Managing Marginality in Railway Stations: Beyond the Welfare and Social Control Debate

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Abstract

How to rid railway stations of the marginalized people who congregate in them? This is the problem faced by railway companies which are seeking to maximize the commercial drawing power of their spaces. The limitations of a strictly repressive policy are prompting railway companies to fund non-profit community-based organizations to carry out social policies aimed at the marginalized. Based on two studies in the railway stations of Lyon and Milan, the article analyses how this strategy was implemented. Our analysis involves differentiating our work from two hypotheses: the irenic hypothesis, which sets social policies in opposition to security policies, and the malefic hypothesis, which equates social policies with security policies. The work of the non-profit community-based organizations shows that the boundary between social policy and security policy is a tenuous one, since the principal aim is to disperse marginalized people and move them away from the station. Control of marginalized people is based on the use of incentive structures rather than on coercion. The community organizations also have to retain control of their philanthropic legitimacy, which they are selling to the railway companies, but which they are also putting at risk. Focusing on the agency of the actors allows us to avoid both an irenic analysis (in which 'human' and 'just' social policies come to the aid of the marginalized) and a malefic analysis (in which social policies are merely security policies in disguise).

Introduction: railway stations in cities and the problem of marginalized people

Railway stations are miniature cities within cities: tens of thousands of travellers pass through them every day, creating a point of convergence and dispersal for a diverse mix of people. They are strategic places in the management of urban and regional flows. In the nineteenth century, railway stations were closely controlled by a state obsessed by fear of crowds (Bowie, 1996). Only travellers had the right to enter these spaces, and they had to wait for their trains in fenced-off waiting rooms (Ribeill, 1996). In short, railway stations pose the classic problem of social order in the city. The throughput of travellers makes relationships particularly impersonal. Disturbances meet only with a minimal level of informal types of regulation; when problems do not affect them directly,

travellers remain mere spectators. Nowadays, railway stations are open public spaces with shops and, as a result, they attract marginalized people. Homeless people, beggars and vagrants pose a dual problem for railway companies. On the one hand, the sight of poverty is bad for business. Some railway stations are frightening and discourage people from travelling by train. The profitability of shops in railway stations is reduced when travellers do not feel at ease. Marginalized people who beg in a rather aggressive way give rise to complaints. On the other hand, the majority of travellers feel compassion for people reduced to begging, and will not tolerate the sight of poor people being ill-treated. Railway stations are public spaces, and this prevents railway companies from controlling access to them and from conducting purely repressive policies against the marginalized.

In this article, I analyse the way in which two railway companies, in Lyon and Milan, have tackled the problem of marginalized people in their stations: how, between 1998 and 1999, the French company (SNCF) rehoused a group of homeless people and how, between 1993 and 2004, Milan City Council and the Italian company Ferrovie dello Stato (FS)[1] came to privilege the work of social workers over that of the police.

In 1998, in Part-Dieu Station in Lyon, station users and shopkeepers complained about the presence of homeless people, their alcoholic outbursts and their dirtiness. SNCF planned to have these marginalized people removed by its internal security department, but an executive suggested that they call on the services of a charitable organization which he had read about in the press. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the City Council, the station's trade organization and the police, SNCF funded an expert report and a rehousing initiative. Social workers from the charity produced the report and carried out the initiative. The homeless were rehoused and did not return to the station.

In the early 1990s, three types of marginality were to be found in Milan's Central Station: the conventional homeless, drug addicts and newly-arrived immigrants. In 1991, the closure of the station at night drove these marginalized people out onto the square and onto the tracks. A number of homeless people died of cold and several drug addicts died from overdoses. Fights broke out between Moroccan and Albanian immigrants. Central Station became the very symbol of insecurity. Between 1993 and 1999, the problems of criminality and marginality met with an essentially repressive response on the part of the police. But the persistent presence of drug addicts and homeless people continued to detract from the station's reputation and damage FS's ambitions for its commercial renewal. In view of attacks in the press and the discontent of citizens' committees,[2] a senior city councillor decided to experiment with a new kind of management of this marginality. In partnership with the City Council, FS invited community organizations that carry out social programmes to bid for funding. The railway station became known locally as 'a welfare supermarket'. In 1999, Colombo and Navarini (1999) counted around a hundred community workers in the health and social spheres at the Central Station. The profusion of organizations in the precincts of the railway station created a risk of overall disorganization. To provide a coordinating structure, the city opened a Help Centre that had its own premises within the station, in order to streamline the offer of accommodation, food and blankets; its over-the-counter service was open to everyone,

1   In Italy, historically, the national railway company is Ferrovie dello Stato (FS). FS became a holding company made up of two bodies, Rete Ferroviaria Italiana (RFI) and Trenitalia. RFI manages the infrastructure (the railway network) and Trenitalia operates the trains. In practical terms, RFI sells Trenitalia time slots in which the trains can operate. RFI also uses service providers in managing the stations: Grandi Stazioni is involved at the 13 largest Italian stations.
2   Citizens' committees are district-based associations largely made up of men in stable professional employment. With the legitimacy conferred on them by their status as a group of respectable citizens, they formulate demands to the local council and other institutions, generally on the subject of criminality and immigration. Their image is strongly associated with the parties farthest to the right of the Italian political spectrum (Lega Nord, Alleanza Nazionale), but research on the ground has tended to show that the members of these committees are not so much associated with these parties as exploited by them (Della Porta and Andretta, 2001; Poletti, 2003).

with a view to making things easier for marginalized people faced with a fragmented range of services. The results were convincing: drug addicts were given support, and some of the homeless and immigrants were relocated into disused warehouses belonging to FS, out of sight of station users.

In both cases, the community organizations and their partners used social policies both to disperse the marginalized people and to avoid their being subjected to outright repression. These strategies were designed in consultation with the railway companies, which are faced with the basic ambivalence of travellers towards marginalized people, a mixture of rejection and compassion. From a theoretical standpoint, our analysis of the policy implemented involves differentiating our work from two hypotheses: the irenic hypothesis, which sets social policies in opposition to security policies, and the malefic hypothesis, which equates social policies with security policies. We look at the theoretical background to this in the next section, followed by a discussion of the methodology. In railway stations, the limitations of police action and the perverse consequences of social policies require the coordination of actors with different values, as discussed in the fourth section. The community organizations are funded by the city councils and the railway companies to carry out a particular service: the control of marginalized people. This is covered in the fifth section. The community organizations are not, however, mere instruments: as discussed in the sixth section, they have to protect their legitimacy and they are able to exploit the security concerns of their employers for their own ends. The conclusion stresses how an analysis in terms of power relations, highlighting the agency of the actors (especially of the community organizations) enables us to go beyond the opposition between the irenic and malefic hypotheses.

Mechanisms for social order in urban spaces

What is the rationale of the institutions that fund third-sector organizations to work on dispersing marginalized people from railway stations? The literature reveals two types of response. For the first type of response, the organizations are *welfare providers* and the use of charitable organizations occurs in the context of welfare state privatization. Social policies that would once have been carried out by public authorities are now carried out by private organizations. Public authorities, subject to budgetary constraints, fund community organizations to carry out social policies more cheaply. This is the argument of Salamon (1993), O'Looney (1993), Smith and Lipsky (1993), Austin (2003) and Marwell (2004), among others; they analyse the increasing importance of the third or voluntary sector as a method of privatizing the welfare state in the US. Contracting to community organizations through invitations to tender and fixed-term funding, as well as the use of volunteers by the organizations, brings down costs and allows social policies to be diversified to match the various issues that arise. Ensuing discussion is essentially normative in nature and implicitly conveys a positive assessment of social policies conducted by the state: Salamon (1993) condemns the 'marketization' of welfare, while O'Looney (1993) considers that the privatization of social services does not, in any case, stem only from a conservative logic of redrawing the welfare state within tighter boundaries: it is also in keeping with a 'leftist' critique of heavy-handed state bureaucracy, insensitive to individual cases and which stigmatizes users. In this 'leftist' critique of the welfare state, the growth in the role of community organizations in the delivery of social services is a solution to the problems linked to bureaucracy. Austin (2003) cites some 60 academic references showing how the mechanism of inviting tenders is effective in bringing down costs without reducing the quality of the services, provided that it is possible to place community organizations in competition with one another. This first type of response therefore presupposes that social policies are fundamentally benevolent and preferable to security policies — this is the irenic hypothesis.

For the second type of response, the issue is not the privatization of social policies, but rather the dressing up of security policies as social policies (*cf.* Piven and Cloward, 1993) — this is the malefic hypothesis. This hypothesis is based on two presuppositions: (1) social policies *should* and *could*, in theory, be legitimate progressive objectives, but are, in practice, means of social control; (2) social control is a means for the dominant class to reinforce its domination. From this perspective, many writers have suggested that the social policies were not conceived with a view to improving the wellbeing of the most powerless, but in order to contribute to the maintenance of social order (O'Connor, 1973; Donzelot, 1977; Platt, 1977; Cohen, 1979; Offe, 1984). For Piven and Cloward (1993), the ultimate aim of social policies is to prevent disturbances and riots and to strengthen the work ethic that favours capitalism (for a critique, see Durman, 1973; Trattner, 1983; Van Krieken, 1991; Dodenhoff, 1998). Like the debate on privatization of social policies, this issue conceals high potential for political polarization. There is a risk that discussion may focus on the essentialist problem of whether a given social policy *is* (or is not) social control, a discussion which will be decided *a priori* by the way in which each camp constructs what it understands by 'social policy' and 'social control'. To avoid this aporia, this article proposes not to ask the basic question (social policy or security policy?), but rather to look at the subjective meaning that these categories have for the actors, in order to inquire into the specific mechanisms directed at marginalized people by community organizations.

From the point of view of the actors, the opposition between social policy and security policy is very meaningful: this opposition has an *emic* relevance. From the conservative end of the spectrum, security policies are associated with effectiveness and authority, while social policies are associated with 'do-gooders' and excessive tolerance; marginalized people are criminals or nuisances. From the progressive end, social policies are associated with humanism and justice, while security policies are associated with repression and violence; marginalized people are victims. The police tend to value security policies, while social workers value social policies. From the point of view of sociology, from the *etic* point of view, the dichotomous opposition between social policy and security policy in practice has to be challenged. If we take into account what is meaningful for the actors, we can then reconstruct their rationales; if we do not use these opposed categories as analytical categories, we can better describe the mechanisms used to manage marginalized people and the interactions between the organizations and their employers. By getting away from the essentialist opposition between security policy and social policy, we give ourselves the means to provide an account of the power relationships, the *agency*[3] of the actors, their room for manoeuvre at a local level and their capacity to exploit those they interact with. This strategy should make it possible to avoid both the irenic view (in which 'human', 'just' social policies come to the aid of marginalized people) and the malefic view (in which social policies are nothing more than security policies in disguise).

Methodology: a study at two stations

The empirical work that underpins this analysis is based on two case studies carried out in the Part-Dieu Station in Lyon and the Central Station in Milan between 2002 and 2004. It goes without saying that two cases cannot possibly enable us to draw general

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3   The notion of agency is used in two respects: the theoretical question of the relationship between structure and agency (Sewell, 1992; Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998), and the theory of the principal-agent (also known as *agency theory*) (Shapiro, 2005). In this article, the notion of agency refers to the idea that most of the time the actors refuse to be a simple means to exogenous ends, and that, even in asymmetrical relationships, they retain room for manoeuvre — and know how to make use of it (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977; Friedberg, 1993) because they are fundamentally endowed with 'self-interest (with guile)' (Williamson, 1975: 26).

conclusions about third-sector organizations or about any of the issues they tackle in their work. The function of the cases presented here is to give a practical reference point for the questions we are asking and to identify empirical mechanisms which, it is reasonable to assume, are quite likely to occur in other contexts. The qualitative survey essentially consisted of making observations and conducting interviews, mainly with the railway companies, the police and social workers, on each site (30 interviews at the Lyon station; 18 at the Milan station). Collecting all these points of view enables us to produce a synthesis that is different from the sum of the individual points of view of each actor. The survey should therefore lead to 'a simplification of reality, partially at odds with the ordinary interpretations and visions of the actors in the context of the action studied' (Friedberg, 1993: 317). The logic of the comparison between France and Italy is not to control cultural or institutional variables, but rather to get away from the nation-state context in order to identify mechanisms that are not specific to a particular nation state. It is important to point out that the data from the Italian case study and the French one are not of the same order. Some 80,000 people pass through the railway station in Lyon every day, but the facts here relate to about ten homeless people, investigated over a period of 2 years. In contrast, 300,000 people pass through the Milan railway station every day; the events recounted here took place between 1993 and 2004 and relate to a large, diverse marginalized population (drug addicts, homeless people and immigrants). This is why subsequent sections focus more on the details of the Italian case study.

Managing perverse consequences

Since 1991, a European Commission Directive has encouraged Member States to embark on a process of opening the railway sector up to competition. This process involves, firstly, ending national monopolies over railways and, secondly, privatizing national railway companies. Public railway companies tend to be loss-making and highly dependent on subsidies (Guélaud, 2002; Marlot, 2004). Traditionally, these companies invested more in trains, which are the core of their business, than in stations, which were for a long time viewed as functional spaces for assembling passengers at nodal points before getting them onto the trains (Sander, 1996). This lower investment in railway stations had contributed to their dereliction. The poor reputation of railway stations and the populations they attract, which are considered undesirable, became a particular problem for the railway companies when it came to opening them up to competition. The SNCF set up a Stations Department, and the FS set up the *Grandi Stazioni* project in order to carry out renovation projects for their railway stations. The idea was to introduce mini shopping centres in order to take advantage of the potential customers passing through the stations every day. These shops, in their turn, need security, which the railway companies, to whom they pay rent, have to provide. In the medium term, the railway companies were relying on the presence of shops to help upgrade the railway station. From this viewpoint, the presence of marginalized people was doubly detrimental to the railway companies' profitability: the homeless indirectly convey a negative image of the world of the train, and by reducing the commercial drawing power of stations, they directly affect the companies' profitability (the rent the shopkeepers pay). In order to remove the marginalized people, the companies initially contemplated the use of coercion.

The limitations of police work

In the French case, SNCF first thought of making use of its internal security department, Surveillance Générale (Suge). Its work would have consisted of harassing the homeless in such a way as to deter them from hanging around in the station precincts. This solution came up against both legal constraints and image problems. On the one hand, sitting

down in a railway station is not prohibited by law, and the police or Suge security guards can only take action against criminal offences, such as forcing children to beg. On the other hand, a railway station is a public space, open to the gaze of travellers, who might protest against any violent intervention. It is not in the railway company's interest to have crowds forming and disrupting the flows of people. An SNCF executive therefore convinced his management to find a non-coercive solution and to call on social workers.

In the Italian case, the police were the sole security actor from 1993 to 1999. In 1992, the Lega Nord (Northern League) won the city council elections and pressed for a policing solution to be found at the railway station. In 1993, corrupt policemen were removed from the station. 'Major operations' then began: police raids at night, using police vans, to arrest as many marginalized people as possible, deport immigrants and imprison drug dealers.

> *(And what was that like?)* Heavy patrols. We had these non-EU nationals, so with around thirty policemen, we arrested all the non-EU nationals,[4] marginalized people and undesirables, we put them in a police van, and they were all taken to the police station, where they were charged with offences (Police Superintendent, Italian station).

The criminal networks were weakened and drug trafficking was pushed back into the adjacent streets, but the experience of station users, travellers and local residents did not change: the railway station still attracted many marginalized people. This is where police action meets its limitations: the police can arrest offenders, but they do not have the resources to deal with poverty — nor is it their job, since poverty has no legal definition. The police simply cannot do the social work that is required to take care of marginalized people.

> Even an idiot can understand that someone who sleeps in a night-shelter will not be dossing in the street with a blanket and a bottle of beer, that someone who has been given a meal will not go off and steal food, that someone who has been given shoes will not walk around barefoot, and that someone who has been given a clean t-shirt creates less of a disturbance than if he's wearing a t-shirt covered in blood . . . These are ordinary examples. Helping people to get access to the health system, helping them in their dealings with the authorities, avoids other problems. You protect the groups at risk. Educating prostitutes about cleanliness, washing, avoids them passing on diseases (social worker, Italian station).

In Milan, as in Lyon, it is not so much benevolence towards the most vulnerable populations as the limitations (perceived and real) of the police solution that motivated the city council and the railway companies to turn to social policies.

The perverse consequences of social policies

Using social policies to produce order has many advantages in both practical and symbolic terms. This strategy nevertheless raises the problem of its own perverse consequences. The issue here is not to judge the appropriateness of the idea of the perversity of welfare or the intrinsically reactionary nature of that idea (Somers and Block, 2005), but to look at it from the point of view of those who promote 'social' solutions, particularly within the railway companies. From the point of view of the actors who wish to reduce the nuisance caused by marginalized people, one perverse consequence is an incentivizing structure set up to disperse marginalized people, which ends up attracting more people than it disperses.

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4 The Italian word to designate (poor) immigrants is '*extracomunitari*', literally 'non-EU national', which can refer to white European (such as Ukrainians), Asian, South American or African immigrants.

Presumably the promoters of non-repressive solutions at SNCF are the most concerned about the interests of the homeless and about the most humane possible treatment of poverty; yet they are acutely aware of the problem of welfare. The experience of the major Paris railway stations shows that the distribution of food (through soup kitchens) attracts large numbers of needy people:

> There are perverse consequences in the actions you take. When you start supporting people . . . At the soup kitchen in *** Station, there were 100 of them to begin with, and in the end it was serving 700 meals a day. It brings a certain population in and then they stay . . . Bringing in people to organize meals in the station is counterproductive (national manager of Mission Solidarité, SNCF, French station).

> We did away with food distribution, and the community organizations agreed with us; we rejected because it creates support centres (regional manager of Mission Solidarité, SNCF, French station).

The actors from the Milan railway company were also well aware of the limitations of a strategy which consists of funding community organizations:

> Welfare alone is not enough; it's like feeding stray dogs and cats, it doesn't solve the problem. You can't get rid of them, so you move them, but it's not simply a question of moving them, you have to organize them (security manager, Grandi Stazioni, Italian station).

For the actors from the community organizations or those ideologically close to them (whose practical interests and values are to promote 'social' solutions), the issue of perverse consequences is neither a matter of making the poor aware of their responsibilities nor a way of putting the problems of the railway company above the wellbeing of marginalized people: it is a matter of the ethics of responsibility. If a welfare mechanism is overloaded, it will be cut, and no one will benefit from it. It is better for the mechanism to benefit a few rather than to benefit no one. To minimize these perverse consequences, the railway companies count on the police or on their own security department. Running operations with community organizations assumes that they will not create a precedent that makes the area's homeless people think that hanging around in the station is the best way to find long-term institutional help. In other words, it is about helping the homeless so that they leave, without attracting others: 'To get them out of poverty — and out of the station, too' (Soutrenon, 2001).

Consequently, the issue is one of coordination between railway companies, police and community organizations. All the actors have different values, objectives and methods. The values of the police and social workers are often antagonistic, with the first valuing 'repressive' policies and the second 'social' policies. But awareness of the intrinsic limitations of the former and the perverse consequences of the latter can lead these actors to work together. For example, the Fratelli di San Francesco (the organization that manages the Help Centre) need the police when a marginalized person becomes threatening, but the police often need the Fratelli to take a minor into the care of their communities when the law prevents any criminal action. This situation of interdependency leads the police to tolerate certain unlawful practices on the part of the Fratelli, such as helping people who are in the country illegally:

> The cops know that the Fratelli feed and house undocumented immigrants, but they don't carry out raids just to make more arrests, because they are the first to ask the Fratelli to take care of large-scale poverty when they need it, such as when there is a humanitarian disaster. So, it's an informal agreement: 'we take on your needy people when necessary, and you don't come here hassling us' (Social worker 3, Italian station).

The railway companies coordinate activities. They fund the community organizations so that they can provide services that suit the interests of the railway companies. In the next section, we look in detail at the tasks that these organizations are asked to carry out by the railway companies.

Managing the marginalized

The Lyon station: breaking up the focal point, rehousing the homeless

In the Lyon station, SNCF's objective was to rid the railway station of homeless people. Rather than entrusting this task to its own security guards or complaining to the police, SNCF set up a 'monitoring committee' with the Ministry of Health, the City Council and the police and decided to call upon the services of a charitable organization to deal with the problem.

Initially, this involved carrying out a sociological expert appraisal — the speciality of the organization concerned — over a period of 2–3 months. This was done by social workers, and was also intended to establish contact with the homeless. From April to June 1999, social workers went out to meet the homeless to gather information about them, build up contacts and create a relationship of trust. The social workers observed that the majority of the homeless — around a dozen — came and went, never staying in the station for long. They sometimes stayed for no longer than an hour. The nuisance they caused depended on their level of alcohol abuse and on the ups and downs of their relationships. The social workers realized that the homeless were actually organized around one of their number, a man aged around 50 who had spent 19 years in the station and who 'lived' in the car park. Making the most of his total knowledge of the whole premises and the cordial relations he had managed to establish with the police, shopkeepers and SNCF employees, he had occupied two parking spaces with his belongings for so long that no one even thought of making him leave. He would offer to let homeless people who came to the railway station stay in 'his' space for a while, in return for a small sum, promising them relative peace and quiet:

> The conclusion we came to was that we had to break the hard core. I really don't like talking like that, but it was necessary to break the hard core, which consisted of two people who were living in the car park under the hotel . . . that's where the homeless guy lived, so he controlled that space, he was in control, and he even sold places there to people, "come and sit by me, don't worry, I know the cops, just give me a euro, two euros", well, at the time it was ten francs, and anyway . . . we said "we have to break that up". Well, by 'break', I mean make the guy who was living there permanently agree to have treatment. And the guy agreed to go away and get treated for alcoholism (regional manager of Mission Solidarité, SNCF, French station).

Secondly, the social workers had to put forward solutions for rehousing the homeless, in order to get them to leave the railway station for good. The social workers were faced with an obligation to achieve results for their partners in the local authority, the police and SNCF. If they did not manage to rehouse the homeless, or if they did not manage to establish a relationship of trust with the homeless such that they would agree to leave the station, the police and Suge would resort to coercion to 'break up the focal point' — the expression used by the institutional actors to refer to the removal of the homeless.

Convincing the homeless to leave the station is more complex than it might appear, because they develop routines and social interactions in the premises that they frequent. They also absolutely refuse to be housed in hostels, where the living conditions are very restrictive and where dogs are not allowed. Rehousing in a flat means dogs can be considered, but involves skills which those homeless people most accustomed to living on the street have lost, such as keeping the flat clean, not leaving the taps running, handling gas points with care, using the toilet. The social workers finally decided to

secure the departure of the most longstanding homeless person in the station — the one who rented his space to others — in order to prevent others moving in afterwards. They convinced the old man to go for treatment for alcoholism and helped him move into a small apartment. SNCF immediately installed wire netting around the spot the homeless had been using, and the station's security guards adopted a systematic policy of discouraging new arrivals. The other homeless people agreed to be rehoused. In the winter of 1999–2000 new homeless people arrived in the station, but did not settle there.

The Milan station: moving marginalized people away in the long term

At the Milan station, it was less a case of rehousing a few homeless people (as at the French station) than of managing the nuisance caused by the presence of hundreds of marginalized people. There are many community organizations there too, each playing a role in managing the poverty that the railway station attracts. The community organizations, by offering services to marginalized people, create relations of dependence and personalized relationships, which cannot fail to stabilize these populations, potentially putting order in the station at risk. The control function of the community organizations is the keystone of the FS Group's security policy, which has managed to take advantage of the funding granted by the City Council, using two methods: dispersing marginalized people and collecting information about them.

Because the station continued, in spite of police repression, to attract marginalized people who frightened travellers, the various components of the Italian railway company coordinated their efforts in order to use the station's Help Centre as a centre for dispersing marginalized people throughout the area. The reasoning was as follows: since the poor are going to come to the station *in any case*, and since *in any case* it is not possible to make them leave without offering them an alternative, you might as well accept the inevitable presence of marginalized people in order to channel them towards spaces where they cause less nuisance. This solution presupposes having empty spaces available to accommodate the marginalized people. The Help Centre agreed to exercise this dispersal function only on condition that it would be able to offer marginalized people places in refuges. For a person in need, the decision to leave the mutual support networks and the solutions offered by the railway station can only be motivated by a prospect that is at least comparable, i.e. an alternative form of support. In fact, like all national railway companies, FS Group is historically a very big property owner. And, as everywhere in Europe, rail transport has declined considerably since the second world war. As a result, RFI (the infrastructure and network branch of FS) owns a number of more or less abandoned signal boxes, small stations, warehouses and sheds. The smallest stations are increasingly operated unmanned; in Lombardy, 45 % of stations are fully automated. These railway infrastructures are often occupied illegally by groups of immigrants. Police operations against this phenomenon have no long-term effect, as the squatters always come back. When a facility has been squatted and the police have intervened, it costs RFI €250,000 on average to restore the property to its initial value. For RFI, these spaces might therefore be better used, and this led to the idea of having them run by community organizations in order to protect them against illegal occupation. In Lombardy, 80 railway stations are now run in this way. Out of the 1,500 automated stations (which also have travellers passing through) in Italy, 400 are run by community organizations. The organizations do well out of this, since they are given the space free of charge and this legitimizes their activities; and the railway company also does well out of the arrangement, since the marginalized people are settled and kept under control, well out of sight of travellers.

But the authorities' ambition does not simply boil down to dispersing the marginalized. Grandi Stazioni's plan is to make the most of the organizations' grassroots knowledge in order to gain a better understanding of these marginalized populations, isolating those who are potentially dangerous and, where applicable, carrying out targeted repressive campaigns:

So there is a synergy here. The community organizations that are working in the station, who help the homeless, have signed an agreement with us to improve security. They make their knowledge of the people they mix with available to us, distinguishing criminals, drug dealers and violent people from the homeless. With the community organizations, we can pinpoint dangerous individuals, in order to bring the station back to health . . . There is an agreement between the community organizations, the city, the station and the police to improve security. Standard forms have been produced to improve our knowledge of homeless and marginalized people and put those who behave badly into prison. It all revolves around these forms. And as Grandi Stazioni is giving premises to these community organizations . . . (Security manager, Grandi Stazioni, Italian station).

The railway company provides the community organizations with premises and funding and, in exchange, expects its community organization partners to give information on individual marginalized people with whom they are in daily contact. Therefore, part of the railway company's task is to integrate the work of community organizations into the station's security policy by strengthening coordination between the community organizations and the police, so that police repression and social work are no longer seen as being in opposition At the same time, it has to make the most of the skills of both in upgrading the station into an attractive shopping space for its customers.[5]

The work of the community organizations stresses the complexity of managing marginalized people in railway stations. Bearing in mind the legal constraints and the intrinsic attraction of stations for marginalized people, a policy based purely on policing is not effective. To achieve its ends, the railway company is forced to practise, through the community organizations, a subtle game of incentives and sanctions. From a more strictly analytical viewpoint, it is possible to identify two social control mechanisms at work in these social policies: (a) the use of incentive and disincentive measures which result in or channel certain behaviours; and (b) the creation of relationships of dependency that act as a constraint on those who benefit from the social policies. In both stations, the charitable organizations are using incentives to get marginalized people to leave the station. In the Milan station, the ongoing support that they provide to marginalized people makes the latter more predictable, as they are more dependent on assistance.

The active cooperation of the community organizations in the dispersal of marginalized people shows to what extent the boundary between social policy and security policy is empirically tenuous: a dichotomous conception of these two concepts is inappropriate. This cooperation also creates a tension between the objectives of the community organizations ('tackling social issues') and those of the railway companies ('getting rid of marginalized people'). Does this mean that the community organizations are instruments of social control? In the next part I try to show that the opposite is true, by highlighting the notion of agency.

Managing legitimacy and the interplay of different forms of exploitation

The particular legitimacy of community organizations is based on their capacity to present themselves as actors disinterested in material gain (Gadrey, 2000) and motivated by solidarity and compassion rather than opportunism. People imagine the world of community organizations to be swamped with charismatic figures and positive values

5   At the time of the research, this project had not yet been implemented. It is clear that for ideological and religious reasons, the community organizations are reluctant to provide this information, particularly to the police (Navarini *et al.*, undated). The question is twofold: can the railway company force the community organizations to cooperate? What area of uncertainty are the community organizations in a position to maintain?

such as solidarity and self-sacrifice. A significant part of social science literature on the third sector and civil society also uses this discourse of praise. The non-profit sector is described as a major social innovation (Salamon, 1995; Salamon and Anheier, 1997; Anheier and Salamon, 1998; Salamon *et al.*, 1999), regarded as remedying the problems deriving from capitalism (Laville, 1997; 2000; Fourel, 2001; Jeantet, 2006; Laville and Cattani, 2006) and renewing democracy (Evers, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Chanial, 2001).[6] This particular legitimacy is the principle that motivates volunteers to work for third-sector organizations, which are able to operate thanks to the normative commitment of their members (Etzioni, 1964).

The same legitimacy is indispensable in the relationship of community organizations with their institutional partners. The city council and the railway company are all the more inclined to fund community organizations that are able to mobilize their legitimacy in such a way that it reflects on those providing the funding. Funding a charitable organization shows that one is concerned about human issues and not only about financial profit. Community organizations are well aware that they are selling their legitimacy as much as their labour force. They are all the more aware of it because, as organizations, they are faced with the problem of continuity or even of survival. Because community organizations are organizations, their first imperative, like all organizations, is to survive (Hannan and Freeman, 1977; Carroll, 1984; Hall, 2002). In order to keep going, organizations must cooperate with actors who can provide the means for their survival. Marwell (2004) has shown, for example, how non-profit community-based organizations providing direct social support services in two Hispanic neighbourhoods of New York were involved in local electoral clientelism. The community-based organizations receive funding from local elected officials. The local elected officials want to get re-elected. The community-based organizations want to go on helping people. So it is in the interest of local elected officials to fund the community-based organizations that are favourable to them, at the expense of those that are not, and to use them as influential intermediaries with the local population, in order to help them get re-elected. The community-based organizations have an interest in secure funding and, therefore, in getting the politicians who allocate their funding elected. In a context in which every community organization depends on funding that is always temporary, the survival of the organization depends on its capacity to be able to continue to sell its services. As a result, relations between community organizations and those funding them involve mutual exploitation, the sophistication of which is at odds with the disinterested basis of their legitimacy.

In the French and Italian studies discussed here, almost all the volunteers, social workers and community organization managers working for the homeless people and drug addicts were firmly convinced that the destitute people at the station deserved respect and consideration. The main community organizations involved are part of the Christian social movement, and almost all the social workers are firmly progressive. They consider marginalized people to be victims of an unfair economic order and a selfish society. Working in a charitable organization almost always implies favouring handling poverty through welfare in preference to repression. Therefore one might expect these community organizations to be hostile towards the intentions of Lyon City Council and Grandi Stazioni — don't these bodies view solidarity as a resource at the disposal of security?

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6   The empirical literature on community organizations is distinctly less lyrical. It stresses the conflicts and the power relations within community organizations (Laville and Sainsaulieu 1997a), and the ups and downs of their daily operation, the issue of professionalization and the nature of their funding (Haeringer *et al.*, 1997; Laville and Sainsaulieu, 1997b). In addition, Salamon (1995), concerned at seeing rather too optimistic a literature developing about the capacity of the nonprofit sector to 'change people's lives', warned, over 10 years ago, against *romanticizing* the third sector in the literature. See also the critical discussions of Mayer (2003) and Pirotte (2007).

On the contrary — the security intentions of the City Council and Grandi Stazioni are resources for the community organizations in the stations. Rather than keeping a tight hold on a purely charitable process, they intend to benefit from the opportunities — material and symbolic — offered by the situation at hand, by explicitly linking welfare and improved security in their applications for funding or premises. The theme of security as a principle justifying the collective utility of social work is used by the community organizations as a code to communicate with the various components of the railway company:

> Our community organizations are involved in welfare activities for these groups who are profoundly marginalized, who are often represented as a social concern and a danger to city residents, and this certainly links our thinking to the security aspect . . . Our community organizations have effectively shown in recent years that welfare activities, help and social protection of the fringe groups at greatest risk, accompanied by equally necessary activities involving prevention, security and control by the forces of order, offer the best conditions for actually tackling the problems linked to profound social marginality, even for the groups most at risk, and that this undoubtedly benefits city residents.[7]

The community organization managers are obviously convinced of the collective utility of their work but tend to view the question of security as secondary within an overall set of problems where their priority is to help poor people whose lives are in danger. Justifying the usefulness of their work from the security point of view therefore falls within the perspective of a cynical, opportunistic exploitation of the situation to their own advantage:

> In a meeting with the Lega Nord, when they ask us what we would do if we found a kid who had run away from Sicily and who turned up [at the station], we don't say "We did a great thing, we returned a kid to his parents", we say "We removed a criminal danger from the streets of Milan" [laughter] (social worker, Italian station).

The community organizations that are selling their legitimacy in order to collaborate with security policies are not mere victims: they have a capacity for agency. They benefit from their usefulness to the city council or the railway company in order to get funding, and they intend to use their room for manoeuvre at the local level to maximize the social dimension of their projects to the detriment of the security dimension. But they are playing with actors who are no less pragmatic; in the game of mutual exploitation, they can also come out the losers. The experience of other partnerships provide proof of this: charitable organizations are regularly mobilized by the authorities to take part in joint operations with the forces of law and order (state or municipal), in the course of which the presence of these community organizations appears to act as a 'social guarantee', the 'humanist' justification for a project which is not humanist at all:

> On Place des Terreaux, we were exploited much more . . . We played the role of social guarantor when they cleaned up the Place des Terreaux. We were really manipulated . . . (social worker, French station).

In the case mentioned by this interviewee, social workers were not informed about police operations to be carried out against the marginalized people whose trust they were supposed to have gained. This shows that the exploitation works two ways: on the one hand, the community organizations exploit the theme of security and the guilty consciences of some decision makers in order to keep their sources of funding going where their projects lie at the margins of social work; on the other hand, the authorities and the private companies exploit the community organizations by making them play the

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7 Undated document from a group of community organizations working at the station, entitled 'Solidareta e sicurezza [Solidarity and security]'.

role of 'social guarantor' when the issues are controversial. As there are many community organizations and their funding is insecure, it is plausible that they are being exploited more often than they exploit more stable actors such as local authorities or big business.

Conclusion

Faced with the problem of marginalized people in stations, the railway companies have turned to charitable organizations to find a more satisfactory solution than mere repression. The notion of management (of perverse consequences, of marginalized people and of legitimacy) enables them to exploit the subtle power relations that come into play in the implementation of these policies. In both Lyon and Milan, the community organizations have to manage the perverse consequences of their own work, not only in order to satisfy the demands of their employer, but also so that they can continue to offer attractive services. They set up incentive structures for marginalized people in order to make them comply with the expectations laid down by the railway companies. These incentive structures are not by nature coercive and, for this reason, the community organizations cooperate with the police. They set up a game in which there is something for everyone — marginalized people and railway companies. But the community organizations are not only managing the marginalized people, they are also managing their own legitimacy. In short, by helping in the commercial upgrading of stations, they are also taking part in the philanthropic, 'social' (as opposed to 'security') legitimation of the railway companies, at the risk of endangering their own legitimacy.

A pragmatic strategy for the railway companies therefore implies reconciling police operations with a social approach, in a bid to limit conflicts and make the space as pleasant as possible for users — but this requires compromises to be made with a fundamentalist conception of 'security'. Symmetrically, using the term 'solidarity' in reference to this social work seems improper, given the exploitation of this solidarity: dispersing marginalized people, making the station better for business, satisfying the demands of electors. The community organizations are not taken in by this policy but they do benefit from the opportunities it provides to ensure the survival of their organization. For the management and volunteers of the community organizations, the desirable objective would be the disappearance of poverty, which is an insult to humanity; for Grandi Stazioni and SNCF, it is a more modest matter of reducing the visibility of poverty in the spaces around the railway station in order to minimize damage to business. But all the managers of the various components of FS Group and SNCF know that there will *always* be marginalized people and that railway stations will *always* attract them.

In this game, the central backers are the railway companies, and the central service providers are the community organizations. The state remains a notable actor through the involvement of the police, but it is practically absent from the social policies. In France, it plays a minor role through its share in funding community organizations through its local administration, for a project that it has not initiated and does not run; in Italy, it is only marginally involved in the funding arrangements.

The approach we have taken allows us to set aside two conceptions, both false, of the relationship between social policies and security policies. On the one hand, fieldwork shows that the management of marginalized people by community organizations lies on a continuum between social policy and criminal policy, at the mid-point of which the boundaries are blurred. A dichotomous opposition between social policy and security policy is illogical; the irenic hypothesis, which idealizes ('humane', 'just') social policies by setting them in opposition to ('repressive', 'violent') security policies, ignores this complexity. On the other hand, within this continuum, the community organizations are trying to exploit their *agency* at the local level in order to ensure the 'social' nature of

their task, which is to play a part in upgrading the stations. This capacity for agency contradicts the malefic hypothesis, according to which social policies 'only' act as a more insidious form of social control.

There remains a paradox. To go beyond the opposition between the irenic hypothesis and the malefic hypothesis, it is necessary to differentiate between emic concepts (those used by the actors) and etic concepts (those used in sociological analysis). In this case, in order to analyse the policies implemented in the railway stations in Lyon and Milan, it is vital to understand the meaning and value that the 'social policy' and 'security policy' categories have for the actors concerned. But claiming the superiority of science over common sense does not do the actors justice: the strategies used by the actors testify to a perfect practical analysis of the real challenges (while the irenic and malefic hypotheses also have their academic expression). All in all, this article shows to what extent the actors involved are pragmatic, competent, reflexive and capable of understanding the nature of power relations from a practical point of view.

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Résumé

*Comment se débarrasser des marginaux qui se concentrent dans les gares? Tel est le problème des compagnies ferroviaires qui cherchent à maximiser l'attractivité de leur espace. Les limites d'une politique strictement répressive conduisent les compagnies ferroviaires à financer des associations afin que celles-ci mènent des politiques sociales en direction des marginaux. L'article, fondé sur deux monographies dans les gares de Lyon et Milan, analyse la mise en œuvre de cette stratégie. Analyser la politique mise en œuvre suppose de se démarquer de deux conceptions, celle qui oppose politiques sociales et politiques de sécurité, et celle qui identifie les politiques sociales à des politiques de sécurité. Le travail des associations montre que la frontière entre politique sociale et politique de sécurité est ténue: il s'agit avant tout de disperser les marginaux et de les éloigner de la gare. La gestion des marginaux repose sur la mise en œuvre de structures d'incitation plutôt que sur la coercition. Les associations doivent aussi gérer leur légitimité philanthropique, qu'elles monnaient auprès des compagnies ferroviaires, mais qu'elles mettent aussi en danger. L'attention à l'*agency *des acteurs permet d'éviter une analyse irénique (où des politiques sociales «humaines» et «justes» viennent en aide aux marginaux) et une analyse maléfique (où les politiques sociales ne sont que des politiques de sécurité travesties).*