Invention of Accessibility: French Urban Public Transportation Accessibility from 1975 to 2006

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Abstract: This paper discusses accessibility policies of the French Ministry of Transportation and the two urban mass transit companies in France. One company is the *Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens* (RATP), France's leading urban mass transit company. The second transit company, which is much smaller than RATP, is the *Société des Transports Poitevins* (STP). Both company's actions illustrate policies pursued for almost the last thirty years. This article will focus on RATP. The two aims of this article are to show how a) new solutions for facilities of public transportation networks are linked to the way stakeholders view disability and b) how changes in this view have reflected stakeholders' moves to promote their idea of accessibility and disability.

Key Words: public transportation, disability history, accessible travel

Introduction

In France, accessibility to the public transportation system is enshrined in the 1975 Disabled Policy Act. Despite the Act, public transportation accessibility for individuals with disabilities is still a recurrent topic in public debate, and many voices openly criticise the inaccessibility of public places (the Paris Metro is the example most frequently given).

Nonetheless, numerous solutions have been rolled out since 1975. This was highlighted in a study [i] of facilities that had either been recommended or installed as part of the accessibility policies of the French Ministry of Transportation and the two urban mass transit companies in France. One company is the *Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens* (RATP)[ii], France's leading urban mass transit company. RATP covers the whole of Paris and its suburbs and is used for 2.6 billion trips per year. The second transit company is the *Société des Transports Poitevins* (STP). It is much smaller than RATP, handling 1.2 trips per year and covering the ten communities in the *Communauté d'Agglomération de Poitiers* (CAP, Poitiers metropolitan area), the authority responsible for organising transportation. Due to these factors, the company is representative of urban transit operators in general. Both companies illustrate the policy pursued for almost the last thirty years. This article will focus on the RATP. The two aims of this article are to show how new solutions for the facilities of public transportation networks are linked to the way stakeholders view disability and how changes in this view have reflected stakeholders' moves to promote their idea of accessibility and disability.

In 1975, the dominant paradigm of disability was based on a medical and functional view, requiring individual responses peculiar to the person identified as disabled. Disabled people were considered from the standpoint of their medical characteristics. A person has an impairment – for instance, he or she is paraplegic and cannot walk – therefore, that person is disabled. This paradigm, which associated disability with a medical, individualised view, underpinned the drafting of the 1975 Act (Chauvière, 1998 & 2000; Chapireau, 1988 a & b). It prompted legislators to propose special solutions of accessibility to help only disabled people in

the medical sense (for instance, lifts reserved for them, special transportation only for disabled people).

In 2006, the representation of disability has diversified. Alongside the medical, individualised view, another approach has developed out of an environmental, perhaps even political, conceptualization of disability. New accessibility solutions (e.g. self-service lifts) are part of the outcome of this new paradigm of disability. Rather than special facilities, we are now seeing integrated facilities based of the new paradigm of accessibility. Solutions are no longer a response solely to technical requirements; they are also social solutions, addressing the issue of the place of the disabled in society.

Drawing on Becker's theory of the "the moral enterprise" (1985), I have reconstructed the normative process implemented by different stakeholders to impose their values and social rules on the rest of society. These stakeholders, whom Becker calls "moral entrepreneurs," are represented principally by one of the biggest associations of the disabled, the *Association des Paralysés de France* (APF). The Association has been a primary contact of the government and administrations when defining and implementing disability and accessibility policies since the mid-eighties. Other associations also play a role in matters of disability, but they have not tackled the issue of accessibility. APF feels public transportation accessibility is a collective problem that really needs to be remedied. Therefore since 1985, it has striven to have the issue addressed in a way that ties in with its worldview. This expression is used to refer to the concept of "paradigm" according to Kuhn (1973 & 1983). I have based my reasoning on this theory to demonstrate that APF has gradually succeeded in influencing the paradigm and the image of accessibility (and related solutions) stemming from the 1975 Act and, accordingly, the image of people with disabilities. My aim is to show how APF made sense of accessibility to others through utilizing several factors, including lobbying from the perspective of the disability paradigm. There has been a succession of paradigms during this period. For instance, criticisms of the solutions and results of the accessibility policy are just some of the resources that have been marshalled to challenge the balance of the policy and alter all the values, methods, and so on contained in it. By focusing the paradigm of disability on a social rather than an individual concept, the APF hopes to improve the accessibility and the integration of disabled individuals into society. The final challenge goes beyond the issue of access to public transportation; it concerns the place of people with disabilities in our society.

Analysis of the solutions brings to light three major phases. Each phase is characterised by a dominant type of accessibility (the types of facilities selected or rejected and who they were aimed at) and by a discourse on disabled individuals. The first phase is defined as a phase of special accessibility. It began in 1975 with the publication of the Disabled Policy Act. The second period began in 1985. It was marked by the emergence of a new paradigm in the new transit networks and the persistence of old solutions. Above all, this was the point at which APF came onto the scene and began creating the paradigm of accessibility, supported by the evolution of the disability paradigm and general concerns about aging of the population. The new view began to spread. The last period, which began in 1996, saw integrated solutions becoming established and brought such a change in attitudes to accessibility that earlier facilities were no longer considered as factors enabling access. Consultation, which is now mandatory as part of urban transportation policies, has played a substantial role in developing accessibility.

1975 to 1985: Special Accessibility

Different Action for Different People

The Disabled Policy Act came into force in 1975. The paradigm on which it was constructed consisted of a medical, individualised view of disability. It influenced the policy on accessibility to transportation that was slowly becoming established, such as policy agendas and publication of decrees in 1978 (decree of February 1st 1978 [n° 78-109] and decree of December 9th 1978 [n° 78-1167]). Based on the Act, a tendency emerged to classify people according to their impairments. Two sets of solutions for two distinct populations therefore characterise the first period (1975-1978). The first was for people in wheelchairs, who were considered to be severely disabled, and the second was for all the others, the "mildly disabled", who included those who were blind, deaf, and all others. This classification exists in Ministry of Transportation reports and in the White Paper setting out the policy of RATP in 1982 (p. 113). For the "mildly disabled" accessibility consisted of solutions integrated into transportation spaces. These solutions were assimilated into general policies on service improvement and improving comfort for all travellers. They consisted of the introduction of moving staircases, hazard warnings in the form of raised bumps along platforms (first tested in 1982, becoming generalised in their current form in 1987), and extra handrails in buses. For those in wheelchairs, accessibility involved special solutions, either in parallel (specialized transportation) or added to existing spaces, such as lifts alongside stairs.

Specialized Transportation

Specialized transportation was viewed by the Ministry of Transportation and representatives of the transit companies (the Union des Transporteurs Publics (UTP) and the International Union of Public Transportation [UITP]) as the definitive solution for quality accessibility; for them it was not synonymous with exclusion or discrimination. It was even seen as a step forward, a response to the right to transportation for all. The first report by the Ministry of Transportation in 1977 even recommended that it should not be reserved solely for people in wheelchairs, but should be opened up to other sectors of the population who experience difficulties, for example elderly individuals or pregnant women. The Association des Paralysés de France (APF) was more ambivalent; its approach to accessibility developed over a number of years and it was only in 1989 that it began to consider specialized transportation officially to be complementary to accessibility to regular networks and not simply a palliative to the inaccessibility of public transportation.

No Action to Change the Environment (Spaces Or Equipment)

Accessibility of regular services (buses, metro, trains) was planned, but the Ministry of Transportation and transit company representatives (the UTP and UITP) felt it was a less satisfactory solution than specialized transportation. Work to adapt the environment was not envisaged, as this extract from RATP's policy shows. Wheelchair users, asking for highly integrated accessibility, were considered unrealistic: “This attitude shows a flight of fancy on the

part of the individual; the disabled are entering the discourse from the standpoint of being equal to other people, and they are demanding that the world around them adapt to them (1982, p. 6)." From then on, the solutions implemented consisted principally of technical features installed to overcome the inaccessibility of the space or equipment.

The French "bus of the future" project (1976-1980), the aim of which was to design a modern bus, was symbolic of the treatment of accessibility at the time. From the mid-seventies, urban transportation enjoyed a significant injection of resources (both human and financial) to cope with the challenges posed by the oil crisis and city centre congestion. It was in this context that the "bus of the future" project came into being. The specification set out points for improvement, namely safety, comfort, and accessibility. Accessibility was for the benefit of everyone except wheelchair users. It consisted of improving the way steps were arranged at entrances and exits, and ergonomic seating. Accessibility for wheelchair users, envisaged by one of the competing projects, was not selected. The various players in the public transportation arena, the state-owned vehicle manufacturer, Renault Véhicule Industriel (RVI)), transit company representatives (UTP, of which RATP was a member) and the Ministry of Transportation opted for a bus with no sideways step or sloping floor within, and with a floor 560 mm above ground level requiring two steps at the entrance and exit. This bus was in mass production from 1987, and was bought by most networks until 1995, when RVI began selling the first low-floor bus without steps at the entrance or exit, modelled on German buses available since 1987.

Until 1985, accessibility policy was divided into two sets of solutions: facilities to make travel easier for the "mildly disabled" and special facilities for "disabled wheelchair users."

1985 To 1996: The Emergence of a New Paradigm

During the second period (1985-1996), new accessibility solutions on the new networks and on buses themselves began to appear, though the special facilities from the previous period still existed. However, there was no quick roll-out of accessibility, so APF set about structuring itself and its activity to modifying this situation.

The Old Concept of Disability: Slowing Accessibility or Questioning the Benefit of Accessibility

The large majority of accessibility solutions deployed (specialized transportation, chair lifts, disabled lifts) were typical of projects where accessibility is added as an afterthought rather than being integrated from the design stage and is intended for those identified medically as being disabled, that is, for one target population and only for that population.

This medical, individualised concept of disability had a number of implications. Firstly, it had been established that the number of people who could use the facilities was between 0.5% and 1% of the population, a tiny percentage of the mass population transit companies were hoping to attract. In light of this, the value of installing a lift was not particularly evident and had to compete with the installation of escalators that could carry a much larger constant flow. Secondly, the cost of these facilities seemed high for the tiny population they served, reducing still further the apparent benefit of developing accessibility. Transportation professionals often

used this argument, as some of those spoken to, who were involved in accessibility policy, testify (Personal communication, three RATP's managers 2003/09/16; 2004/02/04 and /16). Lastly, many in the transportation sector felt it was not really their responsibility. Because a "medical" approach was taken to the severely disabled, they felt a medical response would be more appropriate and that it was not their job as public transportation engineers to provide this. All these factors, which constituted the disability paradigm from 1975, masked the value of accessibility to the transportation sector and slowed the roll-out of accessibility.

This is apparent both from the comments of those working in the transportation sector, who all wanted to know how many people in wheelchairs would be using the facilities, and in the solutions deployed, as the following two examples illustrate. RATP policy during the 1980s did not include plans to make either old or new metro stations accessible to the disabled. In the old stations, many of which were built more than a century ago, with some dating from 1904, planned disabled facilities came up against administrative obstacles (protection of historic monuments), technical problems with the very dense subsoil of Paris (old quarries, many cellars, sewers, water, electricity and gas pipes), and the fact that there were few outlets at ground level (the average population density of Paris is 20,000 inhabitants per km² according to the last census, compared with 7,900 inhabitants per km² in New York). RATP, in its interpretation of the 1975 Act and associated decrees, saw rules on accessibility as applying only to new lines, so new stations built along extensions to existing lines were not designed to be accessible. This approach was sustained by the feeling it would be of little use to make only a few stations on a line accessible. Furthermore, a gap between the platform and train (consisting of an empty space and a step up) meant that accessibility was not assured.

New Dimensions to APF Policy: A New Approach to Disability and Integrated Accessibility Solutions

An international debate on the concept of disability emerged during the 1980s, offering a new way of approaching disability from the point of view of the difficulties experienced by individuals instead of their impairments. This was a functional approach rather than a purely medical approach. This concept of disability and accessibility changed the boundaries of the disabled population, increasing the number of people who could be described as disabled and thereby increasing the benefit of developing access. Simultaneously, a new way of applying accessibility was being seen on new networks. It consisted of integrated accessibility planned from the outset and designed for everyone, enabling equal treatment through solutions that did not segregate.

In 1983, for the first time in France, a totally accessible network both in terms of its buildings and vehicles was opened (the VAL automatic metro in Lille). The accessibility provided by lifts and floor-level platforms fulfilled two conditions: it did not hinder operation and it provided equal access for all passengers. But for the majority of operators, these conditions could only be met on new lines, for example the tram systems in Grenoble (1987), Paris and Nantes (1982) and Rouen (1994).

Spurred on by the development of these solutions providing integrated accessibility for all, and given a renewed lease on life by the new representation of disability, APF mobilised to

construct a policy aimed at promoting integrated accessibility by setting its rules (technical criteria), expressing its value (expansion of the population concerned), and participating in its application.

Becker's theory (1985) of the moral enterprise sheds light on APF's action. Becker discovered that stakeholders sometimes commit to introducing a new rule and that their actions can be broken down into three stages, which are the stages I have defined above. The first consists of defining the rule from values. The second aims to attract the public's attention to the point they feel is a problem. Finally, the moral entrepreneur seeks to rectify the "social problem" through the application of its rule.

Stage One: APF Mobilizes to Act

First, APF began by putting together its demands, by setting up a “national accessibility service” run by a paid worker. These demands, which were presented and approved at its 1983, 1985 and 1989 conferences, tell us much about APF's work to define its accessibility policy. In 1983, APF took its accessibility demands out of the social domain, and made them part of a drive for "Freedom of movement" under the law. In 1985, they were presented under a special heading: "Accessibility of private and public transportation."

At the same time, an operational approach was developing on the initiative of a few activists. It consisted of giving technical training to activists. The challenge was to enable these activists to become negotiators recognised by transportation and planning officials for their expertise in accessibility issues, with the intention of building bridges between the two worlds– the world of the disabled and that of the engineers. To spread this policy, which we will call "the professionalization of accessibility," more widely, the post of permanent technical adviser was created at the association's national headquarters. This structured approach is also evident in the position APF took as a result of its "entry on stage" (as defined by Becker, 1985) or the act that initiated APF's policy on transportation accessibility. In 1986, APF rejected an adaptation to the new R312 buses that came out of the "bus of the future" project because of its special, segregationist nature. The proposed solution was seen as an "*add-on.*" This accessibility solution reflected the dominant view at the time; it was a chairlift at the rear door for use only by people in wheelchairs. Quite apart from the fact that the solution proposed by RVI was incompatible with operating constraints, such as stopping times or safety issues, it did not meet the accessibility criteria defended by the association, which was demanding accessibility for all, and above all, no special accessibility arrangements. APF posed as a transportation professional by taking operating constraints into account as a way of pressing its demands for non-segregationist solutions. It actively opposed the dominant approach to accessibility at the time. It sought to establish a different concept based on taking external factors into account, in accordance with the view that difficulties experienced by individuals arise from the interaction between individuals and society. From this standpoint, a person is disabled because of the obstacles in their path, which means-in political terms--ceasing to be concerned with access for everyone.

Stage Two: APF Expands the Affected Population to Increase the Perceived Benefit of Accessibility

Becker identified two routes of action open to entrepreneurs for securing adoption of their norms. They are to ensure the support of other interested organizations, and to win over public opinion through the press and the other media. "If these efforts are successful, public opinion will take on board a specific problem and the competent organizations will act together to establish the desired rule″ (1985, p. 161). This was the route taken by APF, and to attract attention it sought to enlarge the population affected by the problem to demonstrate the benefits of integrated facilities.

The idea was to link the demands of disabled people with broader concerns affecting a wider audience. To do this, it tried to compare the problems of individuals with disabilities with those of elderly people and parents pushing prams. For example, it produced a logo in the form of a frieze showing all categories of people who may experience problems travelling: in addition to people in wheelchairs, elderly individuals, adults with crutches, mothers with prams, those who are blind, and children. It resorted to the abbreviation PMR (*Personne à mobilité réduite*, person with reduced mobility) and contributed to broadcasting this. But most of all, it took inspiration and a basis from the conceptual considerations of disability that came out of work to define classifications for disabilities led by Wood for the WHO (World Health Organization) (1980).

The categorization that existed during the first period gradually lost its strength, the boundaries of disability changed, and wheelchair users found new allies. This had a socio-economic impact, which changed the way the problem was tackled. Accessibility was no longer about accommodating a minority population, it was a policy to benefit a much larger group involving more people.

Stage Three: APF Participates Through the Professionalization of Activists and Consultation

Third, APF became involved in rolling out this new accessibility rule. Many of the activities in existence before the service was set up in 1986 were resumed and structured. The service organised its policy along three principal axes: the first was to support the APF network by training local officers and providing materials and equipment (for communication, negotiation and information); the second was to raise awareness among the general public and those working in the sector, and the third was to maintain a dialogue with government and national authorities on the subject of accessibility. The focus was on taking accessibility out of the restrictive arena of disability and aligning it with wider issues, making it a collective action and a matter for everyone. To achieve this, APF centralised and professionalized the way its activists worked, tending to use official channels of consultation. APF carried out a number of high-level, centralised actions, such as lobbying and training at the Ministry of Transportation, among members of parliament, and the UTP. The public, extra-sectoral nature of decisions taken amplified the impact of these. But it also pursued its activity at a much more decentralised level, in the approach and actions of its activists on the ground.

The Association's identity changed on three counts. Firstly, it moved away from the medical and social sector, entering new fields, like transportation and planning). Secondly, it gained the status of an expert in accessibility (it was already an expert in disability). Thirdly, it moved from being an opponent to being a partner. APF activists also had a change of image.

Originally classed as workers in the social or charitable sector, they were increasingly viewed as professionals in accessibility, through the expertise they provided in working for a common cause–accessibility in cities for everyone. The work they did to publicise and secure the adoption of low-floor buses is a good illustration of this. In 1989, APF and the GIHP (*Groupement d'Insertion des Handicapés Physiques*, Physically Disabled Inclusion Group) organised a symposium in Dunkerque entitled "Transporting without excluding." The two associations managed to bring together many professionals from the transportation sector to show them low-floor buses (with very low floors, almost to the ground, so no steps are needed at the entrance and exit) manufactured abroad. This communication initiative was a success, and fifteen years later those we spoke to still recall it (Personal Communication, RATP's managers or engineers, 2003 and 2004).

But the economic situation (the French jobs crisis) meant that transit companies continued to buy from the state-owned bus manufacturer, which until 1995 was still producing only R312 buses. The associations lobbied to try to get RVI to produce low-floor buses too, but it was the application of the Loi Sapin in 1993 that provoked a change in the situation , forcing companies to issue European calls for tender. Faced with competition, RVI modified its production and brought out a low-floor bus two years later. Sales of the previous model (the R312) collapsed in favour of the new buses. But there was little progress with the accessibility of bus services for wheelchair users. The networks were mainly concerned with the absence of steps, making boarding and alighting easier for all passengers. Fold-out ramps enabling wheelchair users to board buses were available as an option that not everyone took. Buyers had taken on board the argument of making travel easier for everyone, but not that of including wheelchair users. Only a few networks tried to achieve full accessibility. The Etang de Berre network in the south of France was the first to do so. It would be used as a test and held up as an example for many years to come. Despite the European recommendations concerning accessibility on buses (COST 332, 1995), integrated accessibility was not yet seen as standard.

From 1985, APF spent their time on what tended to be official opportunities for consultation, which were used as a forum for discussing accessibility to spread the word. These included Departmental Safety and Accessibility Committees, to which plans for public buildings were submitted for approval, and Colitrah (Liaison Committee for Disabled Transportation), a consultation facility set up by the Ministry of Transportation following the 1975 Act. Many RATP and Ile de France regional officials attended and participated on a regular basis in the various meetings and working groups organised within this context. In this way, the association won members and even activists to defend and extend integrated accessibility. Furthermore, from 1990, they also had the chance to mix with researchers taking part in work on the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps. The various participants uncovered conceptual thoughts on disability. By the early 1990s, the change in the way the population was perceived had passed into practice, as shown for example by a report by an official research body, the Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Ile de France (IAURIF, the Ile de France Planning Institute, 1994), prepared by members of Colitrah. The report puts at 25% the proportion of the population affected by difficulties using transportation. The concept of disability clearly falls into an environmental approach of situational disability. This information and the figure of 25% were regularly referred to by staff with responsibility for accessibility within their organizations (transit companies, research and consultative bodies, local authorities).

They were in regular contact with the associations both through official structures and within their own companies as they monitored various projects. They usually adhered to the view defended by APF and played a part in disseminating a social view of disability within their organizations, even though they often met with rejection or reluctance on the part of other departments. So the ideas began to spread, but practical results had not yet been achieved, as the arrival of low-floor buses, in which full accessibility remained optional, illustrates.

Initial Results

These initial integrated facilities, available to everyone, illustrate the fact that the new paradigm of accessibility arising from an environmental view of disability was emerging and spreading. However, the previous representation of disability still persisted, expressed in tensions and resistance to attempts to make existing networks accessible. Stakeholders wanting to spread the integrated accessibility model stressed the benefits to the whole population of technical innovations (on metros, trams and buses) to such an extent that they were in danger of losing the specific issue of disability altogether behind more global concerns (aging, comfort). They evaluated experiences in France and abroad and were quick to draw negative comparisons, stigmatising French "slowness" and pushing the French transportation sector to move in the required direction. Most of all, they played a part in policy development by becoming professionals capable of training and advising technical staff responsible for facilities, and combining to become partners to the key players in the transportation, planning and housing sectors.

The objective of APF activists in their action to improve accessibility was not only to provide current facilities but also to establish principles for future facilities. These principles were not merely technical standards. They also had an ethical and political dimension. They were at once a “moral” reference, a practical model and a "preparedness to act." They constituted a constraining influence on all those involved in planning public facilities. By pushing the rules, the activists also sought to change social rules[iii], which define what constitutes "good" and "bad" facilities. This made them the 'moral entrepreneurs' described by Becker. He gives the following definition:

> “Rules are the product of the initiative of certain individuals, and we can consider those taking this initiative as moral entrepreneurs. The prototype of the person who creates rules [but not the only type, as we will see], is the individual who undertakes a crusade to reform customs. He is concerned about the content of laws. Existing laws are unsatisfactory to him because one form or another of the evil, which he finds profoundly shocking, still persists. He believes that the world is not set right until rules have been introduced to rectify this” (1985, p. 171).

Post 1996: New Integrated Solutions Become the Rule

During the second period, the paradigm conveyed by APF and a number of other agencies had spread, and from 1996, accessibility guided by this new paradigm was in its implementation phase. The third period was characterised by the large-scale application of

integrated accessibility, despite the fact that a few traces of old attitudes remained. However, the associations continued to demand even greater equality of treatment.

Integrated Accessibility Facilitated by Systematic Consultation

From 1994, when the first French low-floor buses (GX317) came onto the market, more and more networks were buying low-floor buses. This continued the following year when the Agora, RVI's accessible bus, came onto the market contributing to the collapse and end of sales of the R312. At the same time, transit companies were finding low-level floors still did not meet the accessibility needs of wheelchair users, that it was important for the optional fold-out ramps to be added, and that bus stops also needed to be adapted. In 1998, RATP decided to include the ramps in all their specifications for new buses; they also wrote a guide to making transportation accessible and drew up bus stop adaptation procedures in association with local authorities responsible for highways. So as not to discourage the bus companies, a representative of APF explained the gradual nature of the demands: "You already have low-floor buses; now we can talk about accessibility" (Personal communication, APF manager 2004/04/23).

The dialogue was facilitated by the publication in 1996 of LAURE (*Loi sur l'Air et l'Utilisation Rationelle de l'Energie*, the Air and Rational Use of Energy Act), which made it compulsory for major metropolitan areas to prepare Urban Transit Plans (PDUs), extending the transportation theme to cover all routes and introducing local consultation procedures. An evaluation by CERTU (2002) shows that consultation took on different forms in different metropolitan areas, from information alone to the joint planning of projects. Institutionally, it had been fairly major (partnerships between those involved in the transportation sector, but also with local councils and socio-economic players) as far as dialogue with the population was concerned, and it had been conducted in an exhaustive manner, with focus on the associations rather than with the population as a whole (compulsory public surveys, neighbourhood meetings, working committees, information displays). In 2000, the Solidarity and Urban Renewal Act (SRU) on town planning revived the process. Activists from the departmental branches of APF became involved in these new forums for dialogue. Generally, they already knew some of their interlocutors from having worked with them on the departmental safety and accessibility committees. The work carried out within these consultation groups gave impetus to the total accessibility approach to cities, covering highways, buildings, transportation, shops. The example of the Ile de France PDU is a good illustration. For each bus route selected in the PDU, regular meetings were held with, among others, representatives from APF. At the same time, the city of Paris had set up working groups for each disability, which included representatives from associations, to prepare planning guidelines for traffic areas, to become applicable in 2002. RATP did the same, introducing a consultation group in 2001 that included representatives of associations to advise on and test the company's various accessibility projects. Participants in these forums for dialogue and exchange were now thinking in terms of "architectural obstacles." Accommodating accessibility was a positive experience, as many of the comments gathered show: "It's useful," "We're fulfilling our public service remit," "It's natural"… (Personal communication, Poitiers's and RAPT's engineers, managers and politics, 2003-2004).

Some engineers were not slow to use accessibility arguments to get plans passed by local residents. Associations saw the value of getting organised and grouping together to improve their

effectiveness in local negotiations by having clear, shared objectives. In the Ile de France region, APF created the post of regional coordinator, a single point of contact for regional companies such as SNCF and RATP (instead of having one contact per department). Elsewhere, some associations got together in departmental or regional collectives, on APF's initiative, to promote accessibility. So, buoyed by consultation, the tendency was for integrated accessibility designed for everyone on all modes of transportation (bus, rail and tram) to become generalised. Yet a few traces of the old paradigm persisted, evident in hesitancy or reluctance to act.

Traces of the Old Paradigm Persist

Despite the deployment of the new type of accessibility, several examples illustrate the persistence of the old view of disability. The first is provided by the models of lift installed during the 1990s by RATP. These were self-service lifts, but they were designed for moderate use (only by wheelchair users) and proved to be under-dimensioned for the large number of people actually using them. The second concerns the type of audible announcements to be given on Metro platforms. Until the middle of 2004, RATP's "accessibility" and "Metro" departments were hesitating between on-demand and automatic announcements, opting finally for the latter because on-demand announcements would have meant some effort on the part of the staff concerned (with information) to reach a box to trigger the announcement. The restriction on the use of equipment is another example of the persistence of the old view. Bus ramps are still reserved only for wheelchair users; they are not used for pushchairs, which have to go through the front door to validate their ticket. Limitation of the use of wider motorised gates on ticket control lines at stations was also under discussion until 2004. RATP feared these facilities could be "dens of fraud," enabling several people to go through at once. It wanted to limit their use only to those requesting it in advance, but this came up against a number of operational problems (what do people changing trains do?) and opposition from APF.

The new paradigm guiding accessibility (and related solutions) is based on first equipment attempts stemming from the 1975 Act. IT is gradually replacing it as individuals slowly assimilate information about the situation and the resources they have to deal with it. This explains how accessibility policy has shifted, changed at the edges in accordance with Charles Lindblom's theory (1959) and Brian Quinn's work on incrementalism (1980). Accessibility policy continues to evolve, as do APF's demands.

Increasing Demands

As accessibility evolves on many bus and metro services, APF is also evolving its demands. It is now asking for high quality integrated accessibility, judged on the basis of the availability and reliability of facilities, and for this to cover all travel. But networks are still not capable of providing a quality service, either because of financial problems (under-dimensioned lifts that still have some years of service to go, vehicle fleet costs to recoup), or because of technical problems, particularly on old networks. These problems did not escape the notice of representatives in the Senate in October 2004, who refused to set a date by which all public buildings had to comply with accessibility standards. In the end, the final version of the Act passed on 18 January 2005 gives a 10-year deadline with the potential for exceptions to be made in exceptional circumstances.

But the moral entrepreneurs are continuing their efforts to influence the paradigm by approaching it from the point of view of human rights and non-discrimination. The mismatch in the concepts of accessibility held by the different stakeholders (transit companies and associations) is apparent from their annual reports. For example, when RATP's accessibility task force gave a figure for the number of accessible bus services it runs, APF's Paris branch found far fewer and the Association's headquarters asserted that there were none at all. For RATP, accessibility is limited to what falls within the scope of its responsibility, that is, equipping the service with ramped buses and adapting bus stops in association with the agencies responsible for highways (local councils, departments and central government). The departmental branch of APF takes account of facilities over a much wider radius (routes) and in particular evaluates the way accessibility works (whether the person can use the bus). The accessibility department at APF's headquarters believes that accessibility will only truly exist when wheelchair users can use buses under exactly the same conditions as the able-bodied. This has led to demands for the space reserved within the bus to be doubled and for access through the front door like all other passengers (a frequent operating condition on networks including that of RATP). For them, accessibility is not about whether someone can make a journey (fairness) but about how they can do it (equality). The right to travel can therefore mean different things to different people.

In the 1970s, the Socialist Party saw fairness as the provision of transportation for everyone (using different solutions, school buses, scheduled services or minibuses). Nowadays, APF sees fairness as equal treatment, the same service for everyone, as if differences did not exist. One representative of APF stated: "We do not want to be different from other people; we want to be offered the same service as everyone. Integration is about having the same type of service as that given to the able-bodied." (Personal communication, local APF managers, 2003/04/23). An appropriate way of expressing this would be "we are all the same."

Conclusion

Accessibility in France is now designed and planned from an environmental standpoint despite still overt reluctance. This way of tackling the issue has become the only way of approaching it for all stakeholders; it has become a social rule, in the sense that Becker was referring to when he wrote, "Social rules define situations and the types of behaviour appropriate to them: some actions are prescribed (what is ‘good’) and others are prohibited (what is ‘bad’)" (1985, p. 25). Accessibility, as defined following APF's action, has a philosophical, and ethical dimension. It is a moral reference and a practical model translating into integrated solutions. The study of the paradigm of public policy “makes it possible to account for an ongoing reinterpretation of the world, influencing political rhetoric and reconstructing institutional standards” (Jobert, 1995, pp. 23-24). Influencing the disability paradigm and creating the accessibility paradigm was not devoid of tension and did not occur overnight. Changes have been slow and are yet incomplete. The associations of the disabled are the stakeholders promoting the move to an environmental approach. APF is undertaking a moral enterprise, as defined by Becker. It is imposing a new perception grid of reality. The changes over thirty years have translated into facilities that have been designed differently in the field. At the beginning, the facilities were more specialized and specific to target publics whereas for the past few years they tend to be integrated into the space and available to all. The accessibility to the public transportation networks is now seen as indispensable and complementary to special

transportation solutions. Other facts testify to the State's vindication of the moral enterprise, as can be seen in the publication of various laws promoting accessibility for instance. APF is committed to legislative work to ensure that its outlook prevails even if it is not entirely successful each time, as can be seen in the latest draft of the amended law of 1975, of January 18, 2005 that still states that special transportation is a remedy to the inaccessibility of public transportation. However, APF demands continue to move toward a demand for greater quality and, above all, equality between those considered able and those considered disabled.

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Glossary:

APF: Association des Paralysés de France
CAP: Poitiers Metropolitan area
CERTU: transportation and planning study and research centre
CIH: International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)
Colitrah: Liaison Committee for Disabled Transportation (forerunner of Coliac)
Coliac: Liaison Committee for Accessibility (replacing Colitrah)
GIHP: Physically Disabled Inclusion Group
LAURE: Air and Rational Use of Energy Act
WHO: World Health Organization
PDU: Urban Transit Plan
PMR: Person with reduced mobility
RATP: Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens
RVI: Renault Véhicule Industriel
STP: Société des Transports Poitevins
UITP: International Union of Public Transportation
UTP: Union des Transporteurs Publics

Resources

Access Able Travel Source, www.access-able.com

Accessible San Diego, www.accessandiego.org

Adaptive Environments, www.adaptenv.org

APRODDIS--Asociación Pro Desarrollo de la Persona con Discapacidad, www.aproddis.org

Apumayo Expediciones, www.apumayo.com

Argentina Tourism for All Foundation, www.turismoparatodos.org.ar

Chalfont Lines, www.chalfont-line.co.uk

Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, www.dubaitourism.co.ae

Epic Enabled, www.epic-enabled.com

Flying Wheels Travel, www.flyingwheelstravel.com

Government of Canada "Persons with Disabilities Online," www.pwd-online.ca

The Guided Tour, www.guidedtour.com

Ibero-American Congress on Tourism for People with Disabilities: Consumer Market for Tourism without Barriers, www.turismosembarreiras.com.br

Independent Living Institute, www.independentliving.org

International Air Transport Association, www.iata.org

Kéroul, www.keroul.qc.ca

MIUSA-Mobility International USA, www.miusa.org

National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled Persons, www.ncpedp.org

Nautilus Tours & Cruises Ltd., www.nautilustours.com

Nuevo Mundo Viajes, www.gruponuevomundo.com.pe

Open Doors Organization, www.opendoorsnfp.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America, www.pva.org

PromPerú, www.peruonline.net

RADAR—Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, www.radar.org.uk

SATH—Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality, www.sath.org

Sundial Special Vacations, www.sundialtour.com

Tourism for All UK, www.tourismforall.org.uk

US Access Board, www.access-board.gov

US Department of Justice “ADA Home Page”, www.ada.gov

Wilderness Inquiry, www.wildernessinquiry.org

World Tourism Organization, www.world-tourism.org

[i] This thesis research occurred with participative observation over a period of 3 years at the Accessibility Department of RATP. The research was supported by more than sixty confidential interviews with people involved in accessibility (for example, employees of public transportation companies and urban communities, associations, ministers and consultants) and by reading academic and specialized magazines , such as RATP magazines and those of APF and the city of Poitiers.

[ii] Until the late eighties, the French State had representatives on the RATP Board of Directors.

[iii] We have taken up and followed the distinction put forward by the translators of *Outsiders*, who add the following clarification to Becker's definition of "social norms": "*Here, as almost always in Outsiders, Becker uses the term 'rule'". We have translated this term by "norme" when it means all of these varied forms, or when it means more specifically, informal rule that influence the behaviour and judgements of those who smoke marijuana or of jazz musicians. In other context, particularly the examples borrowed from the administrative and legal domains, we also use the terms "rule", "regulation" and "law"* (Becker, 1985, p. 26).