

***“Housing First and the City:  
How do innovative projects affect local policies and urban space?”***

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Paper presented at the RC21 International Conference on “The Ideal City: between myth and reality. Representations, policies, contradictions and challenges for tomorrow's urban life” Urbino (Italy) 27-29 August 2015. <http://www.rc21.org/en/conferences/urbino2015/>

## **ABSTRACT**

Homelessness is a typically urban phenomenon, and it is usually managed at the local level, even when supra-local strategies, policies and funding are present. This tendency towards localization on the one hand can facilitate the emergence of innovative practices and a better adaptation of policies to local conditions, problems and resources; on the other hand, it can hinder the processes of upscaling of social innovation and reinforce place-based differences. Despite the label, the traditional social intervention in favour of “home-less” people gives a priority to the social and health support rather than to the need of a house. It is based on the so-called staircase model, whose underpinning logic is that homeless people are expected to qualify for housing after having proved to be ready for it. For this reason they are placed in different forms of shelters and other collective, temporary and supervised accommodations.

The Housing First approach overturns this logic and considers housing stability as the prerequisite to promote health and mental well-being, support social inclusion and participation and facilitate the access to labour market. A private stable accommodation replaces collective temporary shelters, thus reducing the risk of concentration of poverty and problems.

Housing First model has therefore a potentially high impact on an “ideal city” where everyone can find an adequate housing solution, and where housing stability is a prime instrument for social inclusion and participation. It was created in New York in 1992 and since then it is spreading to the rest of America and in Europe, adapted on the basis of different national and local conditions and policy traditions, also because of its cost-effectiveness.

Analysing two projects inspired to the Housing First model in Bologna (Italy) and Stockholm (Sweden), through qualitative case-studies conducted within the European research project “ImPRovE: Poverty, Social Policy and Innovation”, we aim to highlight how they interact with the local context and policies, and how they deal with the issue of mainstreaming social innovation.

Comparing the two case-studies, the paper aims at answering to the following questions:

- How and why a local practice conceived in the United States has transformed into an international model and how is it implemented in two different European cities?
  - What are the conditions and factors that can foster or hinder the process of upscaling and/or mainstreaming of local social innovation?
  - How does the urban context influence and/or become an issue within the two projects?
- What is the relationship between Housing First and the spatial and urban dimension?

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## Introduction

The aim of the paper is to describe the relationship between socially innovative practices and local welfare policies, with particular reference to the urban contexts. To better focus these processes we have isolated an (even very complex) urban phenomenon, homelessness, and a new practice that in the recent years is spreading over many European cities to tackle it, which is going under the label “Housing First”. In the first part of the paper we provide a definition of social innovation within the framework of the transformation of the European welfare states, with particular reference to the territorial reorganisation of welfare policies. We then outline a short history of the Housing First model and of its diffusion from the United States to Europe, and explain to what extent Housing First can be considered as an innovative approach in the design and provision of services to homeless people. Finally, we posit some connections between Housing First practices and the spatial, and especially urban dimension.

In the second part, we focus on two case studies of Housing First inspired projects in Bologna (Italy) and Stockholm (Sweden). Firstly, we provide a framework for the field research, presenting the main characteristics of the initiatives and of the local contexts, as regards homelessness and welfare policies. Secondly, the two cases are analysed in deep, describing how they relate and interact with 1) the original Housing First model, 2) the local welfare policies and practices, 3) the spatial dimension and the urban context and 4) the definition of social innovation. Thirdly, a comparative paragraph sums up the main results of the field research. We conclude with some general reflections on the analysed topic, considering the contribution of the case studies to the discussion on homelessness and Housing First, on social innovation and territorial reorganisation of welfare policies and on the relationship between Housing First and urban space.

## 1. Social innovation and territorial reorganisation of welfare policies

A shared definition of social innovation is still far from reaching, despite the growing interest shown by policymakers, researchers and socio-economic operators around the world. For a comprehensive review of the definitions in use we refer to The Young Foundation (2012). In the definition adopted in this paper social innovation refers to locally embedded practices, actions and policies that help individuals and social groups to satisfy basic social needs for which they find no adequate solution in the macro-level welfare policies or the private market. It does so through processes of social learning, collective action and awareness raising to promote the structural transformation of social relations. Following this definition social innovation has three main dimensions: a) the satisfaction of basic social needs (content dimension); b) the transformation of social relations (process dimension); c) empowerment and socio-political capability (linking the process and content dimension) (Gerometta, Häußermann and Longo, 2005; Moulaert *et al.*, 2005; Oosterlynck *et al.*, 2013a). In addition to the satisfaction of unmet social needs, social innovation should also work to transform social relations. This involves breaking through and reorganising existing societal institutions that prevent people from satisfying their basic needs (Oosterlynck *et al.*, 2013a) and being driven by processes of social learning, awareness raising and collective action (Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2008). The structural transformation of societal institutions is a crucial aim of social innovation; hence the promotion of participation, the establishment of more inclusive organisational procedures and the development of the capacity for collective action are concerns of socially innovative practices (Moulaert *et al.*, 2005; Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2008). In this definition social innovation is considered as a locally and institutionally embedded practice (Fontan and Klein, 2004; Moulaert, 2009), strictly connected with the local context where it develops. Social needs and, consequently, possible solutions differ on the basis of local socio-economic and institutional conditions. Social relations too are structured at the micro-level and their transformation should be defined starting from specific local configurations. At the same time, social innovation is also connected with macro-level institutional arrangements and its rising as a label to be used in research and practice is actually related with macro-level transformations. The interest for social innovation emerged indeed in the late 1970s within the framework of the crisis and transformation of the Western welfare state, the transition from the Fordist to the knowledge-based economy, the localisation of welfare policies, the marketisation and subsidiarisation of social services and the emergence of new social risks, especially in the urban neighbourhoods (Oosterlynck *et al.*, 2013b). The search for new assets, processes and practices became a priority for many actors: local public administrations, private organisations, civil society, social movements and local communities in general. These overall processes regard all Europe, although they obviously affect in a very diversified way different contexts. Oosterlynck *et al.* (2013b) disentangle the relationship among welfare regimes, territorial reorganisation, governance assets and social innovation, proposing a hypothesis on the capacity of innovation of each welfare model, as described in table 1.

**Table 1.** Welfare, governance models and territorial organization

<b>Welfare models</b>	<b>Geographical Zones</b>	<b>Territorial organization</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Relationships State/Third Sector</b>	<b>Capacity of Innovation</b>
<b>Universalistic</b>	North of Europe	Local autonomy centrally framed	Managerial and participative mixed	Pervasive role of the State	High capacity of innovation
<b>Corporatist-conservative</b>	Continental Europe	Regionally /Centrally framed	Corporatist	Active subsidiarity	Later but substantial innovation
<b>Liberal</b>	Anglo-Saxon Countries	Centrally framed	Pluralist and corporative mixed	Market model and residual role of the State	Proactive deregulation
<b>Familistic</b>	South of Europe	Regionally framed	Populist and clientelistic mixed	Passive subsidiarity	Fragmented innovation
<b>Transitional</b>	Central and Eastern Europe	Transitional mixed	Highly diversified – difficult to define	Highly diversified – difficult to define	Highly diversified – difficult to define

Source: Oosterlyncx et al., 2013b

The identification of the welfare models derives directly from the traditional comparative research on welfare states (Esping Andersen 1990, 1999; Ferrera, 1996; Kazepov, 2010), resulting in a typology which includes five ideal types: a) a *Scandinavian Social-democratic* regime, characterised by a high degree of de-commodification, inclusive universal benefits, high taxation and redistribution, strong role of the State; b) a *Continental European Conservative* regime, characterised by varying degrees of de-commodification, a strong corporatist organisation of insurance scheme and a strong role of the family as service provider; c) an *Anglo-Saxon Liberal* regime, characterised by a low degree of de-commodification, residual and means-tested benefits and a wide room for market actors; d) a *Mediterranean and Familistic* model, characterised by a low distributive capacity, a preference for monetary benefits over in-kind services, high fragmentation and a strong role of the family; e) a *Transitional* model including Central and Eastern European Countries, with a very heterogeneous situation. The ongoing territorial reorganisation of welfare systems has been analysed by Kazepov (2010), drawing on literature on rescaling and multi-level governance. The proposed typology associates different characteristics to the five models of welfare. The systems can be *centrally framed*, when social measures are mainly managed homogeneously throughout the country, thus avoiding excessive territorial differentiation; *regionally framed*, where legislative competences on welfare policies mainly belong to regions; *local autonomy*, when welfare policies are mainly managed and funded at the municipal level. These connotations can combine in different ways, giving rise to *local autonomy centrally framed* systems (like the Social democratic one), which combine a high degree of autonomy for the

municipalities with a nationally defined regulatory context, *regionally framed* systems with the presence of mechanisms of equalisation (like in some Corporatist countries) or without equalisation, like the Familistic one, thus characterised by high levels of fragmentation and diversification. Welfare systems are also interested by the emergence of new governance models, with the involvement of new actors in the design, implementation and funding of welfare policies and services. Drawing on Di Gaetano and Strom (2003), Oosterlinck *et al.* (2013b) identify five ideal types of governance styles: *clientelistic*, characterised by particularistic exchange relationships; *corporatist*, dominated by negotiation and compromise among different interest groups; *managerial*, characterised by contractual relations; *pluralist*, where many different interests are in competition; *populist*, where the emphasis is on participation and democratic processes. Kazepov (2010) refers to the specific field of social policy and describes the relationships between the State and the third sector in different contexts: a) In the Universalistic welfare model it is characterised by a *pervasive role of the State* with a limited, but generously funded, role of the third sector; b) in the Corporatist model by *active subsidiarity*, with a strong and publicly supported role of the third sector; c) in the Liberal model by a *market model*, with a residual role of the state; d) in the Familistic model by *passive subsidiarity*, with a strong but poorly supported role of third sector and families; e) in the Transitional model by a *high degree of diversification*.

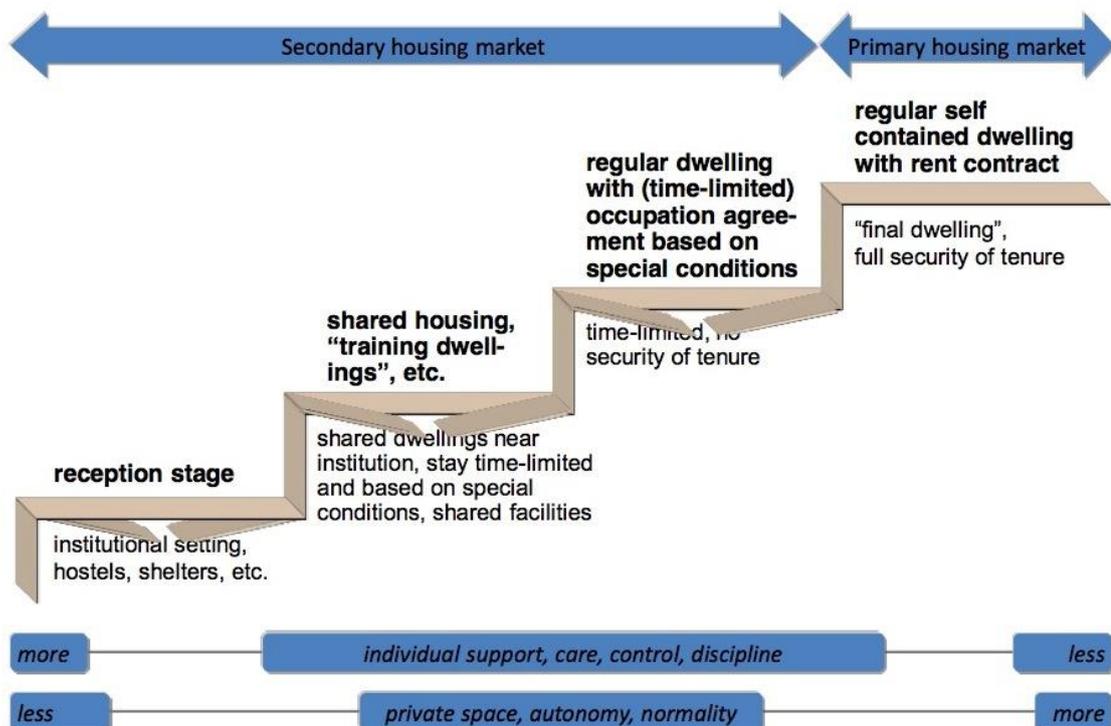
The new context of welfare policies is thus characterised, amongst other processes, by territorial reorganisation, subsidiarisation and multi-level governance. Social innovation lies in the middle of all these processes, being both an outcome and a driver of change. From one side socially innovative practices can profit from a decreased presence of the central State, a stricter link with local public institutions, an enlarged space given to new actors. From the other side they often suffer from lack of support and coordination (traditionally provided by the central State), and in general from a frail system that surrounds them. This frame is obviously diversified around Europe and table 1 provides a hypothesis about the capacity of innovation of the different welfare models. Given the framework described above, Scandinavian Countries should present a high capacity of innovation, thanks to a balanced mix of local autonomy, central coordination and support from the State; Countries belonging to the Corporatist model could be rather slow, albeit effective, in promoting innovation, due to their heavy institutional traditions; Anglo-Saxon Countries are supposed to be proactive towards innovation, especially through a high degree of deregulation; Mediterranean Countries are considered as a particularly frail system for hosting innovation, because of fragmentation, weak public support and clientelism. Finally, Eastern Countries present a highly diversified situation, difficult to be labelled. These hypotheses are not about social innovation *per se*, but about the capacity of different institutional contexts to create a favourable environment for innovation, or not. Social innovation remains essentially a practice-led field (The Young Foundation, 2012) and a locally embedded practice. This paper aims to disentangle the relationship between the two levels (practices and contexts), through a discussion about a specific socially innovative practice: Housing First.

## 2. Housing First: a socially innovative practice?

Referring to the background described in the first chapter, the Housing First model represents an interesting case for many reasons: it was developed in New York City and then undergone a process of upscaling in the United States, translation into a new context (Europe) and transfer among different European cities. The various local practices inspired by the original model present some common features, but also many differences depending on the local needs and institutional conditions, as regards different aspects: governance coalitions and styles, funding, target group, specific activities, empowerment and participation (Atherton and McNaughton, 2008; Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Pleace, 2011; Pleace and Bretherton, 2013).

Housing First (HF henceforth) is a model of intervention on homelessness initially developed in New York City in 1992, which introduces radical changes in the way services to homeless people are usually delivered. Housing is not considered anymore as the final step of a long pathway of recovery, but as a human right that must be provided unconditionally to the beneficiaries. Its origins date back to the closure of the long-stay psychiatric hospitals in the United States during the 1950s and the 1960s (Pleace, 2011). Initial resettlement of patients was provided through the so-called “staircase model”, that has then diffused to all services to homeless people. In the staircase model the services are organized like a ladder, comprising a number of steps for the homeless to climb up, as described in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Staircase model



Source: Busch-Geertsema 2013.

Each step is associated to a type of accommodation, such as night shelters, temporary accommodation, shared training flats, transitional flats etc. When the user reaches successfully the top of the staircase he/she can access to a regular house with full tenancy rights, but in any case this is not an explicit purpose: the focus is on recovery, not on housing. During this ascent homeless people are supposed to overcome different kind of problems, related i.e. to mental illness, substance abuse and indebtedness, being driven and monitored by social workers. At each step the quality of life, as regards accommodation, privacy and autonomy, increases as a sort of reward for good behaviour, while the degree of control decreases. This model has proved to be rather problematic, since many people end in being trapped in a step, or cyclically pushed down to the ground floor, often a night shelter, where they spend much of their life. By the 1980s there was enough evidence that the approach was not working well (Pleace, 2011). A new service model, called “supported housing”, emerged, that provided patients of the ex long-stay psychiatric hospitals with an ordinary housing where they could leave independently with the help of a more flexible social support. This new approach seemed to deliver better outcomes, and in 1992 the psychiatrist Sam Tsemberis transferred it to the services to homeless people, founding the organisation Pathways to Housing in New York, and calling the approach “Pathways Housing First” (*ibidem*). The original HF approach is grounded on some operating principles: housing as a basic human right, a commitment to working with users as long as they need, the separation of housing from mental health and drug/alcohol services, consumer choice and self-determination, recovery orientation, a harm reduction approach (Tsemberis, 2010). It is not addressed to all forms of homelessness, but to chronically homeless people that present mental illness and, eventually, also substance abuse. This choice was explicitly done to meet specific welfare benefits that could help fund the service (*ibidem*). Users are placed into furnished apartments provided, in the case of Pathways to Housing, via the private rented sector. To promote housing stability, which is the main goal of HF, users should subscribe a direct contract with landlords, in order to enjoy full tenancy rights. However, landlords are often unwilling to commit directly with HF’s users, and Pathways to Housing mediates signing the contract and then subletting the apartment to the final user. In any case, housing is provided without any requirement for compliance with psychiatric treatment or for abstinence from drugs or alcohol. The only two conditions that users must accept are a weekly visit from a Pathways to Housing social worker, and the payment of 30% of their monthly income, if present, towards rent (*ibidem*).

The social support is provided separately from housing and it follows the methodology of the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), a method of intervention on mental illness developed in 1970s. Its aim is to reduce risks of relapse and rehospitalisation, transferring in the territorial community both the staff and the treatment usually proposed within structures. In the HF original model the support is delivered by an interdisciplinary team including a psychiatrist, a health worker, a family specialist, a drug and alcohol worker and an employment specialist. It is available 24 hours 7 days, and the services should be delivered as much as possible in the private environment of the user: the dwelling, the neighbourhood and, in case, the workplace. A very important role is played by the case manager, who coordinates the professional team, is the first referent for the user, and mediates with the landlords and with services. The specific content of the support can refer to: housing maintenance, health assistance, job search, spare

time activities, family relations, personal hygiene, life styles. The first aim is harm reduction, although HF has a general, but soft, recovery orientation approach. In any case the cornerstone is free choice of the users: which services to use and their extent are decided by them.

The Housing First model has been mainstreamed in the United States thanks to the financial support of the national government. The first pilots were financed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, through two dedicated programs: the Supportive Housing Program and the Shelter Plus Care Program. More recently the Rapid Re-Housing Program got funds for 25 million dollars in 2008, and the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program of 2009 included investments of 12.5 million dollars for the implementation of HF inspired initiatives addressed to 35,000 homeless people in the United States (Bergamaschi and Cipria, 2013). Thanks to these national public investments, many US cities now offer a HF inspired service.

In the recent years, the new approach has undergone a process of translation, that is, it has been used as a model for change in a new context, Europe. The reasons of this horizontal diffusion from United States to Europe and among European cities are mainly two: firstly the model implemented by Pathways to Housing has shown much better outcomes than the staircase model, at least in terms of housing retention (Pleace, 2008; Atherton and McNaughton, 2008; Pearson et al., 2009; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010). Secondly, HF has been promoted as a cost-effective practice, thus attracting the attention of policymakers. The latter is yet a contested point: some authors believe that it is more the result of an effective marketing strategy of Pathways to Housing (Rosenheck, 2010; Stanhope and Dunn, 2011), and that savings are possible but only in the long term and with huge initial investments (Bergamaschi and Cipria, 2013). However, drawing on evidence HF appears as a scalable model that suits to different contexts, both where homelessness services are very coordinated, well-funded and comprehensive and where they are just at a basic level (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). Together with its diffusion the concept of HF has lost “fidelity” (*ibidem*) and a wide range of services that only partially reflect the original approach call themselves Housing First, both in America and in Europe. In particular, European variations of the HF model introduced new meanings and challenges. Many European cities have implemented HF inspired services and projects, managed by different governance coalitions, combining in different forms local public administrations, public and private housing companies, foundations, universities, third sector organizations, social movements. Some of these services show a high degree of fidelity to the original model of Pathways to Housing, others not, referring to a wider definition of homelessness elaborated by the Feantsa<sup>1</sup>. The definition, called Ethos<sup>2</sup>, considers homelessness as the outcome of the combination of structural factors (mainly related to economic processes and labour market configurations); institutional factors (welfare and housing arrangements); relational factors (family structure, social isolation); personal factors (gender, ethnicity, disability, mental illness). Four conceptual categories of homeless people emerge from this analysis: roofless people (living rough or in emergency accommodation);

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<sup>1</sup> Fédération Européenne des Associations Nationales Travaillant avec le Sans-Abri – European Federation of National Organizations working with the Homeless.

<sup>2</sup> The European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, available at <http://goo.gl/PXhZ2p>.

houseless people (living in temporary accommodation or in targeted shelters); insecure housing (people living temporarily with family or friends, under threat of eviction or in illegal occupation); inadequate housing (people living in non-conventional structures, in unfit housing or in extreme overcrowding). Such a wide conception of homelessness does not find adequate responses in the original HF model, which was designed for a specific target group, considering personal and relational factors. Some HF inspired European services try to consider also the structural and institutional factors, and intend HF as a possible way to tackle structural housing vulnerability. Access to affordable housing for vulnerable groups is a major concern throughout Europe, and this situation influence the way HF inspired services are conceived and implemented. As a consequence of all these conceptual and practical processes of redefinition of the original model, a debate is open on what can be actually considered as HF, and what not. A rather shared view is to consider as Housing First services that present all the basic principles of the original model of Pathways to Housing. Other services that present some features, but provide low intensity social support or addresses to different group of homeless people, should be defined as “Housing-led services” (ECCH, 2011).

Coming to the connections between HF and social innovation as defined in the first chapter, the former can be considered as a socially innovative practice as far as the content dimension is concerned, having introduced a new service in contexts that were traditionally adopting the staircase model. The extent to which it is also a process innovation highly depends on each different project, its governance style and its capacity of involvement of users into the decision-making processes. Finally, the empowerment dimension is the most contested, at least as regards the capacity of HF approach to promote collective action and socio-political resources. Many projects finds it difficult to transfer power and agency to the marginalised group to whom they are addressed, although the unconditioned housing autonomy is *per se* an innovative empowering instrument, which can help breaking with the previous condition of homeless person (mainly considered as ill and/or deviant), and regaining the status of social actor with rights and entitlements (Bergamaschi and Cipria, 2013). Nevertheless, given its historical path and territorial heterogeneity, the question whether HF as a model should be considered as socially innovative or not is rather senseless. As described in chapter one, social innovation is indeed a locally embedded practice, and each HF service and project should be analysed in relationship with the local policies and the local social relations.

### 3. Housing First and the urban context: relationships and challenges

Housing First has developed as a urban service and, to the extent it can be considered as socially innovative, as a urban social innovation. It was born in New York City and, even though using also national funds, it has always been implemented in cities, both in the United States and in Europe. The main aspects connecting HF and the city can be listed as follows:

- Homelessness is a typical urban phenomenon, whose specific form depends on different local factors: demographic features, structure of the housing market, housing and urban policy, welfare policy, local economy (Edgar *et al.*, 2002).

- As described in the first chapter, social innovation is a locally embedded practice whose growing importance is also related to the ongoing processes of territorial reorganisation of welfare policies. A tendency towards decentralisation and subsidiarisation is occurring in all Europe and, as a consequence, local public and private actors have more power and responsibility in the design and implementation of welfare policies. Cities are important actors of these transformations. They are increasingly competing at a global scale to attract human and economic resources and social innovation can represent a driver for the improvement of a city's image and position. Furthermore they usually host skills, resources, technologies and infrastructures, which can be decisive in the creation of a favourable environment for social innovation. Finally, they are beneficiaries of specific funds addressed to the implementation of innovative urban programs (e.g. smart cities and urban regeneration programs). For these reasons social innovation finds a particularly supportive habitat within cities and often develops within the spatial and social dimension of the urban neighbourhood, both as a unit of observation and as a unit of intervention (Oosterlynck *et al.*, 2013).
  
- Social innovation is also considered to be a good point of view on urban institutional dynamics, to see which setting of actors participates in urban governance arrangements, and with which shared norms and values (Gerometta *et al.*, 2005). Places are shaped within these institutional alliances, and new urban practices can reveal to what extent social innovation breaks these coalitions, creating new links and relations or, otherwise, tends to reproduce them. In the case of HF, actors managing night shelters and other types of accommodation related to the staircase model often react in a conservative way to the possibility of dismantling these traditional urban social services for homeless people in favour of scattered-site stable housing promoted by the HF model.
  
- Many European cities are suffering from housing shortage, especially in the most economically attractive regions: UK (in particular London), the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Utrecht, The Hague), Sweden (Stockholm, Goteborg, Malmo), Germany (Munich, Hamburg) (Pittini *et al.*, 2015). At the same time the share of social housing is dropping, though not everywhere, and the waiting lists are becoming longer (*Ibid.*). How to find apartments for HF services is thus a pivotal question. Some projects use a quota of the social rented dwellings (decreasing the availability for other vulnerable groups), others search for apartments in the private market, depending on the local structural and institutional conditions. In any case, finding apartments available for this kind of intervention represents a challenge for the HF services, especially when they grow up in numbers (that would be the goal of all of them).
  
- The location of the apartments is another sensitive issue. The vast majority of HF services (included our two case studies) house their users in scattered-site single or double apartments, although a form of Communal Housing First does exist, where users are lodged in self-contained apartments within a cluster of congregate housing (Pleace and

Bretherton, 2013). The *rationale* of Scattered Housing First (*Ibid.*) is to spread homeless people in different neighbourhoods, to resettle them in new contexts not marked by stigma.

The spatial distribution of the apartments (and, as a consequence, of users) has therefore an impact on the users' experience. The relationship between the person and the space plays a role in his/her pathway towards autonomy and social inclusion. The quantity and quality of the social relations that a user can experience is embedded in the specific social structure where he/she is placed, which directly affects his/her experience in terms of identity, self-esteem, social networks, labour market opportunities. Should the social support explicitly provide activities of social inclusion in the specific local community where the user is housed? Should the relationship with people, services, resources and spaces be driven by social workers or other professionals? Housing stability, promoted by the HF approach, let emerge all these issues, which remain hidden in the staircase approach. A home is not only a physical building and a personal space, but its meaning and value is also connected with its location and is embedded in the social relations of the local community. This aspect is mentioned but not prioritised in the HF model and it usually does not receive a specific attention in the HF services around the world (Atherton and McNaughton, 2008; Busch-Geertsema, 2013; Pleace, 2011; Pleace and Bretherton, 2013, Tsemberis, 2000).

- HF has also a potential effect on the social composition of urban neighbourhoods. Especially if successfully scaled up and mainstreamed, it could bring to profound transformations in the provision of services to homeless people, especially to the ones with higher needs. The latter are frequent users of night shelters, homeless hostels and other similar forms of accommodation, which have a strong impact in the cities, and particularly in the neighbourhoods where they are located. Shifting to single apartments represents therefore a possible important change for urban landscapes and humanscapes, reducing places where poverty, substance abuse and mental illness are concentrated. Another possible spatial effect is the growth of socio-economic segregation in already deprived neighbourhoods, where apartments for HF users could tend to concentrate for reasons of cost-effectiveness. This would reinforce processes that are already in charge of being responsible for having exacerbated housing exclusion, like the expulsion of vulnerable groups from increasingly gentrified urban areas, often fostered by the implementation of EU-funded urban regeneration policies (Teller, 2012; Edgar *et al.*, 2002).

The establishment of links between urban transformation and social intervention, connecting spatial planning and social policy, is a typical feature of social innovation. As sketched above, the potential of HF in this sense is still under investigated and seldom utilised in the practice, at least on an intentional and structural basis. The analysis of the two case studies proposed in the following chapter represents an attempt to gain more insights on this issue.

## 4. The field research: aims, methods and findings

The field research concerns two initiatives inspired by the Housing First approach: *Tutti a casa* (All at home) in Bologna, Italy and *Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad* in Stockholm, Sweden. These case studies are fed with reflections, information and data collected within the European research project *ImPRovE: Poverty, Social Policy and Innovation*<sup>3</sup>, which includes a study on social innovation in the field of poverty and social exclusion. The research analysed 31 cases in Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Brazil, selected through a call for innovative initiatives and consultations with social policy experts in the different countries. Practices inspired by the HF model were studied in six European Countries. In this paper, we compare two of them, realised in Italy and Sweden, to highlight how they: 1) interact with the original model of Housing First, 2) influence and are influenced by the local welfare policies, 3) relate to the urban dimensions and 4) fit with our definition of social innovation.

The field research was conducted through qualitative methods<sup>4</sup> and the following actions: a desk analysis of reports, data and publications concerning the projects, institutional documents and programs, data and researches describing the local policies on homelessness and social housing; semi-structured interviews with stakeholders aimed to collect in depth descriptions of the initiatives, their genesis and potential, organization and network, and to let emerge the most relevant characteristics of the local contexts and social welfare policies influencing their rise and development; a focus group with stakeholders involved in the experience with different roles, meant to describe the relationship between the innovative potential of the initiatives and the local contexts.

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<sup>3</sup> See: [www.improve-research.eu](http://www.improve-research.eu).

<sup>4</sup> The case studies in Italy and Sweden (and Spain) were conducted by a team of researchers of the University of Urbino, led by Yuri Kazepov, within the *ImPRovE* research, between February and June 2014.

The case study on *Tutti a casa*, the Housing First experience in Bologna, was conducted through: - 4 qualitative interviews involving 6 people: a) the President of the association Piazza Grande; b) the two social workers of Piazza Grande coordinating the project; c) the responsible of Vulnerable Adults and Social Inclusion Office (Ufficio Adulti Vulnerabili e Inclusione Sociale) of Social Services Sector of the Municipality of Bologna and another referent of the office collaborating at the project; d) the referent of Bank Foundation Del Monte, financier of the project; - a focus group involving 7 referents: a) the two coordinators of the project, belonging to Piazza Grande; b) a social worker of the Social Cooperative La Strada di Piazza Grande, working on activation pathways; c) a social assistant and an educator of the Public Agency for Services to People ASP Città di Bologna; d) a social assistant of the Municipality of Bologna; e) a social worker of the Mobile Service for Homeless People (Unità di Strada) of Piazza Grande.

The case study on *Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad*, the Housing First experience realised in Stockholm, was conducted through: - 3 qualitative interviews involving the Project Manager of Housing First Stockholm, from the Research&Development Unit of the Social Affairs Division of the Municipality of Stockholm; the Method Developer of HFS, social worker at the Social Affairs Division of the Municipality of Stockholm; the Head of Security of Svenska Bostäder; - a focus group involving 5 participants: The Method Developer of HFS; a social worker of the local district Spångavägen-Tensta; a social worker of the local district Hässelby-Vällingbyvägen; two social workers of Stadsmission.

#### 4.1 Homelessness and the welfare policies in Bologna and Stockholm

The contexts where the two innovative experiences are developed are synthetically described in the following. This description aims at providing a background for the case studies and it is focussed on the main aspects influencing these initiatives' rising, working and developing.

*Bologna* – In 2012, homeless people are estimated to be 45,000 in Italy (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2012). They are living on the street and/or public shelters for about 2 years and a half on average. 28% of them have a job but cannot earn enough to rent a house: they work on average 13 days and earn 347 € per month. 62% lost a permanent job before becoming homeless and 60% are separated from spouses and/or children. 33.7% declare these have been the causes for their homelessness. About 40% of them are Italian, the majority are men (87%), under 45 years old (57.9%), and have a secondary lower school licence or less (about 66%). Rome and Milan host more than 70% of the estimated homeless. In Bologna, a medium-sized city in central Italy of about 378,000 inhabitants, they are 1,005 and more than 50% of them are immigrants.

Social welfare policies in Italy are regulated by the Regions, co-financed by the central State, Regions and Municipalities and implemented by the latter. The Municipality of Bologna has organised its welfare system through a central unit of coordination and six territorial social desks and services placed in the six city-districts. A public local agency coordinates the providers, which are mainly third sector organizations.

As regards the specific issue of accommodation, public shelters for adults (Italian and regular immigrants, 18-65 years old) in Bologna are classified in four typologies defined on the basis of requirements for access and time of permanence, linked with a gradual accomplishment of social and activation pathways, as in the staircase model. They are completely financed by public funds and managed by third sector organizations. They can ordinarily accommodate about 300 guests. During winter, about 250 beds are added to protect people from cold, without any criteria for access. The city offers many other services to poor households and homeless people: canteens and toilets, distribution of essential goods, health services for non-resident people and so on.

Italian housing policy is traditionally residual and mainly oriented towards home-ownership. Only 6% of households reside in social rented dwellings, which is an exceptionally small number compared to the European standards (Istat, 2013). In 2010, social rented houses (ERP) in the province of Bologna were 16,542 (Province of Bologna, 2012), but in the period 2007-2010, only 949 applications could be satisfied. The public supply is insufficient and the Province estimates the minimum deficit of houses in its territory between 20,500 and 27,000 units (*ibidem*).

The Housing Policy Sector of the Municipality provides measures to limit rent costs in the private market and manages the assignment of public social houses. In the Municipality of Bologna, the demands of support in this field (economic support for rent and/or access to public rented houses) were 13,098 in 2010 and concerned 24,493 people. In 2012, the list to have access to social houses contained 8,485 valid requests. Public lists to regulate the access to these provisions are based on economic and social criteria. Applicants must be in the

register of residents and accomplish a complicated procedure; both these conditions disadvantage homeless people. However this kind of measures are not considered as part of the policies to fight homelessness, even maybe at the end of a successful inclusion pathway, social assistants can propose this possibility and present a social evaluation to facilitate the access, if they consider it as a proper measure for the case. Obviously, as already explained, every citizen (homeless included) can present a demand for social housing without passing from the social services and can have access to the waiting list, if the established economic and social criteria are satisfied.

*Stockholm* - The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare reports about 30,800 homeless in the Country, considering people in different precarious accommodations going from acute homeless to inadequate or unsafe long-term conditions. 4,500 people are those in acute homelessness, thus really living on the street (NBHW, 2011). In Stockholm, the capital of Sweden with about 900,000 inhabitants, homeless people are 2,866. The Municipality of Stockholm classifies as homeless people living in institutions or shelters, without any accommodation arranged in case of discharge or with only the possibility to be hosted by friends, colleagues or acquaintances for a maximum period of 3 months (Stockholms Stad, 2014). Almost half of them are 46-64 years old (49%) and women are on average younger than men (23% are 20-29 years old compared with 12% of men). 58% are reported to have substance abuse problems (38% mainly alcohol-related, 39% mainly drug-related, 19% both). In the last years, people experiencing housing difficulties are increasingly young adults and families with children, especially immigrant newcomers (Källmen *et al.*, 2013).

In Sweden, social welfare policies are regulated at the national level and implemented at the municipal level. The traditional model of intervention on homelessness is based on the staircase logic and it is giving unsatisfying results: less than 10% of people become able to gain autonomous rented accommodations in one year (NBHBP, 2012), while in the trial period of the Housing First project this percentage is 17.1% (6 people on 35) (*ibidem*).

The provision of public housing is in charge of the municipalities. Each municipality owns a housing company, except for the City of Stockholm, which owns four companies. In 2011 a national law established that the public housing companies should act almost as private market actors, except for a residual stock of houses allocated to socially and economically excluded households. Among the consequences of this national political choice, 120,920 public dwellings were sold in Sweden from 2000 to 2010, and 41,990 of them where in Stockholm city (Andersson and Magnusson Turner, 2014).

Due to the remarkable role of the National Tenants Union, tenants' rights are particularly strong in Sweden, so that it is very difficult for a landlord to get rid of the tenants, except for two conditions: lack of payment of rent for three months or exceptional disturbances caused to the neighbours. Housing stability is therefore promoted within the regular housing market, both public and private. However, access to the regular market is turning to a tricky issue, due to the housing shortage, the high rental prices in the private market and the long waiting lists to access public housing. These conditions are particularly severe in Stockholm. Almost 400,000 people were waiting for a public housing in Stockholm at the end of 2012 and the average queuing time is 3-5 years in the outer city and 15-20 years in the inner city (Boverket,

2013). The consequence is that the so-called secondary housing market is expanding and it now includes not only apartments subletted by social services to poor households, but also a growing black market that hosts especially young people and vulnerable households, not poor enough to access the very small share of the public stock reserved to social services. In Stockholm about 400 apartments are reserved to people with social and economic disadvantages. 24 of them are devoted to the beneficiaries of the HF project, but their number is going to grow in the next years until 64 units.

## 4.2 Housing First inspired initiatives in Bologna and Stockholm

*Bologna* – The project *Tutti a casa* is realised by the non-profit organization *Piazza Grande*<sup>5</sup> in the city of Bologna, the capital of Emilia-Romagna Region, in central Italy. It is the first application of the HF model in Italy. This experience started at the end of 2012, as a project financed by the Bank Foundation *Del Monte of Bologna and Ravenna*, and its development has been very rapid: in August 2013, the association was managing about 40 private and 4 public apartments in the Municipality of Bologna, hosting 160 ex-homeless tenants.

The project is not only aimed to homeless people with psychiatric problems and does not include active users of drugs or alcohol (see par. 4.3). It is aimed at two target groups: 1) adult single homeless people, coming from the street or other unhealthy situations or from the shelters, with long-term difficult pathways and often with complex needs; 2) households with minor children, homeless or coming from inadequate, precarious and/or unhealthy accommodation.

Candidates are assessed by a working group including professionals from *Piazza Grande*, the municipal social and health services and other private organizations (social cooperatives). This integrated public-private network also collaborates to provide the tenants with economic, health and social support and opportunities of activation.

A team of professionals of *Piazza Grande* composed by a project manager, a psychiatrist, four social workers and four psychologists provides relational and organizational support to all the tenants. Individual weakly meetings are organised with the association's professionals and fortnight group meetings among cohabitants in each apartment. The Municipality of Bologna is actually the main partner of the project: the social services follow the cases in coordination with the network and, thanks to an innovative agreement with the health services, the tenants who need ongoing aid receive assistance directly at home (e.g. people in psychiatric care). The measures assigned to each household is decided case by case, depending on needs and resources.

Anyway, a network of public and private services guarantees them a) an internship aimed at a more stable occupation to pay their rent, if they have not the right to a pension for elderly or disability, b) support in the organization and management of the apartment, c) health care at home and psychological and social care. The social services could also provide limited and temporary economic subsidies in the most difficult cases.

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<sup>5</sup> See: [www.piazzagrande.it](http://www.piazzagrande.it).

Single apartments are assigned to families and people with psychological problems and/or a long-time experience in the street or shelters, supposing they could have more difficulties in cohabitation. The timing for assignments also depends on the availability of big or small houses. Anyway, the cohabitation among tenants is a different solution from the original Housing First model.

The apartments are mainly rented by *Piazza Grande* from private owners and are not free of charge for the tenants. It is about 150-200 €, both for adults and families, it is lower than the market prices and includes the cost of utilities. Furthermore, *Piazza Grande* provides the requested economic and formal guarantees, takes in charge the bureaucratic practices and supervises the apartments' management. These are free services for the landlords, to encourage them to offer their houses to the association for a low rent (see par. 4.3). Anyway, the main responsibility on the respect of the contract and the payment of the rent belongs to the association, as it is the formal contract owner.

*Stockholm - Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad* is a trial project of the Municipality of Stockholm aimed to test the potential of the Housing First model. It is managed by the Social Affairs Division of the Municipality, which leads a network including four city district administrations, the municipal housing company *Svenska Bostäder*, which provides the apartments, and the Ngo *Stadsmission* to offer social support to the tenants. The University of Lund works on the assessment of the project.

A first edition of the project started in February 2010 and ended in February 2014 and a second one has being designed for the period 2014-2016.

Homeless people are offered a trial period (from 9 to 24 months) during which they sublet an apartment from the social services without any condition apart from paying their rent (when possible) and respecting the national *Tenant Act*. They are not expected to stop using drugs and alcohol and social measures and/or health therapy are provided if requested and due, but they are not conditions for keeping the accommodation.

*Bostad Först's* target group is homeless people presenting both substances addiction and mental disease, with long-time homelessness pathways. A major difference between the original model and the Swedish experimentation is that the former addresses especially people outside the welfare system, while the latter usually involves people with a long history in the social services and with bad results obtained through traditional intervention.

The social workers of the district social services manage the access to the project. They select candidates with the required characteristics (comorbidity, acute and prolonged homelessness) and conduct motivational interviews to understand their potential and limits. When a new apartment is available, a meeting between all the partners involved in the project and the candidate is organised to explain the conditions to access the accommodation. During the trial period, the rent contract is signed between the housing company and the local district following the case. If there are not problems and complaints during this period, the contract transfers directly to the tenant, who gets access to the regular housing market.

The new tenants meet a property manager of *Svenska Bostäder*, who has the operational control of the real estate of the company in the area where the apartment is placed. These professionals act as caretakers in a sense, as they are the closest supporters for the tenants.

They intervene, for example, in case of complaints of the neighborhoods for noise or non-proper conducts. The apartments for the Housing First experimentation are provided by the public housing company using its stock reserved for people sent by the social services.

The Ngo *Stadsmission* provides social support to each tenant, coordinated by the case manager of the district social services. Its social workers visit periodically (usually once a week) the apartments. Their task is to monitor and support the tenants' strategies to keep housing stability and respect the *Tenant Act*. The staff is available on call 7 days 24 hours for any emergencies. The project is financed using the ordinary budget of the municipal social services.

**Table 2.** A synthetic description of the Housing First projects realised in Bologna (IT) and Stockholm (SE)

	<b>Bologna – Italy</b>	<b>Stockholm – Sweden</b>
Title	<i>Tutti a casa</i> (All at home)	<i>Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad</i> (Housing First in Stockholm)
Year of beginning	2012	2010
Main organiser	Association <i>Piazza Grande</i> onlus	Social Affairs Division of the Municipality of Stockholm
Type of organization	Third sector	Public sector
Other organizations involved	Municipality of Bologna, Local Health Agency, Provincial centre for unemployed in Bologna, Social Cooperatives employing disadvantaged people, private houses' owners	Municipal public housing company <i>Svenska Bostäder</i> , <i>Stockholms Stadsmission</i> Ngo for social support, University of Lund, municipal Unit for homelessness and social services of four city districts
Type of network	Public-Third sector mixed	Mainly Public
Territorial dimension	Bologna and some Municipalities around	Stockholm
Funds	Mainly private	Public
Financers and budget	First year of activity: 20,000 € from the Bank Foundation Del Monte of Bologna and Ravenna, 8,500 € from private donors, 8,600 € from Municipalities (mainly ordinary social services budget for internships or subsidies to tenants), 16,000 € rent paid by the supported citizens	Municipality of Stockholm - Social Affairs Division. The project (including rents) is funded through the ordinary budget of social services for homeless people. As a project, it had only a small budget added for dissemination.
Aim	Housing-led intervention, social and health support, activation, gradual autonomy but without a temporal limit	Experimental intervention providing housing stability not bound to other treatment-related measures
Target	Families with minor children without a stable accommodation and single adult homeless, already inside or outside the welfare system	Acute and prolonged homeless people with substance addiction and mental disease, from long time in the welfare system
N. of beneficiaries	160 people (2012-2013)	35 people (2010-2014)
Type of accommodation	4 public and 40 private apartments rented by the association placed in the Municipality of Bologna and around	24 public apartments reserved to social purposes
Houses' rent contracts	The rent contracts are between the association and public and (mainly) private owners	Trial period of 9-24 months during with contracts are between the housing company and the social services. If this period is successful the contract is transferred to the tenant
Request to the tenants	The tenants have to pay their rent with the support of the association and measures activated by the network collaborating to the project	The candidate is only required to respect Tenants Act. A contract between the housing company and the local district is signed

Sources: our elaboration from field research

### 4.3 The case studies analysis

This chapter aims, firstly, to highlight the relationship of the two Housing First inspired initiatives realised in Bologna and Stockholm with the original model of *Pathways to Housing*. Secondly, it aims at analysing how the original model, built in a specific local context (New York), is adapted to local conditions in Bologna and Stockholm, interacting with the local welfare policies and assets. It then describes the socially innovative dimensions in the two initiatives. Finally, considering the connection between the urban dimension and homelessness and the related policies, a comparative analysis aims to understand if and how the two projects include a reflection on the relationship with the urban space.

#### 1) How the two projects relate to the original model of Housing First

*Bologna – Tutti a casa* is inspired by the original model of Housing First, but also influenced by the ideas of the Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, which were crucial during the 1970s to promote the national law establishing the de-institutionalization of psychiatric patients. The law 180/1978 led to the closure of the asylums and, during the 1980s and 1990s, the rising of social cooperatives, to foster the social inclusion of ex-patients, also creating job opportunities for them. Some of the differences between *Tutti a casa* and the original HF model depend on this historical framework.

The basic principle taken from the Housing First original model is that the access to a house should be guaranteed to anyone. *Piazza Grande* provides homeless people and families with affordable apartments, mainly rented from private owners. The contract is formally signed by the association, which shares the responsibility on respecting the established conditions with the tenants. The latter, as already explained, have to pay (at least part of) the rent, which is modulated to be affordable for their possibilities and supported by the project's network and resources. People who have the right to pensions cover this cost with this income. Some tenants have already a job. For the others, a tailored solution is studied within the public-private network supporting the project and negotiated with the tenant. Italy has never introduced a measure of minimum income and the municipal social services can provide only limited and temporary economic subsidies and/or paid internships.

The need of activation in order to pay a rent is a reason why active users of drug or alcohol who are not in treatment have not been included in the initiative until now: they are supposed to have more difficulties in accomplishing these goals, needing specific solutions and measures. This is a major difference from the original Housing First model.

The association has launched a social campaign to increase landlords' awareness and find houses to rent. The contract is signed between them and the association. The owners receive free assistance on the bureaucratic procedures, the guarantees on payments and a supervision by the association of the correct management of the house, in exchange of a lower rent than usual (negotiated case by case). Special agreements can be made if *Piazza Grande* takes over also the renewal of the apartments.

As the apartments are rented in the market, they are scattered throughout the city, like in the original Housing First model. There is a special attention on respecting this condition and on

avoiding any other condition creating a potential negative label on the tenants and reproducing processes of social exclusion.

*Stockholm – Bostad Först* is designed following quite exactly the original model as interpreted by the researchers of the University of Lund, which promoted this approach in whole Sweden and has the task to monitor the initiative's implementation and results. Also in this context, the mainstream strategy in the field of homelessness is based on the staircase model, re-named as "treatment first" to be distinguished from the new model. Thus, the experimentation represents a challenge for the Swedish social services.

The target group selected for the initiative is similar to the beneficiaries defined in the original model: they are people in acute and long-time homeless, presenting both substance addiction and mental disease. The difference is that the Pathways to Housing service addresses especially to people outside the welfare system, while *Bostad Först* mainly involves people with a long history of failed treatment in the social services. Following the original model, housing is provided separately from social support and not conditionally to the adhesion to any social pathway or health treatment.

For a trial period of 9 to 24 months, the beneficiaries sublet the apartment from the social services of the local district, which pays the rent to the municipal housing company *Svenska Bostäder*. The only condition is to respect the *Tenant Act*, as for all the other tenants in Sweden. After this trial period, if there are not problems or complaints, the contract can be transferred directly to the tenants, who have to pay their monthly rent, when possible. This should guarantee the possibility of housing stability.

Finally, like in the original model, the apartments are scattered-site-independent houses. They are mainly concentrated in suburbs in North and South Stockholm, as they are less expensive and have apartments of the needed size, but they are only a small number, thus there is not a problem of concentration of poverty specifically related to this project.

The following table (Table 3) provides an overview on the differences and similarities between the original model of Housing First the two applications in Bologna and Stockholm.

**Table 3.** The Housing First original principles and their application in Bologna (IT) and Stockholm (SE)

<b>Tsemberis' principles of Housing First</b>	<b><i>Tutti a casa (All at home) in Bologna</i></b>	<b><i>Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad (Housing First in Stockholm)</i></b>
Housing as a basic human right	Limited – Access to a stable accommodation as a pre-condition to social inclusion and as a collective (not only public) responsibility. Tailored measures support the tenants to pay an affordable rent.	Yes - Experimentation of the Housing First model totally financed by public funds and with public houses dedicated. The houses are free of charge for tenants during the trial period, then they are required to pay their rent, when possible.
Respect, warmth and compassion for all clients	Yes - Continuous dialogue to understand and support personal needs, desires and capabilities.	Yes - Support by a staff available 7 days 24 hours, provision of health and social services if requested and due.
A commitment to working with clients for as long as they need	Yes - No fixed term for the accommodation and services' support.	Limited – The rent contract and social support can be renewed after the trial period, with the approval of the involved the partners (substantial role of the housing company).
Scattered-site housing, independent apartments	Yes - Explicit avoidance of a concentration of the apartments, spread throughout the city and the suburbs.	Limited - Scattered-site-independent housing, although mainly placed in some (less expensive areas) in the suburbs.
Separation of housing and services	Limited - Integration between housing provision and services to support social inclusion (economic, social, health and activation measures).	Yes - Health therapy or social pathways are not bounded to access the houses or to keep them; the only condition is to respect the Tenant Act and meet a social worker once a week.
Consumer choice and self-determination	Yes - Selection of tenants on emergency and motivation. Tailored intervention on multiple aspects, attention to tenants' needs, desires and capabilities.	Yes - Selection of tenants on conditions and motivation. Health and social services are provided only if requested.
A recovery orientation	Yes – Tenants are supported in managing the apartment (especially those in cohabitation), paying their rent (also through activation measures), building relationships with the neighbourhoods.	Yes – Tenants meet a social worker once a week and are supported in their adaptation to the new house and respect of tenants' rules. The participation to any other social or health program is facultative.
Harm reduction	No – At the moment, active drugs or alcohol addicted people who are not in treatment are not included in the project.	Yes – Although participation in treatment programs is not a condition for keeping the apartments, the project aims at reducing risks related to substance abuse.

*Source: Tsemberis, 2010, p. 18; our elaboration from field research*

## 2) How the two Housing First initiatives are influenced and can influence the local welfare

*Bologna – Piazza Grande's* long experience in the field of homelessness was important in the design of the project, as it had a deep knowledge of the local social needs, resources and networks. Furthermore, it was able to communicate the initiative as a new model, explaining

its possible advantages also in terms of cost reduction. Its good reputation has been crucial for succeeding in fund raising strategies and finding low cost houses to rent in the private market. The lack of a minimum income measure is considered as a major obstacle to the implementation of a pure HF project in this context. The Municipality could not make available free public houses to realise the first pilot and the economic subsidies provided by social services are limited and temporary. Thus, the main difficulty was how to support the tenants to pay a rent in private houses. Excluding people who have pensions for elderly or disability, it was necessary to offer to the others any job or (paid) internship opportunities, activating a mixed network including public services and third sector organizations. Anyway, these measures are also supposed to complete tenants' process of social inclusion, creating new relationships and reinforcing their self-confidence, competences and responsibility.

The initiative was born during a crisis of local policies for homelessness, mainly due to increasing needs and decreasing public resources. The high cost of public shelters and the awareness of this solution fostering the dependency from welfare provisions instead of promoting wellbeing and emancipation from services, stimulated a research of new more effective and less expensive intervention, as *Tutti a casa* is considered. However, the combination between crisis and innovation is not obvious: a deep crisis can reduce the creative potential, making to converge all the energies to cope with emergency and cutting investments on innovations.

The participative tradition of the Municipality of Bologna towards the initiative (after a first moment of distrust) was crucial in its development. The governance system of the local welfare is strongly horizontal and participatory, a condition that can be considered as positive for the promotion and diffusion of social innovation. Furthermore, changing public budget items in a period of retrenchment is not easy for an administration, but after about one year of implementation, the Municipality decided to close a traditional shelter to earmark own resources to finance a public Housing First service, managed in collaboration with *Piazza Grande*.

The number of houses and tenants involved in *Tutti a casa* is growing in Bologna and the surrounding Municipalities. Similar initiatives are being activated, for example, by the Municipality of Rimini (not far from Bologna) and by Caritas in Sicily. It is a spontaneous and horizontal process of diffusion of social innovation, based on local awareness and attention to other contexts' experiences. The possibility of a national strategy aimed at mainstreaming is not actually an aim, due to the mainly regional and municipal asset of the Italian welfare system and the lack of institutional mechanisms designed to identify local best practices in order to upscale or spread them. These are conditions for the well-known territorial differentiation and fragmentation of the Italian welfare system (Kazepov, 2010).

*Stockholm – Bostad Först* is designed to comply as much as possible with the original Housing First model, even taking into account local limits and opportunities. The University of Lund is monitoring its implementation to analyse the effects and highlight the conditions for a better adaptation and an eventual extension and institutionalization in the Swedish context. Thus, the perspective of a potential mainstreaming is included in the logic of the experimentation.

The initiative is completely financed by the Municipality, involving a multi-level mainly public network in the governance process, while a third sector organization provides the concrete social support. This highlights the innovative potential of these public welfare institutions in this context.

After the first experience (2010-2014), in the second edition (2014-2016), the project will be expanded (the number of available apartments will grow from 24 to 44 in 2014/2015 and to 64 in 2015/2016) and more integrated in the social welfare. The aim is to employ a multi-professional team, providing a better coordination of housing provision with social and economic support, substance abuse therapy, psychiatry, active labour market measures, housing care, crime prevention. The attempt is to improve the initiative by better combining the strengths of the HF approach with the strengths of the local welfare, services and provisions.

The Swedish structure of the housing market was a major obstacle to launch the initiative. The reasons are mainly two. First, both private landlords and municipal housing companies (which act as private subjects, as established by the law) are not interested in providing apartments for these kind of initiatives, since they could rent them to more reliable and stable tenants. A small part of public houses are reserved for social purposes, but on four municipal companies only one accepted to take part to the pilot. Finding an apartment is difficult for households not assisted by social services and this creates a competition and long waiting lists. Second, once a tenant access the regular housing market it is very difficult for the landlord to get rid of him/her. On the one hand, this fosters housing stability for the beneficiaries when they sign a direct contract after the trial period; on the other hand, it hinders landlords' availability since they are reluctant to accept tenants that could give problems.

Finally, vested interests are in action: public, private and non-profit organisations managing shelters and other similar accommodations have strong interests in preserving the staircase model (Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2013). So far, only 7 out of 290 Swedish Municipalities have started a HF project, despite the method has been promoted by the University of Lund as an evidence-based and cost-effective strategy. The cost-effectiveness is expected to be decisive to foster the possibility of upscaling and spreading the model.

### *3) How the two Housing First initiatives can be related to the urban dimension*

*Bologna* – The new perspective given by housing stability to the beneficiaries of *Tutti a casa* generated a new bottom-up demand, directly coming from the tenants: to be supported in their social life in the new neighbourhood. This is a new kind of demand that was not detected while users could only experience a temporary perspective within the staircase model.

Therefore the exploration of the neighbourhoods has become part of the support provided to tenants in their first period in the apartments: *Piazza Grande's* social workers participate in local public events and festivals with them, accompany them to city parks, social centres for elderly people, public libraries, shops, gyms and so on. Taking confidence with the context around the house is considered as important in the pathway towards social inclusion. It is also supposed to help tenants to build a new relational network outside the circle of services for poor people.

Following the same logic, the concentration of houses in *Tutti a casa* has been carefully avoided by *Piazza Grande*, which also refused an economically affordable offer of managing an entire building with many apartments. The apartments are spread in the whole city and some Municipalities in the Province of Bologna. The sense is obviously to avoid any labelling-effect of tenants. The fact that apartments are mainly rented in the private market makes not so difficult to reach this aim, in the sense that houses availability depends on owners proposals, thus their distribution is more probably random.

Finally, after two years of experimentation within *Tutti a casa*, the Municipality of Bologna started an own Housing First initiative in collaboration with *Piazza Grande* and decided to close a shelter to transfer resources to the new project. The local policy direction is thus being influenced by the new approach and it is going towards the overcoming of the logics of institutionalization and concentration of extreme poverty.

*Stockholm* – The major challenge in the project's design was to find available apartments. Sweden, especially Stockholm, is experiencing a substantial housing shortage, prices in the rental housing market are very high and public housing is suffering from neoliberal reforms introduced from the 1990s. As a result an increasing number of households and social group are experiencing many difficulties in accessing to affordable housing and maintaining it. Municipal housing companies manage the provision of public housing, which is open to all households regardless of their income, except for a very small part of the public stock, which must be reserved for social purposes. The easiest way for the Municipality was to ask the four municipal housing companies of Stockholm to devote part of their social stock for the project. Three of the four public companies did not accept. Only *Svenska Bostäder*, the more socially oriented one, reserved 24 apartments for this purpose.

They are scattered-site-independent housing, like in the original HF model, although they are mainly concentrated in some areas in the Northern and Southern suburbs of Stockholm, for two reasons. First, in these areas rents are not so expensive and the public company, having to accomplish to market logic requirements, would not reserve valuable apartments. Second, the apartments had to present some characteristics regarding size and number of rooms, which are mainly available in those areas (excluding for example the most expensive zone of the city centre).

The small number of apartments reserved to the pilot project (24) does not in effect create a problem of concentration of these tenants. However, the number of apartments is expected to grow until 64 in 2016 and, at least in the promoters' goals, it should institutionalize into a stable city service.

The social support has been very "light" in the first edition of the project. Social workers visit the tenants and provide information mediating, if necessary, with other services and institutions, but they do not directly deal with their integration in the local community of the neighbourhood where they are located. A professional of the housing company acts as a mediator but only in case of conflicts with the neighbours.

#### 4) If and how the two initiatives fit with the definition of social innovation

In the first chapter, social innovation has been defined by referring to three dimensions: content, process and empowerment (Gerometta, Häußermann and Longo 2005; Moulaert et al. 2005a, 2005b). We now come back to them very briefly (to avoid redundancy), highlighting if and how they are present in the two case studies.

*Bologna - Tutti a casa* can be considered a social innovative experience mainly for the following reasons: 1) *Content dimension*: the housing-led approach overcomes the solid and diffuse staircase model applied in the intervention on homelessness in the context where it has been developed. 2) *Process dimension*: it has activated a specific public-third sector network to support the project and the involved tenants. It is spreading in other Italian local contexts, even without a supra-local coordination. 3) *Empowerment dimension*: it considers the right to have access to a house at affordable conditions as a collective (not only public) responsibility and as a precondition for the individual empowerment and a successful social inclusion pathway.

*Stockholm* - The Housing First experimentation realised in Stockholm can be considered innovative mainly for these characteristics: 1) *Content dimension*: it overcomes the staircase model and separates housing provision from other social services. It offers a new and different pathway to people who have been in the welfare system from a long time without obtaining a relief from the traditional approach. 2) *Process dimension*: it is based on a mainly public network, but the involved institutions assume new and different functions and tasks in order to realise the project. This underlines a capacity of innovation within the public welfare system. 3) *Empowerment dimension*: the access to house is universalistic in Sweden, as this is considered as a social right, even the system is actually in difficulty (long waiting lists and consequent secondary market development). Anyway, people with complex needs have still difficulties to reach housing stability and the Housing First experimentation introduces a new strategy to guarantee this right. The promotion of social inclusion and participation are being improved in the second edition of the project, as they were identified as weaknesses in the first one.

#### 4.4 The main results of the field research in a comparative perspective

To sum up, both the considered contexts are dealing with the pressure of demand of public housing that is becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy through policies mainly based on market mechanisms. The public intervention would be essential to favour the access to housing for the poorest part of the population, which cannot afford high costs or provide guarantees to obtain an accommodation. This situation is feeding a secondary market (often illegal), where the weakest layers of the population have very few rights.

The different logic underpinned to the two welfare systems as usually classified by scholars (Esping-Andersen 1990, Ferrera 1996) is evident in the regulation of the public housing sector, but it is changing. As already explained, the access to public support in the field of housing is *universalistic* in the case of Sweden, where citizens have access to public rent houses through the system of the “queue” or through a list reserved to the poorest in charge of social services. Anyway, some problems are rising with the introduction of market mechanisms in this field: the reduction of the public stock and the growing demand are increasing waiting lists and the secondary market. Furthermore, it is especially the most attractive stock to be sold by public housing companies, which are expected by a national law to make profit, risking to reserve to public intervention only lower quality houses placed in the less comfortable city districts.

The system is *familistic* in the case of Italy, where the access to public houses or contributions is reserved to poor people and public intervention is strongly residual. The access to houses for the rest of the population is quite completely left to private resources and possibilities and this logic perpetuates the family differences.

The setting becomes more similar between the two contexts for the intervention on homelessness: it is considered as a social issue, whose competence belongs to the social policy sector and not to the housing sector. This logic is related to the dominant paradigm of intervention based on the “staircase”: people have to be “prepared” to access to a stable house through a period of probation spent in temporary, supervised and often collective accommodations. During this time, they have to accomplish the aims agreed with the social services about activation, health treatment and so on. Although both contexts follow the same approach to homelessness, it has to be taken in account the well-known generosity of the Swedish welfare state compared to the Italian one, residual and suffering from the effects of the austerity measures. Finally, in both the analysed contexts, the competence on homelessness policies and measures’ implementation is assigned to local institutions: in Italy they are regulated by the Regions, in Sweden by the central State, but in both countries they are managed at the municipal level.

The two HF initiatives, being inspired by the same model, have similar aims, starting from housing stability, but they are implemented considering different resources:

a) The Stockholm project is driven and financed by the Municipality coordinating a mixed but mainly public network; while the Bologna’s one is managed by a Third sector organization, financed through private funds, and supported by a mixed public-private (no profit) network.

b) In Stockholm the apartments are provided by a public company and the contract is established with the social services for a trial period, before being transferred to tenants; while in Bologna the apartments are found in the private market and the contract is signed between the landlord and *Piazza Grande*.

c) The target groups are quite different, also due to the different availability of resources. The Swedish choice is closer to the original model, involving homeless with problems due to both addiction and psychiatry disease, who have been unsuccessfully supported by public benefits for a long time. The Italian selection is oriented to single homeless and families with minor children. People with psychiatric problems, with disability and elderly are included in the initiative. Tenants have to pay an affordable rent: this means that economic and social

support, health care and activation in the labour market cannot be entirely separated from housing provision. This entails the exclusion, at least for the moment, of active drug or alcohol users, who would need a special and specific support in order to fulfil the initiative's aims.

d) In Bologna, even in a Housing First perspective, the initiative takes into account the multidimensional aspects connected to the homeless condition (health problems, relational difficulties, unemployment and so on). In Stockholm, the quality of the social support and of the attention to health problems emerged as a weakness of the first edition of the initiative, and the second one will aim to improve these aspects and to better integrate the project in the welfare context and opportunities, especially as regards psychiatric support.

The innovative potential for introducing the Housing First model is similar: in both the analysed cases, the attempt is to overcome the traditional staircase model, considered as ineffective and even inefficient (as the new approach is also expected to reduce the cost) in the intervention on homelessness. Nevertheless, they are based on local opportunities and institutional welfare traditions. It is evident the stronger public responsibility and openness to social innovation in the Stockholm initiative and the Third sector's leadership in Bologna, where the local public institutions are not completely passive, they are participatory but all the "risk" on the resources and results of the innovative experience is in charge of the private organizations, mainly to *Piazza Grande*.

Drawing on the literature about social innovation, the projects have been analysed through three basic components: a) the satisfaction of basic social needs (content dimension); b) the transformation of social relations (process dimension); c) and the empowerment dimension, as activation of actors and relationships to create participation and activation of local actors (Gerometta, Häußermann and Longo 2005; Moulaert *et al.* 2005a, 2005b):

a) *The content dimension* concerns a relevant change: the traditional staircase model of intervention on homelessness is overcome in favour of a housing-led approach, readapted to the local conditions and opportunities. Anyway, it is also emerging the intention not to drop the advantages of the traditional approach, which had the strength to take in account the multidimensionality of social exclusion, proposing a mix of customised and integrated measures to support inclusion and autonomy.

b) *The process dimension* has a double innovative value. The first one concerns the transfer of the Housing First innovative idea: starting from an urban context in the United States, it has become a global model and then, coming back to the local, it has been readapted to local conditions to feed new experiences in other continents, Europe included. The capacity to build a model starting from a local experience has been crucial to favour the transfer of social innovation. In some cases, like in Italy, it has diffused through a sort of horizontal network among cities without a vertical institutional intermediation (it is a double, international and national, local-local process of diffusion through a model, without a supra-local mediation), in others, through institutional mediation, like the one of the University of Lund in Sweden. In both cases, the vertical diffusion is lacking: supra-local institutions (like the Regions or the State) do not (yet?) intervene to evaluate and mainstream the model. The second aspect relate to processes concerns the actors and networks involved in the design and implementation of the new model. In Bologna, a complex mix of public-private resources was

activated through the efforts of a Third sector organization, while the public local welfare became important in the institutionalization process. In Stockholm, the capacity of flexibility and innovation of public welfare institutions is evident in driving the entire process of re-adaptation of the model to the local conditions and diffusing the new idea.

c) *The empowerment dimension* in the proper sense is less evident in the two initiatives as the tenants are mainly considered as recipients to be supported by policies and measures and they are not relevantly involved in the governance processes or in the projects' design. Anyway, in both cases, the access to a house is considered as a pre-requisite for social inclusion and participation and the passage from individual to collective empowerment may be considered as a final goal. To be more precise, in the Italian case the peer-to-peer support strategy is a tradition for the association conducting the experimentation, although it is not specifically implemented in this intervention. In Stockholm, the attention for the process of social inclusion and its quality has increased after the first experimentation and evaluation, thus it is actually an aim of the second version of the project. The empowerment dimension is also present for the professionals involved in the project. Their awareness of the need of readapting their knowledge, skills and approach to realise a new model of intervention is crucial for the rising and diffusion of social innovation.

Finally, we are interested in analysing the impact of the two Housing First experiences on the (urban) space. Three issues have emerged in the field research.

a) The original model recommends paying attention to the scattered distribution of houses assigned to Housing First projects. The two case studies have differently faced this issue, depending on the available resources and opportunities, but anyway considering this aspect. In the Italian experience, the houses are found in the private market and are spread in the city and around; in Sweden the public housing company identified the apartments in the less expensive city districts. Anyway, the small dimension of the initiatives does not pose it as an emergency, while their growth could do.

b) In Bologna, a bottom-up request of being supported in the process of social inclusion in the neighbourhoods emerged by the tenants. This activity has become a part of the Housing First practice in this context.

c) It could be considered as an urban issue the already mentioned transfer (through adaptation) of the Housing First model from a local experience to other local implementations mainly happened through horizontal diffusion from an urban context to another. The same dynamic is observed in the two cases both at the international level (from New York to Stockholm and Bologna, without a supra-local intervention), and in the national context (in Italy, from the Municipality of Bologna to the Municipality of Rimini, without a Regional or National mediation, for example).

## 5. Final reflections

Some general reflections can be drawn from the analysis of the two case studies, considering the theoretical overview proposed in the first chapter.

As described along the paper, HF can be considered as a social innovation at least in the sense that it addresses the needs of homeless people through a completely new approach. However, its specific innovative contribution should be assessed locally on a case by case basis. The main common question emerging from both case studies regards the empowerment dimension: the provision of unconditioned housing is *per se* an empowering instrument, which allows homeless people to regain a full social citizenship. In this sense, autonomy and social inclusion are preconditions of social participation, but the latter should not be considered as an automatic outcome. The risk of social isolation and exclusion from the social networks of the new local community where tenants are settled undermines the impact on socio-political capabilities of the beneficiaries. Many HF practices are aware of this threat, but find it difficult to transfer power and agency to long-term homeless people, who often present complex and multi-dimensional personal and social problems. The specific support provided by the initiative in Bologna as a response to a bottom-up demand tries to handle with this concern, increasing tenants' participation in the local community and improving their knowledge of the local context.

Coming back to the hypotheses on capacity for social innovation provided in table 1, the analysis of the two case studies allows us to go deeper on the features of social innovation in different contexts. HF practice in Stockholm presents some typical characteristics of universalistic welfare models: a managerial governance style and a pervasive role of the State, in this case the local public administration. This guarantees a strong economic and political support to social innovation, which is integrated into broader, but mainly top-down, national and municipal political strategies. The latter often aim at reaching mainly quantitative outcomes, in terms of reduction of poverty and homelessness. The managerial approach tends to concentrate its efforts on achieving the expected results more than on promoting new approaches, like bottom-up participation, that could slow down the attainment of the anticipated outcomes. This context could reduce the innovative potential of HF, which is mainly considered as another possible way of managing homelessness, more than an opportunity of promoting new social relations where homeless people can play a proactive role. A risk of this situation is to foster a "conservative" social innovation which, being mainly driven by strong public actors, tends to produce substantial effects but through linear processes, instead of challenging existing social structures and radically transforming social relations.

The situation of passive subsidiarity characterizing Italy leaves instead enough room for third sector organizations' initiatives, yet often without adequate financial support. The socio-economic crisis worsened the situation in the recent years: the retrenchment of the resources earmarked for welfare policies both at national and local level and the simultaneous growth of

the demand for social benefits and services led many public and private actors to react in a conservative way, trying to preserve the existing services rather than investing on innovative ones. In the case of Bologna a private actor, the Bank Foundation, was particularly important to test a practice that was then supported also by the local public administration, although without a previous broader strategy. This confirms a certain degree of chance in the emergence and diffusion of social innovation in Italy and a high, albeit confused, room for less established actors, processes and ideas.

As regards research and practice of Housing First, the main contribution of the paper concerns the connection with urban space. The aim is not to propose any result or conclusion, but to provide some suggestions on the mutual relationship between HF and urban space. The possible success and growth of HF practices could rise at least three questions related to spatial and urban dimension. The first one concerns the processes of spatial diffusion of socially innovative practices through mainly two dynamics: local-global-local (from a local experimentation to a global model to other local experimentations) and local-local (from a city to another). Thanks to the definition of a theoretical and methodological model, the idea has been transferred around the world despite a weak mediation of supra-local institutions. A deep analysis of how these processes have occurred and which actors and mediators have played a role could reveal something about the global/local conditions favouring or hindering the diffusion of social innovation.

The other two aspects regard more specifically the relationship between HF practices and urban contexts. Firstly, the specific urban neighbourhood where HF tenants are resettled, with its physical and demographic features, established social relations and practices, contributes to shape their pathway towards autonomy and social inclusion. The process of creating familiarity and relationships is unlikely to be spontaneous, after a long period in homeless condition, and the social support provided by HF services still not explicitly addresses this need. Secondly, HF can have consequences on spatial distribution of poverty within cities. The implementation of the HF approach at a large scale can lead to the dismantling of institutions where poverty, social exclusion, mental illness and substance abuse tend to be concentrated, like night shelters and similar collective accommodations, as happened in Bologna. This represents an important transformation of the urban landscape with relevant consequences also on urban social processes. People usually living in shelters or other collective accommodations should be resettled in scattered-site houses around the city. However, this distribution is not random but it is influenced by the structure of the local housing market. As it is happening in Stockholm, public and private landlords tend to be reluctant to rent apartments in valuable areas to HF tenants. The risk is thus to increase poverty concentration in urban neighbourhoods already suffering from processes of economic deprivation, spatial segregation and social stigma. This risk is in truth very low hitherto, due to the low number of beneficiaries of HF services in Europe, but it could become an issue if HF has to be mainstreamed and become the main model of intervention to tackle homelessness in the cities. Every social innovation has to deal with new unexpected challenges when it grows up. Considering the success that HF is having in many European cities, the time has probably come to start a reflection upon them.

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