
15th European Research Conference on Homelessness

Re-orienting Turin reception system to address homelessness:

findings from an italian participatory action-research.

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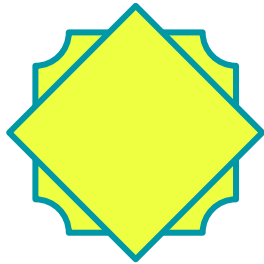
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CONTEXT



ACTION-RESEARCH
& METHODOLOGY



FINDINGS

The italian housing context

TORINO

- **Limited investment of the State** in public housing
- **Impoverishment** of households and individuals
- Historical **high level of home ownership**
- **Increasing of the homeless population** in both dimension and heterogeneity terms



Traditional services for tackling homelessness in Italy

- **Emergency approach** has traditionally characterised services to tackle homelessness and housing exclusion
- Approach aimed to **manage homelessness** by providing temporary shelters and street-based services
- **Poor funded municipalities** has traditionally been responsible for planning, managing and delivering services
→ generating a very differentiated system

Italian **current debate** on homelessness

2014 Latest **national survey** on homelessness

2015 "Guidelines for tackling severe adult marginality"

developed by *the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Italian Federation of Organisations for Homeless People (Fio.PSD), Regions, metropolitan cities and other subject. Among them: the City of Turin.*

↳ Main novelties:

- focus on the right to housing
- **tension to overcome the emergency approach**
- *Housign First and Housign Led* as main methods

2016

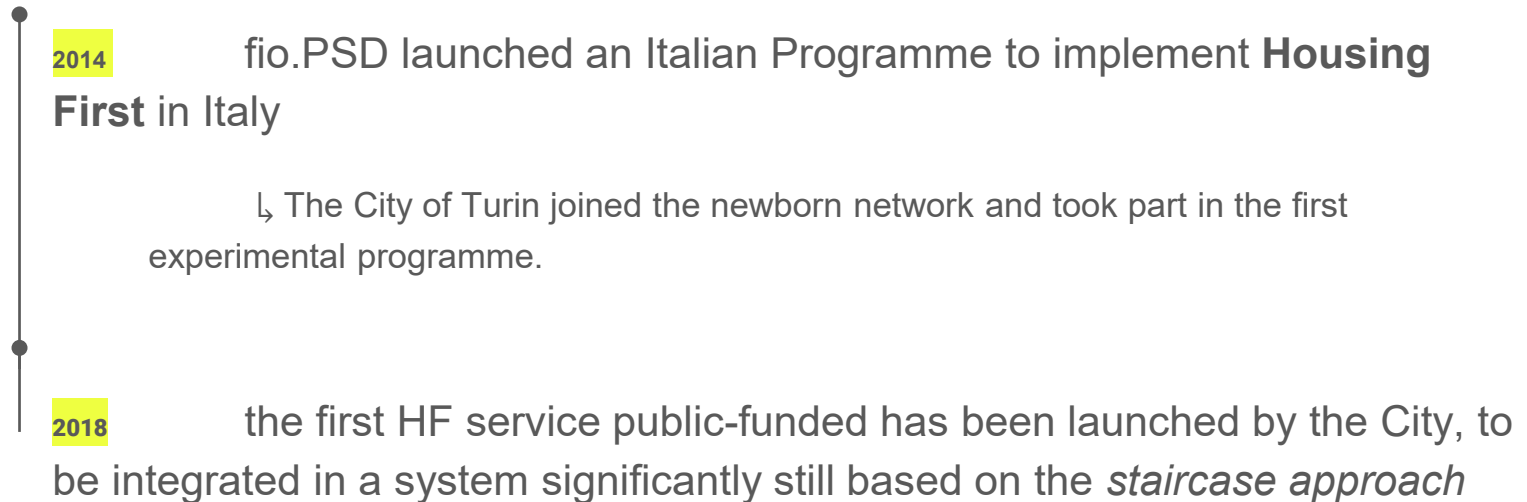
Avviso 4/2016 → first **national strategy** with public fund and initiatives targeted at homeless people, based on the "Guidelines"

2017

Introduction of a **national income scheme**

The Turin case

Turin has a **consolidated tradition in public policies and services against poverty** and in support of the homeless.



The Turin case

TRANSFORMATIVE AIM

Creating the HF services has been considered **not merely as an additional change, but a transformative one**



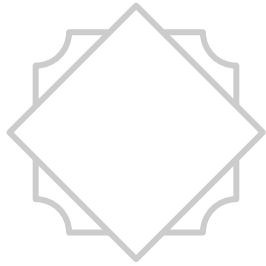
REORIENTING THE SYSTEM THROUGH RESEARCH

The City of Turin ask to our university department to develop a participatory process aimed to **reorient the local system of public services for homeless people** in order to improve the wellbeing of all actors involved

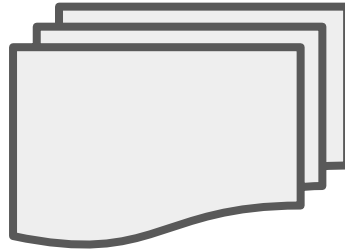


PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACH

Participatory research framework to reflect together on the transformation from the staircase approach to a right-based approach and to implement it



CONTEXT



FINDINGS

ACTION-RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

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The multidisciplinary participatory action-research

PERIOD

may 2018 - still ongoing

COMMISSIONER

the Municipality of Turin

MULTIDISCIPLINARY EQUIPE

anthropologists, designers, sociologists.

PARTICIPANTS

actors of the social services system for homeless people: policymakers, social workers from public offices, social workers from third sector entities.

INDIRECTLY

homeless people using public services.



The Methodology

Action-research framework, grounded on research, analysis, and transformative action (Mullert and Jungk, 1987)

↳ Posture that combines the **production of knowledge and reflection** with **intentional transformative actions**



The Methodology

CORE ELEMENTS of the process:

- **transformative aim** of the Municipality
- **awareness of the importance of the contribution of all the actors** involved in the public service system
- Dialogic and collaborative modalities to accompany a **collective reflection on the practices and objectives** characterizing the system
(Sangiorgi 2011; Yang & Sung 2016)

Phases of the action-research

1st PHASE | **PARTICIPATORY ANALYSIS** of the service system

- Mapping the system, reflection on the services' mission, analysis of the recipients.
- Investigating some emerging critical nodes of the system such as: the effectiveness of the intervention; integration with other welfare services; etc.



Phases of the action-research

1st PHASE | **PARTICIPATORY ANALYSIS** of the service system

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2nd PHASE | **DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC AXES**

for possible transformation of housing accomodation; personalization of

expansion of housing solutions (beyond shelters);
disentanglement of educational planning from
educational path;
focus on social inclusion;
prevention work.

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3th PHASE | **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**
the City has opened several calls for experimental innovative
project
from third sector entities, on the basis of the collective work developed

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We will
focus on
this phase
of the
process

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1st PHASE | participatory analysis

TOOLS

Recurring meetings during one year **with social workers** from both public and private entities

- *Participatory maps*
- *Diagrams*
- *Graphics*
- *Presentation and discussion of case studies*
- *Role playing activities*

Methodological aims

- *grasping connections and ideas comparing different experiences;*
- *socializing data and concepts;*
- *facilitating the comparison;*
- *sharing complex reasoning and conflicting points of view.*
- *bringing out and socializing knowledge and experiences within the system;*

1st PHASE | participatory analysis

TOOLS

With homeless people hosted in social public services

- *In-depth interviews*
- *Focus-Group*

Findings has been introduced in the activities developed in the the working-days with the social workers' group

Methodological aims

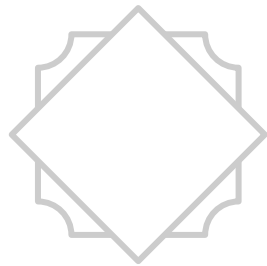
- *giving voice to the more “silent” actors*
- *pointing out conflictual perspectives on the welfare system from different point of view*

Criticalities of the process

While in the process we promoted a deeply participatory approach, in the daily working routine:

- third sector entities **often compete** among them for tenders for services
- **client/supplier relationships** regulate the relation among third sector entities and the public administrations





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The tension between standardisation and personalisation

Standardisation: it should protect recipients and enable them to receive support without having to prove they deserve it or without being dependent of social workers' discretionality.

On the other hand, it turns services, **projects and interventions rigid**, hard to adapt to individual specificities, aims and necessities.

In the action-research: this tension emerged thanks to the methodological tools adopted.





Standardisation vs Personalisation: notes from the fields

PARTICIPATORY MAPPING ACTIVITY

A policymaker suggest to not represent a map with steps, but with “clusters” to give a more fluid representation.

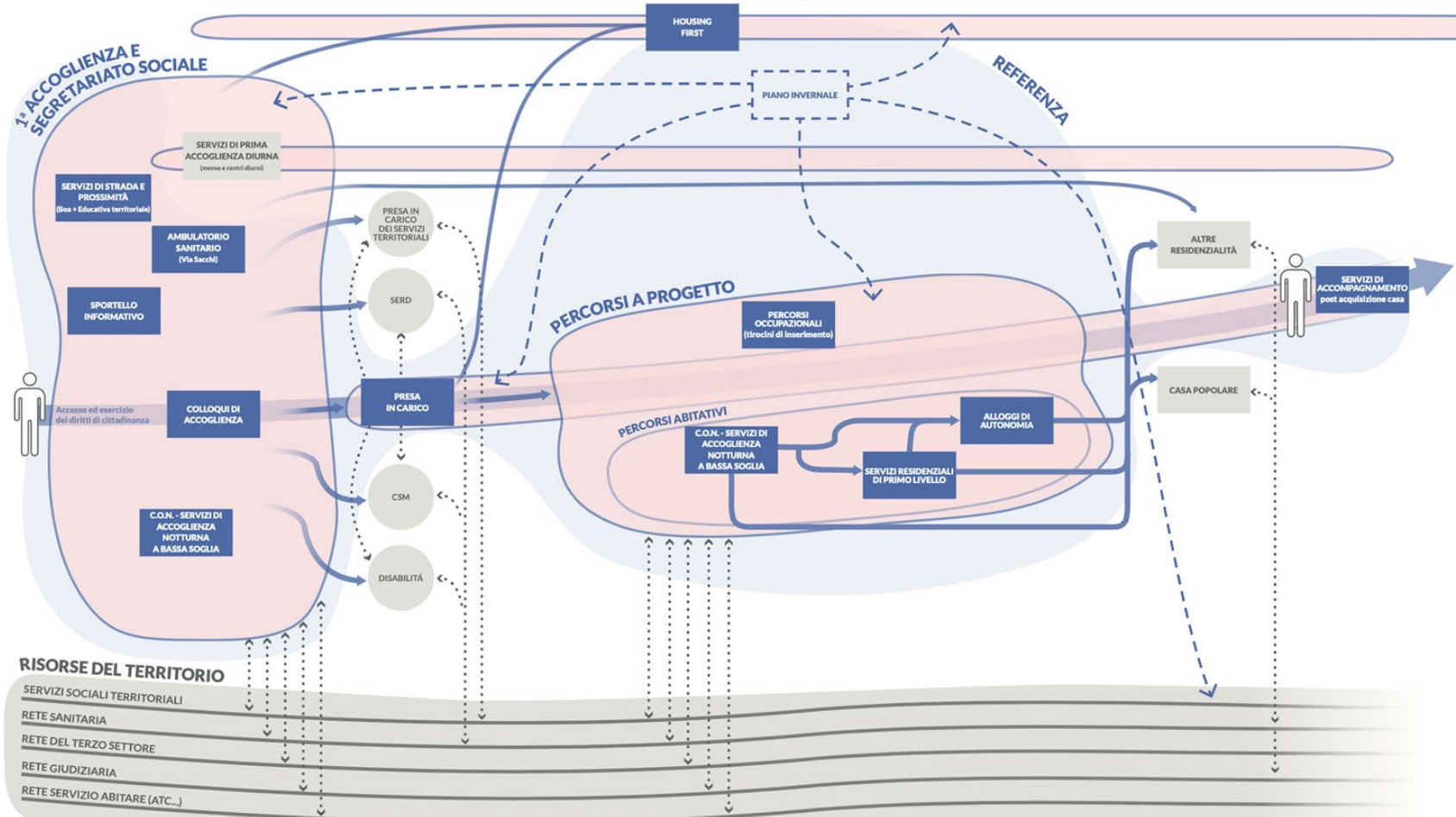
This suggestion indicates the desire shared by the system to move on a less rigid and standardised system.

Frontline workers stated that they *“struggle in imagining a project that differs from the pre-established one.”*

“The projects we do follow a unique direction.”

Frontline workers express a general difficulty in imagining other possible solutions.

Mappa del sistema di servizi torinesi per le persone senza dimora



1st FACTOR: Institutionalised procedures

Eligibility criteria and operative rules

- They become “procedure” people have to follow, but with few possibilities to reflect upon it;
- They thus become “institutionalised procedures” to work with and not to reflect on.

Issues emerged especially by interviews with homeless people

→ es: **the case of R.**

The rule of having to frequent shelters and canteens is one of the “institutionalised procedures”.

It is necessary to prove that people *are really homeless*. → Deserveness?

2nd FACTOR: A unique exit point

The unique final exit is the public housing (ERP).

- There were no alternatives designed for those who did not have access to public housing.
- The uniqueness of the final exit reverberates on the whole system, stopping the progression of people not eligible for the social housing.

Issue emerged in the work with social workers.

They find difficulties in proposing different path to each homeless person, according to their features, desires, opportunities and will.

They can activate few and homogeneous resources.

Exploring innovative paths

Some transversal findings of the *action-research 1st phase*:

- **new and shared awareness of the system features and criticalities** among all the actors involved
- increased **readiness and availability of the group for implementing** innovative and transformative changes

↳ **Experimental pilot project** has been designed and proposed by participants, currently ongoing.

