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Weaving nets: housing and leadership in two Italian cities

Maria Tullia Galanti

Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan, Italy

Correspondence

Maria Tullia Galanti, Department of Social and Political Sciences, University

of Milan, via conservatorio 7 , Milan 20122, Italy

Email: maria.galanti@unimi.it

Abstract

As part of local welfare in Italy, housing policies underwent reforms that emphasized the role of local governments – and cities in particular – in the definition of the problem and in the elaboration of possible solutions. Housing is quite neglected in the political debate, but it is increasingly important for responding to citizens' demands in times of economic crisis. This paper reconstructs the policy process in two Italian cities, Turin (1997-2011) and Florence (1995-2011). The paper argues that policy change in housing can be fostered by a local political leadership that invests ideational, relational and positional resources in policy-making to spread new ideas, build networks of public and private actors at the local level, and attract fiscal resources while taking advantage of windows of opportunity at different institutional levels. Moreover, collaboration with local bureaucratic leadership proves fundamental to promoting innovative policies.

1. Introduction

Since in the 1990s, welfare policies in Italy have experienced different episodes of reform, with a resulting differentiation of forms of local welfare along territorial and sector lines (Maino and Neri 2011; Vampa 2017). In this process, sub-national governments such as regions, provinces and municipalities emerged as key actors in policy-making, though with different roles and discretionality (Madama 2009; Bifulco *et al.* 2008; Baldini e Baldi 2014; Artioli 2016). Policy-making is increasingly affected by horizontal relations (with civil society and the third sector) and by vertical relations (with other institutional actors at the regional and national level), and local political and bureaucratic leaders emerge as key actors in governance networks (Bagnasco and Le Galés 2000; Pinson 2002).

In Italy, public housing policies represent a type of welfare policy in which local governments now play a major role (Minelli 2004; Caruso 2017). This phenomenon has followed the same pattern of territorial differentiation as other welfare policies (Tosi and Cremaschi 2001), with a redefinition of the network of policy actors both horizontally (with the increasing role of the market and the presence of a variety of private actors) and vertically (with the retrenchment of the central state and the decentralization of policy-making).

In particular, the importance of planning instruments approved by municipal governments and the empowerment of municipal executives with the direct election of mayors have emphasized the role of political leaders as key actors in the promotion of policy change and innovation in agenda setting and policy formulation (Magnier 2006; Maggioni

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2017). In public housing policies in Italy, the role of local political leaders is even more important given the substantial retrenchment of the national government from active housing policies.

Hence, without denying the role of bureaucratic leadership, this article aims to show the role of local political leadership in fostering policy change (as innovation in goals, frames and instruments) by focusing on distinctive activities in agenda setting and in the formulation of policy alternatives at the local level (Greasley and Stoker 2008; Gains et al. 2009). Although this article does not present a proper evaluation of the policy outcomes and policy success in the implementation (which depends on a number of exogenous and endogenous variables) (Sabatier and Mazmanian 1980), it argues that collaboration between the political and managerial leaders in the definition of policy solutions helps to secure policy innovation even after the formulation phase.

The argument is that change is fostered not only through the promotion of new ideas, frames, and networks but also by the ability to attract resources from the national level. All of this is not possible without the activation of local political leadership. In other words, policy change in a highly contentious and fragmented policy such as housing is supported by the presence of a political leadership that a) uses its ideational resources to promote a different policy frame on housing policies, intended as the set of ideas and symbols that help policymakers legitimize policy solutions (Campbell 1998, 385), b) activates relational ties at the local level to expand the policy network and c) accesses other levels of government to take advantage of different windows of opportunity.

From a theoretical perspective, this article proposes to consider policy change in the agenda and in the formulation phase as influenced by a composite policy entrepreneurship (Kingdon 1995; Mintrom and Norman 2009) involving both the political and the bureaucratic leadership. Policy entrepreneurship is intended as a type of collective activity that relies heavily on ideational, relational and formal resources to be used to attract fiscal transfers and to promote the relationship between public and private actors in local

governance (Navarro-Yáñez, *et al.* 2008). In particular, political leaders may be the main characters in policy entrepreneurship due to their ability to attract relational, ideational and economic resources from both the European level (for example, with the participation of supranational networks and grant competitions) and the national level (using national funds for housing and mega sports events).

Following a qualitative approach, press releases on local newspapers and documentary analysis were used to analyse the policy process in two cases: housing policies in the city of Turin (1997-2011) and in the city of Florence (1995-2011). Twenty semi-structured **b** local politicians, local civil servants (such as the city manager, the heads of housing and budget divisions, and the directors of municipal offices for housing), and local stakeholders were extensively used to describe the influence of political and bureaucratic actors in promoting change in housing policies.

2. Housing policy in Italy: when the State retreats and the cities come in

Housing policies provide a good example to investigate the role of agency in local welfare and to determine whether and how political leadership can play a role in fostering policy change through collaboration with local civil servants and top managers (such as the head of housing division and the city manager). In Europe, different country legacies exist (Maclennan and O'Sullivan 2013), but housing as a collective problem is increasingly important, especially in periods of economic crisis (Housing Europe 2015). National states have recently converged in two directions: first, the decentralization of powers towards regional and municipal governments, with a retrenchment of the State; second, the increasing importance of private and nonprofit actors as promoters, operators and sponsors for housing construction and renting (Caruso 2017).

In Italy, public housing policies have traditionally shown a weak involvement of the state, with very limited public expenditure and a small stock of public housing (Tosi and Cremaschi 2001; Minelli 2004). In the post-war period, the centre-left national government promoted public housing to sustain urbanization processes, such as the INA-Casa programme, subsequently GESCAL (law 60/1963), which remained one of the pillars for the construction of subsidized housing (*edilizia sovvenzionata*) until the end of the 2000s. More recently, the policy was characterized by a differentiation of policy instruments for supported housing (in the form of assisted housing/*edilizia agevolata* and agreed housing/*edilizia convenzionata*); great regional variance with an increased role of local authorities (decentralization) and private actors; and a general decline in public investments, with a shift away from government regulation towards market mechanisms.

After the dismissal of most traditional housing policies in the 1980s, few resources were invested in the 1990s in the "integrated urban programmes" for urban renewal and regeneration. Traditional housing was transformed into subsidies for families with direct or indirect money transfers (law 431/1998, replacing the rent act established by law 392/1978 and creating a fund to sustain rents in the market, the *Fondo Sociale per l'Affitto*). In 2000, national schemes for public housing definitively concluded, and the lack of financial resources became the major problem for this policy. While the national governments intervened with episodic measures, private actors in real estate ruled the market, and the role of local bank foundations became increasingly important to finance housing programmes (Caruso 2017).

At the municipal level, housing policies are increasingly integrated with urban planning and with other welfare and territorial policies, such as social assistance. For example, land use plans may establish the provision of units of social housing within new private housing, or local governments may differentiate their supply of housing services, such as subsidized leases in favour of low-income citizens or experimental programmes of social housing (Urbani 2010, 256-266).

Municipal governments, local offices and management corporations are currently prominent actors in housing policies due to the control of knowledge resources regarding the substantive aspects of the policy. They control the information on the housing stock and on the housing demand for their territories. Moreover, the management duties have been moved from the provincial to the municipal level. At the same time, the financing of the different housing initiatives requires more collaboration with local private actors.

Given the endemic scarcity of resources, bureaucratic rigidity and implementation gaps (Minelli 2004), housing policies provide a clear example of the hurdles of policy change. At the same time, the decentralization of housing policies and the introduction of new policy instruments may provide institutional and organizational opportunities for astute policy entrepreneurs to respond to housing needs in new ways despite the constraints of scarce financial resources (Mintrom and Norman 2009, 652). In this article, the focus is on the contribution of local political and bureaucratic leaders to policy change.

Policy change is defined as a modification in the constitutive elements of a policy programme that considers both the guiding principles of the policy (the ends) and the policy instruments selected accordingly (the means) at different levels of abstraction (Howlett and Cashore 2007, 55). In this paper, I choose to concentrate on policy change that emerges in the agenda setting phase and in the formulation phase, seen as chaotic processes where ambiguity abounds (Zahariadis 2007). This is coherent with one of the most common metaphors of the policy process in policy analysis. Kingdon (1995) describes the policy process as a context where problems, political interests and policy solutions constantly flow as separate streams. Change occurs when policy entrepreneurs take advantage of a window of opportunity to match a new definition of the problem with their pet policy solutions. This is an easier task when the policy entrepreneur is also a policy-maker who works in collaboration with experts (Natali 2004; Zachariadis 2007).

I argue that both local bureaucracies and political leaders can play a decisive role as policy entrepreneurs in sustaining change precisely because of their ability to access other

levels of government, to build governance networks with local private partners and to spread new ideas about housing problems and solutions.

2.1 Research design and case selection

In this paper, housing policies are studied at the city level by examining the policy goals, intended as general ideas on policy development; the policy objectives that the policy formally aims to address; the instruments in terms of the mechanisms and/or calibration of policy means (Howlett and Cashore 2007, 55); and examples of policy outputs. Policy outcomes are not evaluated here because of the less important role of political leaders in the implementation phase.

Therefore, the dependent variable is the promotion in housing policies of new policy goals, policy objectives, and instruments. Housing policies in Turin and Florence can be seen as similar systems in which many relevant aspects are constant except for the one whose explanatory power we assess empirically, namely, local political and bureaucratic leadership. In other words, I am not comparing two cities but the two contexts where similar problems, solutions and political relations are in place. Despite the socio-economic differences of Turin and Florence (the former being larger in population and more industrialized, the latter being smaller and oriented towards tourism and rent), the housing policies of both cities are similar in their starting conditions considering how pressing housing distress was, how the problem was defined, and the political orientation of municipal policy-makers at the time. Therefore, this case selection is appropriate to assess at least the presence of a causal role of local political leadership in housing policies in Italy. In fact, the comparison is intended to show that leaders may act as causal drivers of innovation by interacting with the context in different ways, thus supporting or hindering policy change (Falleti and Lynch 2009; Bakir and Jervis 2017).

As mentioned, housing proved to be a serious problem in both Turin and Florence. For example, the percentage of evictions for economic reasons among the resident

population grew between 2001 and 2011 both in Turin (from 16% to 35%) and in Florence (from 8% to 14%) (Ministero dell'Interno 2012, 57, 73). Thus, both cities experienced serious housing distress, with increasing protests and abusive occupations.

Second, both Turin and Florence showed similar situations with regard to politics, considering both the ideological orientation and the stability of the governing coalition. In the 1997-2011 period, both cities experienced the consolidation of the institutional model of the directly elected mayor (Fabbrini 2001; Magnier 2006) and were governed by a centre-left coalition. In the first administrative term (five years), two non-partisan mayors (Castellani in Turin and Primicerio in Florence) represented the reaction to the crisis of the Italian party system; in the following term, the centre-left coalition was confirmed, and two partisan mayors were elected (Chiamparino and Domenici). Moreover, the responsibilities for housing policies were delegated to the more leftist components of the governing coalition (Rifondazione Comunista, RC, then Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, PRC) both in Turin and in Florence.

Third, the scarcity of financial resources – especially in terms of fiscal transfers from the centre – was considered the main deficiency of housing on the side of policies and solutions in both cities. At the same time, the early 2000s were considered the season for experimentation with new governance instruments (Pinson 2002; Winkler 2007; Governa and Saccomanni 2009; Manzoni 2017; Caruso 2017).

Thus, I argue that the comparison of housing policies in Turin and Florence can be useful for local leadership to emerge as a significant piece of the puzzle of policy change in a contentious policy such as housing.

3. The importance of political leaders as policy entrepreneurs in local governments

As mentioned, agency can play a major role in fostering policy change through the opening of a window of opportunity. Through this window, agents introduce their solutions

into the agenda and build networks of actors to sustain change. Although policy entrepreneurs are often seen as experts and as outsiders, they can also enjoy formal institutional roles, such as being members of the executive or elected officials (Natali 2004). My point is that policy change and innovation at the local level can be eased by a collective effort of political and bureaucratic leaders. In particular, the access of the local leaders to national and regional decision-makers is crucial not only to attract more financial resources but also to recognize the window of opportunity and to build a composite network of support around innovative policy solutions (Mintrom and Norman 2009).

In other words, policy entrepreneurship must be performed by one or more local political leaders working in collaboration with city managers and the leaders of housing administrative divisions who are willing to invest ideational, relational and positional resources in the policy process.

The final aim of the analysis is to show how leadership matters for change in housing policies under conditions of financial constraints and contentious politics and how the collaboration between multiple political and bureaucratic leaders is essential.

The emphasis on the collective character of these types of activities is new in the literature on local political leadership, which usually concentrates on political leaders as individuals (Haus and Heinelt 2005; Gains *et al.* 2009; Svara 2009). Early studies on the United States emphasized the entrepreneurial character of individuals in different offices (city managers, elected politicians, mayors and leaders of interest groups) creating political equilibrium through their innovative policies and their capacity to organize dispersed citizens (Schneider and Teske 1992, 741). Similarly, Greasley and Stoker argued that conditions of fiscal constraint promote facilitative leadership in networked forms of governance. Facilitative leaders are seen as potential regime builders with four characteristics: partnership skills, low partisanship, accessibility and visibility, and decision-making capacity (Greasley and Stoker 2008, 724).

In the European context, mayoral leadership emerges as a key aspect of the policy process. In their study of urban leaders, Haus and Heinelt note the importance of a multiplicity of actors in the complexity of local governance. In considering the policy process and the role of other important but less "political" actors, such as city managers, bureaucrats, experts and civic leaders, Haus and Heinelt emphasize the complementarity of (political) power sources and urban leaders' public visibility and accountability (Haus and Heinelt 2005, 27-28). For example, the mayor assumes the role of the entrepreneur and of the broker (Denhardt and Denhardt 2011), while political leaders must cope with the nature of central-local relations (Kubler and Michel 2006).

The role of local political leaders can thus be crucial to build networks of actors both vertically and horizontally. In the former instance, local political leaders still play an important role in the intergovernmental relationships linking the centre and the peripheries (Borraz and John 2004; Steyvers 2013), especially in terms of fiscal resources. In the latter, political leaders may play a crucial role, involving citizens and the beneficiaries of services in new governance arrangements and making connections with local industries, unions, associations and public authorities (Bussu and Bartels 2013).

The importance of local political leadership for governance emerges clearly in the Italian case. Traditionally, the mayors act as political entrepreneur to attract resources from the central government for their territories. The direct election and the empowerment of local executives increased their capacity to act as coalition builders (Dente 1997; Fabbrini 2001; Pinson 2002; Bobbio 2005; Magnier 2006; Di Giulio et al. 2016).

Thus, the literature on local political leadership suggests that leaders not only support new ideas and governance networks but also help to find financial resources through their access to multi-level institutional venues. Leaders actually shape and coordinate local policy networks to aggregate a variety of material and immaterial resources, including knowledge. To promote housing in the governmental agenda and to innovate policy instruments despite

fiscal constraints, I argue that political leaders may engage in three main activities and use three main resources.

The first resource of political leadership at the local level is ideational. Political leaders frame policy ideas through discourse, and this framing activity is strategic in a double sense (Béland 2016, 738, 741). First, frames allow us to draw on existing ideological repertoires to make convincing statements. Second, frames allow policy entrepreneurs to build coalitions of supporters for their proposals starting from a shared problem definition, which often reflects shared values. Overall, framing uses ideas to redefine a problem in connection with different policy goals and objectives, and this can be used to build coalitions in support of the policy solution (Kingdon 1995). For example, framing housing problems in terms of a poor match between demand and offers to boost social inclusion anticipates different policy goals (e.g., intervening in the market) and different policy coalitions (e.g., both on the left and on the right of the political spectrum) than framing the same problem as a security issue (e.g., prioritizing legality as a goal and consolidating a centrist coalition). Thus, promoting a new frame is strategic in times of crisis where the scarcity of resources obliges local institutions to open to other governance actors and to invent new solutions.

Ideational resources can also come from collaboration with experts. In this sense, another important aspect to consider is the collaboration between political and bureaucratic leaders, such as city managers and the head of the housing division or agencies, who control the knowledge about the substantive functioning of the policy. Given their role in the implementation of the policy, bureaucratic leaders may provide feedback from stakeholders and innovative solutions to problems (e.g., the scarce use of a policy instrument, the lack of incentives, scattered information about housing demand for public housing and social rents).

The second resource of political leadership in cities is relational and pertains to networking. It derives from the complex nature of governance at the local level and entails the capacity to shape the policy network around the issue of housing (in our cases), using

those relational resources to coordinate and direct private actors, local stakeholders and the local civic society (Navarro-Yáñez *et al.* 2008).

The third resource of local leadership is access to policy-makers at different levels of government. It refers to the centrality of leaders in intergovernmental relations (Dente 1997) and can be measured through the capacity to attract financial resources and fiscal transfers. Moreover, the local leader would benefit greatly from proximity to the national government and, at the same time, from an international orientation, such as towards those actors and institutions that award resources for specific programmes, such as the EU.

4. A tablespoon to empty the sea: Policy change in housing policy under constraints

The analysis of several official documents of the Municipality and of the local press has been used to identify the main policy goals, the objectives, the instruments and the policy frame of the main political and bureaucratic leaders for both cases. This analysis is synthetized in Table 1, which shows that policy change was more evident in the case of Turin than in the case of Florence. This analysis seems to confirm the results of previous studies on Turin as a case of innovation in housing policies (Governa and Saccomanni 2009).

Turin and Florence share the majority of policy objectives (decentralization, increasing the amount of resources, increasing the number of housing assignations) but differ in the general view of the role of the Municipality in the market (facilitator vs. regulator), of the relationship with the private actors (collaboration vs. supervision) and in the adoption of related policy instruments (active vs. reactive). The main difference is that Turin interpreted its general goals on housing differently from the past, proposing a shift from pure assistance to the development of opportunities for more inclusive welfare and a more equitable market. This idea spread due to a new framing of the role of the Municipality, namely, as a mediator between tenants and landlords in the housing market. In contrast, Florence saw housing in

light of extreme poverty and marginalization. It framed this issue mostly as a security problem in which the main duties of the Municipality were to face illegal occupation and to provide more public housing. Florence saw itself as a traditional public actor in the decentralized asset of housing policy.

Moreover, the policy instruments and the actual policy outputs were different. First, Turin was better able to secure financial resources in this housing than other welfare sectors. The current expenditure for housing in Turin represented a higher and growing share of total expenditure than in Florence (see Table 2). Though Turin was traditionally more sensitive to housing distress, the choice to secure resources on this policy was an explicit strategy of the governing coalition to compensate the advantages of urban elites with more welfare services (TO2). Second, Turin was able to obtain more resources from national instruments of financing, such as the abovementioned *Fondo Sociale per l'Affitto* (law 431/98), to subsidize citizens for the renting of houses (see Fig 1). Most importantly, Turin experimented with new policy instruments in collaboration with the main local bank foundation, the Compagnia di San Paolo (CSP), which became a stable partner in experimental projects on social and co-housing (TO5). Hence, with regard to the policy outputs, Florence was not necessarily less effective than Turin, but it was less innovative.

The most relevant innovation in this sense was represented by the creation of a local office, Lo.Ca.Re, to act as an institutional mediator in the housing market, thus promoting and sponsoring the subscription of subsidized rents. This action implied additional public expenditure (which was critical for Turin). Nonetheless, it provided an alternative and less expensive instrument than traditional construction and management of ERP.

As noted, both cities attempted to promote social rents as innovative policy instruments to respond to increasing housing demand. If we consider the policy outputs, both cities showed the administrative capacity to respond to the demand for different forms of housing (see the trends in available resources in Figure 1 and the ratios between applications and assignment for subsidized rents in Table 3). Nonetheless, Turin was more

active in finding new ways to increase the stock of public housing. The Municipality of Turin purchased new units that were originally built for the Olympic games and that involved some modifications to the land use plan (344 and 124 of a total of 612 new ERP housing purchased from 2000 to 2010). At the same time, Turin recruited new specialized staff to develop projects of housing restyling and renovation financed by the European Union, as in the case of the experimental "Peripheries project" that started in 1997. The "Peripheries project" and the "Urban" initiatives of the European Union represented two windows of opportunity to move housing to the top of the governmental agenda and to propose innovation in the instruments of traditional housing, starting with renovation experiments.

Overall, it is clear that Turin was able to foster a more visible policy change given the ideational shift in both the goals and the frames of housing policies, the variety of the policy instruments, and the quantity and quality of policy outputs in traditional public housing and in subsidized rents. Moreover, local press and some commissioned reports on the implementation of specific housing and regeneration programmes (such as Winkler 2007) reported the satisfaction of the main stakeholders involved in these initiatives.

5. Weaving nets: The ideational, relational and positional dimensions of leadership in housing policies

After assessing the presence of policy change, the analysis turns to the reconstruction of the policy process to determine whether the ideational, relational and positional resources of political leadership played a role.

5.1 Ideational resources

With regard to ideational resources, local political leadership should be able to promote innovation in goals, objectives and instruments through the use of frames. To analyse this ideational dimension, political leaders, municipal officers and a limited number of prominent actors in housing policy were asked who elaborated the programmatic document on social

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housing; if and when housing policy was at the top of the governmental agenda; and what the leaders did to promote their ideas.

In Turin, housing policy entered the agenda immediately after the elections of 1997. Mayor Castellani started his second mandate after a close electoral victory thanks to a political allegiance with the left party Rifondazione Comunista, which explicitly asked for the introduction of renovation programmes in the periphery of the city (TO1). Hence, the mayor first appointed to the executive two former regional officers with expertise in housing in the local executive (*giunta*) and as the head of experimental programmes. Second, he introduced a special project for the renovation of the peripheries, thus anticipating national policies on integrated urban programmes. Third, he supported the integration of urban renovation projects and housing through the modification of the land use planning (TO2; TO4).

Before that time, housing policies were not integrated with other policies and were mainly focused on the implementation of national and regional legislation (TO10). From 1997 onwards, housing policies aimed to ameliorate the life condition of vulnerable citizens, including the young and immigrants, and social housing was seen as an opportunity to boost the private market. The political leadership framed the demand for subsidized rents as an opportunity for both the tenants and the landlords, proposing that the Municipal offices guarantee the contracts.

The political leadership in Turin (the mayor, the deputy mayor and the city manager in particular) also linked this new frame of housing as an opportunity to the experimentation of instruments such as participatory planning. The first participatory planning served to create mutual recognition among actors in the city and helped housing and renovation programmes to develop (TO8; TO9; TO10). In other words, the framing of social housing as an opportunity was coherent with the overall idea of a new renaissance for Turin. In turn, this coherence allowed the leadership to capitalize on relational resources derived from participation. In the same period, political leaders took advantage of the activation of

financial resources at the European level by promoting and then winning several projects linked to the Urban programme (TO1; TO2; TO4; TO7).

In the following years, important reforms in national housing policy occurred, and two main initiatives were introduced in the programme by Mayor Chiamparino and by the member of the executive in charge of housing. The innovative policy instruments in housing were elaborated through collaboration with the local councillors, on one side, and with the municipal head of the division for housing, Giovanni Magnano, on the other side.

The first innovative instrument was the creation of a permanent municipal commission for housing emergency, the Commissione per l'emergenza abitativa (CEA), which is involved in housing assignments (TO6; TO3). In addition to being a means to monitor applications and to readily answer housing requests, the CEA was created as "a way to tie our own hands on assignations" (TO6). At that time, the Italian legislation left ample margins for local governments to distribute public housing. The CEA was also meant to restrict these margins and to isolate the decision-makers from distributive and clientelistic pressures.

 The second innovation was a brand-new municipal office called Lo.Ca.Re. as a policy instrument to tackle the subsidized rents problem. The office was created in 2000 as a free-of-charge service for selected low-income tenants to be matched with accredited owners. The local political and bureaucratic leadership used Lo.Ca.Re. to promote a new role for the Municipality by "acting as one among other players in the housing private market, to match demands for housing by the disadvantaged citizens with the offers of housing, in a period of growing economic crisis and housing distress" (TO6).

The introduction of these innovations was the product of the collaboration between the former municipal councillor and member of the executive charged with housing (the *assessore*) and the director of the municipal division on housing. The interviews indicate that during the negotiations with the tenants and owners, the political leader promoted the idea that the final goal of housing was not based on a dependency culture and proposed a different frame of housing as an opportunity. At the same time, the bureaucratic leader suggested

exploiting the legislation on rent subsidies to incentivize the subsidized rents. This shift in in the frame and in the instruments was possible due to the ability of both the political and the bureaucratic leadership to create trust: "They feel they can trust the administration, and in due time, the number of the subsidized rents increased" (TO6).

The Municipality of Florence created a new office for the management of the housing market with subsidized rents, the *Agenzia per la Casa S.p.A.*, but this innovation was promoted only in 2009. This office works to collect information about the local housing market and is presented as a more "friendly" instrument than the traditional territorial pacts with syndicates on subsidized rents (FI5; FI6). Overall, the policy goal of providing housing as social assistance remained uncontested, and housing policies were framed as security and budgetary problems that were not integrated with other policies. The construction of new public dwellings and the renovation of existing ones was a stable objective of the governing coalition until 2009 (FI1; FI2; FI5). The pressure on the region to attract financial resources was not able to meet the housing demands (FI4; FI5; F17). Moreover, the Municipality participated in the (few) calls for projects on housing issued from local foundations and banks but was unable to find additional resources or to promote experimental projects. Overall, the attempts to innovate and to extend the governance network were timid and unsuccessful.

5.2 Relational resources

Florence is different from Turin in the second dimension of leadership, namely, political leaders' relational resources and networking capacity. This analysis was conducted by asking if and how the political leader attempted to build the support for the policy solutions among local stakeholders (public and private). In Florence, interviews revealed the existence of an institutional network composed of the local authorities, the representatives of the main interest groups and unions, the provincial governor (in Italian, *Prefetto*), the police and the regional officers. From 2009 on, the leaders attempted to extend their network to local banks and foundations. The interviews indicate that the attempts to extend the network were not satisfactory because the local bank foundations and other private actors preferred

to finance initiatives in other policy sectors (e.g., culture, education and social assistance). At the same time, the Municipality constantly faced the protest of the social movement 'Fight for the house', which acted against the local government by occupying empty public properties, forcing the Municipality to invest resources to face abusive occupations (FI5; FI8; FI10).

In Turin, the network-building activity involved more political leaders across levels of government and was able to include local bank foundations such as the CSP (TO2; TO5). The expansion of the network started immediately after 1997, when the governing coalition deputed the local politicians of the left to be responsible urban renovation projects. This political activism attracted public managers from other institutions to collaborate with the different projects with particular reference to the recruiting of experienced regional officers in public housing and planning. Moreover, especially after 2006, the CSP Foundation started several experimental projects in social housing through collaboration with the City of Turin. The political leadership thus created a composite network of public and private actors that shared the idea of housing as a welfare priority and as an opportunity.

5.3 Access to policy-makers and centre-periphery relations

The capacity to build networks is linked to the third and final dimension of political leadership in housing, namely, its ability to have access to other policy-makers and to attract financial resources. The policy outputs on housing also depend on the relationship between the Municipality and the region (for traditional housing), private partners, and the European Union (for specific experimental projects, such as co-housing and urban renovation).

The analysis of municipal budgets and of specific funds shows that the leadership in Turin managed to find more resources. This was possible thanks to the international networking of Mayor Castellani, later to the growing centrality of Mayor Chiamparino inside its own party, the Partito Democratico (PD) at the national level, and finally to the attempts of the city manager towards policy integration. Two events worked as windows of opportunity for housing: the planning and the winning of the Winter Olympic Games

(WOG) (TO8). The interviews revealed that both events were strongly supported by Mayor Castellani and by the city manager Vaciago and were intended to work with the local experts and the stakeholders, following the examples of cities such as Barcelona and Bilbao. In particular, the WOG was exploited as an opportunity to acquire new housing stocks in the post-event phase. The approval of specific rules to incentivize social housing and the modifications of the land use plan to increase the number of residential dwellings are clear examples of this strategy.

Another example relates to the ability to attract resources from the territory. After 2006, incentives and guarantee funds (issued by Lo.Ca.Re) were financed based on resources from the Region Piedmont, while the two local bank foundations financed the guarantee fund of the Municipality of Turin against the emergency caused by dispossession, renewed in 2013. Interestingly, the continuous commitment of CSP to housing may have influenced the composition of the governing coalition of the city in the long run. The fact that the deputy mayor of the Municipality in 2011 was part of Ufficio Pio, an organization linked to CSP, could be a clue for future research on the evolution of the élite in Turin (Belligni e Ravazzi 2012).

In contrast, political leaders in Florence were unable to find additional resources and seemed less effective in their pressure strategy towards the region of Tuscany. Most of all, they could not rely on the intervention of local banks and other private actors, which "simply awarded other type of initiatives than our housing projects" (FI5). After 2009, the political leaders of Florence attempted to take advantage of the transfer of some public properties from the State to the local authorities and to renovate them as public housing.

5.4 Discussion

The analysis of the ideational, relational and positional resources of political leadership confirms the relevance of political and bureaucratic leaders to agenda setting and policy formulation in housing. The ability to strongly innovate in ideas, frames and instruments characterized local political leadership in Turin, suggesting that successful policy

entrepreneurship in multi-level policies needs not only new ideas and networking capacity, as theorized by the public policy literature, but also centrality in the centre-periphery relations, especially to gather additional financial resources. Moreover, the analysis shows the importance of the collective character of leadership involving both political and bureaucratic leaders. Collaboration between politicians and technicians produces innovative solutions, allowing technical knowledge on policy content to be combined with a coherent framing of policy interventions.

Skilful leadership also allows public managers to learn from successful models from abroad while maintaining a strong commitment to the day-by-day management of public housing. Moreover, the pivotal role played by leadership as a collective effort is crucial to extend the policy network towards private actors and the local bank foundations. Hence, the political leadership in Turin was plural, with the local government committed to steering the policy process but far from the sole character on the scene. Thus, thanks to the work of political and bureaucratic leaders, policy change was driven not only by exogenous events but also by the ability to exploit different opportunities at the national and European levels (e.g., the WOG and the URBAN programmes). Moreover, the political leaders took advantage of the political opportunity structure at the time (Vitale 2015). The close electoral competition facilitated the move of welfare to the top of the governmental agenda.

In Florence, local political leadership was more restricted in number and strongly institutional. Innovative policy instruments were only recently introduced. The leadership instead showed a tendency to act through less experimental schemes, following a sort of local neo-corporatism in which the Municipality interacts only with the main representatives of the associations of owners and the tenants. Moreover, the structure of the local leadership in Florence seemed less plural and multi-levelled, with few attempts to create stable relationships with the European and the regional levels of government. The more traditional character of political leadership in Florence matched with the absence of a credible commitment of strong financial supporters at the local level. In this sense, in Florence, the

leaders interpreted their role as "caretakers", effective but unable to manage complex coalitions, while Turin experienced a collective leadership of "consensual facilitators" able to create a network of public and private partners across the local and national levels (John and Cole 1999, 102).

6. Conclusions

The main argument of this paper is that local political leadership matters for policy change in housing policies, other things being equal. My aim was neither to provide a complete account of all the complex variables that may influence policy change in their outcomes but rather to focus on the agency role of political leaders by describing the resources they may invest in two cases of multi-level policy that matters for local welfare.

The cases of Turin and Florence suggest that leadership matters for policy change a) when it is able to elaborate a new and coherent frame for innovative policy goals and means, b) when it is able to build wide horizontal networks at the local level, and c) when it is able to access different levels of government to attract resources and to take advantage of windows of opportunity at the national and international level. In the case of housing policy, when political leadership is plural in its composition and multi-level in its positioning, the contemporary presence in the European, state and regional arenas may foster more resources for housing policy. Political leaders seem to be able to weave different nets of actors by collecting a variety of resources and, at the same time, trying not to be trapped in one single net. This is even more the case in times of austerity as fiscal transfers from the central state for housing are drastically diminishing while the scarcity of public resources has increased the territorial differentiation of local welfare.

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Table 1 – Policy change in policy goals, frame, objectives, instruments and outputs in Turin and Florence (policy changes are in bold)

Case	Policy goals	Policy frame	Policy objective	Policy instruments	Observed policy outputs
HOUSING POLICIES in TURIN 1997-2011	**From a dependency culture to housing as both welfare and opportunity**	**Changing the role of the Municipality: not only direct intervention but also mediation in the housing market**	More economic support for housing distress	More spending in housing than in other welfare sectors	**Increase in municipal expenditure on housing (as expected)**
			More effectiveness in public housing stock and assignations	Implementation of decentralization and reform of municipal regulations on housing **Reservation of public housing in renovation projects and new buildings** **Creation of a guarantee fund against housing emergency, cofounded by local foundations.** **Creation of the CEA commission to tie politicians' hands on assignations.**	**Approval of new municipal regulations (as expected)** **Increase of the stock of public housing (ERP) (as expected)** Increase in the assignation of public housing (measured as demands presented/demands awarded) (as expected) Social mix in the assignations of public housing (as expected)
			Promotion of subsidized rents and experimental social housing	**Creation of the municipal office Lo.CaRe as an innovative policy instrument for the Municipality to act in the real estate market** **Co-financing and co-planning of social housing with private local actors**	**Increase of subsidized rent contracts (as expected)** **Integration of housing policies with other policies via European projects (The Gate, Urban II, others)** **Social housing and co-housing experiments with the CSP (as expected)**
HOUSING POLICIES in Florence 1995-2011	Public housing aims at social assistance	Housing distress worsened by security problems: Municipality must provide better housing and fight illegal occupations	Implementation of national laws on housing decentralization	1a. Approval of new municipal regulations on housing and implementation of bids for social housing 1b. Creation of *CASA spa* for the municipal management of public ERP; **creation of the office *Agenzia per la casa* (2009) to act as mediator in the housing markets**	1a. **Approval of regulations and awarding of public housing (ERP) (as expected)** 1b. **Moderate increase in the stock of ERP and renovations** but overall decrease in the assignations of both ERP and subsidized rents (measured as demands presented/demands awarded) (not expected)
			More economic support for housing distress	Increase in municipal expenditure for housing, per year	2a. Decrease in current expenditure for housing, per year (not expected)
			Pressure on national and regional governments for more resources	Increase in national and regional financial commitment towards housing policies; search for financial support for housing projects	4a. No increase in national and regional transfers (not expected) no financial support from private actors for experimental projects (not expected)

Table 2 - Percentage of welfare spending on total current expenditure and distribution among service categories, Municipalities of Florence and Turin

Disaggregated welfare expenditure for:	Municipality of TURIN				Municipality of FLORENCE			
	1998	**2000**	**2002**	**2005**	**2000**	**2003**	**2005**	**2008**
% of welfare on total current expenditure (all categories)	**20.0**	**19.8**	**20.0**	**22.4**	**16.9**	**16.8**	**17.1**	**18.9**
Nursery and related services	18.0	15.7	15.6	15.3	29.8	35.4	36.5	39.3
Prevention and rehabilitation services	4.8	4.1	3.9	3.4	4.3	6.4	7.5	8.4
Residential care homes	10.9	11.8	11.2	10.9	27.6	18.6	15.8	12.5
Assistance and other individual services	54.0	54.8	54.8	56.0	32.3	34.9	36.0	35.9
Cemeteries	7.0	5.9	6.0	8.1	4.2	3.6	2.7	3.4
Social housing	5.4	7.7	8.4	6.3	1.8	1.1	1.5	0.5
Welfare TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Source: accounting certificates, *finanza locale, Dipartimento per gli affare interni e territoriali, Governo Italiano.*								

Figure 1 - Total resources (including transfers, in euro) for subsidised rents ex law 431/98 (Fondo nazionale per l'affitto), Municipality of Turin and of Florence
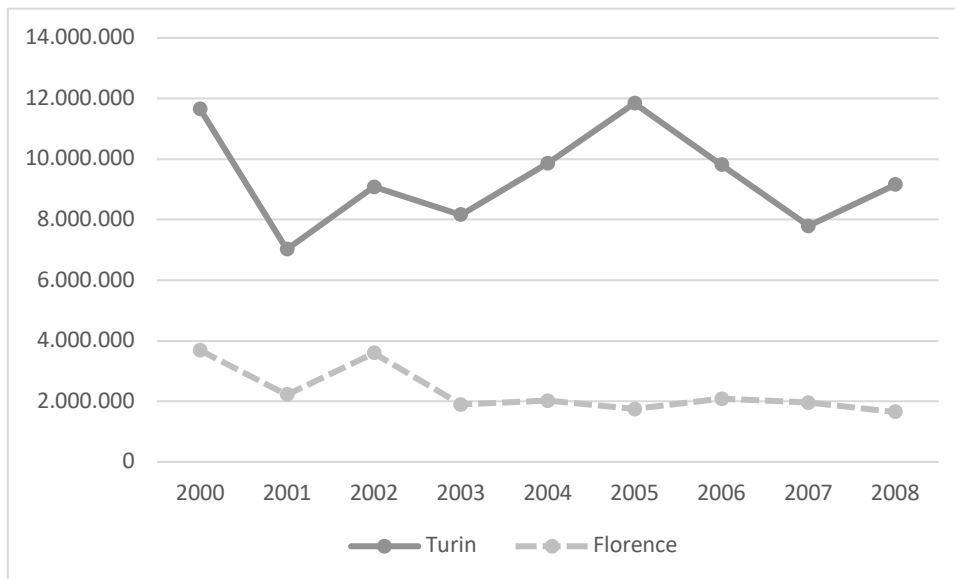
Table 3 - Subsidized rents ex law 431/98 (Fondo nazionale e regionale di sostegno alla locazione), demands presented and entitled, Municipality of Turin and of Florence

	Turin			Florence		
Year	Demands presented (E)	Demands entitled (F)	E/F	Demands presented (G)	Demand entitled (H)	G/H
2000	11468	10.083	87,9	-	-	
2001	14804	12.929	87,3	-	-	
2002	11915	9.687	81,3	-	-	
2003	10607	9.733	91,8	1.857	1.649	88,8
2004	13649	10.988	80,5	1.993	1.701	85,3
2005	14571	11.664	80,0	1.838	1.622	88,2
2006	14651	11.980	81,8	1.899	1.690	89,0
2007	15655	13.057	83,4	1.541	1.362	88,4
2008	13073	10.810	82,7	2.147	1.833	85,4
2009	13360	11.517	86,2	2.123	1.709	80,5

Source: Muncipality of Florence for Nomisma, dimensioni del disagio abitativo e strategie di intervento, il caso di Firenze, 2010, page 55.

Appendix - List of semi-structured interviews

For housing policy in Turin	For housing in Florence
TO1 member of the executive, urban renovation and peripheries project 1997-2001 (29/04/2011)	FI1 member of the executive, social distress 2004-2009 (28/02/2011)
TO2 mayor of Turin 1993-2001 (11/4/11)	FI2 Mayor of Florence 1999-2009 (16/02/2011)
TO3 mayor of Turin 2001-2011 (20/4/11)	FI3 director, urban planning (20/05/2011)
TO4 member of the executive, urban planning 1993-2001 (05/05/2011)	FI4 member of the executive, housing (21/03/2011)
TO5 Compagnia di San Paolo, General Secretary (20/06/2011)	FI5 director, housing division (03/02/2011)
TO6 director, peripheries project (until 2001) and division housing of the Municipality of Turin (12/4/11) (12/5/11)	FI6 area manger development (22/02/2011)
	FI7 area manager welfare (17/02/2011)
	FI8 Mayor of Florence 1995-1999 (08/02/201)
TO7 director, budget of the Municipality of Turin (28/04/2011)	FI9 member of the executive, social assistance (08/06/2011)
TO8 city manager (6/4/11)	FI10 councillor (8/03/2011).
TO9 director, strategic planning (08/04/2011)	
TO10 member of the executive, housing (until 2001) and urban planning (20/4/11)	