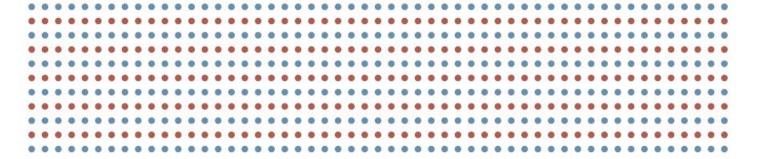


## **GAME CHANGER?**

## **PLANNING FOR JUST AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN REGIONS**







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## Housing First And Beyond. A Focus On The City Of Trieste (Italy)

## Elena Marchigiani (University Of Trieste (It)), Valentina Novak (University Of Trieste (It))

In Europe, due to a widespread increase in economic uncertainty, housing affordability has become a priority issue, with particular reference to people with multifactorial distress, unemployed, or with a job that is too precarious to access the private housing market. If public policies for rent ("council housing") are still mainly addressed to families and individuals in stable economic conditions, the "very social demand for housing" is generally taken over by social assistance measures provided by the public and third sector. As a result, this demand often falls into institutionalized emergency responses to "homelessness", whereas a "treatment first" approach generally prevails: from the dormitory to supported housing, access to a dwelling comes after a long (and uncertain) path toward well-being recovery, social integration, and economic independence.

By addressing severe adult marginality, Housing First (HF) deeply questions this approach, conceiving access to a home as a basic right, and a starting point to rebuild independent life. Public welfare support remains an important component of HF, and the dwelling is often assured only for a limited period; however, living in one's own home is understood as a prior step, to be integrated with social and economic care, job access and training, according to a holistic person-centered perspective. Since 2015, HF has found full recognition in Italy (Guidelines for Combating Severe Adult Exclusion). Nonetheless, projects still reach a few persons. In this perspective, the financial support (177 MEUR) provided by the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (PNRR, 2021) to temporary housing for individuals and households in extreme hardship appears far from sufficient.

This paper reflects on the possibility of overcoming a punctual application of HF solutions, by investigating conditions (i.e., the availability of public and private buildings and their maintenance), target users (elderly people, young adults, persons with a migrant background, single persons and large families, etc.), stakeholders (public, private, form the third sector), material and immaterial resources that can be involved in the upscaling of HF to ordinary and structural urban policy. The focus is on Trieste: a medium-sized city in the northeast of Italy, on the border with Slovenia, where homelessness has strong impacts. Demographic decline and aging population trends are above the national average; huge migration flows are due to the location on the Balkan route; the offer of council housing is inadequate to meet a growing social demand, and the number of public and private vacant dwellings is significant. Furthermore, relevant impacts on the availability of low-rent dwellings are produced by a steady rise in tourist traffic. In Trieste today, access to a house is, therefore, an unattainable luxury for an increasing and diversified number of individuals and households, who carry multiple social, economic, and physical distress.

These conditions make Trieste an interesting context for exploring and understanding how to cope with the still diverging routes of homelessness and housing affordability. Specifically, the paper focuses on how to integrate a diversified set of actions, subjects, and solutions: from the realization of "supportive condominiums" in public housing buildings, and the involvement of tenants in self-recovery and self-maintenance of public and private housing; to deep rethinking of the silo-organization of the "very social" welfare offer; up to the identification of an intermediary body (between beneficiaries and the public sector) playing the role of financial guarantor, property and social manager.

Keywords: Housing First, Housing affordability, Welfare policies, Housing policies, Trieste