



Politecnico
di Torino

Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio
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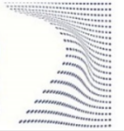


UNIVERSITÀ
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ScuDo

Scuola di Dottorato – Doctoral School
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U R D

PhD in Urban and Regional Development
IN VARIETATE CONCORDIA

Doctoral Dissertation
Doctoral Program in Urban and Regional Development (35th Cycle)

REINTERPRETING URBAN TRANSITIONS
Spatial conditions, actors and implications in energy
renovation of public housing neighbourhoods.
Insights from Italy and France

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Summary

The climate and energy issues raise several questions about the spatial and policy conditions that might guide just transition processes in urban contexts. The research is based on the premise that every transition is a contingent and politically charged process that involves a variety of systems, agents, and scales that interact with one another and result in the reconfiguration of social interests, political structure, and technological advancement. In this context the renovation of public housing neighbourhoods has recently become a specific object of interest in addressing urban transition processes. This is because existing public building stock in Europe represents an energy-consuming heritage in need of renovation. Moreover, such contexts might be characterized by economic and social hardship that can result in energy poverty.

In order to shed light on the matter this research adopts relational and institutional perspectives shifting the focus on the specific contexts, spatial conditions and involved actors in energy renovation projects of public housing neighbourhoods. A limited number of case studies are thus explored and compared in light of the main research questions that revolve around: (i) the institutional framework within which the projects fit; (ii) the existing spatial conditions and the energy measures proposed by the projects in different urban contexts; (iii) the actors involved and the relations between different actors involved in the processes; (iv) the spatial and governance implications of the considered projects.

The empirical ground of the present contribution is structured into three main steps. A first exploratory phase consists in the investigation of energy transition practices in different urban contexts in Europe. After that the in-depth investigation of two Italian case studies gives insights on the energy renovation of public housing neighbourhoods. Finally, the step forward allows the discussion of results by investigating the French context in relation to the Italian context. To this aim the proposed research methodology combines document review, semi-structured interviews with privileged actors and on-site observations.

Results of the thesis move from understanding the actor's relations along the decision-making process to the identification of levers and catalysts to trigger process innovation in the shaping of urban transitions policies and practices. More specifically the thesis' results refer to: the influences of strategic urban planning and spatial planning governance in favouring the integration of energy issues in urban areas; the importance of existing spatial conditions and energy infrastructures in orientating the spatialisation of energy solutions not only at the neighbourhood

scale but also at the urban scale; the determining role played by local institutions and the network of involved actors and interests in steering experimental processes towards local transitions. Overall the research offers some reflections and practical insights about different configurations of institutional frameworks, spatial conditions and actors 'relation that might favour renovation of public housing neighbourhoods and ultimately lead to a just energy transition.