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For a Still "Social" Housing: The Fluent Governance

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Abstract: Network governance, widely used as theoretical model in investigations on social housing, is not free from critiques, first of all, for the fact that it has a uni-directionality of bottom-up processes, when oriented to public deliberation, or top-down when decision-makers are technical experts at the political level. Given the new complexity of the social housing issue and the considered limits of the network governance, this work aims at looking for a possible different theoretical framework able to give different tools to simplify decision making processes without any alteration of any basic decisional element. The contribution given by this work is the proposition of what has been called "fluent governance" as a framework of decision making able to represent the whole spectrum of interventions in the process, also taking into account aspects not captured by standard models. The paper reports an experimentation of the proposed model conducted in Italy in the field of renovating social housing policy.

Key words: Governance, social housing, structural analysis, network governance, decision making.

1. Introduction

Social housing in Europe had a very long tradition in both housing and welfare policies of most of European countries. Indeed, "under most of 'old' Europe's governments, social housing becomes a key element of local and national welfare policies, after the 'social welfare' that marked the first stage of industrialization" [1]. Although there is a long tradition of social housing in housing and social policies of European countries, it is not easy to have a single formal definition of social housing, due to the fact that each single country, according to its own history and tradition, developed specific paths. Anyway, it is possible to encompass all different aspects in three key basic elements [2]:

- the existence of specific missions of general interest;
- the objective to increase supply of affordable housing through the construction, management, purchase and letting of social housing;
- the definition of target groups of vulnerable people (either in socio-economic terms or in relation to other types of vulnerability).

In this sense, social housing can be broadly expressed as a set of policies, programmes and initiatives aiming at satisfying households' housing needs in terms of access and permanence in decent and affordable housing for vulnerable categories of citizens [2].

Nowadays, social housing is having a renewed consideration due to the fact that, on one hand, especially after the economic crisis that afflicted industrialized countries, the demand for affordable housing by vulnerable categories is increasing and, on the other hand, the need to cut public spending leads to the necessity of finding new efficient and effective ways in designing the supply of decent and affordable houses that cannot be delivered as it was in the last decades, when the public intervention (both through subsidies and direct building programmes) was very high. In this sense, it is important to have, independently by the single tradition developed in each country, a new governance system, in which public and private sectors, together with the non-profit sector work

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together in an effective collaborative way in order to satisfy the housing need of vulnerable categories of citizens, without increasing public spending.

The possibility of arriving at squaring the circle comes up only if not only the delivering different components (i.e., public services, private sector and non-profit sector) work together, but also the demand side (i.e., the users and the vulnerable category) participates in the decision making process in order to give the possibility of having a fine tuning both in the management process and in the delivering one, designing habitation that can really satisfy the needs avoiding risks such as: distortions in the delivering in different territories (having a supply higher than the demand in some territories and vice versa); ghetto neighborhoods; houses that cannot respond to specific needs (e.g., particular needs of disabled people).

The necessity of a new management and governance model in the social housing system, independently by the specific tradition present in each country, leads to the necessity of finding new ways of interaction among the different actors involved in the process. In this sense, the aim of this work is to present a new tool aiming at having a better interaction among all different actors. The "fluent governance" as it has been named, represents indeed a new framework of decision making able to represent the whole spectrum of interventions in the decision making process. In the following, there will be analyzed pros and cons of the most used standard models in order to show how the proposed one, i.e., the fluent governance, represents a tool able to take into account also those aspects that are not captured by standard models.

In the second part of the work, it shows a first testing of the proposed model that, also if run on a limited number of actors, gives interesting results in terms of the applicability of the proposed model.

2. Background: Social Housing and Network Governance

In European countries, social housing has a central role in the field of social and socio-economic analysis applied to residential contexts both in terms of its theoretical and normative classification [3-6], as well as for what regards its matrices and models of local development [7, 8] and its structural, managerial and operational characteristics, carried out by the experiences developed in various local territorial realities [9-13].

The different approaches referred to social housing are ascribable to the theory of convergence and divergence [14-16]. Moreover, in reference to European Union countries, there are different politics and policies [10-13] developed on social housing.

Convergence theory includes two models of social housing: a mass model and residual model. The first focuses its subject on the intervention on people with a middle-lower income and the second refers definitely to the poor people. Within the approach of the divergence theory, a model of social housing aimed at market strengthening without competition (dual rental market) and a typical model of continental Europe (unitary rental market), which pursues the minimization of renting gaps instead, are included.

Different actors are intervening in this field making a scenario already variegated more complex, contributing directly and indirectly to its further evolution, according to a scheme that is possible to summarize as simultaneity in the co-presence, in which different actors define the living condition dimension, making it very complex (with the needs, peculiarities, values and resources at their disposal) highlighting the heterogeneity of different housing experiences, due to different cultural economic, managerial and political perspectives, with the paradoxical result of bringing back the aspect at the centre of the analysis that seems, more than others, to have been gradually neglected by the dynamics of housing instead, i.e., the social one.

Indeed, the dynamics of socio-cultural and economic changes of recent years have led to a profound alteration of the scenario and of the actors of

housing. Compared to the past, the housing question is posed in a completely different way, mainly because of the changed scenario in which it is located [17]: the social physiognomy of those seeking access to housing has a high degree of variability, ranging from single-income families to singles, from migrant workers to aged persons to university students, in a context of social and territorial evolution, much more blurred and complex than once—able to offer a perspective of multidimensional analysis of the phenomenon [8]—which is not subject to the possibility of a full representation in spite of the nature of social housing as a social service of general interest as set by the European Union (EU Commission, Brussels 2006, COM (2006), 177). The different interpretative and experimental modes leaded to an impossibility of defining a framework uniquely shared for the definition of social housing policy and politics. It seems anyway plausible to recognize a contextualization of social housing in terms of:

- construction of a residential identity, propulsive of the social inclusion of groups through the co-participation to liveableness and representation of places;
- copartnership/financial sustainability in the light of a governance, intended in its broadest sense, i.e., sociological, economic and relational [6, 18].

One of the theoretical models widely used in investigations on social housing is the one related to network governance, properly developed by several researchers such as Kickert and Koppenjan [19], Teisman [20] and now renewed by Sørensen and Torfing [21].

The advantage of this model, shown by Koopenjan and Klijin [22] is its potentiality for the activation of the resources of decision makers, linked in an interdependent relationship, with little or limited knowledge of procedure and placed in a context characterized by high disturbance in the environment. It's an approach having the advantage of a high epistemological incisiveness, compared to the challenge provided by a new configuration of the living space, filled by points of intersection due to aggregate social relations and cultural exchange, through the activation of decisional resources decision for interdependent and contextual actors.

Anyway, there are also critical issues related to inequalities of power and democratic participation related to this approach [4] and to the destabilizing role of uncertainty and increase of complexity because of the intertwining and overlapping of networks exceeding a certain level of interdependence, with the result of bringing knowledge and information flows at a level of deadlock and therefore of indecipherability of the decision-making. Moreover, the theme of uncertainty, which concerns not only the decisions, in the same view of the complexity strikes and, at times, can overwhelm the environment, the actors and the contexts, according to a joint that has found a clear exposure in the tripartite division of substantial strategic and institutional uncertainty [7]. Therefore, the approach of network governance seems to lead to the decision-making indecipherability, due to exceeding the critical threshold identified in excessive networks overlapping.

Last but not least, nowadays network governance applied to social housing, as an intermediate form between market and hierarchy, is no longer a homogeneous group [23, 24] with an uni-directionality of the process of bottom-up type, when it is oriented to public deliberation, or top-down, when decision-makers are the political level, technical experts having, in this case, citizens "suffering" the consequences of these decisions in some way. Therefore, the decision process related to the network offers features of:

- one-way (despite the pluriformity);
- increasing uncertainty (despite the closeness);
- increasing of the ranking of the relationship (despite the interdependence);
- increasing of the static orientation (despite the potential dynamics that this interaction should lead

to).

All the above mentioned aspects lead to a paradoxical result, i.e., when the intertwining and overlapping of the network of interactions exceed a critical threshold, all cognitive and informational processes that contributed to create the interdependence of the network lead to an immobility and an impossible decision making. In a broad sense, network governance promotes the evolutionary power of decision making itself within areas of preselected forces fields with a selected predetermination of dimensions that guide a unilateral decision-making function, carried out by individuals belonging to the network. Indeed, even if you can, however, ask actors about their perception or appreciation of the phenomenon under investigation, this aspect is only a further element compared with others that are central to the survey, for example, the type of involved actors, its characteristics or social variables of reference, its origin, etc.. The decision precedes the future in the network governance. Among other things, the actor, also if stimulated in terms of perception of the situation, is, however, alienated in his/her "closeness", which does not allow him/her to return his/her subjective perception to the whole picture, that is, the individual actor is called on perceptions and assessments that can rightly fall within the model of "self-interest". Precisely for the reasons expressed above, the network governance is not, for decision-making purposes, the functional and value telos of a housing recognizable and definable as social. It is evident that the need for a multi-relational approach, due to the convergence of the material aspects of housing (establishment, management, delivery, etc.) with those intangibles, namely their social ones, is related to people and services.

Considering the above summarized criticalities of network governance and also given the new complexity of the social housing issue, this paper intends to answer the following question: is it possible to find a different theoretical framework about governance able to give us different tools in order to simplify the decision making processes but without any alteration of any basic decisional element?

In order to answer this question, the aim of this paper is to contribute to the debate, with the proposal of what has been defined fluent governance as a framework of decision making able to represent the whole spectrum of interventions, in the decision making process, also taking into account those aspects that are not captured by standard models as the network governance.

2.1 A New Framework for Social Housing Governance: Characteristics Needed

To define a new framework able to overpass the limits of network governance in the field of social housing, it is necessary to define a scheme and consequent applicable tools, able to outline a governance model well suited for a representation of a housing that finally comes back to express its deeply social nature, being, at the same time, a model of decision, prevision or anticipation appropriate to support the decisions for a social housing that is still really social.

The theoretical perspective for this framework proposal ought to be based on being a framework able to overcome the ambiguities and methodological challenges noted in the context of the network governance. It indeed should be able, collecting a tradition of epistemological and sociological studies, to unify social complexity, systems theory and evolutionary models, taking shape as a unified approach of the social action oriented to the future. A model able to be "fluent", i.e., capable to promote evolutionary decision, considering the fluent structure of identity between system and environment, characterizing itself, then, for the residential identity of the actors, that is, to respect, in the collection of data about decisions and preferences of choice, the membership of each type of actor to his/her frame of reference, optimizing the functions of participation,

values and decision-making in respect of a logic of identity. In this way, the model could reduce uncertainty (that cannot be completely erased anyway) as much as possible, avoiding misrepresenting the decisional perspective of the actor involved in the process.

With the term “fluent identity”, we mean the protection of rights and citizenship, according to a relational approach and communication between institutions and civil society, in the same direction suggested by key concepts in sociological analysis, such as those of participation and social capital, where the analysis moves from the processes of collective and institutional construction of relations towards a valuable personal resource, now based on a free and complex interconnectedness of individuals and groups according to modeling bounded rationality and incremental decisions, able to explain the logic of identity and community of civilized life, of living in an inclusive manner, communicating negotiating meanings, desires and proposing future scenarios [25, 26]. Furthermore, the term “fluent identity” seems to rebuild and boost the horizontal space of communicative interaction, rather than vertical and hierarchical as in the traditional view, where a center and a periphery are replaced, the new reality dialectic and polyphonic of urban dislocation, multiple centers and peripheries, legitimizing a purpose explicitly inclusive of social exchange and dynamic local housing.

Therefore, the objective ought to avoid determining the choice depending on the situation (present or future), but to assess, even before the roles, tasks and functions of the actors, their propensities and expectations, requesting the personal visions of the future (supported by expertise, skills and abilities), to evoke the most plausible future for the choice of strategic actors/policy makers. It follows that the model should be one in which, as we are going to explain, the decision follows the future.

A model for a governance able to be “fluent” should be one in which the decision as such is neither considered in its structural (and therefore static) characteristics, nor in relation with the “consequences” arising from it (in terms of cost/benefit analysis as procedural rationality), but in its representation of the relationship between the present context of the actors and the future they would design, rationally oriented on the base of their expectations, perceptions and hopes, being able to give a plausible representation of a connection of rational strategy between present conditions and future perceptions. In this sense, the “new” framework able to have a “fluent” governance should be therefore in contrast with the network governance whose noble attempt to capture the decisional complexity to reach a decision as objective as possible (respecting the plurality of actors and the complexity of decision-making process itself) does not totally emancipate it from the traditional pattern of strategic “Olympic” rationality [27], i.e., it does not record the projection to the future of the decisions and dynamics that follow its action. We should have a model for a “fluent” governance that, on the contrary, comes out from the dichotomy between a functional strategy (logic of identity) and a procedural strategy (logic of consequences) to reach, passing through innovative contributions on strategies for rational decision-making to a model that takes the challenge of resolving the complexity without reducing it or resize it, catching, in the subjective rational prospects, not the determinants of action (decision) but their tendencies which may develop themselves in the future, then, in a neither procedural nor decisional perspective, but according to a logic of propensity type having the advantage of “bringing out” the decision form of a desired future, rather than polluting the future with an “objective” decision.

While in the network governance, the variables, oriented towards the decision, are previously isolated, recognized and classified with a specific gravity (indices), the framework for a “fluent” governance should be able to have variables arising from the

subjective projections of the actors in the sense that they should not be forced to select “only” one kind of meaning but should be left free to smoothly “explore” their perceptions on the phenomenon under investigation, leaving then the possibility to different perceptions of finding a “convergence” that is, ultimately, a direction towards the future (anticipation) and not a decision for the present (prevision).

This prevision instead of anticipation might be able to encourage, in the best possible way, a housing still social, as there is the anticipation as the desirable and plausible change and the action as a strategic choice in it. In this way, the anthropological fundamental condition of the “person”, understood in an ecological and evolutionary sense, remains, so to say, preserved and safeguarded against rational and strategic directions taken in the moment of the decision, ultimately optimizing the convergence already highlighted of the collective, individual and situational “visions” of the different actors.

The model of being able to build a “fluent” governance ought to be able to capture the change without abstracting it. In this sense, it is not necessary to find a new paradigm that intends to substitute the already present ones, it is, on the contrary, necessary to find an instrument of “fluidification” of the decision making process for the definition of the different policies.

2.2 A “Fluent” Governance for Social Housing Thanks to the Structural Analysis

Stated above the basic characteristic for allowing us to overcome the critical issues of the network governance, the point is if it is possible to find a tool able to give us the prospect to have a “fluent” governance in social housing.

The idea proposed in this paper is to use structural analysis as efficient and effective tool in order to develop a “fluent” governance.

Structural analysis is a method that allows the explanation of the system through the identification of the “key variables”, divided in internal and external variables.

Structural analysis consists of three main steps:

(1) Inventory of variables. In this stage, using expert opinions, all the variables, internal or external, that characterize the system are defined. The definition of a list of variables should be as exhaustive as possible, avoiding leaving out important elements describing the system. It is also important to create a glossary in order to avoid any wrong interpretation among the experts so that the variables are easily understandable for people outside the group of experts;

(2) Description of relationships between variables. Once defined the variables, the important task is to reconstruct and describe the web of relations between them. Using matrices, the work, made by experts, consists in defining direct influences between variables taken in pairs. The Micmac method [25] allows the comparison among all the variable and, in particular, is based on a square matrix where the experts declare the existence and the degree of influence of each variable toward the others. In the junction between the generic row variable (V_i) and the generic column variable (V_j), in the cell of the matrix, the experts will put 1, if the variable V_i has a direct influence on V_j, and 0 otherwise. Therefore, the Micmac matrix is a square matrix with zeroes and ones that allows a simplification of the problem and permits the assembling and the identification of the key variables of the system. With “fluent governance” model, it is intended to add different opinions and to provide democracy by the participation of different users, as well as enhancing the quality by the multiplication of ideas. However, all these differences are evaluated between 0~1 (white or black) paradoxically;

(3) Identification of essential variables. This last stage consists in identifying essential variables of the system’s global dynamics. The variables are visualized in a perception graph, called

influence-dependence plane, from which it is possible to recognize various groups of variables. In particular, influent variables, depending variables and relay variables (they are very influent and very dependent at the same time) can be identified.

Besides the direct relations among the variables that come out from the Micmac matrices, it is also possible to detect the indirect relations. In general, there are many chains of influence and feedback among the relevant variables in a system, and, in order to point out the key variables, it is also important to consider the indirect relations. That is why starting from the original matrix, two ranking of the variables can be made, one using the total by row that represents the influence capacity of each variable, and one based on the total by column that represents a measure of the dependence of each variable. Raising the matrix to the 2nd power (multiply the matrix by itself), we obtain a new matrix that represents the indirect relations of the 2nd order and two new rankings (one for the influence and one for the dependence) are calculated. Raising the matrix to subsequent powers, it is possible to highlight other relations and, starting from a certain power of the original matrix, the two rankings become stable (that means they do not change any more) and represent the final Micmac classification.

A detailed explanation of variables is indispensable to follow up the analysis and recognize relationships between the variables and generates a database to be made which is required for any prospective thinking.

In this systemic approach, a variable exists only through its relationship with other variables. Structural analysis thus attempts to discover the relationships between variables in a dual-entry table called "structural analysis matrix".

In this way, comparing the hierarchy of variables in the various classifications (direct, indirect and potential), it is possible to have a rich source of information that enables not only to confirm the importance of certain variables, but also to uncover certain variables which play an important role (yet were not identifiable through direct classification) because of their indirect actions.

The primary advantage of structural analysis is that it stimulates thought and generates ideas among group members, thus encouraging them to think about counter-intuitive aspects of how a system works. Participants should not be taken literally but should be made to think.

One limitation of the structural analysis concern the subjective nature of the list of variables drawn up during the first phase, but if this aspect can be seen as a limitation by a statistical point of view, in our prospects, i.e., the possibility to have a governance in social housing which is "fluent", this aspect represents a strong point in some sense due to that it is not possible to lose any opinion or idea in this way. Obviously, the point is that it is important to have a panel able to represent as much stakeholders as possible from all different categories. Indeed, structural analysis is not a reality but a means of looking at reality. This tool enables a group to find a method to pool ideas by reducing the inevitable biases. In fact, the results as well as the input data (list of variables and matrix) inform as much about the manner in which reality is perceived by the working group and therefore about the group itself, as about the system under observation.

Starting from the consideration that, theoretically, structural analysis might be a valid tool for building a "fluent" governance in social housing, the point is that this tool might be easily used in practice. This paper reports about a first trial made in Italy in order to develop the possibility to use structural analysis for the governance of social housing issues.

2.3 A "Fluent" Governance for Social Housing: A First Experimentation for a Possible Actualization

In order to experiment a first trial of "fluent" governance for social housing, we carried out a first conducting test in Italy in 2011. We asked for the participation of eight persons representing of the

following categories:

- local policy makers;
- civil servant dealing with social housing;
- local representatives of the union of the tenants;
- local representatives of the public association for social housing;
- academics involved in studying social housing.

On one hand, if it was important to have a group composed of local actors representing the above mentioned categories, on the other, it was important to avoid any possible bias linked to a specific territory or tradition, because we thought it was important to run a first practical experimentation able to represent a "general" Italian scenario and not the representation of what was going on in a specific territory. That is why the participants were from different Italian regions (also in order to avoid misrepresentations caused by the well-know differences present between North and South Italy).

The first phase, i.e., the inventory of variables was conducted sending a formal request (together with a specific format and information for compilation) asking the group components to freely list what they thought as important variables about social housing in Italy.

The collected variables have been then reviewed by us in order to "unify" the same variables expressed by the group components using different terminology (for example, defining the same variables using Italian words by a member of the group and English words by another). This happened because some words like governance, empowerment, community, are nowadays currently used in Italian without translation, constructing, in this way and accordingly to the structural analysis foreseen steps, a glossary in order to avoid any wrong interpretation among the experts and so that the variables might be easily understandable for all.

At the end of this first phase, it has therefore been possible to list the following group of variables:

- network governance and participated democracy (classified *V*1);
- community empowerment (classified *V*2);
- social sustainability (classified *V*3);
- technological/environmental sustainability (classified *V*4);
- economic/financial sustainability (classified *V*5);
- public communication and promotion (classified *V*6).

After the conclusion of the first step with the listing of variables, it has been possible to run the second step of the description of relationships among variables. In order to develop this second part of the analysis, we constructed a specific matrix that has been sent to all the group components with specific indications on how to fill it for defining direct influences between variables taken in pairs. In this way, it has been possible to develop a Micmac square matrix with zeroes and ones, allowing us a simplification of the problem and permitting the assembling and the identification of the key variables of the system.

The resultant obtained information regarding the second step allowed us the identification of essential variables that gave us the following results.

2.3.1 Direct Relations

From the Micmac matrixes filled by the components of the group, regarding direct relations, the values of driving and dependency are presented in Table 1.

The graphical representation of the variables (Fig. 1) allows us to take some considerations upon the different behaviors of the variables examined within the system of Italian social housing. The horizontal line represents the driving and meanwhile the vertical

Table 1 Driving and dependency in direct relations.

Variable	Driving	Dependency
*V*1	6	4
*V*2	4	6
*V*3	5	7
*V*4	7	5
*V*5	8	6
*V*6	2	4

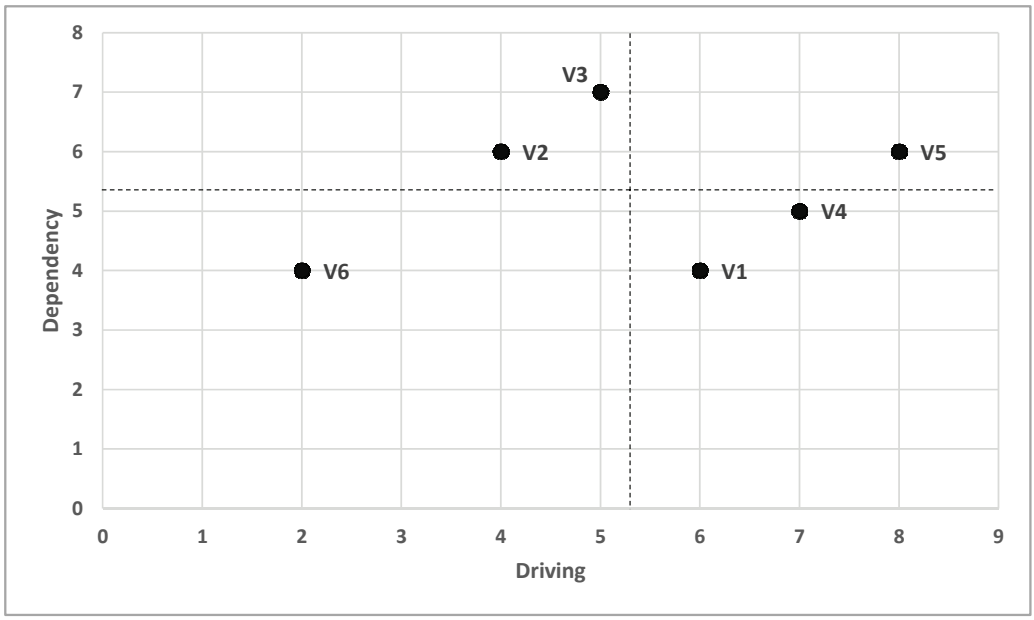

Fig. 1 Influence and dependency of direct relations.

one represents the dependency mean.

2.3.2 Relay Variables

Relay variables are both very driving and very dependent and are graphically situated within the top right quadrant. In the examined case, the relay variable resulted to be *V*5, i.e., the economic/financial sustainability. This variable is an element of instability within the Italian social housing system and any action made on this variable will lead to consequences on all the others, with the risk of creating a boomerang effect.

Indeed, it is important to note that *V*5 is related, according to the opinions expressed by the group members, with the profitability of a social housing project, availability of building areas at a "fair" price, taxation and funds (grants, facilitations and contributions).

2.3.3 Determinant or "Driving" Variables

These variables are graphically situated within the low right quadrant and have a high degree of driving and a low level of dependency. It means that the system is strongly dependent on these variables. In the examined case, the driving variables resulted to be *V*1 and *V*4, seen by the members of the group, as related with: direct participation of both public and private actors of social housing (*V*1); building quality and liveableness of the house according to urban, architectonic and technological profiles (*V*4).

The degree of action that it is possible to have on these variables is important because it depends on the future evolution of the system. It is important to note also that *V*1 and *V*4 are variables strictly linked with the general contest and environment that strongly influence the system but on which it is very difficult to have a control.

2.3.4 Depending Variables

These variables are located in the top left quadrant of the graph and are very dependent and are not much driving. So they are variables that are sensible according to the evolution of the driving variables. In our analysis (*V*2 and *V*3 resulted to be depending variables), according to the members of the group, the dependency is linked with the participation, since the planning phase, of the representatives of the community that will compose the group of tenants (*V*2) together with the analysis of the of the potential and the expressed demand, the analysis of the supply for the different typologies (rent, purchase), social quality of the territorial contest (segregation versus social mix, presence of basic services, social capital in terms of

network at local level) (*V*3).

These variables can be also considered the output of the system.

2.3.5 Excluded Variables

These are variables near to the origin that have low driving level and low dependency, so they are outside the dynamics of the system. In our case, *V*6 resulted to be an excluded variable. Anyway, it must be noted that this variable is not very close to the origin, but located a little bit towards the top, so it is nearly a dependent variable not too far from *V*2 and *V*3. It means that, in our case, communication campaigns to promote benefits and positive results in social terms of a social housing project (building quality as well as quality life within the territory) do not represent a "valid" aspect on which it is useful to intervene in order to reach intended results.

2.3.6 Indirect Relations

Moving forward to the later powers of the MIMAC matrix, it is possible to define the levels of driving and dependency within the indirect relations (Table 2).

It is then useful to compare driving among direct and indirect relations. In Fig. 2, it is possible to see that the ordering of the variables does not change much according to their degree of driving between direct and indirect relations. Only variables *V*1 and *V*3 change their position in the ranking, while all the others maintain their position.

It means then that the key variables of Italian social housing maintain their driving force also in the long period.

Finally, Fig. 3 shows the two rankings of the variables (one for the direct relations and the other for the indirect one) on the levels of dependency of the variables. It is possible to note that *V*3 is and remains the most dependent variable. *V*2 is very dependent in direct relations, but after the reciprocal influences among all variables, it is less dependent in the long term.

Variables *V*1 and *V*6 are the less dependent and remain the same also after the interactions made within the system among all the variables. In this sense, considering that *V*6 resulted to be an excluded variable, then the driving variable of the whole system is *V*1.

Table 2 Driving and dependency in indirect relations.

Variable	Driving	Dependency
*V*1	6.00	4.63
*V*2	3.79	5.25
*V*3	6.20	6.74
*V*4	6.68	5.31
*V*5	7.77	6.04
*V*6	1.37	3.85

Direct relations			Indirect relations	
*V*5	8		*V*5	7.7736
*V*4	7		*V*4	6.6833
*V*1	6		*V*3	6.1984
*V*3	5		*V*1	5.9965
*V*2	4		*V*2	3.7922
*V*6	2		*V*6	1.3736

Fig. 2 Comparison of the driving force of the variables.

Direct relations			Indirect relations	
*V*3	7		*V*3	6.74
*V*2	6		*V*5	6.04
*V*5	6		*V*4	5.31
*V*4	5		*V*2	5.25
*V*1	4		*V*1	4.63
*V*6	4		*V*6	3.85

Fig. 3 Comparison of the dependency of the variables.

2.4 A "Fluent" Governance for Social Housing: Analysis of the Results of the First Experimentation

According to the conducted analysis, the economic/financial sustainability that concerns the profitability of a social housing project, availability of building areas at a "fair" price, taxation and funds (grants, facilitations and contributions), represents the greater element of instability within the Italian social housing system. In this sense, it is evident that cultural inheritance is still strongly influencing the institutional change occurred in Italian social housing system in the last decade [6]. This aspect underlines the fragility of the new system introduced with the reforms established in the last 10 years, showing the centrality of the availability of building areas together with the involvement and selection of private subjects trough grants or facilitations that, according to the Law 244/2007, should be defined locally according to regional laws [6]. Our analysis shows how (according to the opinion of the members belonging to different categories of stakeholders involved in the social housing system) the concrete definition of some aspects stated in the law, such as: urban plans for the definition of social housing, definition and availability of areas and/or building blocks, together with the correction of the logic of the standards [6] still need a clear definition in order to avoid a possible collapsing of the whole reform system.

On the other hand, if it is true that everything is centered on a actual implementation of the reform (considering all the risks of a not correct intervention on such a sensible variable as *V*5), it is also true that two aspects can really help in "guiding" the Italian social housing system towards a right development path. Indeed, the driving variables *V*1 and *V*4, concerning direct participation of both public and private actors of social housing as well as building quality and liveableness of the house according to urban, architectonic and technological profiles, represent important and valid levers for developing a real "social" housing system. Indeed, in some sense, if the system (according to the opinion expressed by the group members) will be able to assure, on each single local project, a good level of participation of a large category of stakeholders (both public and private) together with good standards of quality building and liveableness (something not always assured in the past tradition of the whole Italian housing system, not only in the case of social one), it might be possible to locally "drive" each project towards valid goals.

One last consideration needs to be done on the fact that participation, since the planning phase, of the representatives of the community will compose the group of tenants, together with the analysis of the potential and expressed demand, the analysis of the supply for the different typologies (rent and purchase), social quality of the territorial contest (segregation versus social mix, presence of basic services, social capital in terms of network at local level), i.e., what expressed by *V*2 and *V*3 that can be seen as the social components of the system, represents, according to our analysis, the "output" of the system. Then, if the Italian system will be able to clearly define a valid frame (*V*5) thanks to the use of participated democracy (*V*1) together with technological/environmental sustainability (*V*4), it will be able to develop itself, in the near future, as a "still social" housing considering that *V*1 and *V*4 can be seen as the output of the system.

3. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to look for a different theoretical framework about social housing governance able to give us different tools in order to simplify the decision making processes, being able to overcome the limits of the most used model of network governance at the same time, especially issues related to inequalities of power and democratic participation and to the destabilizing role of uncertainty and increase of complexity because of the intertwining and overlapping of networks exceed a certain level of interdependence.

The contribute given was the proposal of what has been defined “fluent governance” as a framework of decision making able to represent the whole spectrum of interventions, in the decision making process, also taking into account those aspects that are not captured by standard models as network governance.

After having delineated the basic needed characteristic for a framework able to outline a fluent governance, we thought to use structural analysis as a valid tool for developing the new proposed framework.

A first experimentation of the proposed model and consequent tools has been conducted in Italy in the field of renovating social housing policy. The paper reported the results of a structural analysis conducted using Micmac method for the identification of key variables useful for detecting the forecast of possible different scenarios in developing social housing policies in Italy.

Results show that this method can really be a useful one in order to develop a framework of decision making able to represent the whole spectrum of interventions, taking into account also those aspects that are not captured by standard models as the network governance in the decision making process.

By the analysis of the results, emerging from the run experimentation, it is possible to conclude that Italian social housing system is nowadays entirely centered on the ability of a right definition of the frame according to what enounced in the Law 244/2007 (i.e., a valid intervention on economic/financial sustainability). This right definition of the frame ought to be realized thanks levers as participated democracy in the planning having the aim also of a technological/environmental long term sustainability, which resulted to be the driving variables of the conducted analysis. In this sense, it is possible to conclude that for what regards the Italian social housing system, if it still wants to be a social one, able to reach community empowerment and social sustainability, which resulted as depending variables and output of the system, it is important to act on participated democracy and technological/environmental sustainability after having a clear definition of the general scheme foreseen by the changes pushed by Law 244/2007.

Indeed, the presented experimentation gives, in our opinion, a valid definition of key variables and general scheme of both strong and weak aspects of Italian social housing system. Obviously, it is not possible to affirm that the run experimentation represents the birth of a new model of governance, but obtained results, in our opinion, encourage the replication of other pilot experimentations in different contexts in order to clearly define the possibility to have a model of governance that does not forget the basic aspect of social housing, i.e., the social one.

One limit, in the proposed experimentation, might be considered the number of involved stakeholder in this first experimentation about the validity of the Micmac method for developing the fluent governance model. Indeed, in this first experimentation, different categories of different stakeholders involved in the process, also from different part of Italy were chosen. The fact that eight respondents, involved in the social housing aspects, with no connections among them, gave answers in a valid way for the reliability of the Micmac method as a tool for developing the fluent governance model is indeed a proof of the fact that, even in the hypothesis of multiplying the number of respondents and the number of categories (summarizing in this way different aspects, through a valid sum of variables expressed in a 0, 1 value) the Micmac method can be used(obviously making elaborations much more complex than the ones run in this experimentation), for developing a method useful for having a fluent governance in which, in the decision making process, all variables, by all different involved categories, can be considered for having a valid guiding tool in developing a social housing system.

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