



**REDUCING
HOUSING
INEQUALITIES**



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Nature-Based Solutions and Housing Inequalities: the Segantini–Baden Powell Park case (Milan)

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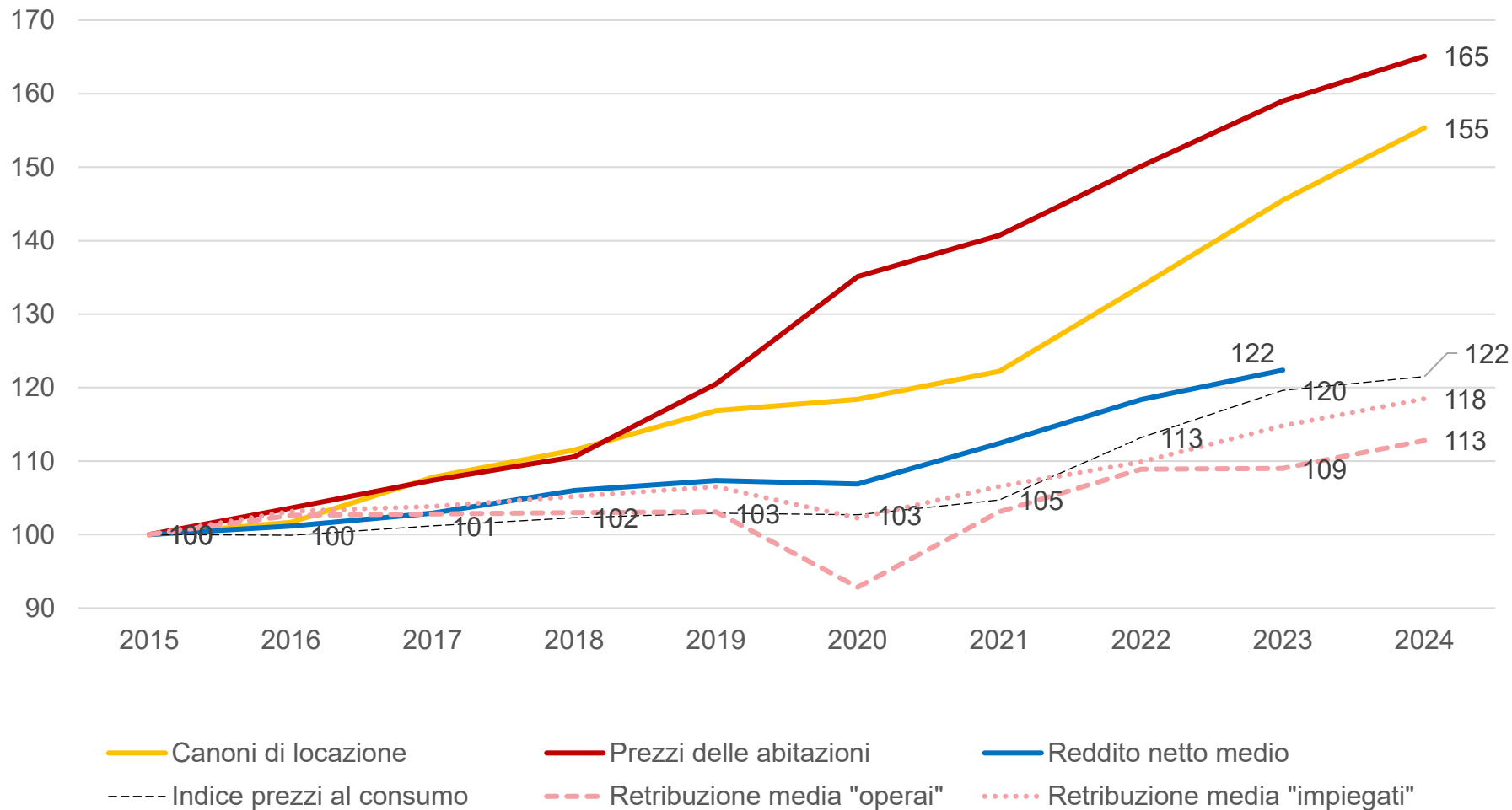


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- **How do nature-based solutions affect housing markets and affordability?**
- **What mechanisms can prevent green gentrification and displacement?**
- **How can environmental improvements prioritize vulnerable communities?**
- **What governance tools ensure equitable access to green infrastructure?**

Housing costs and rents



Housing prices

Rents

Incomes

Salaries of blue and white collars

Download report:
www.oca.milano.it

Source: Osservatorio Casa Abordabile's elaboration based on various sources.

Case framing: Milano and Nature-Based Solutions

- On one hand, large-scale projects, such as the **Porta Nuova redevelopment (case 1)**, illustrate a paradigm of top-down, market-led densification, high-profile architectural and privately managed green infrastructure (BAM) → vague reference to sustainability which is often deemed as greenwashing.
- On the other hand, **Baden Powell and Segantini parks, in the Navigli neighborhood (case 2)** rooted in civic engagement, community-led resistance to speculative redevelopment and negotiated planning. Originally planned for high-density residential construction, the site was reclaimed through the activism of local associations, resulting in a system of two connected public parks and a significantly reduced building footprint.

Urban, social and housing context of the Navigli area

- The Navigli area features a **dense and socially stratified urban fabric**, combining historic **private housing** with large **public housing** estates (1920s) and more recent **cooperative developments**.
- The public housing complex along via Gola is a node of significant social vulnerability, marked by physical degradation, informal occupations and socio-economic hardship.
- At the same time, tourism, nightlife and growing residential attractiveness exert strong market pressures, driving up housing values and short-term rentals.
- In this context, the historical lack of public green spaces has affected quality of life, and several civic organisations have played an active role







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Segantini and Baden Powell Park: Key spatial and temporal data

- Baden Powell Park: approx- 35.000 m² (Opened 2005)
- Segantini park: approx. 100.000 m² (opened 2015)
- Integrated green system, approx 135.000 m²
- Incremental implementation spanning more than two decades
- Area historically characterized by a lack of public green spaces

Facts and figures: housing and governance data linked to the park system

- Large public housing estate (Via Gola) approx 700 dwellings
- Cooperative housing nearby (CCL) approx 170 dwellings (2021-2023)
- Associazione parco Segantini established in 2013
- Hybrid governance model: public ownership + civic co-management
- Strong and active local committees activated against speculation and for green open spaces

The Segantini–Baden Powell Park as an urban Nature-Based Solution

- The park emerged from the transformation of a **former industrial and pharma site** into a large public green space: “the outcome of a long sequence of precedents, interrupted projects, and civic mobilization, rather than the linear delivery of a unitary and broad plan”.
- The remediation and redevelopment of the large open spaces was not immediate, and that abandonment produced degradation for years. The condition of **neglect**, together with **uncertainty about ownership and redevelopment trajectories**, is depicted as one of the factors that enabled residents to frame the park as a matter of **collective entitlement**.
- Public governance and co-design: public ownership and the involvement of local associations guided both design and maintenance.

The Segantini – Baden Powell park in Navigli (Milan)



2003



2025

How do nature-based solutions affect housing markets and affordability?

- In the Segantini–Baden Powell case, **the impact of nature-based solutions on housing markets appears nuanced** rather than dramatic.
- The presence of a large public park has increased area attractiveness and, for sure, **the value of properties facing the green space.**
- **The long and incremental implementation, the absence of iconic real estate developments** directly integrated with the park, and **public management have moderated market impacts.**
- **HOWEVER:** most stakeholders identify the overall city trends, tourism, infrastructure and leisure-related transformations in the Navigli as the **primary drivers of gentrification, rather than the park itself.**



Mechanisms to prevent green gentrification and displacement

- The reduction of buildable volumes compared to original development plans preserved a large share of land as public green space, limiting private value capture.
- Public ownership and management prevented selective access and privatisation dynamics.
- Structured civic participation and incremental implementation slowed speculative transformations and favoured social appropriation over time.

Housing affordability and the role of cooperative housing

- A key feature of the Segantini–Baden Powell case is the presence of cooperative housing as a buffer against market pressures.
- Nearby cooperative developments delivered owner-occupied dwellings at below-market costs between 2021 and 2023.
- These interventions allowed households already living or working in the area to remain, counteracting displacement linked to environmental upgrading.
- The case shows that housing affordability in the presence of NBS largely depends on the availability of non-market housing instruments.





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How can environmental improvements prioritise vulnerable communities?

- Environmental improvements in the Segantini–Baden Powell system have largely benefited socially vulnerable groups.
- The park is freely accessible and used daily also by low-income households, children and elderly residents, including public housing tenants.
- Educational activities with local schools, often attended by children with migrant backgrounds, support inclusion and learning.
- Shared gardens and citizen-managed natural areas foster social ties, although participation from the most fragile public housing residents remains uneven.









Governance tools for equitable access to green infrastructure

- Governance is one of the most distinctive elements of the Segantini–Baden Powell case.
- A hybrid model combines public ownership with civic co-design and co-management.
- The Associazione Parco Segantini has played a central role in shaping priorities and managing specific areas through volunteer work and technical expertise.
- This model enhances flexibility and responsiveness to local needs, while raising questions of long-term sustainability and coordination with municipal services.

Policy lessons

- Nature-based solutions should be explicitly integrated with housing policies to avoid exclusionary outcomes.
- Land value capture mechanisms could redistribute the benefits generated by green infrastructure beyond the immediate area.
- Equity outcomes depend less on green infrastructure per se than on governance arrangements and housing systems.
- The quality of urban green spaces lies in their everyday use, accessibility and capacity for social appropriation over time.



Yet, such a pioneering NBS experience was developed in a context in which basic access to affordable housing is a severe and major social concern for many...

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Thank you for your attention!

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