A DIFFERENT PATH

HOMELESSNESS AND LGBT PEOPLE

RESEARCH REPORT AND HANDBOOK FOR PROFESSIONALS

Avvocato di strada Onlus

8tto per mille
CHIESA VALDESE
UNIONE DELLE CHIESE METODISTE E VALDESI

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APPENDIX

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A DIFFERENT PATH.
HOMELESSNESS AND LGBT PEOPLE

The project "A Different Path," has been realized by Avvocato di Strada – Onlus during 2014 with the contribution of the Chiesa Evangelica Valdese (Valdese Evangelical Church) through its 8x1000 fund. The project aimed to research and intervene on a new category at risk of homelessness that is represented by LGBT people.

It is common knowledge among professionals working with homeless people in Italy, although rarely talked about, that stigmatized factors in our society such as sexual orientation and gender identity are causes, or at least are associated causes, of life on the street. The project, therefore, was thought and realized to favor the rights protection and psychological and physical wellbeing gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans people living in extreme conditions of marginalization and poverty.

During the project, it has been worked for the creation of a network among the different Bolognese realities working in the field of social exclusion and LGBT – ism. It has been created a team of lawyers, educators and volunteering professionals who are able to guarantee adequate responses to the needs of people in difficulty and adequate safeguard against the many discriminations because of sexual orientation and the homeless state.

The objectives of the project are:

RESEARCH First of all, the project aimed to conduct an analysis of the problems and interventions directed to LGBT people living in extremely marginalized situation in Bologna. The resulting data are collected in this publication.

TRAINING Between October and November 2014 to training cycle have been put into place: the first one was focused on the topics of sexual orientation and gender identity and addressed to professionals of associations and services working with homeless people; the second one, addressed to lawyers and also professionals and social workers, has been focused on legal aspects and in particular the analysis of the main legal issues that a LGBT homeless person could face. Professionals, lawyers experts in LGBT issues and our volunteers are at beneficiaries' disposal.

LEGAL SUPPORT Avvocato di Strada has promoted a special helpdesk where homeless LGBT people can be listened to and get free legal support. The helpdesk was, and is, available through mail booking at bologna@avvocatodistrada.it, to guarantee an higher confidentiality outside normal helpdesk which has open access.

AWARENESS The project results in a video output showing with images and words the life, problems and resources of a LGBT person living in the street. The goal is to bring awareness and information to to citizens and institutions, with the aim of acknowledge, deconstruct and overcome the stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination that intersect and that worsen when an LGBT person lives in the street.

The project team included both professionals and lawyers who are engaged in homelessness issues and professionals and lawyers engaged in LGBT issues.

PROJECT DURATION / 01 febbraio 2014 – 31 dicembre 2014

COORDINATORS / Giuseppina Digiglio, Jacopo Fiorentino, Costantino Giordano

RESEARCHERS / Carlo Francesco Salmaso e Giuliana Sias

TRAINERS / Carlo Francesco Salmaso e Irene Pasini

REALISED WITH the contribution of the 8x1000 fund of the Chiesa Evangelica Valdese

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AVVOCATO DI STRADA ONLUS

Associazione Avvocato di Strada - Onlus is an organization of volunteers established in Bologna in February of 2007 by the suggestion of a group of lawyers who since 2001 freely protected homeless people' rights in many Italian cities. The goal of the Association is to defend the rights of the homeless people that often cannot escape from their precarious condition precisely because they are lacking a qualified and organized legal support.

THE BRANCHES / Today, Avvocato di Strada has branches in Ancona, Andria, Bari, Bologna, Bolzano, Catania, Cerignola, Cremona, Ferrara, Florence, Foggia, Genoa, Iesi, La Spezia, Lecce, Macerata, Milan, Modena, Monza, Naples, Padua, Palermo, Parma, Pavia, Pescara, Piacenza, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Rome, Rovigo, Salerno, Syracuse, Taranto, Turin, Trieste, Venice, Verona and Vicenza. All helpdesks are established within organizations of volunteers specifically working with homeless people. Each helpdesk is organized as a real legal office, with timetable and opening days during the year. Every Avvocato di Strada branch has full organizational autonomy and is part of the national association Avvocato di Strada. Each helpdesk, at the moment of establishment, commits to collaborate with other branches in the nation, in addition to the national Association, providing, as a simply statistic measure, data on the activity addressed to homeless people. Today in Italy more than 700 lawyers collaborate within Avvocato di Strada project, counting those volunteering in the already opened branches and those who declared themselves available to freely provide their service for cases domiciled in cities where there is no braches opened yet.

THE PUBLICATIONS / Avvocato di Strada published a pamphlet in 2001 entitled "Lascia che la giustizia scorra come l'acqua" (Let the justice flow like water) that presented the project and illustrated the objectives of the service offered by the Association. Since 2003, every year the "**Dove andare per…**" (Where to go for…) has been pulished: it is the Bologna guide for homeless people with indications on where to go to get food, to get clothes, to clean themselves, to sleep, to see a doctor, to look for a job, and, naturally, to seek legal assistance and consultation. The initiative has been replicated also in other cities like Modena, Monza and Padua. In March 2004, Avvocato di Strada published the book "**I diritti e la povertà**" (Rights and poverty) (Edizioni Sigem) where the first years and the most important achievements of the helpdesk have been described. In September 2007, "**I diritti dei minori**" (The rights of minors) was published: it is a book on Avvocato di Strada experience and on legal problems connected to childhood where a series of testimonies on solved and unsolved questions related to minors living in social exclusion conditions are collected. In 2011, Avvocato di Strada published "**Povertà e cittadinanza**" (Poverty and Citizenship), a research carried out by Istituto di Ricerca e Formazione sulle Politiche Sociali IRESS Soc. Coop. (The Institute of Research and Training on Social policies IRESS Soc. Coop.) devoted to the activites performed by the association's volunteers within Avvocato di Strada branches in Emilia Romagna region.

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THE FIVOL AWARD / The project Avvocato di Strada was awarded by the Fondazione Italiana per il Volontariato (Italian Foundation for Volunteering) as the best project in 2001 addressing homelessness.

THE EUROPEAN CITIZEN AWARD / The European Parliament has appointed the Association of Avvocato di Strada - Onlus the **CIVI EUROPAEO PREMIUM 2013**. The award, established in 2009 by the European Parliament, aims at recognizing individuals or groups of people who showed an exceptional commitment in the following areas: activities or actions that distinguish themselves for their exceptionality in promoting a better mutual recognition and a close integration between the State members population; daily actions putting into practice the values of hospitality, solidarity, and tolerance or encouraging European integration; particularly meritorious actions undertaken by citizens in the context European Union work with third states and that translate into practice the values of solidarity and of international cooperation.

THE COOPERATION WITH UNAR, FIOPSD AND FEANTSA / With the aim of increasing the cooperation network with the not-for-profit sector, UNAR - the office for the promotion of equal treatment and ending of discrimination based on race or ethnicity established by the Council of Ministers Department for the Rights and Equal Opportunity - in February 2008 signed a protocol agreement with the association "Avvocato di Strada". UNAR has the role of guaranteeing, with an autonomous point of view and with impartiality, the effectiveness of the principle of equal treatment of people; of monitoring the efficiency of protection tools in place against discriminations and of contributing in the removal of discriminations based on race and ethnicity analyzing the different impact they have on gender and their relation with other forms of racism based on cultural and religious beliefs. The objective of the protocol is to create a link between victims and associations entitled to act and forensic sector. Since April 2008 Avvocato di Strada - Onlus has been a member of fio.PSD, Federazione Italiana Organismi per Persone Senza Dimora (The Italian Federation of Organizations for Homeless people) that pursues the goal of social solidarity in the sector of extreme adult marginalization and homelessness (http://www. fiopsd.org). Since 2008 Avvocato di Strada has been invited by Feantsa (European Federation of National Organisations Working With the Homeless) to represent Italy in the "**Housing Rights Watch**", a European network composed of an interdisciplinary group of associations, lawyers and academics coming from different nations, that have the goal of promoting housing rights for all.

This publication is only one of many results reached thanks to all our volunteers who everyday with their work allow this initiative to strengthen and grow: all the volunteers of Avvocato di Strada commit themselves being aware that defending the rights of weaker people means defending the rights of everybody.

Antonio Mumolo
President of Avvocato di strada Onlus

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ABSTRACT

Introduction / The research stems from these three questions:
1) Do specific needs/vulnerabilities of homeless LGBT people exist?
2) In which context are they expressed and what reactions do they generate?
3) Are they relevant in the context of the services for homeless people?
Twenty in-depth interviews to volunteers, professionals and homeless people were carried out involving services addressing homeless people and services addressing LGBT people in Bologna.

1. The System of Services / There are no specific services for homeless LGBT people, with a unique exceptions. The network of Bolognese services is characterized by strong connections among services with the same targets (homeless or LGBT), while the connection among services with different targets, with few informal exceptions, are initiated starting from professionals' personal connections when addressing single problematic cases.

2. Visibility and Invisibility of Homeless LGBT people / Homeless LGBT people are rarely declared; professionals think that they can be many more than the ones actually declared. Generally, LGBT people who declare themselves prefer to do it only with some professionals they trust. Declared people cases are increasing. We identify seven models of invisibility which prevent to know this phenomena, the first one is performed by homeless LGBT people, whereas the other six ones refer to the professionals:
• **Not defining oneself, denial:** the person do not want to talk about himself/herself as LGBT.
• **The errors of focusing:** the professional is not able to put the analysis in terms of stigma.
• **The privacy**: the professional prefer not to talk about users' personal sphere.
• **The perfetc question**: the professional is able to take action only if the person ask for help in a proper manner.
• **The interlocking within solutions**: I search only where I already know that I can find a solution.
• **The emergency**: in which only immediate survival issues emerge.
• **The unchanging context**: in which only invisibility causes are defined so that they cannot be removed.
The invisibility and visibility in stigmatized contexts create further marginality within extreme marginalization situations.

3. A story / The story of a young homeless gay foreigner.

4. The problems / We identify some problems specific of homeless LGBT people which are often strongly interconnected to each other.

• **Coming out:** it emerges that difficulty of declaring LGBT to oneself and to the others. People may feel they must take the impossible choice between being oneself and the community. Some people keep both existence plans separating them: the suffering of the "double life".

• **The family rift**: when the conflict within family relations becomes unsustainable and a rift emerges two sets of problem emerge: the material sustenance and the crisis of the personal role of wife, son, sister, etc.

• **Social estrangement**: when the coming out negatively reverberates in all aspects of one's life, the LGBT person may also leave first, not wanting to bear the judge and the hostility of people who are significant to him/her.

• **The stigma**: it emerges as it not only related to sporadic episodes of violence but that it constitutes a constant presence tied to the invisibility and to the absence of positive conversations.

• **Solitude, shame, self-image:** people and professionals tend not to go further when discussing about these issues. The shame connected to their actions may easily come to concern the whole person in its being.

5. The needs / We identify some specific needs of homeless LGBT people, often strongly interconnected among each other:

• **Support, protection and hope:** people demonstrate a need of support and protection, but also of believing to have concrete opportunity to get it.

• **The other explanation – the getaway from the stigma:** the need to give a sense to one self's homosexual behaviors without declaring oneself as homosexual. This confirm the stigma presence and the coherent images of oneself.

• **The identification, legitimization and the construction of sense:** person's necessity of receiving positive feedbacks from the surrounding contexts and to build new positive meanings that make the stigma false.

• **The job:** despite being a frequent need for homeless people, it becomes a structural need for trans people.

• **Health and wellbeing:** the theme clearly emerges when related to trans people, with specific needs connected to the transition. For gay people the theme emerges in relation to HIV and sexual practices.

• **Legal assistance:** it is mostly necessary in family conflicts for maintaining and, rarely, required against hate crimes. Among professionals it is widespread the impression that the rarity of requests related to hate crimes derives mainly from the difficulty to make the phenomena emerging and the lack of judicial specific instruments to monitor it than from its low numeric evidence.

6. The interventions / We identify certain practical aspects that positively or negatively influence the supportive relationship with homeless LGBT people.

• **The normality:** professionals don't worry about LGBT people's potential problematics because homo-transexuality is a normal thing, thus ignoring the stigmatizing context and its effects on people.

• **The first step**: professionals confront LGBT topics only if the person makes the first step.

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If this doesn't happen the situation stalls and it grows into a sense of helplessness. The solution once more is to propose themes which are easily accessible and to work on the context so that the person feels that he/she can open up.

• **The impossible protection**: inside dormitories professional "protect" declared LGBT people. The intervention is not effective and risks to consolidate the perception of LGBT people as fragile and dependent on professionals. The ideal solution is to change context, or alternatively change THE context.

• **The separation**: specific housing solutions in "friendly" contexts in which the LGBT person can find assistance without running into homo/trans-phobic contexts are proposed. The intervention does not confine them in a ghetto if actions aiming at the creation of new connections within the community are put into place.

• **The filter**: some people access services or express their own problems related to LGBT only is they can completely or partly hide their personal identity. As a first step,tools that guarantee anonymity can be useful to favor the emerging of hidden problems and to create a relationship of trust..

• **The network**: the network of services maximizes the efficiency of the intervention, but also has significant management costs. The mandate to one node of the network to respond to the totality of possible needs of homeless LGBT people is scarcely effective.

• **The training**: professionals have and declare strong needs of training. The skills to be acquired to manage problems and needs of homeless LGBT people can be useful in other situations of stigma or with specific people.

7. Conclusions /

• Are there any needs/vulnerabilities specific of homeless LGBT people? **Yes.**

• In which context are they expressed and what reactions do they generate? **Generally resistant context, alone are not able to modify its mechanisms of invisibility.**

• Are they relevant in the sector of services for homeless people? **Yes, a lot, even though they aren't perceived as such. They put evidence on some limitations of the system and lead into stimuli of significant improvement, not only in the sphere of intervention with homeless LGBT people**.

What is the future and which are possible paths?

The future of a system of interventions in which LGBT people feels welcomed and receives, without asking, positive supports. A context that favors personal opening and awareness of the problems thanks to the competencies and familiarity of professionals with this topics. We identify three possible paths:

• **The training of professionals** interested in the topics and already sensitive and able to influence contexts of origin.

• **The implementation of devoted services:** able to only respond to needs, but also to let hidden question emerge.

• **The Strengthening of the Network of Services:** even starting from events shared among services of the two target which requires a commitment in terms of time not very high. It is important to monitor the trend of potential increase in the number of cases to adapt network responses.

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RESEARCH
REPORT
&
HANDBOOK
FOR PROFESSIONALS

INTRODUCTION AND GUIDE TO READING

CHOICE OF THE SUBJECT
AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

*"In my own way, I'd need caress me too.
In my own way, I'd need to dream me too."*
L. Dalla

People exchange goods, services and products. They also exchange attentions, gestures of care, messages of welcoming or of exclusion. In this flow of exchanges, sometimes somebody find himself/herself on the borders, deprived both of material goods, home, work, money and non-material assets, self-esteem, caresses, dreams.

To provide an exhaustive list of which social forces, personal factors and which interaction among them could cause marginality is a hard task for anybody who knows the variety of homeless people's life stories. This does not mean that some elements and processes that contribute to the marginalization cannot be identified and studied. In this research we have focused on the issues related to sexual identity, in particular we will deal with lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people.

Why this focus? The stigma towards homo/transexuality is already evident and studied data. However, it is less clear how does this affect marginality or social inclusion paths. Recently, homeless LGBT people phenomenon has become so significant to attract the attention of Association Avvocato di Strada Onlus professionals: an attention aligned with the recent quantitative researches mainly carried out in the Anglo-Saxon areas[1], which highlight relevance and reach of the phenomenon.

LGBT people are overrepresented within homeless people population: if usually the number of people who declare themselves as LGBT out of the total US adult population is estimated at between 3-4%[2], among homeless youth it exceeds 40%. The same researches show that health conditions of half of the LGBT respondents are worse or much worse than those of the other homeless people. Concerning the strategies to fight the problem, 40% of US organizations do not put into place any action to intervene on the most widespread cause of homelessness among LGBT youth, that is the breakage with the family network.

Finally, also from the researches it emerges as the phenomenon of homeless LGBT youth is constantly increasing, alongside withtheir written requests for help addressed to the organizations working with homeless people.

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1 See Cray A., Miller K., Durso L. E. (2013), Durso L. E., Gates G. J. (2012), Ray N. (2006)
2 See Gates, G. J., Newport, F. (2012)

How is the situation in the Italian context? We were able to identify only the preceding research - "Approdi Negati" [3]. The research, which analyzed Bologna among sample cities, revealed widespread invisibility of the phenomenon and highlighted how the relationship with professionals - more than the characteristics of the organizations or the type of service delivered - represents the variable that most influences the visibility of LGBT people's needs and problems.

Stemming from these data the research "Una Strada Diversa" has set 3 questions to start with:

- **Are there any needs/vulnerabilities specific of homeless LGBT people?**
- **In which context are they expressed and what reactions do they generate?**
- **Are they relevant in the sector of services for homeless people?**

METHODOLOGY

We undertook a qualitative research through semi-structured and in-depth interviews with professionals, volunteers and homeless people.

The choice of semi-structured interviews was due to several factors:

• The limited sample that we could take into exam, which would have made purely quantitative data less reliable.

• The little studied and thus highly explorative research topic, which required the ability to quickly formulate new questions depending on the emerging material.

• The will to act on the interviewee-interviewer relationship: allowing the building of trust, negotiating the possibility of talking about intimate/taboo aspectsand exploring the subject in an empathic way also thanks to the researcher's emotions.

With the aim of offering an analysis of the network and of limiting the cultural variability of the context, we restricted the research scope to the City of Bologna. Interviews were conducted from July to October 2014, they included the experiences of 8 services for homeless people and 4 services aimed at LGBT people, involving a total of 20 respondents. The structures and respondent have been chosen in order to ensure the diversity of viewpoints: we interviewed both women and men, foreigners and Italians, heterosexuals / cis-gender and LGBT people, youth and adults, volunteers and professionals, public and private structures, both religious and secular, whose

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3 Salmaso C.F., Zini R., Passarelli M. (2012)

intervention focus on different topics as health, home, proximity, or legal, psychological and social assistance.

With the respondents and during the report writing we referred to the Ethos[4] classification in order to define the category of homelessness. The acronym LGBT, for communication needs and where not otherwise specified, is used to not only include openly Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual people, but also to convey the notion of behavior, identities and desires that are hetero-normative, meaning diverse from heterosexual and not tied to generally dominant roles[5].

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report was drafted by the research team formed by **Carlo Francesco Salmaso** and **Giuliana Sias**. The research and data processing were carried out through the collaboration and discussion with the project coordinators, **Giuseppina Digiglio**, **Jacopo Fiorentino** and **Costantino Giordano**.

Together with being a research report, this document is intended to be a tool for social workers who wish to reflect and improve their intervention directed to homeless LGBT people, politicians and policy makers who want to understand the context and orient their action to combat marginality in an efficient way, citizens who care about the welfare of their community and who want to deeply examine the phenomenon of poverty from an innovative perspective.

We wish to make this document accessible to a wide audience. We have therefore agreed on its hybrid style between a research report and an operating manual. We hope to spread messages and proposals supported by research evidence, without being overly abstract.

For this reason, within the chapters that most call into question the help relationship, we propose few tips addressed to an ideal social worker with the aim to facilitate the transfer from research theoretical results to practical field-work. The recommendations are not intended as rules to be followed, but as proposals, being aware that choices and responsibilities of the intervention are first entitled to professionals, organizations, social services and policies.

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4 ETHOS – European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion.
5 See Bertone C. (2009).

The report is divided in 6 parts:

1. The system of services: we briefly describe the actors took into exam among the services for adult disadvantage and the services for LGBT people.

2. The visibility and invisibility of LGBT homelessness: we trace the main cultural patterns that hinder the visibility of LGBT issues and identify elements to contrast them.

3. A story: we propose a first-person narrative, written thanks to a dialogue with a gay guy who has been homeless. We would like it to allow to capture fact-finding information, emotions and experiences that tend not to emerge in more analytical writings.

4. The problems: despite highlighting how often one problem influences on another one, that is their interconnection, we identify the main problem areas specific to the homeless LGBT people.

5. The needs: where the problematic situations have been followed by the expression of a need, we report and analyze the type of needs expressed.

6. The interventions: within the intervention models, we analyze the characteristics that appeared to be as the most relevant in enabling or hindering an effective response to the problems and the needs mentioned above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. THE SYSTEM OF SERVICES

The services active in Bologna area which have been contacted for the research:

The service of mobile support of Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande Onlus works three nights per week providing support and assistance to homeless people around Bologna Central Station and the most peripheral area of the city. The mobile unit was established in 1994 and is a necessary tool for constant monitoring of the numbers of people on the street.

Drop-in social service of Bologna municipality is a specialized service for homeless adults who find themselves are in extreme marginalization situation with scarce resources and points of reference, temporarily present in the area, and not-registered as residents in Bologna. The service is also accessible to the fictitious residents of Via Tuccella and the residents of the homeless shelters run by Asp Città di Bologna. In particular, the service deals with people who lead "street life": homeless people, who are in a condition of extreme poverty and/or with emotional networks and broken-up families.

Listening help-desk Services devoted to the emergence of homeless people's issues, to the provision of information, to the intervention and networking of the problem. Sometimes directly linked to city canteens or to street units.

Dorms These structures are designed to serve as residential (daytime and nighttime) or semi-residential (nighttime) reception, open to socially disadvantaged men and women. Can be open year-round or only in cases of the "cold plan", both adult Italian citizens or foreigners can access.

"Tutti a casa" Housing First project run by Associazione Amici di Piazza Grande Onlus: it is based on the main assumption that the house is a primary human right, the approach aims therefore to overcome housing exclusion of homeless people offering them access to accommodations managed by the association, without necessarily access a dorm before. Once in the house, people enter in a personal project aimed to increase their well being.

Avvocato di Strada is an association of volunteers established in 2000 in Bologna with the purpose to provide free and qualified legal assistance to homeless people. It is currently present in 38 Italian cities, but it has its national headquarter and first helpdesk in Bologna where its lawyers have been interviewed for this research. Address: Via Malcontenti 3, 40121 Bologna. Tel: + 39 051 227143.
Email: info@avvocatodistrada.it. Web: wvvw.avvocatodistrada.it

Il **Cassero- Arcigay** founded in Bologna in 1978 from previous years experience of homosexual liberation movements. In June 1982 it received Porta Saragozza office from Bologna municipality, when for the first time an Italian municipality

recognizes the importance and the planning of a gay and lesbian association. Since 2002 there is a new office in Salara area. Il Cassero deals with health, culture, gay and lesbian rights issues, it has an important thematic library and provides recreational services. Legal address: via Don Minzoni 18, 40121 Bologna. Tel: 0510957200. Web: www.cassero.it

M.I.T., Transsexual Identity Movement established in 1982, it is an NGO that defends and supports transsexual, transvestite, transgender and gender queer people's rights. Since 1994 MIT, in accordance with the health system and the Emilia-Romagna region, has established the first health clinic for transsexual and transgender people. Currently MIT provides assistance and support for transsexual people during their transition path. Legal address: via Polese 22, 40122 Bologna. Tel: 051271666. Email: mit.segreteria@gmail.com. Web: www.mit-italia.it/

Plus is the first Italian organization for the HIV positive LGBT people. Address: via Polese 15, 40122 Bologna. Email: info@plus-onlus.it. Web: www.plus-onlus.it/

MigraBò is a group of volunteers of different nationalities established in Bologna in 2012 with the aim of assisting LGBTQ immigrant people coming from other countries within their integration process in Italy and in the LGBT context.
Tel: +39 347/5592301. Email: migrabolgbt@gmail.com. Web: migrabo.wordpress.com/

From the interviews it emerges how services and associations concerned with LGBT and homeless people currently operating in Bologna area are well outlined. The type of services provided varies from legal assistance to health care, housing, work and relational assistance.

There is no dedicated service that offers or guarantees specific support to the people belonging to both categories: homeless and LGBT, other than a small housing project at M.I.T., with very low turnover.

Services with a common target know each other, they often participate in joint formal and informal events (roundtables, consulting, information and training events, pride...) and cooperate. The mutual knowledge and meeting opportunities drastically decrease among services with different target groups. This kind of cooperation only happens when the specific need of a user determines the necessity of looking for the answers outside its scope.

Services generally active in the field of homelessness, indeed, have contacted organizations specifically working for the defense of rights and provision of services for LGBT people and vice versa several times. These collaborations are neither automatic nor regulated by intervention protocols, they are often based on previous informal relations and have a transitional nature, depending on the specificity of the case.

The responses generated from these collaborations are mainly related to emergency situations, strongly connected to the specific need of the person, or involve a "handover".

The first barrier to more effective collaborations is the absence of a common language. We will deepen the topic in chapter 6. Here we will merely note social professionals do not generally get training on LGBT issues, as well as professionals and volunteers of LGBT associations are not generally trained in the area of homelessness and services addressed at homeless people. Therefore it is hard to share even only the overview of the issues and the intervention together.

The picture is somewhat different for MIT and MigraBò, who from the beginning of their history have had frequent connections with local social services, national bodies and individuals scattered across the country. The longevity and strength of these connections coexists with little or no knowledge of other local social services, limiting the possibility of networking.

The current relationship between the two sectors of activity, that with homeless and that one with LGBT people, would correspond to a situation where the two categories of needy people rarely intersect and therefore more structured interventions would not be necessary.

The interviews, instead, outline a situation where the number of homeless LGBT people is clearly increasing, thus highlighting the need for professionals to create new connections, to increase the frequency of those already established and to give the network better defined structure.

«It is an issue that should be addressed, honestly a network among the associations would help».

«A network of this type yes, is possible to create, on the contrary it's desirable, but it must have a concrete project behind not just chatter, maybe in terms of horizontal subsidies but you cannot think that associations manage everything because despite having the skills we do not have the money».

Not without difficulty, the Bolognese system appears dynamic and determined to structure interventions with more effective networks. The project "A different path" can be considered as an example.

2. THE VISIBILITY (AND INVISIBILITY) OF LGBT HOMELESSNESS

2.1 HOW DO HOMELESS LGBT PEOPLE APPEAR OR DO NOT APPEAR

From the research it emerges that users of reception structures rarely declare their LGB sexual orientation to other guests, while it is more common that they decide to confide with professionals with whom they feel comfortable or have developed a trusting relationship. The LGBT guests' relation with the expression of their sexuality is so expressed:

«*Not very balanced, in the sense that I have seen people who expressed their sexuality very strongly- with very explicit jokes and puns both towards professionals and the other guests in an almost aggressive manner, continually making sexuality the central theme - or denying it in an absolute manner and passing very weighty judgments on the other homosexual people*».

«*Declared LGBT people, in the dormitory, were always 'very declared'… They told you right away… Then they created confusion, maybe with a joke, and they did nothing to avoid it*».

The *housing* projects, the LGBT associations or those offering legal assistance, on the contrary, do not associate a volatile characteristic to the visibility of LGBT people, despite having experience of some declared LGBT people.

All professionals agree in pointing out that declared LGBT people are rare, very rare:

«*If I had to tell you the actual percentage it would be too low and not credible, because it would be one out of everyone that I have met… but it is not credible because that would be even less than the percentage of the general population… Therefore, it would not be believable. I would have to tell you 1 out of 100 but that is not possible, no, it is just too low…*».

Yet professionals point out how the phenomenon is more prevalent than how it appears:

«*So, if I count declared things we have a low level, rather low, but if I count according to my own perception or to what other professionals and other people have told me, I believe we get be around 30%*».

visibility & invisibility of LGBT homelessness/ #adifferentpath

It would thus seem that the opportunity for people to choose whether to declare (even to themselves) or not their sexual orientation[1] greatly affects (the prevalence of the phenomenon).

The choice linked to express of not oneself sexual orientation instead appears to be denied at first glance to transsexual people because their choice is visible regardless of their statements, because *«They carry on their body the signs of their identity»*.

Yet, the choice between visibility and invisibility still involves them:

«We don't know how many people die without having lived the trans experience, there is nothing that can prove it to us… we can at best suppose it. Here at the MIT clinic we have 18 years-olds and people who have undergone the transition after they turned 60. For example, a woman bottled it up, bottled it up, and compressed it for a lifetime. Then when her spouse died, she had an input to live out her story».

To give an idea of the complexity of the situation: in the multi-year experience of a professional of the Servizio Mobile di Sostegno (Mobile Service Support), she never received an explicit request for help from homeless LGB people, while in the past few years, the number of homeless lesbian, gay and trans people who referred to Cassero-Arcigay (now just "Cassero") has grown continuously.

Given the existence of homeless LGBT people, and presumably of their needs, why do these people have difficulty in getting in contact with professionals? What are the cultural models that reinforce the invisibility of LGBT issues?

During our research we have identified seven possible LGBT models of invisibility, which we present:

- Not defining oneself, denial
- The errors of focusing
- The privacy
- The perfect question
- The interlocking within solutions
- The emergency
- The unchanging context

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1 Not the choice of their sexual orientation, which on the contrary is a characteristic of the person not dependant on his/her own will.

KEY POINTS
• There exist homeless LGBT people, even if they choose not to show themselves.
• The visibility of LGBT people also depends on the context.
• When publically declared inside a dormitory, homosexual identity assumes very identifiable traits, unlike in other services.
• Homeless LGBT people more frequently choose to confide in the professionals than to publically declare their sexual identity.

2.2 NOT DEFYINING ONESELF, THE DENIAL

There are various cases in which, according to professionals, there are or could be LGBT people that «*deny their sexual orientation because they do not accept it*». For example, two professionals from different sectors explain:

«There have been various users who we thought could be homosexuals, but they always denied it in an absolute and very strong manner».

«The thing I want to point out is that outside he then started to accept his orientation, he also had a relationship… while inside the dormitory it was a continuous showing the unreal in order to be accepted within that context».

Again inside a dormitory, as a response to the complaint of one of the guests – a declared homosexual - of attempted approaches by other guests, the latter ones responded:

«No, never, he invented it, no way I asked him to go to the bathroom».

Denial regards both sexual behaviors and sexual identity, with different characteristics. If one's identity is an intangible construction, the behaviors are facts that can be visible independently of one's will. In case a behavior emerges, according to professionals' experience, is still possible to deny one's identity. In the interviews conducted, the story of a declared hetero user in a "housing first" apartment emerges as he has been found out having sex with another man from his flatmates. The user does not deny having had a homosexual intercourse, even though he goes on defining himself as heterosexual:

«He wanted to emphasize that it was not one of his customs dating with men, he kept repeating "I do not date with men normally, it just happened, it's a thing that happened, a fact that happened, but I am heterosexual, I have a wife", and so he wanted to make us understand that his identity was the one of an heterosexual person».

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A confirmation of the existence of these two distinct areas comes from the experience recorded by a professional working at Il Cassero:

«The other night a man arrived, he was talking with another guy and said "I have sex with men but I am not like you guys" and this is actually a fairly standard definition from people coming from Muslim countries».

An Arab man who was interviewed related the choice not to define himself as LGBT with the different value recognized to the word "gay" in his culture. He explains:

«You cannot tell a Muslim that he's gay, you cannot use that word, do not tell him that he is gay, homosexual, fag, do not tell him. If he believes he is heterosexual but is then attracted by other men, let him say so, let him say whatever he wants, do not label him. You should think with his terms, not with yours. Poof can be offensive to you, but you can intend it in a joking manner also. For an Arab man "gay" is only derogatory».

The argument of no definition/denial appears moreover to be linked to a different degree of enforceability between behaviors and identity: a user declares that *«Among people from North Africa, a person can be gay only if he/she does not show it»*. Furthermore: *«Because for them* [referring back to the community of origin] *to be gay means to be less than the others, no one can help you if you are that way, it is against religion so you should kill yourself rather than living in that way».*

A similar discourse applies for trans people: referring to the living condition of people who for long stretches of their lives deny their true identity, a professional from MIT explains:

«The "freezing" concerns various people because there is not a single moment or age when the trans experience comes out, that means it is something that one feels and is there, something that in certain moments you succeed to tame, to hush, and in other moments instead it roars and wakes up, and you need to be yourself».

«Everything is linked to context, that is the people who live in difficult and hostile environments obviously repress it. There are people who probably prefer to marry because it is the easiest way for the outside even if it is the less easy for themselves».

Questioning not only people, but also the context, therefore, appears necessary to understand and intervene in the issues of LGBT people.

KEY POINTS
• A person can have homosexual behaviors without defining himself/herself as such.
• Defining a person as LGBT on the basis of his/her behaviors can make him/her feel labeled.
• A person can repress a part of him/herself feeling that he/she is not himself/herself.
• Depending on the characteristics of the context, a person may choose whether or not to do coming out.

TIPS
• Pose questions that concern behaviors rather than identity.
• Reassure the person by letting them know that you do not have any intention to impose categories upon them to which they do not feel they belong.
• Legitimize the existence of LGBT behaviors even if they are different than the declared identity, for example: "You can go to the Cassera without being gay", "You can have sex with other women without being a lesbian".
• Clarify that, for you, being a LGBT does not mean you are valued less than others.

2.3 THE ERRORS OF FOCUSING: GENERALIZATION AND REDUCTION TO THE PERSONAL DIMENSION

Invisibility can depend on the desire to hide oneself or to not be perceived. In interventions with homeless people who are included in the model of "The errors of focusing" the specificity of LGBT people is not perceived by professionals because the focus of the intervention is placed on other levels.

A possible first level is the idea of "too far", that of general nature: a framework which is considered extremely problematic aside from sexual identity.

«It is a difficult place to be in, either you are homosexual or hetero».

«The perception of difficulty in dealing with the current economic and working situation comes from all users».

«They are typical problems of more or less all minorities within the group of homeless people.».

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On the other hand, the "too close": approaches that exclusively consider the individual life perspective, so that extracting common characteristics becomes impossible:

«We do not care if you are hetero or homo… we look at the person, what he/she brings».

There may also be a passing between the two levels, individual and general, without ever catching the specifics related to the culture of the group:

«At the most sexuality constitutes a problem added to the others: so it like you tell me "Can being Muslim be a problem?" or "Can being an African be a problem?", I do not know. It could be that in that situation which is very complex it becomes an element creating an ulterior discomfort. That is to say, homosexuality is a characteristic that, in a complex situation, can also become an element that creates marginalization, but like being a woman, being a Neapolitan, or being 60 years old».

Both approaches ignore the intermediary dimension of "some people" and the connections between personal lives and group dynamics.

Especially in the case of stigma, which deals indeed only with "some" members of the community, both approaches result erroneous in focusing on the specific issues: in the first case, stigma will be invisible because not everyone is stigmatized, in the second, only the negative group effects will be visible on the individual person without having the opportunity to question and intervene on the shared norm that generates it.

KEY POINT
• The distance at which you look at the problem can make it appear or disappear.

TIPS
• In order to focus on LGBT issues try to also keep in mind the problems that only one person may be having.
• In the search for the causes of discomfort, look at the person from their context: ask yourself if there are diffuse stereotypes or convictions that make only one person from the group or the entire group feel bad.

2.4 THE PRIVACY

Another model related to professionals' point of view that leads to the lack of perception of LGBT issues is that of privacy. In this perspective, the sexual and affective sphere belongs to an area so personal and intimate that it should not be included among the contexts of intervention.

«With those who do not open themselves up we cannot do anything because there also exists a question of privacy, I am not one of your friends».

Or:

«I find it healthy that the sexual preferences of a person who be placed in an apartment are not reported on their access documents. It is something that has always make me angry because I do not tell anybody my sexual preferences, that is I don't have to tell them, I am not obligated to, so the fact that it should be stated, that it should be explained to Social Services from users makes me a little angry».

The desire to not want to "enter by force" into the intimate sphere of a person is confused in this model with the practice of not getting into it at all. The inherent danger is that confidentiality can affirm a taboo on the affectivity and sexuality, thus complicating the emersion of issues and needs in these areas because they are perceived as not relevant.

«It comes to my mind one of my users who I often saw during spring months, it was pretty clear and obvious but it was not obligatory that we talked about it, meaning it was not for the purposes of our relationship… That is, if he does not tell me I do not ask about it because it is not relevant, it is a thing related to his personal sphere therefore I surely do not open up the topic».

This model can be reinforced by professionals' difficulty in managing their own emotions within the relationship, the perception of the danger of being heavily influenced and empathize with the pain, suffering themselves.

Yet, as we will see[2], many of the needs of LGBT people directly concern the emotional sphere. In particular, the failure of users' coming out does not have anything to do with the necessity of defending their right to privacy, but with lives characterized by more complex emotional expressions, how is well explained by this gay foreign homeless young man:

«I was not telling anyone that I felt bad and not opening myself up to the outside world I wasn't giving the possibility of helping me. The same thing goes for the other foreigner people I knew: each one thinks "If I open myself up I will be fucked, because the law of survival wins, because I could be robbed, and what if it were a policeman? And what if I end up in jail, how can I trust others?" I am not in need, I do not ask, I am too proud, maybe ours is an inferiority complex».

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2 See chapter 5.

KEY POINTS
• Talking about sexuality does not violate users' privacy.
• The emergence of some issues comes through communicating about one's emotional sphere.

TIPS
• Make it clear that you guys can talk about all issues, even those related to sexuality and emotions.
• Use your emotions as useful information in help relationship .
• Open up the conversation over emotions beginning with expressing your feelings towards the other person: "I feel embarrassed, ashamed, a desire to, etc…".

2.5 THE PERFECT QUESTION: IF IT IS NOT SAID, IT DOES NOT EXIST

In this model the existence of an issue is subject to the capacity of the person to be aware of it and to express it. From the interviews it emerges, however, LGBT users' intense difficulties in clarifying themselves in relation to their sexual identity, in thinking and defying their emotions, fears and desires, in communicating them as problematic elements connected to their being homeless.

In their relation with professionals, this difficulty of performance appears many times as condemning them to perpetual invisibility:

«If people do not state their sexuality as a problem, this means that there is no problem».

It is to say that the fact that a user does not ask for help it means that he does not need help. For example, a lawyer explains that to the lesbian girl he was supporting it has never been proposed to contact LGBT associations in the area *«because she never asked about it»*. Elsewhere, a professional of the mobile service admits her own difficulty in catching:

«requests for help maybe not explicit but implicit, or also simply trying to look at the problems».

Regarding this, it arises as particularly interesting the testimony provided by a professional at Il Cassero:

«IThe system of intervention occurs only when one sees a problem, only then a structured response is created, but in the case of homeless LGBT people not only it does not exist a system for responses but people barely perceive that there is a problem».

Lacking the coming out- even though it exists a sort of common code of recognition according to which professionals define themselves able of interpret and get an idea (*«It is something that you can feel by instinct, even if you cannot be certain of it»*) - the LGBT issue remains invisible:

«There are cases when I am absolutely certain because it seemed to me to be extremely obvious but it has never been talked about in explicit terms so I cannot be a hundred percent sure».

Unless the call for help does not come forth in a clear way from the user, in the perfect question model the professional opts for not intervene or even for the removal of the problem.

The experience of the LGBT associations however shows that the path leading to coming out and self-awareness is generally very long and complex. A professional from Il Cassero affirms:

«Very often people come here in first person without having reached any other services before and they get here not for an immediate call for help, but searching for a shelter, a shelter which is not intended as a place to sleep or stay but as a community welcoming them. Then, step by step, when they acquire strength and empowerment in this context they get in a private and personal way to do coming out regarding their condition and also ask for help. However, it does not happen all at once, it is a gradual process».

To act only in response to explicit and aware calls for help means therefore to ignore the basic needs of a LGBT person, leaving him/her alone in a situation of particular fragility.

KEY POINTS
• Discomfort exists though it is not always vocalized.
• Homeless LGBT people can feel bad without necessarily knowing why, or what exactly they truly want.
• The journey to coming out can be very long and complex.

TIPS
• Give yourself as a goal for the intervention the facilitation of problem emergence, not just to listen to it.
• If you think it is important, do not give up everything against a negative response (especially when it comes to questions on identity), but explore other aspects (behaviors, emotions) or work on the context to favor personal opening up.
• Investigate fears, stereotypes and categorizations related to LGBT themes with the person.
• Facilitate the person's knowing of LGBT people, and provide him/her with occasions to think and think about oneself.

2.6 THE INTERLOCKING WITHIN SOLUTIONS: I SEARCH ONLY WHERE I ALREADY KNOW THAT I CAN FIND A SOLUTION

Another element of invisibility can be the removal of issues that are not relevant to the solutions owned by the professional:

«For the goals of my relation with him, of the interventions that I can potentially start for him, the fact that he is homosexual or not does not change anything».

«The moment you access, you are offered a standard package, that is: a bed, and if you do well a public work compensation package. So you get in and you don't say 'there is this, there is this, there is this,' what is more suitable for your personality, for your demands, for your needs? No, rather: you do need something that is not strictly related to the bed, it doesn't matter you get the bed!».

In this model the professional perceives that he doesn't have useful solutions or tools and decides not to make evident a problem for which he does not have responses. The risk is that only issues for which a solution is ready become visible e come to the professional's attention, thus ignoring the emerging needs within the society.

KEY POINT
• To start from the solutions impede a total view of the problems.

2.7 THE EMERGENCY

In this model the emergency makes whatever other type of problems the person may be facing invisible. Repeatedly professionals report of possible LGBT issues that are set aside because actions are aimed at finding solutions for more urgent problems:

«We saw this transgendered woman arriving in the dormitory and we immediately got busy to find her a safer place. In the end, that same day she was offered a place in a more peaceful dormitory … I do not know where she is now…»

«Homosexuality is a part of him but it is not the part of him that we focus on the most because he had other types of more serious problems.».

Where with 'serious' there is generally a reference to psychological illnesses or to the absence of a housing point of reference. The cause of the homeless condition does not come to be taken into consideration as a field of intervention, nor it is attributed to user's sexual orientation even when he/she has suffered a moving from the family and thus loss of the house as a result of the coming-out:

«My client turned 18 declared to his parents her homosexuality, a declaration that has worsen in a decisive and complete manner family relationships and eventually forced her to leave home. But in her specific case sexual orientation is part of the problem, among determining factors there is also this, but the fundamental point is that she is out of home without a penny.».

While on the one hand the fragility of the homelessness condition calls for immediate solutions, on the other hand the removal of the causes, among them LGBT peculiarity, contributes to maintain invisible the issue of invisibility in general terms and activates a vicious cycle: if the triggering cause of the homelessness condition is always and in any cases identified as the absence of a dwelling, the interventions will continue endlessly to focus on homelessness and will never delve further to investigate, and resolve, other essential aspects of the marginality faced by the user.

KEY POINT
• The emergency interventions are useful, but they bind the perceptions of the problem and the solutions in a very strict manner.

TIPS
• After securing the person, wide your research of causes and possible interventions.
• Ask yourself if the problem that you are facing has an emergency or structural character and find coherent solutions.

2.8 THE UNCHANGING CONTEXT – THE OBLIGATORY CHOICE BETWEEN RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY

In this model the invisibility is attributed to an "external" context considered fixed and unchangeable:

«In some cases it is truly difficult to intervene because even if there is a service that gives you a hand, or a psychologist who you can see, professionals' ability who help you to report, then the woman or in this case the young man, has to live every day in an environment in which they are still vulnerable».

«I think for example to people from East Europe or Magrheb who have sexual relations between men but always in a quite hidden manner, because most likely they would become isolated from their communities if they were to be discovered. For this it would also emerge the issue of the home, they are all related issues, it is not easy to make a certain type of hidden issue which would provide a real opportunity to tackle discrimination or isolation from the community emerge. If you are Italian for better or worse you can rely on a network, if you are a foreigner in a foreign country you still have your community and if they let you out also them you think twice (to let the issue coming out)».

The person is crushed by the excruciating choice between losing his/her own family relationships and "not being oneself" as reported by MIT professional.

The fixity of the context is attributed time by time to the "low education" or the belonging to "different cultures," "religions that condemn homosexuality," variables so large so as to be beyond the reach of intervention of the professional. In this model the negative conditions of context are always non-negotiable and therefore non-conquerable, the possibilities of intervention by the person affected and by the professional are null.

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The risk stays in the prior denial of the possibility of work on the context, which on the contrary emerges in several points of the research as one of the more effective tools for the "making visible" LGBT people[3].

KEY POINTS
• **The environment sometimes is perceived as given and unchanging, even if this is not truly the case.**
• **The creation of micro - environments if possible — for example LGBT associations or informal groups, in which some people can have the opportunity to feel more at ease and obtain empowerment.**
• **It can be perceived an obligatory choice between familial relationship and sexual identity.**

TIPS
• **Remember that people can always create different environments (micro-environments) and identities.**
• **Send the message that, when facing a 'double-bond' it is not necessary to make an immediate decision. There is time to explore and search, reflect upon oneself and acquire self-confidence.**
• **Explain that Coming-Out can be a difficult journey, but many people have already completed this journey with success.**

2.9 CONCLUSIONS

The interviews convey conflicting visions of the phenomenon, which highlight how the perception of the issue is show that the perception of the problem is obstructed by multiple way of thinking which are inadequate to understand the issue in its complexity.

Yet homeless LGBT people not only exist and represent a category defined by particular needs, but as we have recalled they appear to increase in a very clear way. Despite the numerous models of invisibility, indeed, professionals and associations agree in attributing to the phenomenon a positive sign in terms of growth.

On the one hand, there's what professionals identify a "grey area," that is hidden as an obstacle to the reading, comprehension and the intervention —arising from the lacking perception of professionals of users' difficulty in requesting assistance—on the other hand, there is visibility, which faces stigma and increases the risk of becoming a victim of violence, that even if is only symbolic is still painful. There are two sides of the same coin because both, for one or the other, contribute to the creation of many further dangerous forms of marginality within marginality.

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3 See further section 5.3, 6.3, 6.4

3. A STORY

This story was collected in October of 2014 through different interviews with a gay male who had been homeless. It has been written modifying some personal elements, to keep the identity of the person unknown. All modifications were submitted and approved by the individual. We propose this story with the intentions of capturing elements of knowledge, emotions and experiences, which tend to escape from writings of a more analytic nature.

I am 27 years old, from Morocco. I've been in Italy for 6 years, and I take the evening course at the Technical Institute and do some mechanics in a laboratory. Homosexuality is only a term for me, a sort of symbol, that is used in the West to identity people who are different – that have sexual preferences outside the norm of heterosexuality. It's a categorization that serves only to make oneself understood, but in my home country we don't use this term. It exists in French but not in Arabic. If I had to say in Arabic that I am gay, I wouldn't know how to say it, I wouldn't know how to identify myself in Arabic. I am simply me, only a combination of all of my experiences, and among these things there is the fact that I like men.

At 20 years old I had already finished University in Morocco and because of this I won a scholarship to spend in Italy.

Once I arrived, however, I discovered that the admission test could be taken only in Italian, which I wasn't able to speak yet. I lost the scholarship, had no one to contact, and didn't know whom I could turn to. I found myself on the street without the ability to ask anyone for help.

Why didn't I go back? If you stain your path it's as if you've disrespected your family, and the entire family pays the price of it within the community. When I lost my scholarship I was ashamed to go back without having obtained or realized anything. My parents told me, "Don't come back, make a future in Europe," so I started to distance myself from them because they couldn't understand how it was here, how difficult it was for me. They didn't understand that Europe wasn't that dream that we had always imagined, therefore they couldn't understand even my pains and troubles and would have considered me unfit if I opened up to them.

Upon arriving I rented a room but after a few months, having vanished the possibility of studying, I moved in with friend, another Moroccan university student, waiting to find a job and afford a house. After some months however the person who was hosting me began to make me understand that I was not welcome anymore. He was annoyed by my presence but I didn't know anybody else and for me it was very difficult to establish relations with other people. Being in trouble I finally decided to go to the mosque to talk with the Imam and ask him for support, but he responded only with, "go on the internet, look through the work ads like everyone else».

In my life I had always interchanged between guys and girls. In that moment of great fragility I met an Italian guy on a website, a chat, that I met that same evening because we discovered we lived in the same neighborhood. I had never had the courage to tell him about my situation to him because I was afraid he would judge me. I used to spend the night with him, and during the day I was with other Arab guys with whom I didn't talk about tthis relationship. I knew well that they wouldn't understand: I once said to them that I had been to Il Cassero [an LGBT center],and their expressions changed, and after I realized I had made a bad impression. I had never opened a discussion like this with them, I had always pretended to be simply hetero.

After about a year during which I more or less managed my situation, I had an argument with the friend who was hosting me and I moved to sleep under the tables of an outdoor bar that was closed during winter nights. The owner was Arab, and I thought that if he had said anything against me I would have known how to explain him why I was there. I got food and shelter from the person who in the meantime became my boyfriend, he worked at night and I pretended to have a home in which to return in the morning.

I waited for him to eat without having eaten all day, but I ate slowly so he wouldn't figure me out. At a certain point my Arab friends realized that I always carried around my backpack, which essentially contained my entire life, so I explained them that I didn't have a place to stay and they invited me to stay with them for some time. In order not to weigh everyone down, I stayed a few nights with one, a week with another, and when I had finished my rounds I pretended that I had found a place to stay, but returned to stay under the tables of the bar.

Eventually a room got free in one of the flats where my friends lived and they asked me if I wanted to rent it. I told them I didn't have the money to afford the rent but they told me it didn't matter, that I just had to do some things for them, some deliveries. I had to make a choice: go back under those tables, with the cold, or work for these guys and in the meantime search for other jobs and accommodations. My boyfriend was unaware of everything, because if he had known he probably would've told me, "here's another that wants to make a good life by selling drugs," and I would've lost him. Shortly after I was arrested, and spent a year in prison. During that time I wrote long letters to my boyfriend, finally recounting everything, and I discovered myself for who am I. With the distance our story could not continue so we split up. Thanks to my experience inside prison I managed to resume my studies and enroll at university, and when I leave prison I find shelter in a student dormitory for priests, where they offered me a room for rent. I saw the person that I loved again and we decided to start from the beginning. I'm ok now, I have a job, but I am still afraid I won't be able to pay the rent. In this sense, homelessness not only has to do with those that don't have a home, but also with those who are afraid of losing their home. I think so. Although where I stayed I was safe, it remained inside me the fear of losing everything again and so I was doing different jobs at the same time, for example I passed out leaflets in the morning and home deliveries in the evenings. In this way I met other gay people, many foreigners, which supported themselves by hustling because they were removed from their families and it was the only way to survive.

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4. THE PROBLEMS

Below we present the main issues related to LGBT peculiarity that emerged during the research. Far from being exhaustive, this dissertation is intended as a starting point to allow a more in depth vision, indicating the areas to which the professional can draw attention and in which he/she can place its intervention. Work and health, emerged both as issues and as needs, are inserted within the following chapter.

None of the points on the list is to be understood as an airtight compartment for its own, but rather as having deep connections with the others. It is useful to keep in mind, then, that interventions to be carried out will be the more effective the more they are able to involve the different areas.

4.1 COMING OUT

«There are many adults who are late, people who only very slowly manage to arrive at the path of coming out and so that path makes them leaving from previous contexts, for example heterosexual marriages».

«The coming out has been cause of marginalization, of reject».

The difficulty in undertaking the path to coming out is very significant data for both Italian and foreign people, with professionals' perception of a bigger problem for the latter group. The path of coming out starts with one's self: the acceptance of calling oneself lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans. Once one's self identity is defined, it can be told to someone, kept hidden from others, be redefined… in a path with many forms of expression that may never come to full visibility.

The absence of coming out complicates the picture because it makes the problems faced by homeless LGBT people invisible. The desire to meet the needs of encounter, confront, sexual and emotional, combined with the willingness not to declare themselves, can generate in people a split between planes of existence.

A double life, interior/exterior or different according to the contexts, that, as we previously said[4], is also a manifestation of a double commitment: if I speak (it's found out) of my sexual identity in my community I will be rejected/ if I hide my sexual identity I will never be free to fully be myself and satisfy my needs.

In this context, certain groups of LGBT population perceived to be especially vulnerable are those over 50 years old, that are the people who had shaped their sexuality before the sexual revolution.

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4 See section 2.8

«These people have a relations with certain categories which is very different in respect to the one we have. And a modesty, regarding certain issues, which often leads to being the first victims of their own homophobia».

The issue of coming out is closely related to the categories with which homo/trans-sexuality is conceived, categories originating from that same culture in which stigma is generated.

4.2 THE FAMILY RIFT

«His presence in the family was no longer bearable».

«They confided to us the difficulties they encountered in declaring their sexual orientation given the radical rejection expressed by their respective families».

«Being transsexuals led to being disowned from their own families, who did not want to deal with them anymore».

The topic of gender identity and sexual orientation can still be hard to face for many people, and consequently coming out can create profound fractures in families.

We prefer the term rift to "removal" because the concept does not limit itself to the separation dimension, but it has to do with the imperative of "being together", to feel rooted in a primary core, that is now broken.

The rejection from families generates at least two types of problems on particularly different, yet interconnected levels: on the one hand the trauma of being removed, and on the other hand the lack of self-sufficiency from a material-economic point of view. Although in this second case it's possible to take legal action to advance a request of support (which can however be rejected by the family, forcing an appeal to the judge with uncertain result), in the first case the problem has to deal with one's role as a daughter, husband, granddaughter and is therefore connected very strongly to the person's sphere of identity. The interconnection of levels emerges not only at the time of coming out, but it also directs the responses provided on one or on the other one level:

«The problem is that he has a very complicated relationship with his family so there are certain days when he wants, others when he does not want to persist, so we tried with default notice but at this point it was necessary to take the next step, that is the trial… a thousand afterthoughts, anyway he is an extremely fragile person».

It emerges as, more than just strictly legal motivations, what makes the person insecure about the best approach to adopt is precisely the plan of relationships and family roles, highlighting a possible and significant area of intervention in family mediation.

4.3 SOCIAL REMOVAL

«Most likely, if they came out they would be isolated from their community».

«A LGBT individual who doesn't have a house faces a double social discrimination because as well together with having a problematic situation he/she also faces a social removal due to his/her gender identity».

«I am not physically removed but maybe I distance myself, am I clear?».

Among the issues related to the homeless situation of LGBT individuals there is that of social removal, not to be understood as a particular reaction to the personal characteristics of the individuals, but as an action implement by a stigmatized context towards LGBT people in general. The family rift often imposes also a physical removal from the entire context of reference:

«Because the removal from home impacts the family not only within home but has also a impact in the village, it weighs in wider contexts, in the school you attend, in every context. It's an extremely painful burden to carry and very difficult to rework without creating further damage. For this reason, one often feels the need to escape».

4.4 THE STIGMA

«It is as if homosexuality is a problem, not a characteristic».

«It was the subject of ridicule and gossip within the dorm».

«A man was daily insulted and harassed because of his sexual orientation».

«Sometimes he was also victim of jokes or teasing by other people».

«I think it's more difficult to guarantee him a job here because transsexual people are more stigmatized».

«The insults precisely concerned this situation, the other woman had not insulted her as if insulting a woman but as if she was insulting a transsexual».

Among the most commonly occurring elements, there is that of stigma. The typical contexts of street life (dorms in particular) are commonly recognized by operators as having a strong connotation of users' hostility towards LGBT people. Even among the people who in daily life did not show any sign of living in a problematic manner others' sexual identity, when they found themselves in a conflict situation with LGBT people they tend to address insults and attacks based on sexual discrimination.

The stigma also has a subtle nuance and does not only involves users: a homosexual professional so answered when asked if he was or wasn't declared to users:

«No no. I am always very careful not to say it!»

The stigma acts primarily by removing the positive discourses tied to homo/trans-sexuality, making it invisible even in the environments that involve them the most, where one speaks of desires and sexual attractions, of couples, of personal identity, so that it is impossible to say if LGBT issues are absent or just hidden carefully:

«Very often guys of my age who are in the flats say "no, yesterday I saw a girl", "yesterday I went out with her", so there it's way easier… […] They are all heterosexual, yes. At least as far as I know, then I don't know if they are, I don't know, they tell me they go out with girls…»

This type of action, very frequent, provides the measure of homophobia that pervades the whole context. The common fragility to LGBT people is not due to particular personal characteristics, but to the constant removal of the possibility of existence of their identity, of the possibility of being belittled or under attack: for the stigma to act it is sufficient even a simple way of watching, a silence, a word, that will recall and add up to who knows how many other similar attitudes experienced during their lives.

4.5 SOLITUDE, SHAME, SELF-IMAGE

Among the problems that LGBT people and professionals identify or report with less ease we gather together those related to emotions and self-image. More than one interview seems to suggests between the lines that there is a painful and complex emotional sphere:

«I guess that he/she has always been a bit more isolated than necessary within the dorm».

«He/she is a very closed person, he had contacts only with a professional from Caritas and went to the CSM only for pharmacological therapy».
«I am forced to live on the street and to rely on social services».
[tone of shame]

The sense of shame can pertain directly to one's self LGBT identity, or it can derive from actions (living on the street, having to rely on social services, having sexual relations with people of the same sex) deemed as degrading. Negative judgment of the actions can easily move to the whole person:

«I should have come back home, but I was too ashamed of who I was».

In other situations, the most problematic experience is the difficulty to change one's self-image and reconstruct a significant social role:

«Abandoning the acknowledged social role, you as leaving previous contexts, I don't know, a hetero marriage, the LGBT person founds himself/herself alone in facing the problem of self-determination, of telling himself/herself: "who am I in my new life?"».

«People don't always have the strength for self-determination».

Out of the roles offered by the dominant culture, is quite frequent that also the path leading to the redefinition of one's self role (see coming out) is long, complex, tiring and identifies an area of intervention as strong as hidden.

5. THE NEEDS

There are various difficulties involved in recognizing and communicating the needs of the interviewees. The range of these needs is not exempted from the models of invisibility previously analyzed: first of all that of expressing questions and the difficulty in accessing the emotional sphere which make professionals tend to focus mostly on practices - in particular those at risk like sexual practices - instead of other characteristic yet less tangible aspects.

Secondly, often the specific characteristics of the service influences the initial expectations of the people accessing it, the needs that emerge and those that are recognized in that environment: it is not a coincidence that Avvocato di Strada mainly identifies legal needs, while Plus identifies health needs and so on…

From this perspective, the presence of dedicated services would not only change the response to needs, but also their perception.

We report here the specific needs of LGBT people that emerged with the greatest clarity. We exclude housing need, which is included in the very definition of homelessness, highlighting the fact that it is connected to other needs that we address: a home is a place that can provide protection, welcome, and that can allow the construction of meaning and of a positive self-image. Just like problems, needs also reveal to be strongly interconnected with each others: positive consequences into an environment can reflect themselves into others, or become obstructed by problems and needs that have yet to be confronted with.

5.1 SUPPORT, PROTECTION AND HOPE

«I think they have a hard time believing that we can really help them with these issues. They perceive that the tools and expertise needed for real support aren't there, and therefore do not trust us».

«They come just to ask for consultation, to ask for something, this man was indeed asking what he should do because he suffered from being constantly marginalized and insulted because of his situation».

«Even more so, for who confronts a challenge of this kind [LGBT people], he/she needs a lot of support, of backing and certainly within that place he/she doesn't find any».

Homeless LGBT people do make requests for support, even if they are not

always made explicitly. The need for psychological support is often connected to a strong need for "physical" protection from the very real dangers present in environments which may reveal to be particularly violent and inhospitable.

«LGBT people are certainly more exposed to the risks connected with living on the street».

[talking about a trans user] *«We thought about the thing that made her feel calmer and more protected in a situation which is not protected, like the one of the dormitory».*

Requests for support and protection, however, are hard to advance without the hope that they can be positively welcomed and satisfied. We call this condition as a "need for attainability" and for "building trust": I can decide to trust you only if I think that you will be able to understand and help me in a concrete way, otherwise I will distance myself and not be able to establish a contact.

Where one perceives the existence of effective tools for protection- like in the case of international protection for asylum seekers - even though with difficulty, people's issues do emerge. As the operator of MigraBò points out:

«They confide to the service professionals, and they point them out to us. It's difficult for them to come and immediately tell us everything, no no, it's not like that…. but if they come to us because there are other foreigners who are able to understand them, and because others have already come here and explained them what we do».

5.2 THE OTHER EXPLANATION – ESCAPE FROM STIGMA

«When he had to talk about homosexual experiences he had, just to find a rational explanation he told us that he was being followed by secret agents: "I need to divert them, for this reason I have relationships with other men because they know that I am heterosexual and therefore if I have relationships with men they think it's not me"».

The need to give an explanation to one's own behaviors that is not that of "being homosexual" expresses at the same time a profound need for self-coherence and a strong need to escape from stigma.

This double direction is not afoot for people's well-being:

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«There have been many examples of users who according to us had a strong homosexual orientation that was strongly denied so this thing brought about imbalance for people».

As we've seen with the model of "defining oneself, negation", and as we'll see in the next chapter, escaping from stigma can be the most advisable strategy to provide the person with time and resources to carry out a path of reflection and construction of meaning (see next paragraph).

5.3 RECOGNITION, LEGITIMIZATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

«He constantly puts the theme of his sexual orientation to the fore».

«This is my personal fight and I want to do it in my own way».

In more than one interview it emerges the need to feel that one's existence and identity is recognized and legitimized. This strong need can manifest itself in different ways: the interviews suggest that inside the dormitories it assumes particularly marked characteristics.

In different contexts, such as the relationship between "me" and "you", needs for recognition expressed in less "explosive" terms emerge:

«Perhaps there was a greater need, a desire to show and talk about their orientation with an external person since there had been a strong break with their families exactly due to their "coming out"».

Being perceived as "different"- that is, not being part of the hetero-normative paradigm - often generates profound questions of meaning for LGBT people that since the coming-out onwards, for a certain period, continue to accompany their life experience. The practical manifestation of these questions can consist in the concrete need to confront people similar to oneself on diverse aspects of LGBT life, the search for "models" (thematic films, cultural icons) to compare oneself against: I am like her/ I am not like her.

The need behind this search is that of an image of oneself that is integrated and accepted by the person and by the one's own community of reference.

Also other users of the shelters, if lacking negative prejudices or deep knowledge of the theme, can show a need for the building of sense:

«The women who shared the room with her didn't cause problems. I remember only one woman who had just arrived from Cameroon that came into the office and asked us why we had put a person with a beard in her room. After she had been calmly given an explanation she accepted that she was in the room…. I thought that there would have been more resistances, jokes, or that they would make fun of her but there wasn't».

The people's LGBT experience deeply questions our society dominant models and it is thinkable to find a solution to these issues without starting a reflection within the whole context (starting also from separate micro-contexts) on the meaning of "normality", masculinity-femininity and heterosexuality.

5.4 WORK

«They have troubles integrating themselves in the workplace».

«The loss of job creates marginalization and LGBT people are more at risk than heterosexuals because they cannot claim their relations on a labor union level and therefore they cannot count on the security networks generally available to married individuals. LGBT people, for example, generally tend to be the first to be laid off with unemployment insurance because they don't have a family responsibility to claim for».

«The obstacles put in their access[trans people] to job world are more numerous than in any other case».

The need for job, although common to any homeless individuals, represents a a problem and a compelling need for LGBT, and particularly trans, people. This need is directly connected to their sexual identity independently from their capabilities and competences. In general, the job environment proves to be further aggravated by the stigma toward LGBT individuals.

5.5 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

«The main problems was health, or to use a term that is more our own, well-being. Because transsexual individuals need a series of treatments, interventions, as well as medical and surgical assistance in their transition path, since transition is obviously not something that can be done at home».

The health needs of homeless LGBT people emerge with clarity in relation to trans individuals, a need that in Bologna is covered by the clinic managed by MIT. There also seems to emerge a specific issue connected the topic of sexually transmissible infections, and HIV in particular, even if in the experience of Plus the records are very reduced:

«I need to tell you the truth. The only two cases [homeless LGBT youth encountered] were two south-american people, therefore immigrants. [...] These two young men contacted us because of bureaucratic problems that they had encountered in obtaining medicines [anti-retroviral]*».*

In one case a young homosexual man user of a housing project, discovered that he was HIV-positive:

«When this young man has discovered he was HIV-positive, he had to tell it at home and the person with whom he had a sexual relationship became paranoid because he was afraid of having become HIV-positive. However, he was angry because this person hadn't told him, because he had exposed him to danger. We therefore had to work, and mediate, to help him understand that he also had unprotected sex and that this young man didn't know beforehand».

The hypothesis is that also the issue of health emerges with difficulty because of taboos connected to sexuality and to homosexual behaviors. Where it emerges, we ascertain that it is not limited to purely "medical" aspects, but it brings about specific behaviors, emotions and needs for meaning related with the LGBT sphere.

5.6 LEGAL SUPPORT

«I live on 200 euro a months. My parents said that they prefer to get involved in a trial».

«Despite his poverty, his father, brother, and sister refuse to support him financially even if it's required by law».

Among the needs expressed by LGBT homeless individuals there is also that of legal support. They usually turn to lawyers to solve economic issues connected to the lack of support from the families, yet almost never to deal with homophobic hate crimes. Professionals' impression - and ours too as researchers- is that, more than because of a lack in hate crimes, rather legal actions in this second area are not perceived due to the absence of complaint and of adequate normative tool to persecute them and make the records emerge.

As we have already shown[5], the possibility to advance legal action against one's own family is often accompanied by a strong need to manage the emotional consequences of the conflict.

6. THE INTERVENTIONS

In Chapter 1 we presented various subjects that carry out interventions connected to the problems of the homeless LGBT people and we highlighted how the Bolognese network is characterized by scarce connections between organizations with different areas of intervention: LGBT issues and homelessness. This – combined with the natural specificity of the individual organizations – on the plan of the actions ensure that the diversity of approaches is significant, the good practices have difficulties in being put into a network and therefore the solutions result as less effective. Also for this reason cultural models that hinder the visibility analyzed in chapter 2 are maintained and reproduced. In this chapter, instead, we focus on the acted part of thought patterns, depending on its ability to facilitate or hinder the emergence, the intervention and the solution of the specific problems of homeless LGBT people.

In this case those that we tracing are also abstract models ,and yet the chapter aims to also be a practical tool for professionals to reflect on their own intervention. We hope that innovative connection between one's action plan proposal and the effects on homeless LGBT people can be recognized here and there.

6.1 THE NORMALITY

«I will tell you that I have never had a problem here. I have always been accustomed since childhood to be around gay people».

«So we neither talk too much about it nor don't talk at all, it's a normal and natural thing».

In this model of (non)intervention the LGBT issues are seen but not perceived as potentially "problematic"; they are intended as an absolutely normal part of a person or of his/her personality and devoid of possible complications. The intervention aims to demonstrate acceptance and to avoid moral judgment. The slogan could be: "If a person is LGBT, what's wrong?"

These actions are linked to the pattern of invisibility of the error of focusing[6]:

5 See section 4.2

6 See section 2.3

concentrating on the characteristic of the person causes make us lose sight of the possible threats, violence, and insecurities derived from the context. It is as though, not wanting to judge the body of a pregnant woman on the ninth month, we avoid thinking that she would have troubles in finding appropriate clothing entering any clothing store.

As we have seen, the contexts, being them the family, the shelter welcome, the origin are still characterized by a potentially strong homophobia and thus able to generate specific problems and needs within LGBT people.

KEY POINT
• To consider normal a characteristic of a person does not mean he/she cannot have problems because of the way this feature is understood in the context (stigma).

TIPS
• Start from the hypothesis that, given the homo-trans-phobic context, a LGBT person can have more specific problems and needs.

6.2 THE FIRST STEP

«We did not have a role in his path of acceptance because he has never opened up, so how can you do it?».

«If a person does the first step and speaks to me, it is possible to help perhaps by linking him/her with associations that deal with this».

«It is not that a different intervention is structured starting from this, also because he did not place it as the main topic of the call for help».

The model of the "first step" structures the intervention exclusively from the opening up and the issues reported by the user. It connects to the models of invisibility of the "privacy" and the "perfect question" models[7], where it is not possible to see and act on the issues because they are too personal or are not made explicit, sometimes it connects with the ''emergency'' model in which there is a focus on the immediate, ignoring possible causes and structural problems.

«We asked them: how can this thing be a problem for you, how we can help you to make sure that this thing is not a problem?».

7 See Chapter 2.

Even when the person declares himself/herself LGBT, asking him/her to define his/her own problems - and possibly also the solutions - can collide with his/her inability to give a name to his/her feelings and create an effect of abandonment and "homework" giving the implicit message **"come back when you will have better defined your issues, we are here"**.

An intervention of this type can definitely relegate the more intimate or abstract issues, such as those related to loneliness, to the image of the self and to coming out, into invisibility.

Shifting the focus on professionals, they can find themselves in the double bond of doing nothing - feeling the frustration of having identified the needs, but having absolutely no possibility of acting - or insisting on personal questions, with the feeling of forcing the person to open up.

The third way, which is useful to break the deadlock, is represented again by moving the focus from the identity to the behaviors and work on context.

KEY POINTS
• For a homeless LGBT person to first define his/her own problems and the solutions he or she would need could be too difficult.
• Waiting for the person to make the first step may generate deadlock.

TIPS
• You can always take the first step!
• Remember that identity is a difficult tangle to deal with also for homeless LGBT people, but the others' experiences, own feelingsand behaviors are more accessible topics of conversation.
• Work on the context to make it welcoming , through speeches, materials, creation of micro-environments or access to other contexts.

6.3 THE IMPOSSIBLE PROTECTION

The model of the impossible protection is strongly connected to the trans or LGB declared people within the dormitories and to the characteristics of the latter. Both the structural aspects - shared facilities, sometimes dormitories with many people, high turnover, access also of violent people - and cultural aspects such as homophobia are called into question. This theme of being hostile to LGBT people is in the story of all

respondents: less hostile where people have the choice to isolate themselves in their own personal spaces and to surround themselves with the people they choose among the users and professionals; very hostile instead the closer to the low threshold level: with shared rooms, confined spaces, high turnover. In the face of the hostility of the environment, professionals promote actions to ensure the safety of the person:

> *«We asked ourselves what would make her feel less exposed».*

> *«Instead maybe in the dorm among the users the situation is indeed more problematic because the guys I told you about before, at the end never declared themselves within the context of the dormitory because it is a complicated context».*

> *«You would have to pass men's room to use the bathroom and this thing for these two people* [trans MtF][8] *it was always a traumatic thing, so we accompanied them».*

The protection has emerged among the specific needs of homeless LGBT people[9] and in case of emergencies is obviously necessary to protect and secure the people.

The intervention model of "impossible protection", however, has different features: professionals build a kind of barrier, which they would want as permanent, around people who request it and those visibly fragile, permanently trying to act as a shield between them and the attacks of the hostile environment.

> *«For example, some people* [users of the structure] *that had conflicts* [with LGBT people] *and then maybe* [the latter] *told us that during the night they* [people prone to conflict] *approached them ... while we were not there. That is to say, being things not… done under the eyes of the professionals it was not something of which we could speak, the others denied».*

The limits of the model emerge because in the dorms the "protection" can never be complete. The limited personal space and the presence of various common areas allow users to be always potentially in communication among each other. In the face of a very hostile environment, the demand for protection potentially extends to the total residence time of the LGBT person, making it impossible to ensure their safety in fact.

Not only, inside the dorm structure, users observe the different treatment reserved to some people who can therefore be identified (and identify themselves) as particularly fragile and not as more under attack from the context.

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8 From male to female.
9 See Chapter 5.

KEY POINTS
• In the absence of a deep awareness raising work on all users, dorms are not contexts where declared LGBT people can be safe.
• In the actual situation, to ensure protection for declared homeless LGBT people within the dormitories of low threshold is impossible.

TIPS
• Try to find other solutions as soon as possible!
• Influence the environment of the dormitory so that it is as welcoming as possible: propose a meeting with materials, speeches and LGBT people.
• Take a stand first: insert a paragraph in the regulations regarding the reception for LGBT people that sanctions homophobia.

6.4 THE SEPARATION

«We welcomed a girl in our apartment, that is belonging to some of our people, for some time, until she found a suitable solution through the institutions».

«We assessed that putting a transsexual in the female wing because the male one was considered too violent but once we reached the destination, we met resistance from the women because the recognition of that identity is not a thing that happens automatically in that kind of community so there is a lot of work that MIT tried to do also with the Province of Bologna through some apartments dedicated for trans people».

The model of separation aims to respond to housing need and threats and issues of the "dormitory" context creating friendly environments, specifically for LGBT people, where they do not come into contact with homo-transphobic group and personal cultures and behaviors.

The separation can take place with housing solutions as housing studios or shared apartments; the important thing is that they are inhabited by friendly people and without stigmatizing homo/trans sexuality attitudes.

The model has great merits in an emergency perspective, as it allows an effective response to the need of safety for the person and consequently frees resources to work on other areas of need, such as self-image, coming out, training/job research. The inherent risk in the model is its incompleteness: without other types of action, in the long-term separation risks to become chronic, becoming additional marginalization and segregation.

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The barriers can indeed constitute a useful and in many cases necessary protection in the passage from a hostile environment to a welcoming one, provided that work to allow the person to have greater security and connect to the new relational contexts is put into place .

KEY POINTS
• To separate a person from a hostile environment for short periods does not mean to segregate him/her.
• To treat in a special manner a person that is being stigmatized in the context of origin, does not mean to give him/her privileges, but to provide an adequate response.

TIPS
• Reply to the need of safety thank to places that are actually safe, even culturally.
• Safety is the first step; remember that from there the work of the professional starts, it does not end.

6.5 THE FILTER

«In this case the advantages are the multimedia tools such as chats, websites and phone lines, which place a filter over the difficulty, with respect to the face to face interactions, and then produce a sort of curtain behind declaring the needs becomes easier».

«It's hard enough for them to show themselves or even to call on the phone».

The experience of the LGBT associations (Cassero, MIT, Plus, MigraBò...) shows how for many people it is easier to take the first step without revealing their personal identity, behind the protection of a filter that makes the helping relationship possible. The filter is usually the telephone, but all the tools allowing the person not to reveal aspects of himself/herself that he/she doesn't feel he/she wants to reveal fit in this model.

Also going to saunas can be considered a filter:

«Where you're just with your body and the mat ... who you are outside of there does not count: rich, poor ... it does not matter. For some people the sauna was a turning point!».

The instrument of anonymity, or filters, can hardly represent a point of arrival in the path towards the well-being of the person, but it certainly emerges as an important step in the startup phase.

It is also to be noted that it may be useful to have a filter that that not only hides personal identity, but also specific aspects such as social class. Also LGBT contexts, unfortunately, can stigmatize the person with respect to other features, as told by this professional:

«No, I would never bring a refugee in a gay club ... I was there and there if you're not dressed well, they immediately look down on you».

KEY POINT
• Some people are more at ease in building the relationship, talking about their problems or researching solutions without revealing other important aspects of themselves.

TIPS
• Upgrade possible ways to request and provide assistance with tools allowing anonymity: phone, public accounts, notes, post…
• Give yourself time to use the anonymous channel to build trust, make it a first step but not the last.

6.6 THE NETWORK

The network model would provide a structured action and joint actors that, despite the specific nature of their intervention, would join together and confronting themselves with respect to the general objectives and monitoring of the action.

The advantages of this model are many: from the ability to mobilize resources and skills to the ability to influence each other's among professionals of different services, allowing the dissemination of information, good practices and good "ways of thinking".

The disadvantages mainly consist of the activation time required and the difficulties in managing group processes, given the strong diversity of the entering actors.

«We have no specific interventions; however it is clear that it can be a resource to contact Il Cassero or rather how is it called the MIT, we do it».

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«Now that I know that MIT exists, meaning that I knew it before but I had never got through it».

«For the more protected contexts we turn, for example, to the nuns. However then there's a whole other topic because you have to see if these nuns are available, understand? I do not know if they stigmatize, if they accept ...».

In Chapter 1 we saw how the network of services for homeless people and for LGBT people is mostly informal, while not lacking strong connections between some nods of different sectors.

The fact that often the actors in the Bologna area do not know or come into contact only when for emergency, has negative repercussions on the intervention, slowing down the response time and making the system less efficient. The absence of formal agreements, connection tables, common training and even only meeting events, prevent the mutual influence that we saw in Chapter 2 and allow the undisturbed acting and reproduction of invisibility models.

Other times, the network intervention is reduced to a minimum: in the act of passing a contact, in the reporting certain problems to another association or just in being aware that someone else is handling the case:

«So we put her it in contact with Il Cassero».

«This person told me that she had already been followed by this association who had placed her in an apartment and was also helping her in job research or in health aspects so in the end in that case I had nothing to do».

The risk of this type of management of the network is that individual associations - usually made up of volunteers - are delegated of the problems and needs of LGBT people, that we saw are very general and require different types of interventions, resources and professional skills.

KEY POINTS
• The network among services maximizes the effectiveness of the intervention, but it also has significant operating costs.
• The proxy to a network knot to respond to all the needs of a person is scarcely effective.

TIPS
- **Get informed and know the players in the network before emergencies arise.**
- **If there are none, organize some common events to start building relations.**
- **Be careful not to burden a single knot in the net!**

6.7 TRAINING

«It's a complicated thing on which I ask myself a lot of things actually».

«My understanding is actually full of holes on the issue».

«I think that there is a great need for training for dormitory professionals about these issues, absolutely yes, that is the right way to stay close to them, the way of getting explicit or implicit requests for help, or simply being able to see the problems. Maybe at this time, not having a specific training, we don't even see, we don't even perceive that there can be a disadvantage, if one is trained then can perceive it».

«It comes to say that if their role is of an educator and of welcoming, they should arrange in order to have some tools, to correctly implement one's own role of educator even if the person is not the standard heterosexual individual. Therefore I put it first as an issue of professionalism to be acquired».

«I think that more training of the professionals on this particular issue would be needed».

«I've always approached this issue as a professional as for any other issue, that is trying to pay attention to the person but without having specific skills on homosexual people living on the street or on how to help them».

Professionals show strong gaps of information on LGBT homelessness and they ask for tools to better carry out their work.

This need applies both to professionals in the social sector as well as to those active in the LGBT community: each one relating to the skills of the other field.

The training needs are also justified by the delicacy of the scope of intervention: in the face of deep concerns of homeless LGBT people, to get wrong language, unconsciously repeat stigmatizing patterns, and give signs of being taken aback can completely block the personal opening up and the professional's possibility of action.

The training would have immediate positive effects in the contrast to invisibility

models, and therefore in taking responsibility of problems and needs, in the network's construction and in the implementation of effective models for intervention.

Not only, get trained on LGBT homelessness means acquiring analytical skills and tools useful in many other possible areas: identifying the stigma, empowering the welcome, being familiar with the sphere of one's self and others' emotions, questioning the context are elements that can significantly improve, in general, the quality of the work of those dealing with countering extreme marginality.

KEY POINTS
• Professionals display strong need for training.
• Given the delicate area of intervention, it is very important to feel competent and at ease.

TIPS
• Observe and take part in training organized on the issue you feel you know less about (between homelessness and LGBT issues).
• Read the glossary at the end of the manual: it is not as good as experiential training, but it expresses many important ideas to know.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The research **"A different path"** stems from three questions as a starting point, which we pull from the first chapter:

- **Are there any needs/vulnerabilities specific of homeless LGBT people?**
- **In which context are they expressed and what reactions do they generate?**
- **Are they relevant in the sector of services for homeless people?**

To the first question we can undoubtedly answer yes. Homeless LGBT individuals have specific needs and vulnerabilities that extend across multiple circles: from reflections on personal identity to protection, from health to acknowledgment and acceptance from friendly contexts. One of the research result is the discovery that these needs directly call into question the contexts in which the relationship of help is made explicit – including models of thought of both users and professional – that in turn result in need of changes.

The proper contexts of intervention with homeless people, indeed, end up being the most problematic element, as they impede, in various ways, the visibility of LGBT issues, thus creating vicious cycles according to which the less the theme emerges, the less other people can become aware of the problems, define them and allow their emersion, therefore leaving the suffering of many without any response which *«we will never tell about».*

Where, in spite of everything they emerge, the stories of homeless LGBT individuals shine a light on complex experiences, deep emotions and show the way towards other possible contexts of welcoming and acceptance. A light which both professionals and other users seem to be struggling to see and understand in its meaning, so that often the direct encounter with LGBT people is able to modify the intervention approach and the general context. Thus it emerges the resistance of cultural models of invisibility, and it highlights the necessity of more structured interventions in order to generate change.

Regarding the third question, even if they rarely appear relevant for professionals, the specificity of the needs and problems tied to LGBT themes are a profoundly significant element. Firstly, they are significant for the wellbeing of the people themselves, secondly for the entire system of welcoming, which while observing exactly where it has major difficulties of perception of the phenomenon – before that of intervention – can become aware of the its limits and find incitement, energy, and direction for change. The specificity of LGBT themes in the sphere of intervention with homeless people represents the occasion for a transformation towards a more welcoming and effective system, capable of responding to the new poverty and of providing new responses to existing problems.

7.2 HORIZONS AND PATHS OF CHANGE: WHERE TO START FROM?

The system needs a **cultural change**, that is a change in the ways of thinking about the people who compose it.

The horizon is that of a system of reception where an LGBT individual, or a person who is still reflecting on whether defying himself/herself as such, can feel not only welcomed, but receives – without asking for– certainties of the fact that he/she will not be judged for being LGBT; he/she will breathe **positive phrases** towards diversity; he/she will feel by instinct that he/can share thoughts and concerns related to the sphere of emotions, certain to find people listening to him/her, who are able to understand, address and give him/her advice. In this context the personal openness and reflection are a coherent consequence of the received inputs, as much as in the current intervention so are the closure and removal.

The most indicated path is that of **training**: allowing the creation of knowledge, abilities and attitudes, different from those into place, in a new training setting. The most sensible target is certainly that of the professionals, who have shows awareness of their training needs and, once back in the staring context, find themselves in a privileged position to **positively influence** the whole environment.

Also we saw that the presence of **dedicated services** such as help desks, telephone help lines, and web sites are elements capable of facilitating the emersion and the listening of specific problems, as it could be the presence and diffusion of information on the real possibilities of dedicated help to LGBT people (friendly apartments in housing projects, emergency lodging for young adults kicked out of their homes tied to services of mediation and legal consultation).

Finally the **network of services**. If there the increase in the cases of homeless LGBT persons is confirmed, it will be necessary to upgrade the network, starting with a few things: events of mutual kowledge and discussion, participation in joined trainings, reporting and rating of cases handled together.

In this historical phase, to modify the system relatively reduced input seem to be necessary, they appear even smaller if compared to the potential of expected benefits. Therefore we must have the will to think in a new way and the courage to take **a different path**.

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APPENDIX

LGBT GLOSSARY
edited by Rete Re.A.DY.

SEX / The biological and anatomical characteristics of men and women, determined by sexual chromosomes.

GENDER / Social and cultural category constructed on the biological differences of the sexes (masculine gender vs. feminine gender).

GENDER IDENTITY / The self-perception as masculine or as feminine or in an undefined condition.

GENDER IDENTITY DISORDER / Expression used by medicine to describe a strong and persistent identification with the sex opposite to the one assigned, also called gender dysphoria.

GENDER ROLE / The set of expectations and social models that determine how men and women should behave in a certain culture and historical period.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION / The direction of affection and sexual attraction towards other people: it can be heterosexual, bisexual, and or homosexual.

HETEROSEXUAL / A person attracted on an affectionate and sexual level to a person of the opposite sex.

HOMESEXUAL / A person attracted on an affectionate and sexual level to a person of the same sex.

BISEXUAL / A person attracted on an affectionate and sexual level to people of both sexes.

LESBIAN / A homosexual woman.

GAY / A homosexual man.

TRANSSEXUAL / A person that persistently feels to belong to the opposite sex, and for this reason, goes through a path of transitions that generally ends with the surgical reassignment of sex. The feminine term indicates a person who is originally biologically male, but feels to be a woman (MtF – Male to Female). The masculine term indicates a person who is originally biologically female, but feels to be a man (FmT – Female to Male).

TRANSGENDER / An "umbrella" term that includes all of the people who do not recognize themselves in the current models of identity and gendered roles, and believe they are too restrictive in respect to their own experience.

#adifferentpath / LGBT glossary

TRANSVESTITE / A person that habitually dresses clothes of the opposite sex, independently from own sexual orientation or gender identity.

DRAG QUEEN / DRAG KING / A man that dresses as a woman (queen) or a woman that dresses as a man (king) accentuating features for artistic or recreational purposes.

INTERSEXUALITY / Condition of the person who, by genetics, born with genitalia and/or secondary sexual characteristics not defined as exclusively masculine or feminine.

LGBT / An acronym of Anglo-Saxon origin that is used to indicate people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender. At times it is written also as LGBTIQ, to include the people that live an intersexual condition and the term queer.

QUEER / English term (strange, unusual) that was used in a derogatory sense when confronting homosexuals. Recovered recently in a political and cultural sense, and in a positive light, to indicate all of the facets of gender identity and sexual orientation, refusing at the same time the more fixed categories still present in LGBT term and claiming back its overcoming.

COMING OUT / Expression used to indicate the decision to declare one's homosexuality. Derives from the English phrase "coming out of the closet", to go out of the closet, to come to the fore, to come out. In a broader sense, the coming out represents the path that a person takes to become aware of his/her own homosexuality, to accept it, to start living romantic relationships and to declare it on the outside.

OUTING / Expression used to indicate the revealing of someone's homosexuality by third persons without the consent of the person involved. The homosexual liberation movement utilized outing at times outing as a political practice to reveal the homosexuality of public figures (politicians, representatives of the Church, journalists) secretly homosexual, but who have taken up homophobic public positions.

HETEROSEXISM / World vision that considers only heterosexuality as nature, assuming that all people are heterosexual. Heterosexism rejects and stigmatizes all forms of behavior, identity and relationships that are non-heterosexual. It occurs both on the cultural and individual level, influencing morals and social institutions and is the root cause of homophobia.

VISIBILITY / The result of a path of acceptance that allows a person to live his/her own homosexuality publicly.

HOMOPHOBIA / The prejudice, the fear and hostility against homosexual people and the actions that derive from this prejudice. It can lead to acts of violence against homosexual people. May 17th was chosen at international level as the worldwide day

against homophobia, in memory of May 17, 1990 when the World Health Organization eliminated homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses.

INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA / Form of homophobia often not conscious, resulting from the education and values conveyed by society, of which sometimes homosexuals themselves are victims.

HOMONEGATIVITY / The term homophobia today is in part replaced with the term homonegativity to indicate that the attacks of discrimination and violence against homosexuals are not necessarily irrational or the result of fear, but rather the expression of a negative conception of homosexuality, that stems from heterosexist culture and society.

TRANSPHOBIA / The prejudice, the fear and the hostility against transsexual and transgender people (and against those seen as transgressive in respect to gender roles) and the actions that derive from this prejudice. Transphobia can lead to acts of violence against transsexual and transgender people. November 20th is recognized at international level as the Transgender Day of Remembrance (T-DOR) to commemorate the victims of transphobic violence, in memory of Rita Hester, whom assassination in 1998 gave start to the project Remembering Our Dead.

INTERNALIZED TRANSPHOBIA / Form of transphobia that is often not conscious, resulting from the education and values conveyed by society, of which sometimes transgender people are victims themselves.

PRIDE / Expression that indicates the manifestation and the initiatives that take place every year during the worldwide day of LGBT pride, in the preceding or following days of June 28th, that commemorates the revolt of Stonewall, culminated precisely June 28, 1969. The so-called Stonewall riots were a series of violent clashes between transgender and homosexual people and the New York police. The first night of the clashes was Friday, June 27, 1969, when the police burst into a local bar called Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in Greenwhich Village. "Stonewall" (as it usually named it shortly) is generally considered the symbolic moment of birth for the modern LGBT liberation movement throughout the world.

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USEFUL LINKS

Main organizations involved in the project "A different path"

http://www.avvocatodistrada.it

http://www.piazzagrande.it

http://www.arcigay.it

http://www.cassero.it

http://www.mit-italia.it

http://migrabo.wordpress.com

http://www.plus-onlus.it

http://www.retelenford.it

On homeless people themes:

http://www.feantsa.org

http://www.fiopsd.org/

On LGBT themes:

http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/

http://www.iglyo.com/

http://www.onig.it/

http://www.fortytonone.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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