



Homelessness.

***Definition, numbers, places in the territory
of Bergamo***

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The project

- The research is composed by two stages; the first one started in September 2012 and ended in June 2013; the second one has just began in September 2019.
- It was employed firstly a quantitative methodology, based on the criterion of representativeness; secondly we adopted a qualitative methodology, in order to find significant outcomes.



Targets of the research

This research aimed to analyze different topics:

- What role the social network can play?
- How homeless people circulate in our territory?
- How homeless people use the sanitary system?
- Have homeless people got new lease on life?



First part of the research

- Firstly we compared and composed how many people each homeless shelter had guested during the year 2012, and then during the firsts six months of 2013.
- Then we control how many people used to sleep in different homeless shelters during a week and how many people benefited from an accommodation for less than a week.
- Finally we compared our study's statistics with the data produced by the national statistics institute (ISTAT)

Homeless in Bergamo

In 2012, 683 were the homeless people in Bergamo

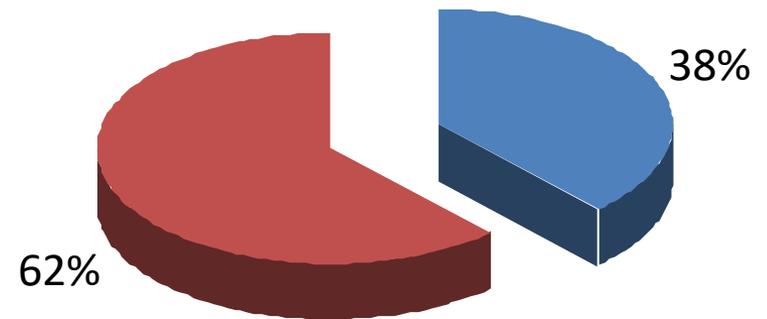
- Most of them were men (600) and come from abroad (499).
- The 12% of homeless people was female, 56% of them was a non EU citizen, while 44% was Italian.
- The 88% were men and in the 75% of them come from a foreign country.
- During the firsts six months of 2013 we have seen different trends: the number of Italians is growing and the homeless female population as well.



Time spent in the homeless shelter

People who sleep in an homeless shelter for less than a week are not considered homeless (by ETHOS criteria), however they represent an important population for the services.

- less than a week
- more than a week





The research on care services

- We prepared a survey about the homeless' use of care services and we analyzed how their health status was related to homelessness' condition.
- The 42% of people was sleeping at an accommodation, while the 31% was sleeping outdoor
- Moreover, the 53% has been at the emergency ward for a physical problem, while the 38% was there for a problem related to homelessness and poverty.



Second part

The second part of the research was devoted to the qualitative research. We attended for many days the homeless shelters and we caught a great number of narrative interviews that were about these topics:

- How they became homeless
- The migration
- The use of drugs or alcohol abuse
- The job insecurity
- How they feel like at the homeless shelter
- The expectations in the future
- The social network



The parental background

As we have seen during the interviews many people came from a parental background of poverty, low education and drugs abuse. Sometimes these people made experience of homelessness and community life already during infancy.



Migration

- Many of the non EU homeless we met, rarely made experience of the street life when they were just arrived in Italy. Instead, they became homeless after, when they have exhausted their social network or they have lost their job.
- For migrants the relation with the family is really problematic, because they often have taken the responsibility for all the family wellbeing.



Job insecurity

Homelessness and unemployment were not so strictly related. This because many people we interviewed used to work salutory, but they were employed in really precarious and low qualified job. Moreover some people became unemployed cause of the enterprise failure or the industrial machineries' settlement abroad.



The homeless shelter

We decided to analyze two points: how people remembered the first night at the homeless shelter and secondly, how they were feeling their everyday life.

- we observed that many people postponed the entering in a homeless shelter cause they were not disposed to admit to be homeless, actually they were suffering for the stigmatization.
- In the everyday life instead, the most significant problems were related to cohabitation. Homeless shelters in fact used to host many people that came from different countries and contexts and that were compelled to share the same room and places.



The expectations in the future

Many people interviewed were looking for reaching more autonomy and were conscious that this implied to earn a living, but also to find a new context of friendship.

- About the living, they were afraid for the difficulties in finding a job, after many years of unemployment or in receiving a grant in aid.
- Many people had broken their previous relationships (with friends, family, colleagues) and were afraid to spend the next years in solitude, without a network of solidarity and affection.



The social networks

The social networks play a crucial role in bringing information, resources, further links and they can aid homeless people in dealing with poverty, social exclusion, unemployment. Usually social networks are divided into formal and informal relations.

- Homeless people entertained formal relations with the accommodation's operators and social workers, while they used to have informal relationships with relatives and friends.
- However, while formal relations were really common, the informal ones were sporadic; for this reason, it happened frequently that formal relations were overburdened.
- Non EU homeless instead didn't have the right to comply with the public social services and for this reason were further excluded.



Conclusions

social services and material support

- Bergamo makes available a huge system of support and accommodation' s services that are mostly financed by foundations and privates social associations
- However most of the social services are devoted to emergency and primary support, and scarce resources are addressed to projects of social integration and autonomy reinforcement



Social invisibility

- The local institutions as well as the national statistic institute (ISTAT) have a underestimated awareness of homelessness in our territory, specially about non EU population.
- Furthermore the entire society is not in touch with this phenomenon and sometimes homeless are excluded also from their relatives and friendship networks

The social invisibility and the luck of long-lasting welfare grants are the main cause of homeless chronic vulnerability.