

The homeless population during the COVID-19 syndemic: Inequities, practices of social resilience and social reintegration strategies

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Introduction

The paper analyses:

- the amplification of **social insecurity and misrecognition** of the homeless during the COVID-19 syndemic.
- practices of **social resilience** activated by the socio-educational staff and the coordination figures who work in the support services.
- social dynamics that can improve the **social reintegration** of the homeless, in a long-during prospective.



The field research

Period: 18th of July-14th of September 2020.

Place: the city of Bergamo, Italy.

Method:

- 18 discursive interviews to different professionals engaged in the support of homeless;
- 12 semi-structured interviews of homeless people who were participating in social reintegration programmes.



The social resilience (Adger 2000)

- **Coping** with an immediate social risk;
- **Adaptability** of the social organisations;
- **Conversion** of social infrastructures.

These abilities influence both the **social interactions**, both the **symbolic configurations**.



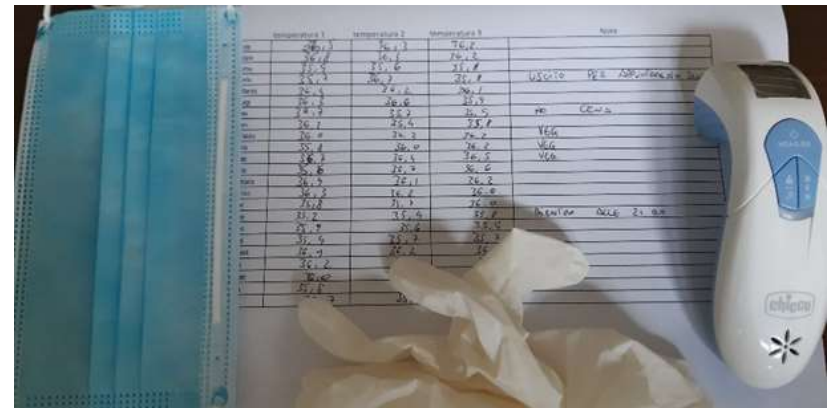
The natural selection

- Social vulnerability
- Incomplete accesibility to Welfare services
- Lack of protection from national and local authorities



In the Medieval castle

- Self-management of the shelters
- Drop-in services still operate
- Continue clinical checking
- Isolation from the rest of the society
- Increasing of the opening hours 24/24



In the eye of the cyclone

- Organise new workshops
- Assure psico-social interviewes
- Unterupted working teams
- Reach a new sensation of wellness



Towards processes of social inclusion

- disappearance of many jobs in the informal economy
- judgemental gaze of society
- engaging in volunteering, maintaining collaboration with the community or participating in associative life
- finding or rediscovering family networks, friends and neighbourhoods
- Living in a stable home



The Covid-19 crisis implications

As the operators interviewed defined themselves as being 'accustomed to permanent emergencies', so the homeless population lives a 'normally' insecure life, deprived of the traditional mechanisms of insertion and integration (in respect of the labour market, the welfare state, and social ties).

Conclusions

- **Coping** and **adaptability** abilities were reached thanks to: the personal and organisational flexibility and the sense of responsibility expressed by social professionals.
- The **conversion** of the social infrastructures is still in progress because it needs a strong institutional and political engagement.

The **institutional commitment** should be realised:

- directly, by providing **legal instruments** and forms of **economic intervention** in favour of the protection of the most vulnerable.
- indirectly, by encouraging projects and public initiatives to raise **awareness in civil society** of the condition of the homeless population.

