



FICTITIOUS
ADDRESS

Alessia Cadamuro

FICTITIOUS ADDRESS

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“For a few years now homeless people have been an important source of curiosity and human closeness for me.

My experience started five years ago in Venice, where I had the opportunity to meet many homeless as a volunteer in “Ronda Della Solidarietà”.

As volunteers at Venice train station we brought food, clothes and blankets and spent time with the homeless three times a week.

Here I met a nice old lady, who liked to sing and had lived for more than twenty years at the station.

I started to talk with her and from that day my thoughts started to change and my prejudices disappeared. I realized that this old lady had a great personality and she shared her stories with me, giving me a “part” of herself.

From that day onwards I couldn't ignore her being, her presence and identity.

This lady is called Rosetta, or rather “Rosie”.

Rosie told me, “... friendship does not exist on the street ... they are just acquaintances, not real friends...I was always alone and I've realized that you can trust nobody...”

Indeed, it took a long time for her to trust me and allow me to be her friend. For more than two years I met her regularly and we built a good friendship with a lot of mutual respect. To Rosie and other people go my thanks, because through their friendships I have found the courage and passion to start this design research project”

Alessia

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AN INTRO TO THIS TOPIC



Ben the Magician

In order to introduce this topic, I believe it is important to understand who the homeless are, how they live their lives, and why they live on the street.

The common idea that society has about the homeless, especially those people who have never spoken with them, is often distorted and unrealistic.

It is with great pleasure that I present you with the story of a person who has collaborated with this thesis:

‘Ben the Magician,

Ben is between 40 and 50 years old, previously a chef on a ship but currently a homeless alcoholic.

He knows many languages. His story is of a normal person who divorced from his wife and sunk into depression. Rejected by some family members and deprived of the opportunity to see his two daughters, he began to drink, lost his job and now he is living on the road.

“... During the day I go around with my friends. They are also homeless like me. We all are boys and we try to give to each other a hand. I often stay alone and I like to have my space to do things. For some years now I’ve been sleeping in dorms and also on the road. I still sleep on the street, especially when I’m drunk in the afternoon. It is a long time since the aid centre tried to give me a hand to stop drinking but unfortunately alcohol is too big an attraction for me.

A long time ago I traveled a lot. I was a chef and I was very well regarded. I worked on a cruise ship. It was a beautiful way of life but at the same time it was hard. Inside a cruise ship it seems like a small city from which no one can escape.

After ten years working as a chef I met my wife. I lived with her for seven years during which time we had two children. I continued to work on the ship and saw my family every three months. Unfortunately, I betrayed my wife. She discovered this and we separated. I was very depressed. From that day I have seen my daughters only twice. Nowadays I don’t hear any news about them.

I always liked to drink wine and two years ago I started drinking up to six bottles a day.

I’m shy but when I want to know someone and I want to be accepted, I like to do small magic tricks. I always carry a one Euro coin in my pocket: I use it to do magic tricks. I’m able to move the coin from my hand to other people’s shoes through my magic power but in reality I’ve kept the coin between my fingers. I used to do this trick for my daughters and

they laughed a lot.

I’m tired of living like this. I’d like to give up alcohol and find a job. I’m able to make bread. I can build and I am an artist. Sometimes I work but only for short periods and then I find myself on the street again.

Every time I go to the help organizations they send me from one place to another and, in the end, there is a social assistant that is polite and friendly to me.

Very often people treat me like a stupid guy, a person not able to understand anything. I am committed to improving my situation: for example, I don’t sleep all day like other people do. I work when I can but sometimes it’s very difficult...”

I met Ben about five months ago at the front of the train. This interview took place at different times, in front of St. Catherine’s Church.

Invisible becomes visible

My research aims to discover how through design it is possible to give dignity back to homeless people.

In order to give solutions to this topic I collaborated with the homeless throughout the research and design process.

In the first part of my research I started looking into data about aids organizations from two countries: Italy and the Netherlands. Furthermore, I analyzed how European laws on homelessness are structured, focusing on the denial of basic human rights. This provides a useful foundation in order to understand how the problem of homelessness is treated.

The second part of the thesis questions society and its knowledge of homeless situations. This chapter highlights how society is only partially conscious of homeless problems and therefore how far from each other these two societies are.

In order to make these differences visible, I used the third chapter for directly questioning the homeless. My questions were mainly focused on their opinions about the loss of basic rights. The dialogues I had with them guided me in understanding which solutions might suit their situation.

In the fourth part of the thesis I started to focus on how design tries to solve homeless problems, therefore, I give an overview of some existing design projects, highlighting both successful and less successful proposals. This research into design introduces also the last chapter of my thesis project, concerning my own design proposals.

The conclusion represents the type of scenario I imagine. In this scenario the homeless are more conscious of their rights and have the possibility to change their lives whenever they desire, without any social or legal barriers.

Support data and information

Important sources of data for this thesis were the publications from FEANTSA, a book by Anna Fausta Scardigno (A. F. Scardigno, 2009) and the data given to me by The Street Lawyers, an Italian N.G.O.

Specific attention in my research has also been drawn to the Italian law n°733, article 44 of the Civil Code, which makes it difficult for certain persons to register at the town hall.

I also used the sources received from NEOS, an aid centre for the homeless in the Netherlands.

Chapter 1:

THE LAW'S VOICE

Step into two countries: the Netherlands and Italy

There are currently three million people homeless in Western Europe (data from European Federation of National Organization working with homeless FEANTSA). The 'Homeless' include people who have only recently begun living on the street as well as those who have been living without a fixed address for more than 10 years. Reasons for being homeless include: job loss, illness, bereavement, separation, addiction or lack of strong bonds. There is never a single critical event leading to homelessness but culmination of several events and the loss of weak and uncertain relationships that become difficult to maintain over time.

I decided to do my research in The Netherlands and Italy because I had the chance to collect evidence and data necessary to construct this research in person. I believe it was essential to collect interviews, newspaper articles, and data, to fully understand the heart of the problem and everything that surrounds it. I talked to not only the homeless but also to social workers, psychologists, sociologists, volunteers in dormitories and soup kitchens, priests, lawyers and managers of aid centres for the homeless.

Aid organizations in the Netherlands

Data from FEANTSA states that the number of homeless people in the Netherlands is estimated at around 30.000, representing 0,2 % of the total population. More specifically, the Eindhoven city hall claims there are 940 homeless people in Eindhoven and 1100 people at risk of becoming homeless. In order to face this social problem Eindhoven city council is constructing new buildings for the homeless.

To understand the quality of help that is given to the homeless I interviewed both aid centre social workers and the homeless themselves.

Interviews were conducted from October 2009 to March 2010 (Eindhoven, Amsterdam, Rotterdam). They show that the homeless frequently complain about the lengthy bureaucratic processes they undergo.

According to homeless opinion, the process in seeking assistance is long and daunting, and the volume of documentation required to be completed is significant. Equally important are their views about how the aid is organized: some centres try to help them find a home but only if their behavior is considered

to be good enough. If they don't have good behavior they can't have any residency at the aid centre organization and they cannot have any of their documentation back. It is not easy to be classified as 'good', especially when they are not in a stable situation. The homeless think that the centres do not provide adequate assistance to help them obtain employment and become self-sufficient. Therefore, they don't feel they are really equipped to move into mainstream society, especially as the help centres draw a line between them and the rest of society.

To decide for myself if this was true, I asked for further information in a homeless centre in Eindhoven. I was made very welcome in Neos and in a long interview with Doryanne van Gemert I was able to understand how aid is organised in the Netherlands.

Indeed, during our conversation, Mrs. van Gemert admitted that everything is so bureaucratic as help centres are the intermediaries between the homeless and the government of Eindhoven and have a task to monitor the homeless.

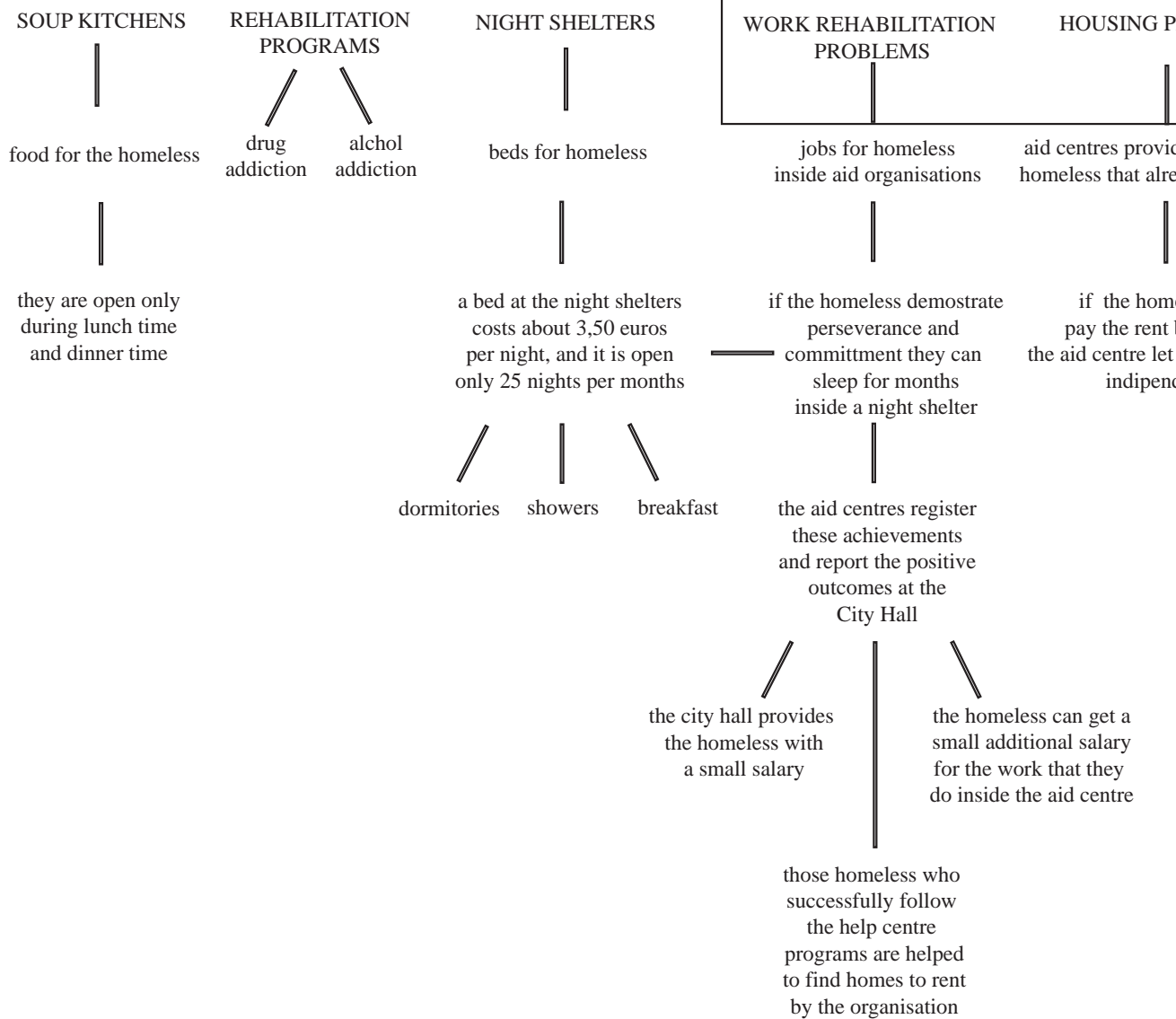
From my interviews I can say that in my opinion in the Netherlands it is possible for the homeless to receive many different kinds of help. I also understand that aid programs are well organized and function properly (see scheme n°1, Aids in Netherlands) although I believe it is important to understand if this is all the homeless need and how much effective help they receive from these programs.

I also think that, with Eindhoven being a city of small dimensions, it's quite easy for organisations to check the economical and social situation of their citizens. This is quite different in big cities, such as Amsterdam or Rotterdam, as their population is bigger and it is no coincidence that the number of homeless is higher. For this reason I also believe that it could be more difficult to check the problem and organize it efficiently in bigger cities.

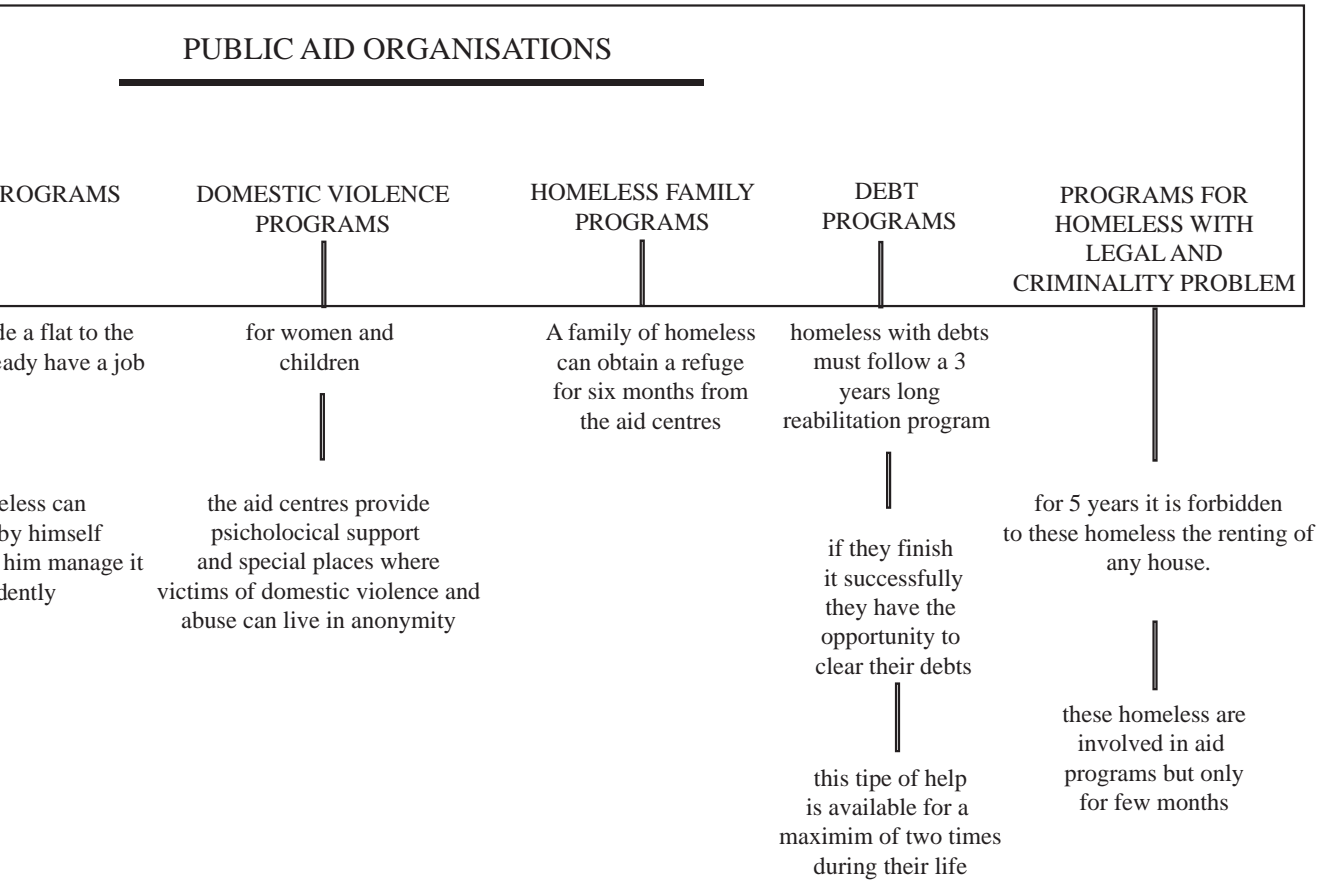
My final conclusion about the organisation of aid programs in the Netherlands is that the Dutch government and private organisations put a lot of effort into finding different types of solutions for the homeless. Despite this, the problem is still visible, because the net of organisations is too complex and the homeless often become trapped in its meshes.



PRIVATE AID ORGANIZATIONS



HOMELESS IN THE NETHERLANDS



scheme 1: Aid in the Netherlands

Aid organizations in Italy

FEANTSA and FIO.psd (Federazione Italiana Organismi per Persone Senza Dimora, online) data also describes the situation in Italy. The number of the homeless in Italy is between 170.000 and 200.000.

According to Paolo Pezzana, the head of FIO.psd, this data is constantly growing and what is missing in Italy are appropriate social policies that could face the lack of structures for homeless.

The book of A.F. Scardigno (A. F. Scardigno, 2009), also describes the situation of the homeless in Italy. The author presents personal stories of the homeless through interviews and talks and explains what type of aid currently exists in Italy: "...there are dormitories for those without a home. Private, catholic and secular associations manage dormitories.... The dorms do not meet the real demand and many people are still on the street...".

Scardigno also did a sort of ethnographic research. The collection of stories in the book shows that "...homeless people want more places to eat and sleep, but especially a stronger process of fostering and care, particularly focused toward the division between their world and mainstream society...".

A graphical analysis of the experiences gathered in the book, shows that the word 'work' is the most commonly used: in particular the expression "to find work" appears 94 times.

Graphs in the book clarify the centrality and significance of the words: 'house', 'I', 'work', and the relationship between them and the perception of the future. In this sense a job and support can help to restore dignity to the homeless person.

The book also describes the national health care situation. In Italy it is required that clients have a stable address. In the same book, it is explained that the homeless do not have a permanent address and often also lack documentation; therefore health care is denied.

Another source of information comes from the ONLUS association of Street Lawyers, established in Bologna at the end of 2000 with the aim of protecting homeless rights. Lawyers provide free legal advice and assistance to those without a home.

Through the description of their activities I've realized that the path of a homeless person back into society is very complex. For example, even a request for a fictitious address (there's an Italian law for those

who don't have an address) is often rejected or denied because the public administration and the person who work in it are not informed about this statute. For this thesis I started a collaboration with the Street lawyers. They shared much information about Italian and European law with me. The street layers proposed the fictitious address for homeless person to the Italian government some years ago and they constantly try to protect the legal identity of the homeless.

From this data I can understand that the Italian situation in terms of available structures, resources, aids for the homeless etc. is not developed enough to guarantee appropriate answers for those without a home (see scheme n°3, Aids in Italy). Furthermore, in this section of the chapter a new issue has been introduced, concerning the problem of the homeless legal identity and their lack of documentation.

Outcomes

From all of the previous assumptions and data I can now assume some important aspects for my research.

The first and most immediately visible is that Associations for the homeless and the Italian Government are not well connected, and this is in clear contrast to what happens in the Netherlands.

The second important issue concerns the integration of the homeless into society: this argument has been often highlighted by the homeless and from all of the involved organisations. Aid centres, shelters, soup kitchens are surely important, but I believe there is a bigger necessity to address. This necessity involves issues such as social inclusion and the possibility to reinstate a communication between the society with a home and the one without (scheme n°2).

As I said previously, this chapter also addresses another new type of issue, which has more to do with the homelessness lack of documentation. Through my research I've understood that in both Italy and the Netherlands the homeless expressed this problem. For this reason, I decided to investigate this direction, to see what the law says about this argument.

scheme n°2



PRIVATE AID ORGANIZATIONS

PRIVATE SECULAR ORGANIZATIONS

CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS

N.G.O, VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

SOUP KITCHEN



food for homeless



open only during lunch and dinner time

NIGHT SHELTER



bed for homeless



dorms showers breakfast

REABILITATION PROGRAMS



drug addiction alcohol addiction



services are anonymous but not free

CLOTHING



new and second hand cloths are distributed



open only three days per week

FOR HOMELESS IN ITALY

PUBLIC AID ORGANIZATIONS

S

LEGAL SUPPORT

street lawyers provide
free legal support to
the homeless

SEART
REABILITATION
PROGRAMS

drug
addiction

alcohol
addiction

It is anonymous, free and
connected with the national
health care

CAPS

night
shelters

psycological
support

soup
kitchens

‘Ubi lex voluit. Dixit.

Ubi noluit. Tacuit,

there are laws for homeless that protect their rights to have residency and documents, but these laws are not always applied correctly throughout Europe and particularly in Italy. The interpretation of these laws is often made arbitrarily because laws themselves are not always defined and sufficiently detailed.

PASSPORT



Italian, European and European-laws on homelessness and a fictitious address.

For understanding the meaning of being without a residence registry, it can be useful to analyze the meaning of some of Italian and European laws. In particular I am referring to art. 43 of the Italian Civil Code and to the European laws about residence registry. Furthermore, it can be also helpful to refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in order to draw some first conclusions.

Art 43: Domicilio e Residenza, Codice Civile Italiano

“(...) The domicile of a person is in the place where he has established the main location for his deals and interests. The residence is the place a person regularly lives”.

Registry law is based on the fundamental principle of usual residence. Obviously this principle can't find any application for those without a usual place of residence. The law, for this reason, uses the principle of the domicile, in order to register people without a home. These people can practically choose the city where they want to be registered, and the town hall would provide them registration in a dedicated street. This street won't exist in reality but it would be invented: this registration system is called "Fictive Address".

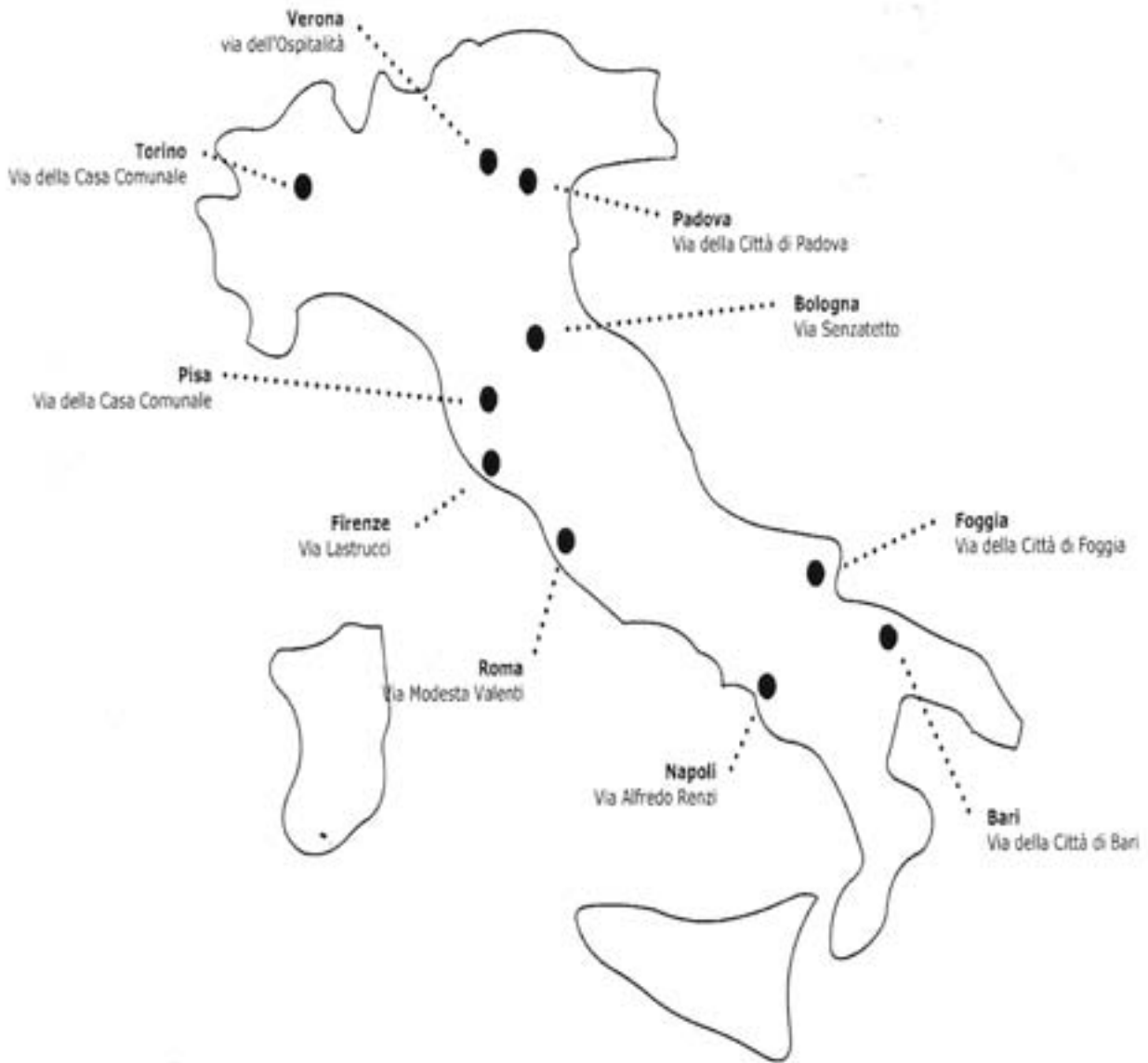
Until a few years ago the fictitious address for the homeless was called "Homeless Street". This created a social barrier that was certainly not helpful for the homeless person. Now, for example, in Bologna, a virtual road has been dedicated to Mariano Tuccella, a homeless person who died after a violent assault.

A fictitious address in Rome is called Via Modesta Valenti, the name of another homeless person beaten to death at Rome's Termini train station (see illustration on the right).

The recognition and use of fictitious addresses for homeless people is a principle of civilization but, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, access to a fictitious address, which is often required by homeless people, is denied. One reason for this is because many employees of municipalities simply don't know of this law.

As stated in Cassazione number 449, 16/6/2000, the decision to be registered is a right for any citizen and an obligation for the registrant. For example, "... the Milan court in case number 10257, 2/6/2003, a case of denied fictitious residence for the homeless, found: The town government officials only required to give effect to the rules, so if an applicant has what it is necessary to confirm his or her registration, this constitute a real subjective right registry entry..."

Another motivation leading to the denial of the right to residence is to found by the provision of a small budget that forces the municipal administration to make a choice and cut money for social spending. This inevitably impacts on the weakest in society.



Fictitious addresses in Italy

I have found the 'fictitious address' a very stimulating topic for my thesis research because an address is a means of identification and therefore can help give a person dignity. Without an address, the person loses the right to social and health services, important for every citizen, but especially important for those who are homeless.

To have an address means a person can have an identity card, exercise the right to vote, have a job or has the right to take a pension.

In the rest of the Europe if you don't have an address you can't have identity documents. In all European countries there are plans to find a solution to this problem. Many European countries expect social plans to increase housing for the homeless. These plans are not yet implemented but are forecast for the next decade.

Residence registry

Losing residence registry is not difficult. If you leave your house, for example an inability to pay the rent divorce and lose the right to abode in the matrimonial house, family problems leading to the abandonment of the home, legal problems etc. over time it is possible to lose residency.

The most common case of residence loss for homeless persons is: homeless people living on the streets for several years after the municipal censuses are deleted from the lists because they are no more present in their previous home.

In most cases the homeless do not realize they have lost their residency, until they go to renew or reprint their identity card. Indeed if the identity card expires or is stolen and you do not own a home or cannot demonstrate a home contract, you cannot have the identity card.

The European Union claims that this happens all over Europe and not only in Italy and the Netherlands.

According to the Street Lawyers, for those who live on street, documents are objects that sometimes link them to uncomfortable or painful previous lives. They can be exchanged for money, and often they are lost because of an extremely insecure lifestyle. Unfortunately, when problems arise, or the opportunity to find a job or a house emerges, although it is possible to have the ID card reinstated this is not simple given the bureaucratic difficulties, and this often leads to the homeless being marginalized.

During my research I have understood from Street Lawyers and Aid organisations that the homeless may have the possibility to be registered and gain residency from some help centres.

The reality is that currently only a few homeless are resident at night aid centres or dorms. In order to understand the reason for this I questioned a street lawyer. He claims that this happens because there is space for only a few homeless to follow the aid programs; so a lot of homeless people are unable to obtain the residency in these structures.

Some homeless people do not share the methods of rehabilitation of the help centres; others have difficult experiences with social workers on a personal level, while others reject the slow pace of the rehabilitation programs, which can last for several years.

Conclusions with references to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

I believe that to exit living on the street is a deep personal choice and it is important to provide the opportunities for every individual to arrange their lives independently. Furthermore, I think the homeless must feel free to choose which rehabilitation program to follow without becoming stuck inside the welfare system for many years. After reading and analyzing the law and court sentences, I can now summarize that:

- 1- Many homeless people live without documents, such as an Identity Card or a Passport.
- 2- In order to have personal documentation they need a residence registry, which is often denied as the homeless do not usually have a permanent address.
- 3- In order to have a residence registry the homeless must provide proof that they live in a specific territory.
- 4- The Homeless can register at aid centres, dorms and soup kitchens, but only if their behaviour is “good”, as confirmed by their social worker.

From these assumptions, I can now extract some insightful conclusions for my project.

The first and most significant concerns that to be a citizen of a country and to have documents is a basic human right, as stated in art. 13 and 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This article is often violated, as many homeless are deprived of documents, due to criteria based on subjective opinions.

The other important insight concerns the fact that the homeless can be registered at aid centres and help organisations. In my opinion this is very interesting, since registrations could be used by the homeless to obtain a residence registry:

Registrations can therefore become tangible proof of the presence of a person in a territory. By using them the homeless have the right to ask for their residence registry.

There are six important articles in the Universal declaration of Human Rights, concerning the legal identity of a person and the right to reclaim it.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it is independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.

Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

By consulting the UDHR, I have understood what the law says about the rights of a person. It could surely be useful and stimulating for this research to also understand what people think and say about the homeless. It could also be valuable to understand if the only problems for the homeless concern the law, or if their situation is also complicated because of society's opinions and prejudices.

Jeder Mensch hat Anspruch auf eine Staatsangehörigkeit

Artikel 15 (1)

31

ALLGEMEINE ERKLÄRUNG DER MENSCHENRECHTE



Art15: ISHR, International
Society Human Rights
poster on paper

Chapter 3:

SOCIETIES VOICE

Interviews and conversations with passers-by in both the Netherlands and Italy

As I've mentioned in the previous chapter, during my research I collected opinions from one hundred people on the street (the city centre and public library of Eindhoven, the commercial area in Rotterdam, Venice university area), through questions on the issue of homelessness. I focused on understanding people's opinions about who the homeless are, why they live like this, what they need, and what type of help they receive.

From the answers I obtained I identified that there are mainly two different visions on homelessness:

– many people stated that the Government must assist the homeless and help them to integrate into society where possible. In relation to the question of whether they were personally willing to accept and help the homeless, only a small number demonstrated an interest and availability to do so.

– the other vision links the homeless with the idea of laziness and people who don't like to work. They regarded them as drug and alcohol addicts who do not like to engage with society and feel good living of charity. I noticed that this type of person has no tolerance for the homeless and that they don't want to help.

I also used an indirect method to gather the views of people who own a house – I designed and built an extremely large mailbox.

This large mailbox is anchored to a box containing soil and grass, and on the sides it has two wheels. With this curious machine I tried to attract the attention of passers-by in front of the public library in Eindhoven. They responded to a number of questions. I received forty answers. Some of these were:



The giant mailbox



The giant mailbox, detail

- *What kind of aid do you think the homeless need more of?*
- ‘... Person to person!’ from Ida
- *What do you think are the differences between you and them? If there are differences could you try to explain them?*
- ‘Alcoholism, abuse of drugs, mental disorders, debt, marriage failure, disease.’
- *How do you feel about the homeless?*
- ‘I feel sorry for them,
- I’m scared of them,
- I’m scared I could become one of them.’
- *How do you get the homeless off the street?*
- ‘I’d build shelters to offer them a chance to find their place in society’.

Insights and Outcomes

From most of the answers I understand that people have an idea about the homeless based on their appearance rather than on a direct knowledge of them. What I mean to say is that almost nobody thinks that homeless problems go beyond the necessity of or shelter, food and clothes. Even though there are some who believe in offering the homeless a place within society, the majority ignores this fact, that being the homeless, as any other individual, should have the right conditions to take care of themselves. Therefore I think people should better understand what happens to them, so as to gain new and different opinions about homelessness. Furthermore, this is also important, as the homeless are people who lose all contact with society: they are alone and invisible to the rest of the world.



The giant mailbox, detail

Chapter 4:

HOMELESS VOICES

***Dialogues beside the research.
Meetings: Venice, Italy, april 12th
and 13th***

During my research process I took the decision to give the homeless the relevant voice in my work. This is why this thesis represents a co-design experience. By this I also mean to say that, after consulting people and the law, I now leave the last word to the homeless themselves.

I asked them to explain to me the main problem that they have, in terms of legality and social identity. For that reason I have organized two three-day workshops, in Venice, Italy, and Eindhoven, The Netherlands. The subject of the workshop was the loss of residence and related such as missing documents.

I wanted to understand the severity of this problem, and I tried to learn what and where are the homeless find difficulties in getting new documents.

My meetings took place in Padova and Venice-Mestre, on April 12th and 13th. The protagonists of these meetings were: Cristoforo, Diego, and Andrea, a street layer.

Alessia:

Cristoforo, can you tell us your story?

Cristoforo:

I don't have a family, I was a wood carpenter and many years ago I had an incident at work and now I have a disability pension.

I was born 79 years ago in Pescara.

I lived in a car for 9 years.

About 6 years ago I was robbed of my wallet and consequently I lost my documents. I immediately reported the accident to the police; then I also went to the City hall to ask for an Identity card. I waited for a while before receiving an answer and then they told me I could not have an ID card because I was living in a car.

Alessia:

According to Italian law this would not be a sufficient reason to deny an application for residence and an ID card?

Cristoforo:

For many years I tried to ask for a document but it was always denied.

My situation was getting worse day by day... I did not

not have any money because I could not take my pension. I was very depressed. I spoke with the volunteers of a dormitory for homeless people and they found for me a place where I could sleep.

I also explained my problems to the volunteers.

These guys have started to help me: they went to the city hall and protested through a newspaper... there is an article with my name... but with regards to my document there was nothing they could do...After 3 years of protests and requests to the mayor, the city hall gave me my Identity Card.

At 79 years old, I'm once again a citizen of the Italian State. I was a victim of a big injustice and what is worse is that I got the ID Card, not because it was my right, but because my story started to make too much noise and consequently citizens began to protest.

My address is now in the dormitory where I usually sleep.

I could not have imagined all of these difficulties....

Alessia:

In your opinion why is it so difficult for the homeless to have an ID card and a residency?

Cristoforo:

I think there is too little information about this problem. I was sent every day to different offices. I also did not know what to do, and where to turn. The volunteers of the dormitory didn't know what to do. I think there is ignorance and discrimination against the homeless. For many who work at the City hall, since we don't have a home, we also do not have any right to exist, we are not like other people...

Alessia:

Do you know others who have experienced your problem?

Cristoforo:

Ha, yes!

Yes, most of the people who sleep in my dormitory don't have documents. I would say almost all of them.

Diego:

I'm 27 years old, and for 4 years I've been living without a home. I ran away from my family house because I had drug problems and troubles with my family.

Now I do not have documents. I made the first request to have a new ID card about one and half years ago. So far I have not received any response.



Diego, from Italy

Alessia:

What happens if the police stop you?

Diego:

When the police stop me, and this happens very often, they lead me to the police station, where they take my fingerprints... It happens every time. After one night in the police station I'm again on the street.

Alessia:

What are you doing now to solve this problem?

Diego:

By going to have dinner at the Caritas's soup kitchen, I found a flyer from the street layers.

I went to them, and I explained my situation. Now they are handling my case. Two weeks ago I did not know anything about their existence.

Andrea, street layer:

The residence is a fundamental prerequisite for all people, and not only for the homeless, because if you don't have a residence and an address it means you don't exist.

Normal people don't reflect on this problem, because everyone has a house and for most people it is difficult to understand what it means to be without it. If you lose your home and your documents you can easily get into a spiral that is difficult to exit.

Without residency and documents you cannot work, you have no right to health care (except emergency care), you can't have a house and you cannot vote.

How can a person who lives on the street return to a normal life? At this time we are helping Diego to get residence in the dorm where he has slept for more than a year. We advised the municipality but if they won't respond we will start a lawsuit.

Alessia:

Talking to you I realize there are two fundamental issues to consider:

- 1 The importance of receiving information on this specific topic (because this information is absent).
- 2 The importance of having a physical address, that allows the homeless eligibility to obtain documents and certificates.

Cristoforo:

First of all I think it is important that this information is visible to every homeless person... because we don't know anything about it. We understand where to go, but we also need to understand to whom we can

ask if we need help and advice.

Ask dormitories, soup kitchens and organisations that deal with homeless people to become witnesses for our presence in the territory. When we enter a dormitory, people who work there always ask us for our name. These people have been known us for years. In these places we can have our address, although it is only temporary.

We should tell those who live on the street that they have rights and should not to be afraid of asking for information and help.

Meetings: Eindhoven, the Netherlands, April 17th, 18th, 19th.

Protagonists of this meeting are: Ben, Joep and Bram.

Alessia:

Could you tell me your stories?

Joep:

I am 56 years old and I have always worked with my brother in our restaurant. Then, after many years the business began to go wrong. I argued with my brother over money issues. I have a gambling addiction. I lost a lot of money, and this is why I'm on the street. I don't have my documents anymore. I sold them a few years ago.

Now I need them again. I have many health problems and I also have problems with the law.

I wish I could find a normal job and have back my old life, but there is a big problem in getting my documents back.

You need to follow help programs, and if they think you are doing well, then they can decide to help you to get a residence permit.

I started this journey a long time ago but I have issues with some of social workers, so I went there only a few times.

Ben:

I have got the ID card now and I sleep in a dorm. I know many people with the same problem as Joep. Many people don't have the documents or residence.

Bram:

I was born 38 years ago. I always had a good life, but then I get deeply depressed and began to have violent



Bram, from the Netherlands

behavior with people. My wife pushed me out of our house.

Now she is married with another man. It has been 6 years that I'm not living in a house.

I don't have my ID card anymore. I still have my driving license, but I lost the residence. Sometimes I do a small job and I sleep in a dormitory.

I know a boy who lives on the street that had to renew his Identity Card but they (the city hall, n.d.r.) have not renewed it because he is homeless and doesn't have a residency.

Alessia:

So, in order to have a residence address you need to ask at aid centers and successfully follow an inclusion program. Do you know any other ways?

Bram:

No.

Alessia:

Do you know that to have a document is your right?

Ben:

When you are homeless you don't have rights. For everyone it is better if you do not exist.

Joep:

It is true. We are nothing, and we've lost the hope to be something.

Insights and outcomes.

All of these dialogues led me to understand the many aspects of homeless life. Some of these aspects confirmed what I already understood from my analysis of the law. For example, the homeless expressed their difficulties in reapplying for their documents and following the bureaucracy in order to obtain a residence registry.

Some new aspects came from these dialogues.

Most important concerns the problem of their rights. The homeless, from what I understand, are not really conscious of their rights. Furthermore, they don't always know structures and organisations that can help them. A lot of the homeless that I've interviewed only use the soup kitchens and sometimes dormitories, some only dormitories; few people use the daily aid centres and a small amount of homeless – just five – use all three services at the same time. The homeless don't know who the organisations are and also where they are. This is an excellent finding for my research, because it starts to address the first real design issue, concerning a communication problem: homeless people don't know what to do and how to do it.

Another important aspect I became aware of came from Cristoforo's story. His situation was initially unknown to society, until the volunteers of a dormitory denounced it to a newspaper, which published his case. By reading this, people knew of his plight and complained to the town hall about the lengthy bureaucratic procedure. After this, the mayor of the city gave Cristoforo his documents and residence registry. By this I mean to express how important society's opinion is and how it can also contribute to changing the way we perceive this phenomenon.



Igor, from Russia



Joep, from the Netherlands



Cristoforo, from Italy

Chapter 5:

TOWARDS POSSIBLE DESIGN SOLUTIONS

How does contemporary design meet the problems of homelessness?

In my thesis research project I thought it was very useful to analyze how design is trying to answer the topic of homelessness. Moreover, I wanted to understand if some of the contemporary designs already responded to my thesis outcomes.

There are numerous publications on design projects that have homelessness as their subject. I have selected some, based on different methodological approaches.

Design towards housing and survival: Micheal Rakowitz, Parasite and Linda Baday with Taxi agency, Paper Jacket.

Design has almost always tried to address this problem through solutions such as housing and way to survive outside. Normally these products are specifically designed for people who sleep on the street, in order to give them a personal refuge for sleeping, or to offer them a way to feel warm. Although the shelter from Micheal Rakowitz deals with this problem in an interesting way, by adding a heating function to a very fragile and movable structure, it still does not answer this problem. In my opinion this shelter, as most of these structures, are really beautiful, but often redundant because in reality they are not used. They are expensive, easy to damage, and not accepted by local inhabitants.

Furthermore the law does not allow camping on the street and sleeping outside is not safe.

There are also many dormitories where the homeless can eat, take showers and sleep on a bed, in a heated building, protected from the dangers of the street.

Another type of project designed for the homeless is a jacket that can be filled with newspaper pages.

3000 of these items were distributed in five North American cities. They have the function of a winter coat that keeps the body warm during cold temperatures. This jacket is insulated to deal with temperatures of as low as minus 29 degrees Celsius. Although I think this item has a great functionality, I still believe that it acts on a surface level, solving the visible part of the problem and keeping its real roots intact.

Design towards address problems: Dominic Muren and Andrew Dahlgren, Unhome.

With this project designers force the re-examination of the home as a status symbol in a community, paying attention to the problem of address as a symbol of identity and right. In this project the homeless person brings with him the mailbox.

Although the designers started from an intention that looks very similar to mine, the design itself is really far away from contributing efficiently to the topic. Instead, it raises questions concerning the portability, as from my experience that the homeless don't bring almost anything with them, mainly for safety reasons.

In my opinion it would also be unrealistic to offer the homeless a movable address, because by being movable it would also be difficult to trace and obviously to deliver mail to.

Design towards an interaction with society: Roberta Bruzzechesse, Maddalena Vantaggi and Maria Zanchi, Rifiuto con affetto.

This is the project of a transparent container where people are invited to deposit unused cloths and items, instead of throwing them away. The aim of this project, designed for residential areas, is to trigger a chain of solidarity and sustainable trade.

Although this project is not directly involving the homeless, I think it is very interesting because it aims to put people in communication. Obviously, everybody can use the containers by leaving something inside, rather than taking something from the boxes. I like the aspect of sharing that this idea aims to promote, because it also represents a value I would like to take in consideration in my design project.

Micheal Rakowitz, Parasite



Roberta Bruzzechesse, Maddalena Vantaggi and Maria Zanchi, Rifiuto con affetto.



*Linda Baday with Taxi Agency,
Paper Jacket.*



Dominic Muren and Andrew Dahlgren, Unhome.

Design towards Homeless self-confidence: Hazel Saunderson, Survival Station Gulliver.

Another example of aid to the homeless is an existing project carried out by the organisation Gulliver and the designer Hazel Saunderson. This centre was unique in Cologne as former homeless people ran it and there were no social workers involved. The project was commenced after lengthy research through many interviews and questionnaires on paper.

Gulliver Survival Station was born in the hope of giving an opportunity for the homeless to be involved in something productive such as music.

I think this initiative is the most interesting of all those examined as it focuses on the importance of the homeless developing confidence in themselves and continues to do so through music, writing, and organizing concerts.

What I consider most stimulating is that in this design project the homeless are directly involved. Therefore, this is probably the first design proposal that places them, as real people, at the centre.

My overall conclusion about this step into design-for-the homeless is that a pragmatic approach to this serious topic hasn't really been considered yet, except for in some singular cases. The homeless are usually just the subjects of the project, but in most of the cases they are not active in identifying the solutions.

By analyzing all of these designs I've also made clear a significant point: it is very important to use co-design as an instrument to work with the homeless. Co-designing can give an added value to my project because such a way of working can easily bring a functional solution for the homeless. I believe that, by representing an active part of a system the homeless could gain more personal benefits and therefore represent the engine of a project.



Hazel Saunderson, Survival Station Gulliver.

Chapter 6:
**FICTITIOUS
ADDRESSES**

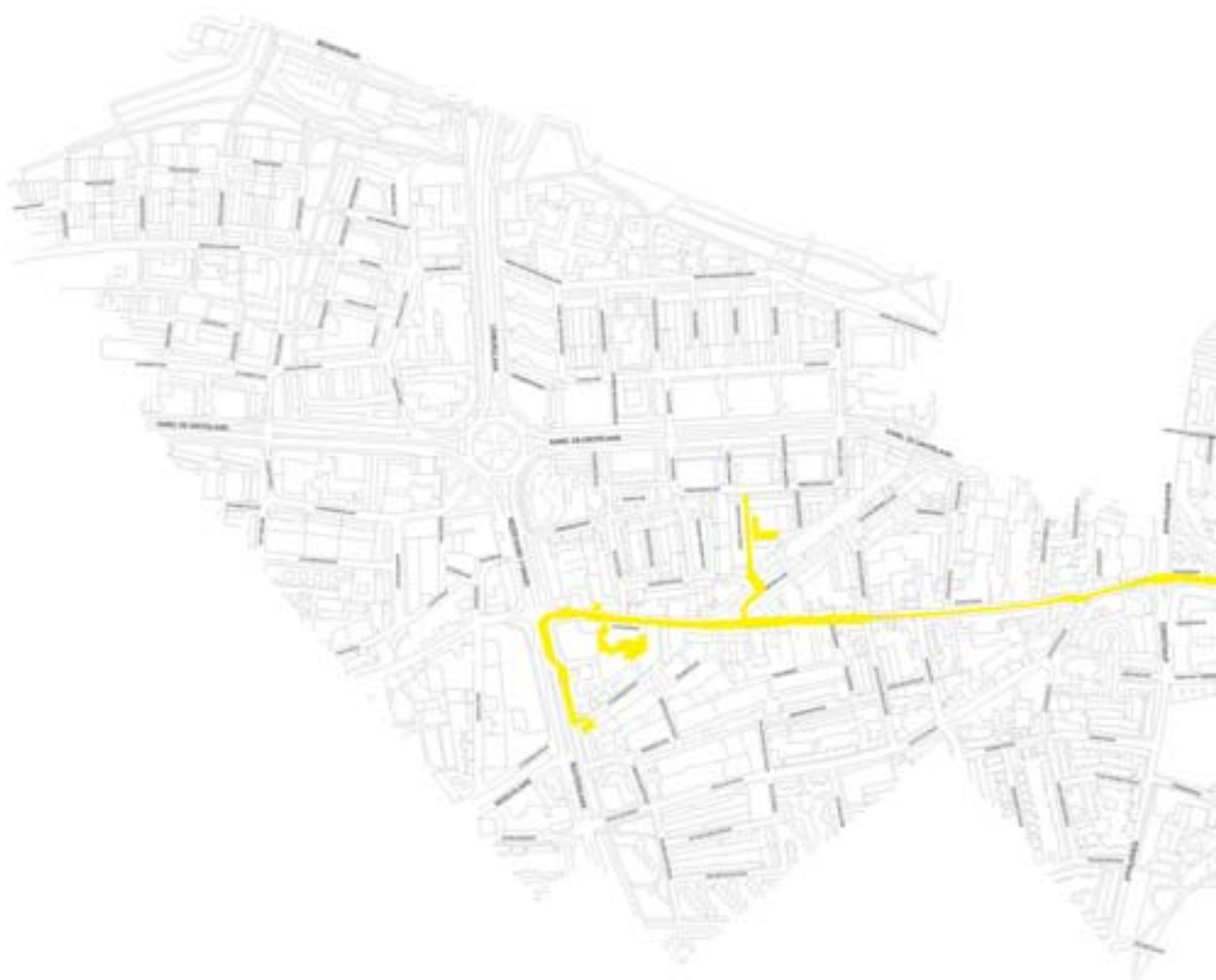
A location for my project

The research that I've been describing 'til now helped me to understand a scenario and some very relevant issues that I would like to involve in my project. The scenario that I chose to involve considers Eindhoven as a case study for my research, but it looks at an application throughout the whole of Europe. What I mean to say is that, as we have already seen, the problem of homelessness has similar features in most European countries and cities, therefore this type of scenario allows the project to spread outside a single city.

By analyzing the city of Eindhoven, I have noticed that there is a network of services available for the homeless (illustration n° 4). This network includes structures such as dormitories, soup kitchens, churches, and organisations where the homeless can work and follow rehabilitation programs. The amount of structures that offer these services totals 16, representing a relatively strong network for a city of these dimensions.

The problem, as we've seen in the previous chapters, is that the homeless don't know how to use this network: where to go and how to use it. Furthermore it is necessary to connect the network and make it work better between its single structures.

For this reason I think the idea of making this network clearer represents an excellent design opportunity for my project.





Eindhoven map, aid centres

Fictitious address

The insights of my research demonstrate how in this project there is the involvement of three different subjects (see scheme n° 5). These subjects can be identified by:

- 1. The Homeless;***
- 2. All public and private aid organisations;***
- 3. The general public***

I believe each of these three parts should play an important role in making the project real and functional.

The first real subjects are those without a home. Whenever they'd want or need to have back their documents, it has to be clear to them what their rights are and what they need to do. A design possibility could be represented by a map and some physical traces on the urban territory. This visual language could guide and remind them about the possibilities that they have.

The second beneficiary of my project is the network of organisations. I considered what they are already doing for the homeless and understand that the principles are good, but the application must be improved. By this I mean that by registering some of them in the aid structures on the base of subjective criteria the situation will never change. What I want to propose is to remove this subjective criteria and to make it more democratic, on the basis of European laws and Human Rights. I propose introducing a new registration system that can guide the homeless to the residence registry with the help of social workers. Moreover, this new registration system would help social workers to better monitor the homeless situation.

The third subject of my project is the public.

A good result would be for me to make people more conscious and sensitive about this issue. In order to do this I believe it could be excellent to use the public realm as territory for propaganda. By leaving visible traces for the homeless within the territory, this would also enable mainstream society to gradually be informed about this issue and begin to understand it.

My aim is to create the value of the project from combining these three elements together (see scheme n°5).

My approach:

To make the homeless, aid organizations and the general public, the real subjects, active in identifying any type of solutions.

1. HOMELESS

2. AID ORGANISATION
GOVERNMENT

3. GENERAL PUBLIC

1. HOMELESS

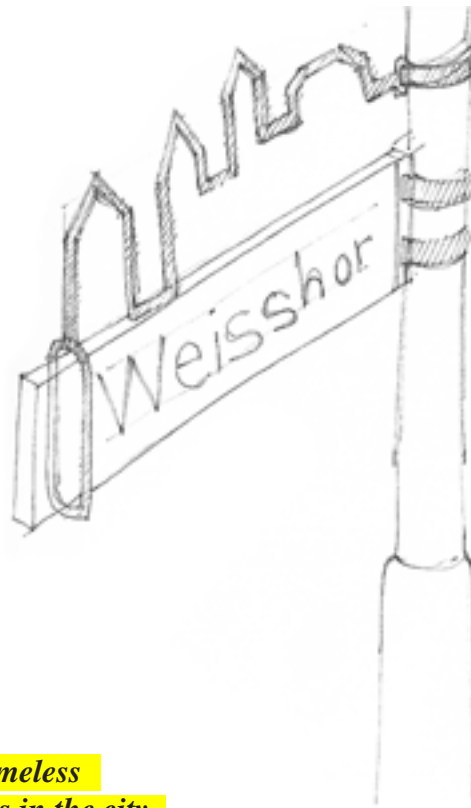
2. AID ORGANISATIONS
AND GOVERNMENT

DESIGN PROPOSALS: AIMS

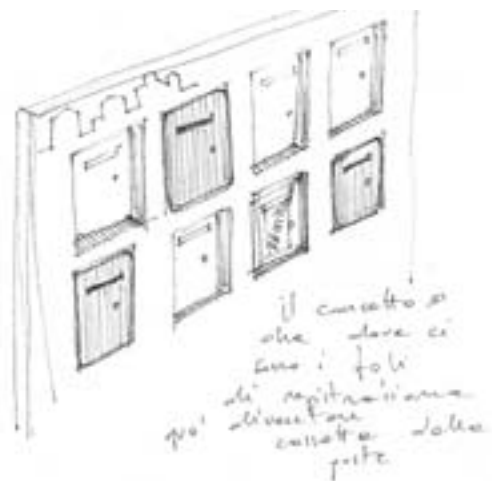
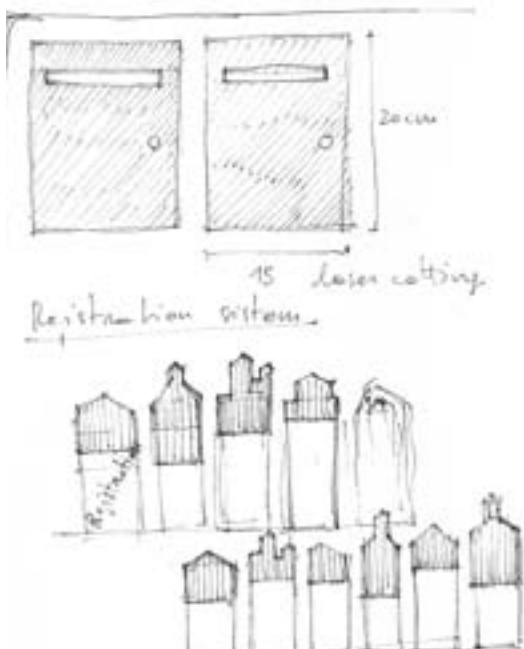
- To inform homeless of their rights, where and how they can do to get residence and documents.
- To support centres and all those who work for the homeless in becoming witnesses of the presence of homeless in the territory
- To inform the public opinion about this social problem, and more in detail about the social and legal identity problems that many homeless have.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC

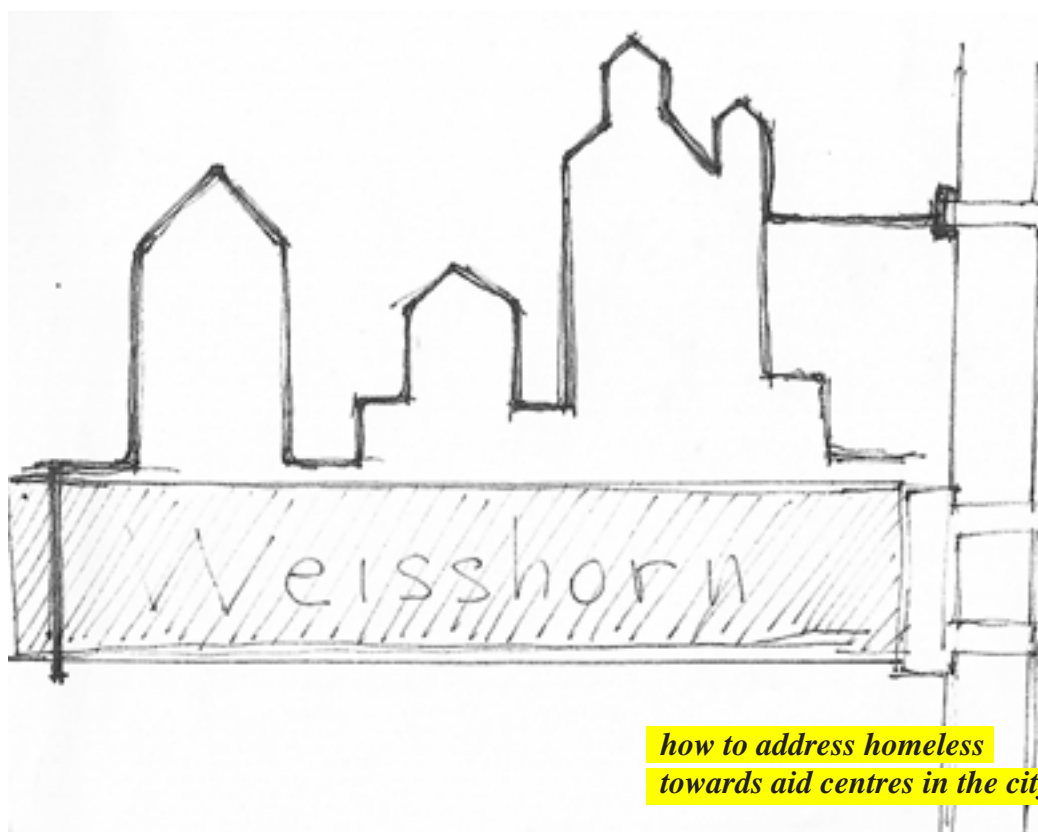
Scheme n° 5, design path and direction



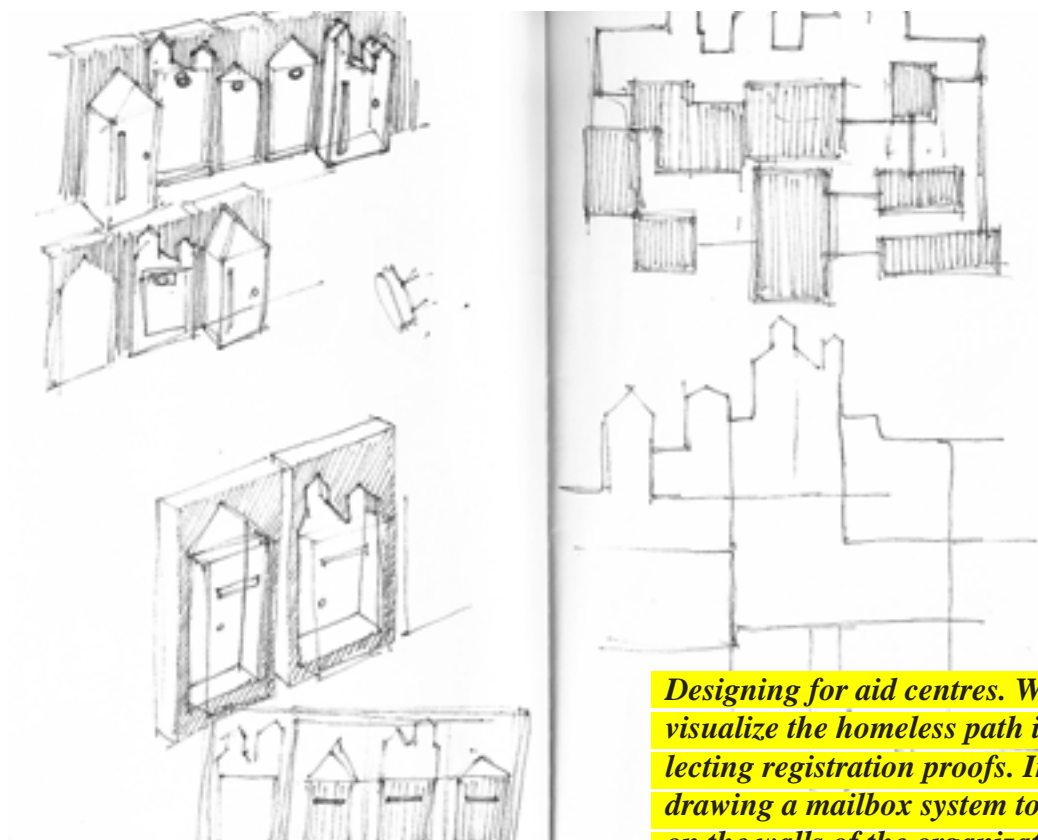
**how to address homeless
towards aid centres in the city**



**Designing for aid centres. Ways to
visualize the homeless path in col-
lecting registration proofs. In the
drawing a mailbox system to install
on the walls of the organizations**



*how to address homeless
towards aid centres in the city*



*Designing for aid centres. Ways to
visualize the homeless path in col-
lecting registration proofs. In the
drawing a mailbox system to install
on the walls of the organizations*

Chapter 7:

CONCLUSION

In choosing this topic I followed my heart. It was a trip inside the misery of the contemporary man, a sometimes difficult experience that gave me many beautiful surprises.

My meetings with Ben, Rosetta, Antonio and all the other people changed my life, altering my approach to life and people.

It was a path of respect and love that I wish to continue in the future.

Sometimes it was not easy, sometimes their pain and distress seemed too big to be shared and many times I thought I could not help.

They all offered me friendship. Together we talked, joked, laughed, ate, embraced, and grew to we know each other deeply.

As a conclusion for my research project, I wish to use my imagination to explore what could happen if my project was applied in reality.

How could the homeless situation change if they could find a job immediately, whenever they feel a desire for change?

What I would like to see is that the homeless, through the use of their documents, could start to look after themselves, without being trapped in long bureaucratic procedures.

I also would like to understand if, through this, they could gain more self-confidence and are able to protect and preserve their dignity.

Furthermore, I am curious to understand if in a few years the number of homeless people without documents would decrease, and consequently their numbers. This represents a different type of environment that would place the respect for others at the centre of the homeless problem.

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LIST OF FIGURES

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Homeless associations

NEOS, Eindhoven

Feantsa, Brussels

Ronda della solidarietà, Venice Italy

Avvocati di strada, Padova Italy

Interviews on the streets Eindhoven, Amsterdam,
Rotterdam, Venice, Mestre

List of figures

pg 17, by adelbeukes, see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/adelbeukes/569134934/>

pg 25, by LucasTheExperience, see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lucastheexperience/4097092685/>

pg 31, see http://www.igfm.de/fileadmin/igfm.de/images/Publikationen/Poster_u_Postkarten/IGFM_Poster_Art15Staatsangeh_rigkeit_klein_.jpg

Movies

Het leven ligt op straat, Pat van Boeckel 2008

Dark Days, Marc Singer, 2000

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