

Homelessness: breaking the silence!

Facilitated Intergroup dialogue in Maltese communities

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Abstract

Intergroup dialogue (IGD) is a pedagogical approach that involves sustained and facilitated dialogue between individuals from different societal groups that tend to share a history of intergroup conflict (Dessel et al., 2006). The study aimed to explore if IGD contributes to the awareness, empowerment and overall personal transformative change of individuals experiencing homelessness and others who are not. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate whether sustained IGD is an effective pedagogical tool for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the community.

This qualitative study employed a participatory action research approach, where seven adult participants came together for twelve hours of IGD in a community-based setting. Data was collected through online pre- and post- focus groups, conducted with each societal group, and also through the researcher's diary which brought the facilitator's observations and insight on the experience and process of IGD.

The findings show that IGD can affect positively the participants' and the facilitator's cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and bring about empowerment and behavioural change. However, less positive outcomes were also recorded, especially that of disempowerment to engage in action on an individual level, after becoming more aware of the complex reality. Results seem to indicate that the IGD process and outcomes of both the participants and the facilitator reflect ESD principles at different levels and thus, could serve as a tool for ESD and contribute to the general aims of ESD.

Several recommendations are proposed to multiple stakeholders to prioritize ESD beyond the formal schooling through the integration of IGD into adult education, and community learning and development.

KEYWORDS: Intergroup Dialogue; Education for Sustainable Development; Homelessness; Participatory Action Research; Community-based learning; Adult Education.



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*To those who believe in the power of dialogue,
where open minds can open hearts and unite
communities.*

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List of Abbreviations

CEER	Centre for Environmental Education & Research
EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
IFL	Identity First Language
IGD	Intergroup Dialogue
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSO	National Statistics Office
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PFL	Person First Language
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UHRI	Universal Human Rights Initiative
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1 Aims of the study

The general aim of this research study is to examine whether sustained intergroup dialogue (IGD) could be an effective pedagogical tool in the sphere of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the community.

In addition to evaluating the outcome of IGD, this research will place at its core the particular process that unfolds through IGD sessions. Concurrently, this dissertation intends to explore the transformative learning curve that may be experienced by both the diverse participants and the researcher through regular reflective cycles.

In light of these aims, this research poses the following research questions:

- Can sustained IGD between individuals experiencing or had experienced homelessness and others who never experienced homelessness, contribute to their awareness, empowerment and overall personal transformative change? If so, how?
- In what ways can IGD serve as a tool for ESD and contribute to its general aims?

1.2 Rationale

Being an educator and also an outreach and reconciliation coordinator with a non-governmental organization (NGO) working with refugees, has made me appreciate at a

deeper level the link between education as an imperative part of lifelong learning on one hand, and on the other the community as an integral sector of society.

Working closely with refugees has made me more cognizant of the difficulties people presently face to find fair and adequate lodging at a reasonable price, which sometimes leads to homelessness. In the last five years, an increase in homelessness was recorded by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) (Berger, 2020). Having a particular interest in community development and education, and considering that IGD is a new method in the local scenario, I wanted to study the effect of IGD as an ESD tool in the efforts to achieve a more cohesive society by seeking to bridge the gap between the individual and the community.

1.3 Language matters

The language people use can either challenge or reproduce the associated stigma, oppression and power imbalances in society (Dorsey, 2020). As argued by Brown, (2020), using person-first language (PFL) might prove beneficial especially considering the social perception and attitude towards the topic of homelessness. Interestingly, PFL was originally coined in the 1980s in the disability literature and eventually also embraced other vulnerable and traditionally labelled communities (Gomes, 2018).

There are multiple opinions among researchers on which is the better option concerning PFL or identity-first language (IFL) when referring to marginalized communities (Dorsey, 2020). In this context, one should note that the American Psychological Association

(APA, 2019) recently put prominence on the use of PFL, especially when doing research with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Bearing in mind that this study is deeply rooted in a transformative paradigm and with a social justice education lens, I intentionally opted for PFL over IFL throughout the study. Accordingly, I will refer to 'people experiencing homelessness' instead of 'homeless person'. The former puts emphasis on homelessness as a situation that is not a fixed element in the identity of the person concerned. PFL humanizes the person and embeds a less negative connotation to homelessness; instead, it presents a more hopeful perception of the person (Jensen et al., 2013).

1.4 My positionality

Third-person accounts tend to be more common in academic research, as it is recognized as a means to communicate objectivity. However, no researcher has absolutely no influence on the research they are conducting (Webb, 1992).

As a matter of fact, first person writing has become more acceptable within non-traditional qualitative research and popular within community-based and action research (Leavy, 2017; Webb, 1992). In qualitative and community-based action research, the researcher and the participants work in, challenging the traditional power imbalance. Consequently, writing in the first-person endorses further this non-hierarchal relationship between facilitator and participants (Webb, 1992).

Considering all this, I deemed third person writing to be unsuitable for this study as it gives a sense of impersonality and distances me from the actual research. In my role of researcher as well as facilitator during the IGD sessions, I opted to use first-person writing. This enabled me not only to engage in critical reflection on my own experience but also to give voice to the participants' perspectives (Gough, 2008).

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter was a general introduction to the study and explained certain terminology and my positionality within the research. The next chapter is the literature review. It presents an outline of the literature on IGD and ESD related to this study and points out the lacuna in both local and international literature on the link between IGD and ESD. The next chapter also gives a brief overview of the local situation regarding homelessness.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

This chapter is divided into three main sections, starting with an introduction that explains IGD, its pedagogy and main features. The chapter also includes an overview of the available literature on IGD. In the second section I present a summary of the current situation of homelessness in Malta, focusing specifically on the stigma and stereotypes associated with it. A description of ESD competences and pedagogy, including an outline of the relevant research, interlinking it with community and non-formal settings, is presented in the third section.

Given the word limitation, the literature discussed is neither extensive in detail nor all-encompassing of all the relevant research. However, I made an effort to provide a general overview of what has already been studied and any lacuna that has been noted.

2.1 Intergroup dialogue

2.1.1 The roots of IGD

‘Dialogue’ has a myriad of definitions. Put simply, it is any kind of social interaction, typically through conversation, which has a particular “focus and purpose” (Romney, 2005, p. 2). Dialogue as a communicative practice within an educational framework is believed to have its roots in the inspirational work of John Dewey back in the 1930s (Zuniga et al., 2007). To date, several different approaches to and designs of dialogue across differences exist. One example is Study Circles (Neely, 2016).

This study focuses on the IGD designed by the University of Michigan in the 1980s, a relatively recent and distinct approach to dialogue education developed specifically for Higher Education Institutions (Humphreys, 2012; Yeakley, 1998; Zuniga et al., 2007). This is a pedagogical program that strives for facilitated, sustained, face-to face encounters between individuals from different societal groups who tend to share a history of intergroup conflict (Dessel et al., 2006; Neely, 2016). As a group, they are encouraged to delve into matters that are seldomly discussed in society (Zuniga et al., 2007) to create "new levels of understanding, relating, and action" (Zuniga, 2003, p. 8).

2.1.2 IGD pedagogy and group composition

In IGD, group composition is a significant part of the planning to ensure as much as possible equality between the two groups (Zuniga et al., 2002). Typically, IGD groups comprise eight to ten participants and up to twenty. They would include both social groups involved in the matter, for example males and females (Moss et al., 2017).

The IGD multi-stage program usually consists of two-hour sessions spread over several weeks and preferably guided by two co-facilitators, each one representing his or her social identity group (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zuniga, 2009). This approach strives for a more inclusive environment with a power balance among the groups (Frantell et al., 2019; Nagda, 2019).

Although curricula and activities might differ according to the different social identity groups participating in the sessions, IGD typically follows the four-stage model explained below:

Stage 1. Creating an environment for dialogue;

Stage 2. Situating the dialogue: Learning about differences and commonalities of experience;

Stage 3. Exploring conflicts and multiple perspectives: Dialoguing about 'hot' topics;

Stage 4. Moving from dialogue to action: Action planning and alliance building.

(Zuniga, 2003, pp. 12-14)

Another important aspect of IGD is its critical-dialogic theoretic approach. This approach seeks to obtain three main educational outcomes: consciousness raising in all the participants; while simultaneously striving to build relationships among them; and to nurture a community capacity, promoting positive social action (Zuniga et al., 2007). This model distinguishes IGD from dialogue that simply focuses on positive intergroup relationships without delving into the realities of oppression and without exploring ways of social justice action; or dialogue that focuses on consciousness-raising and action without explicitly addressing the intricacy of intergroup relationships. Dialogue in IGD differs significantly from debates or discussions as it aims for active listening and an apprehension of the perceptions of others, resulting in meaningful dialogue (Frantell et al., 2019). Nagda and Maxwell, (2011) stress that such goals “do not happen in a vacuum” (p.5). Hence, by taking a critical-dialogic approach, IGD approaches personal and social identities as being “embedded within a structural system of inequality and privilege” (Gurin et al., 2013, p. 44).

Discourse with others and critical reflection are central for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). In addition, “the role of context and social change in the transformative experience” is given prominence in the socio-emancipatory view of transformative learning which is rooted in Freire’s work (Taylor, 2008, p. 20). This view resonates greatly with IGD, as diversity and social justice are at core of the transformative learning process of IGD (French et al., 2021).

Three pedagogical components of emancipatory transformative learning are:

- developing a sense of agency through critical consciousness raising to achieve a personal and societal transformation;
- an active learning approach through problem-posing dialogue and collaborative learning and action; and
- challenging the traditional power imbalance between learners and educators, by adopting a “horizontal student-teacher relationship” (p.20).

(Taylor, 2008)

Likewise, IGD pedagogy embraces a learner-centred environment in which the participants are active agents of learning by sharing their knowledge and experience. IGD fosters experiential learning, which involves activities that encourage critical reflection, analysis and action. Facilitators act as active guides for equal participation and model respectful dialogue. On their part, participants engage in and direct the flow of collective dialogue and learning (Nagda, 2019; Nagda et al., 2009).

Previous studies show that the traditional way of teaching is less effective than facilitated and structured learning (Sorensen et al., 2009). Education nowadays has moved away from the idea of “filling empty vessels” to a more collaborative approach in which participants are helped to reach their learning potential (Driscoll, 2005, p.387). Facilitators are no experts, but are in a learning process together with the participants (Freire, 2005; Zuniga et al., 2007).

According to Zuniga (2003), two crucial competences for IGD facilitators are being self-aware of their own identities and biases through regular self-reflection and evaluation, and secondly, to have the knowledge and training on how to facilitate group dialogues in which conflict and disagreements are likely to arise.

2.1.3 Literature on IGD

Given that IGD is a recent notion of dialogue, literature on IGD is still evolving (Hurtado, 2001). Key academics and researchers whose efforts in the implementation of IGD and research have been cited in numerous other studies include those of Chesler, Cytron-Walker, Gurin, Nagda, and Zuniga (Moss et al., 2017; Zuniga et al., 2007).

At this point I refer to two key publications that reviewed the empirical literature on IGD in order to summarize IGD literature that bears relevance to this research. The first study is by Dessel and Rogge (2008), who reviewed twenty-three works published from 1997 to 2006. The second study is by Frantell et al. (2019), who reviewed forty-three IGD research studies published from 2006 to 2017.

The primary focus of IGD research is race. Although in the last decade IGD studies addressed a variety of identities other than race, such as gender and social class, the latter is still somewhat a topic minimally explored through IGD (Frantell et al., 2019; Madden, 2015).

IGD literature is mostly found within academic settings (Brown, 2008). However, there is a growing body of research on IGD in community and work-based settings (Dessel et al., 2006; Frantell et al., 2019). This might be due to the much-needed all-round investment made to assess IGD in community settings, especially to identify and evaluate IGD outcomes. Whereas educational institutions are supported by proper structures, resources and personnel, these tend to be lacking in the general community, such as in NGOs (Dessel et al., 2006).

The study by French et al. (2021), recommends the need for IGD in community-based settings by focusing research on IGD and adult education. This study indicates the correlation between community-based IGD and adult education. It emphasizes the positive outcomes of the participants, including an increase in critical awareness, the development of transformative skills, becoming more receptive to diverse experiences and encouraging social change (Dessel & Rogge, 2008).

Since the early days of research on IGD, outcomes and effectiveness have been extensively studied. Research on IGD in different settings attests to several common positive outcomes including critical consciousness, changes in attitude, skill development, understanding of different perspectives, identity formation and

solidarity, and action taking (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Frantell et al., 2019). Action taken following IGD varied across different studies, ranging from someone feeling more empowered and confident to take action, to actual collaborative planning and action, such as educating others on ways how to break oppression (Frantell et al., 2019).

Studies in the field have purposefully focused on positive outcomes of IGD. As a result, there is a lacuna in the literature that examines IGD outcomes through a more unbiased lens. Research that evaluates participants' IGD experience in its totality, including a positive, negative or neutral experience is lacking.

In fact, critics brought up the need for research to explore also the negative or neutral effects if any, of IGD, on participants. Graf and Paolini (2017) conducted research focused not on IGD but on intergroup contact. They argued that research is only evaluating one end of the spectrum by focusing on positive outcomes, and that taking into account negative outcomes of intergroup contact would offer the "full evaluative spectrum" (p.3). Consequently, one would gain a fuller and richer understanding from intergroup contact research, which in turn would offer more relevance to complex real-life contexts. Recent research pointed out that there were instances of unsuccessful intergroup contact that instead of producing the typical positive outcomes, fuelled further prejudice (Graf & Paolini, 2017). Other research focused on the negative effects of intergroup contact on participants, such as intergroup anxiety sometimes experienced by participants (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

There is indeed a lack of research on unsuccessful contact in the context of IGD. This in turn opens an avenue for research on causality of its neutral or negative outcomes so as to rectify the current bias (Frantell et al., 2019).

The process of IGD was extensively explored in the last decade. The IGD process is very much related to its outcomes and research on the process of IGD taps into the pedagogical characteristics (Frantell et al., 2019). In fact, Gurin et al. (2012) highlighted two pedagogical features. These consist of the processes of communication, for example, active listening; and the psychological process, such as expressing emotion and increased critical consciousness. These are sometimes considered outcomes of IGD by other researchers (Frantell et al., 2019).

Several studies to date opted for pre-post dialogue measures and reflection journals as data collection tools. Frantell et al. (2019), argues that considering the strong interrelation between process and outcomes, future research should look into what transpired during the sessions, thus assessing the process after each session and not simply at the end of a series of IGD sessions.

Although there is a vast literature that focuses on participants, literature on IGD facilitation is sparse (Frantell et al., 2019; Moss et al., 2017; Nagda & Maxwell, 2011). Considering the important role of facilitators in IGD, there is the need of additional research that explores their training, role, experience, characteristics and effect on IGD in varied settings, especially those beyond formal education institutions (Frantell et al., 2019; Moss et al., 2017).

Regular self-reflection is an integral part of a facilitator's experience (Frantell et al., 2019), as being self-aware and reflective of their own identity helps them to be aware of their own privileges and oppression and of their viewpoints on certain topics (Maxwell et al., 2011). IGD also provides a learning curve for facilitators; they learn from the group as well as from their own self-reflection (Frantell et al., 2018; Zuniga et al., 2007).

Longitudinal research on facilitators have shown a twofold effect, namely, on a personal and professional level (Frantell et al., 2019). Following their experience in IGD, facilitators felt more confident to take on work on social action (Vasques-Scalera, 2011). The skills acquired during facilitating were useful and looked for when applying for employment (White et al., 2018).

In this study, I try to address some of the previously mentioned gaps and recommendations, such as situating IGD in community-based settings; more specifically, I investigate IGD on social class in terms of homelessness. This made me focus on both the process and outcomes of IGD and to take into account any positive, negative or neutral experiences, as well as the feedback of all the participants and of myself as a facilitator.

2.2 Homelessness

Unfortunately, homelessness has been in existence for decades and is still a reality in the present world. However, locally the limited research on this topic was mostly conducted by Dr Vakili-Zad and YMCA Malta (Roberts, 2018). The statistics published might not be portraying the full reality maybe due to the absence of a national definition and the invisibility of the individuals experiencing homelessness (Cutajar, 2019).

2.2.1 Defining homelessness

There is not one simple way to define homelessness. Different countries and academics connote different descriptions, which may in turn create different meanings of homelessness (Demanuele, 2004). To date, Malta has no legal definition of homelessness (Hudson, 2019) and this leaves room for organisations, governmental institutions and academics to connote different descriptions. This in turn may result in creating different meanings of homelessness. For example, a narrow definition of homelessness includes only people who are experiencing rooflessness, which is a typical representation in official documents (Vassallo, 2019).

Another example is that presented by the National Statistical Office (NSO, 2014), where the homeless are individuals that are roofless or living in improvised dwellings and individuals who are not residing in a permanent accommodation but forced to move frequently between accommodations.

YMCA Malta runs three shelters locally: Dar Niki Cassar, Y Communal Home and Y Studio Flat. Besides offering shelter, it provides holistic professional aid to people by delivering educational and empowering programmes, and also well-being services (ymcamalta, n.d.) In 2020, YMCA Malta launched the project Platform Against Homelessness in Malta, which at the time involved sixteen NGOS and organisations that directly or indirectly worked on homelessness (YMCA Malta, 2020). The main aim of this platform is to address current challenges related to homelessness and discuss plausible solutions. In 2021, this platform issued a number of recommendations, including the urgent need for a national definition of homelessness (YMCA Malta, 2021). The definition they put forward identifies three main categories:

- **Visible homelessness:** also referred to as rooflessness, this includes people who live on the streets.
- **Invisible homelessness:** this is a more inclusive perception of what is considered homelessness, as it includes people who might be living in inadequate or unsafe housing.
- **Temporary or Institutionalised homelessness:** this includes people living in institutions such as elderly homes and shelters, due either to not having their own house or because they are unable to live independently.
(YMCA Malta, 2021).

It is not the aim of this research to attempt to define homelessness. However, considering that there is no recognized definition, for this research I decided to adhere to the above definition proposed by YMCA Malta. This is because it is an all-encompassing definition and it has been adopted by a number of NGOs that work on the ground and thus it reflects the reality of homelessness.

2.2.2 The local reality

At present, homelessness in Malta is on the rise, and even though there is a growing increase of people sleeping rough, hidden homelessness is still by far the most prevalent (Broekroelofs, 2019; Caviedes Diaz, 2021).

There are multiple reasons why people opt to remain invisible. First, it is illegal to beg in the streets. The law is enforced particularly in certain localities where a more recent by-law against loitering was sanctioned (Debono, 2019). Secondly, people experiencing homelessness feel stigmatized and humiliated by their situation (Broekroelofs, 2019; Calleja, 2021). The perception of the general public is that homelessness is an obsolete phenomenon in Malta (Demanuele, 2004; Grech Pirota, 2020). The absence of an official definition, hidden homelessness and close family ties might be the reasons as to why the public is so blind to the reality of homelessness (Vakili-Zad, 2006).

Burnes (2016) attests that the public tends to label and blame the people who experience homelessness as substance and alcohol abusers, lazy or experiencing mental health problems. A similar tendency of stereotyping exists in Malta (Bonett, 2011; Broekroelofs, 2019; Dalma, 2013). Consequently, people experiencing homelessness in Malta tend to live in inhumane conditions in garages, abandoned buildings and vehicles rather than in the streets in order to avoid being recognized by family and friends (Caviedes Diaz, 2021).

This associated stigma, together with negative stereotypical connotations, create a barrier between the individuals experiencing homelessness and institutions and

organizations that can offer support (Dalma, 2013), resulting in invisible homelessness. In fact, there is a lacuna in research that investigates awareness raising, especially research directly involving people who are experiencing homelessness (Grech, 2019). In this study, unlike others, I aim to challenge the current stigma and perception of homelessness through participatory action research.

2.3 Education for Sustainable Development

ESD is considered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) as an education that

empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about lifelong learning, and is an integral part of quality education. (p.12).

In fact, ESD is a critical enabler to accomplish all 169 targets within all seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The SDGs are global guidelines that direct a sustainable way forward to eradicate extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect the Earth (United Nations, 2015). ESD directly contributes to SDG 4, specifically Target 4.7, which is about quality education for all. It states that through ESD, individuals of all ages and gender develop knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to enable them to live more sustainably (United Nations, 2015). In order to achieve this, urgent changes in our way of thinking and acting need to be made. There is therefore an urgent need to “transform lives through education” (UNESCO, 2016, p.7).

ESD is synonymous with transformative education; in fact, in the most recent global framework, the ESD for 2030 Roadmap stresses the need for a 'big transformation' on both an individual and social level (UNESCO, 2020).

In this framework, the following five stages of transformation were put forward:

1. awareness – individuals gain factual knowledge of the real-life issues;
2. understanding – through critical reflection and analysis individuals comprehend the intricacy of real-life issues;
3. empathy – through first-hand experience with realities, individuals might feel more connected to the real-world problems and develop empathy towards victims of such world issues;
4. compassion – when individuals perceive the relevance of and resonate with the real-life issues, empathy might lead to compassionate individuals, and;
5. empowerment – when individuals feel confident to become change agents and take individual or collective action.

(UNESCO, 2020).

The stages have no particular order and an individual might not pass through all the phases to experience transformative learning and action (UNESCO, 2020). Furthermore, individuals may experience transformative learning suddenly, over a short period of time, through a significant life experience; or it may occur over a sustained period and accumulation of learning experiences (Mezirow, 1997). ESD learning pedagogy enables transformative action by empowering one to obtain the competences required for such action (UNESCO, 2020).

2.3.1 ESD learning pedagogy

ESD is depicted as a holistic learning process of the individual, embracing the growth of the entire individual including the head, hand and heart. This contrasts with traditional teaching that simply focuses on the mind (Pestalozzi, as cited in Gazibara, 2013). Other research studies consider ESD as a learning process that equips individuals with the required knowledge, attitudes, skills and values conducive for individuals to become active citizens (UNESCO, 2020). ESD pedagogy, although interpreted throughout the literature in varied ways, all boils down to envisioning a holistic pedagogy with the emphasis on action-oriented approach to achieve transformation (UNESCO, 2017).

The transmission of knowledge from educators to students is at the core of traditional teaching, especially as a means to equip individuals with the right skills and attitudes for action. Past research indicates that there is no linear model linking knowledge acquisition as a means to action; on the contrary, it is a more multi-layered process, including other crucial variables that play an influence, such as empowerment (Hungerford & Volk, 1990). ESD is not only about the content related to sustainability. As Vanhear and Pace (2008) explain, efforts should be concentrated on the 'how' rather than the 'what'; thus, the way learning takes place is of utmost importance.

Consequently, central to ESD is a learner-centred approach, including active participatory practices, in which critical emotional awareness and growth are also acknowledged as part of learning (Ojala, 2022; Sleurs, 2008; UNESCO, 2012). Moreover, ESD is characterized by collaborative learning, by which educators act as facilitators rather than instructors, guiding individuals who are active in their own learning and

where their experience is valued. This active participatory approach to learning dovetails ESD into IGD, as both strive for more group equality, challenging the power imbalance between learners and educators (Lawale & Bory-Adams, 2010). In fact, facilitators direct individuals to reach their own transformative potential through guided questions, visioning activities, critical reflection and dialogic communication (Sleurs, 2008).

Experiential learning is another important aspect in the ESD process; catering for a more relevant education and problem-solving that is rooted in real-world problems. Correspondingly, learners might feel more connected to the problem and this approach could instil a sense of ownership, emotional values and empowerment, which comprehensively might serve as a tipping point for transformative action (Harron, 2017; Sleurs, 2008; UNESCO, 2020; Vanhear & Pace, 2008).

In sum, the shift from teaching to a learning environment is the key to ESD pedagogy (UNESCO, 2018b). Although the topics and curricula might address differing topics in different contexts around the world, all ESD initiatives should be based on the pedagogies and methodologies discussed above in order to guarantee the development of competences needed for the successful achievement of SDGs (Rieckmann, 2018).

2.3.2 ESD competences

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, 2011), argues that competences can have diverse meanings. Wiek et al. (2011) define competence as “a functionally linked complex of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable successful task performance and problem solving” (p.204). In fact, cross-cutting competences of

ESD not only deal with the gaining of knowledge; they also incorporates holistic growth by enhancing skills and attitudes to empower individuals to take sustainable individual and community actions (UNESCO, 2018b).

Over the years, various academics have proposed varied amalgamations of core competences for ESD which tend to focus on the outcomes rather than the inputs of ESD (UNESCO, 2018b). A number of competence frameworks focused solely on the educators' competences for ESD, such as the UNECE framework developed in 2011 (UNECE, 2011). This consisted of thirty-nine competences, classified in four pillars of 21st Century education proposed by Delors: learning to know; learning to do; learning to live together; and learning to be (Delors, 1996). This left critics unimpressed by the fact that it is too abstract and nigh impossible to achieve (Vare et al., 2019).

Over the years, a number of academics have developed varied combinations of learners' competences for ESD, including the following:

Gestaltungskompetenz – shaping competences. This was developed by De Haan and comprises twelve sub-competences including the gathering of knowledge and future thinking and acting; addressing intricate information and situations; the participatory aspect in decision making as an individual and in cooperation with others; be motivated and inspire others to be active in society; practice self-reflection and also awareness of others; and engaging in empathy and solidarity especially with the marginalized (De Haan, 2010).

Sustainability competences developed by Wals (2015) consist of four inter-dependent 'dimensions' of competences that achieve sustainability, including conceptual and systemic knowledge; critical thinking; change and innovation; and an ethical and normative dimension.

A very popular range of competences is the one compiled by Wiek et al.:

- Interpersonal;
- Normative;
- Strategic;
- Anticipatory;
- Systemic working.

(Wiek et al., 2011).

In 2016, 'integrated problem-solving' was added to the list as an overarching competence (Wiek, et al., 2016). This work was very influential on the subsequent work on ESD competences and there was a general consensus on this framework especially when situated within academic settings (Brundiers et al., 2021).

Two more recent sets of competences based on Wiek et al. include that by UNESCO in 2016 and that of Giangrande et al., in 2019 (Giangrande et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2018b). The latter incorporated two additional key competence areas to the list of Wiek et al. These are disciplinary and interdisciplinary competence, and intrapersonal competence, forming a total of seven competences. There is a great emphasis on intrapersonal competence, which acknowledges the need to achieve self-reflection and personal

transformation. This can then be a stepping stone for achieving social and global transformation. It is not an easy endeavour to achieve sustainability and personal wellbeing and growth should be considered part of intrapersonal competence (Giangrande et al., 2019). The need for intrapersonal competence to be considered as one of the outcomes of ESD was suggested by other academics too (Brundiers et al., 2021).

Intrapersonal competence such as self-reflection is not only a core competence of ESD for learners, but also significant for educators for them to evaluate and develop their own professional development (Sleurs, 2008). It is important to note that ESD is a learning opportunity for all parties concerned including participants and facilitators. Participants learn from each other and from the facilitators but so do the facilitators; they learn from their own experience but also from the rest of the group (Tilbury, 2011).

The list of competences developed by UNESCO is very much similar to that of Giangrande et al., but comprises a different terminology and it also makes less emphasis on intrapersonal competence. However, one main difference is the additional mega-competence of integrated problem-solving proposed by Wiek et al., thus forming a total of eight competences (UNESCO, 2018b). The figure below shows the two lists of competences.

Figure 2.1 Lists of Competences

	<u>UNESCO – competences’ list</u>	<u>Giangrande et al., - competences’ list</u>
Integrated problem solving	Self-awareness =	Intrapersonal (<i>including personal wellbeing</i>)
	Collaboration =	Interpersonal
	Anticipatory =	Future thinking
	System thinking =	System thinking
	Critical thinking =	Disciplinary and interdisciplinary
	Normative =	Normative and cultural
	Strategic =	Strategic

Adapted from Giangrande, (2019); and UNESCO, (2018b).

These two collections of competences share overlapping similarities. Both present a comprehensive and meaningful set of categories that reflect a holistic pedagogy. As previously mentioned, the head, heart and hand tap into the knowledge, attitudes, skills and values that enable individuals to become active citizens. Besides, unlike previous research, the two lists are not specifically designed for formal education only. Giangrande et al. (2019) explicitly stated that their competence list should be used by community practitioners in society and it provides qualitative outcomes as is the case in this research. At the same time, UNESCO is recognized as the principal agency of ESD and has years of expertise on ESD; also, the importance of an overarching competence is obvious considering that such competences should not be valued as ‘stand-alones’ but should be integrated to address diverse real-life problems. These are the reasons why I decided to refer to these two lists of competences in this study.

Having a framework of competences offers a common evaluative structure for ESD programmes. While I highlighted the above sets of individual ESD competences, it is also important to recognize that no one individual can respond to all the requirements of ESD competences (UNESCO, 2018b). Indeed, Sleurs (2008) speaks about the need for a community approach that involve collective competences which can create a sustainable present and future. Research on ESD competences is ever growing, as sustainable development and ESD themselves are an evolving notion (UNESCO, 2012).

2.3.3 ESD, adult education and community-based settings

ESD research and practice seems to be mostly situated in formal education settings (Lockhart, 2016). Apart from equipping students from a young age with ESD competences is vital, as they are the ones that will shape the future, ESD also embraces the importance of life-long learning as a process that should be available to learners at all levels (Union for the Mediterranean, 2014). Even though adult education is not explicitly mentioned in the SDG4 and the ESD roadmap for 2030, but presumed to be incorporated within learning ‘for all’ and ‘lifelong learning’, adults are the ones that have the potential to influence and produce the changes that need to be made now (Benavot, 2018).

Adult education tends to be perceived as formal and vocational education that prepares adults for the workforce (Benavot, 2018). Even in the SDG4, reference for adults is made in relation to skills for employment and decent jobs in Target 4.4 and to literacy and numeracy in Target 4.6 (United Nations, 2015). Adult education should not be a means to an end; both ESD and adult education are as much a tool as a goal, not only to address

SDG4 but to achieve the SDGs by 2030 (European Association for the Education of Adults [EAEA], 2018; Römer, 2021). Consequently, ESD through non-formal settings, with the aim to extend also to the community at large, is very much highlighted in the Agenda 21 (United Nations, 1992), and more recently within the ESD for 2030 roadmap (UNESCO, 2020).

Non-formal education can potentially address the deficiencies in formal systems. ESD in formal education disregards individuals from marginalized and socially excluded communities (Noguchi et al., 2015). Every human being is affected by the consequences of the current dire state of our unsustainable world, especially the marginalized communities. Thus, although one cannot deny that providing the basic needs to everyone is a priority, especially in situations of extreme poverty, ESD is still as important to marginalized and vulnerable populations as the rest of the society (UNESCO, 2018a).

Involving people experiencing poverty and social exclusion is important in order to achieve the SDGs. It is vital to listen to their voices, experiences and concerns. Through ESD in community-based settings, the diverse community members can respond as one (Noguchi et al., 2015). Through non-formal, informal and community approaches, ESD can create learning spaces for collaborative competences, meaningful learning and transformative action. This goes a long way towards the goal of SDGs both on a local and global level (Noguchi et al., 2015; Sleurs, 2008). The power of learning and transformative action lies in and with the community; in fact, the need for intergroup encounters is stressed in the ESD for 2030 framework. An individual in the community can meet with “other fellow members and bond with them, which generates solidarity

and facilitates collective action for transformation and a culture of sustainability” (UNESCO, 2020, p. 58).

In Malta, despite the growth of ESD especially in schools, and also in NGOs working mainly in the environmental sector, there is still the need for ESD to be offered to adults (Cassar & Caruana, 2018). The dearth of ESD in adult education and community-based settings may be due to numerous obstacles. Community organizations might not perceive a link between their role and ethos on one hand, and sustainable development on the other. This is further sustained by successive governments who treat ESD as an endeavour solely in educational organisations (Pulis et al., 2018).

Gross (2000, as cited in Leal Filho et al., 2009) reported that a research study with groups of adults showed that the current individualistic way of life made people more egocentric and solely concerned with the world of work, rather than embracing a holistic perspective that includes the social and environmental facets of life.

The above-mentioned factors may be the cause of what Pulis et al. (2018) labelled as ‘a culture of inertia’ that needs to be addressed and challenged.

I query whether in the local context, especially in non-formal settings, tools, resources, and spaces are being made available to develop the skills and values that should guide adults into the transformative change that we need. Also, I question whether there is an absence of community-based non-formal initiatives or whether in fact these are taking place which, however, although very much with ESD underpinnings, are not

framed under ESD. This may be due to a general lack of understanding of the abstract nature of sustainability and what ESD actually entails (EAEA, 2018).

In any case, the prerequisite for growth of ESD in the non-formal and community-based sector needs to be tackled with urgency in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030. In fact, the latest ESD for 2030 framework underlines action in five priority areas that has to be achieved by 2030, two of which specifically highlight the potential of transformative learning within communities. These two priority action areas are transforming learning environments and accelerating local level actions (UNESCO, 2020).

These two actions attest to the importance of transformative action, not only within formal education but also beyond, by means of integral non-formal and informal learning. Education within the community offers relevant lifelong learning opportunities that empower individuals to feel inspired and follow up with significant social actions (UNESCO, 2020).

2.4 Conclusion

To date, our collective body of skills and knowledge, attitudes and experiences seem incapable of providing the necessary answers to address successfully local and global challenges. Thus, we are still struggling to achieve the SDGs by 2030 (UNESCO, 2012). Consequently, there is an ongoing need of new ESD tools. Considering also the transformative potential of both IGD and ESD; I wanted to conduct a research study that

explored whether IGD could serve as a tool for ESD and contribute to the general aims of ESD.

The next chapter presents the multifaceted theoretical framework that guided me in this study.

Chapter 3:

Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3 : Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

As stated in the preceding chapter, there is a great need to explore IGD beyond the usual topics of race and gender (Madden, 2015), and beyond formal educational institutions (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). Additionally, there is also a substantial void in the research, both locally and internationally with regards to IGD, specifically as a tool for ESD.

When it comes to frame the research that addresses these gaps, no one single framework on its own fits this study. I will therefore capture the multifaceted framework of this study by dividing this chapter into three main sections followed by a consideration of a number of theoretical orientations that fall under each section.

The three main sections are:

- intergroup dialogue;
- the research approach; and
- education for sustainable development.

3.2 Intergroup Dialogue

IGD is known to be rooted in the critical-dialogic theoretical framework of IGD (c.f Literature Review) as outlined in the research (Sorensen et al., 2009). It was with this theoretical model in mind and informed by the literature that I was directed towards the principles and paradigms of intergroup contact theory, social justice education and

critical pedagogy. This not only shaped the planning, process and outcomes of IGD but also influenced me in the way I operated throughout this research study.

3.2.1. Intergroup contact theory

When considering that current society is characterized more by segregation and individualism than by community interactions and belonging, it is not a surprise that widespread discrimination and prejudices towards people from differing backgrounds and identities exist.

Intergroup dialogue is typically designed around sustained intergroup contact. It is not just a mere encounter of individuals coming from different social identity groups (Zuniga et al., 2007). IGD is to some extent informed by the existing literature of Allport's contact hypothesis theory (Sorensen et al., 2009). Allport put considerable effort on research that foregrounds positive intergroup contact and stipulated conditions required in order to overcome prejudices and achieve successful intergroup contact (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998). The four optimal conditions are:

- 1) equal status among participants;
- 2) cooperation;
- 3) common goals; and
- 4) institutional support (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998).

In the longitudinal intergroup contact theory, Pettigraw (1998) recommends an additional requirement in order to lead to a positive outcome. This concerns engaging in sustained contact that in turn can potentially result in friendships. While Pettigrew

posits that in order to build friendships in positive intergroup contact, one must highlight the commonalities within the group members. However, one should conceive a balance of similarities and differences in intergroup contact. Thus, one should address differences and not shy away from conflict dialogue, especially that concerning the viewpoints coming from marginalized communities dealing with power relations (Abu-Nimmer, 1999; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Hammack & Pilecki, 2015; Moaz, 2016).

Group composition is central within IGD framework, as it strives for equality between the two different social identity groups (Pettigrew, 1998). Consequently, relationships should be built among participants, the main aim being to nurture a community capacity and promote positive social action (Zuniga et al., 2007). In this research study, the knowledge and experiences which the participants bring to the sessions are valued and the participants are encouraged to collaborate by choosing a topic of tension revolving around homelessness in order to be tackled in intergroup dialogue. In addition, with me as the facilitator, the participants are guided to work on a common goal that benefit the community at large. Such participation should help the participants to build trust by decreasing the imbalance of power dynamics between them and myself as the researcher (Davis, 2008).

3.2.2 Social justice education

Social justice is both a goal and a process. The goal of social justice is full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. The process for attaining the goal of social justice should also be democratic and participatory, respectful of human diversity and group differences, and inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacity for working collaboratively with others to create change. (Bell, 2016, p.3)

The goal of social justice education is explicitly that of working towards achieving social justice action by fighting against discrimination and inequalities through a cooperative educational setting that encourages equal active roles of participants from diverse societal backgrounds (Adams 2016; Bell, 2016).

Intergroup dialogue is a pedagogical tool that intends not only to educate ‘about’ social justice but also ‘for’ social justice. Accordingly, IGD bridges intergroup contact with social justice education, “yet it extends both these traditions in innovative and challenging ways” (Nagda et al., 2018, p. 380).

IGD content throughout its four stages is grounded in social justice education. In stages 1 and 2, IGD participants are encouraged to learn and dialogue about one’s own identity and those of others, and on positionality of power, privileges, prejudices, and oppression in the societal context (Fournier-Sylvester, 2016). Stages 3 and 4 further promote social justice action. Participants are guided to discuss controversial topics revolving around social justice, and encouraged to collaboratively work on common goals for social action (Zuniga et al., 2007).

3.2.3 Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an educational underpinning of critical theory that “aims to un mask the world and then change it” (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p. 4). Through a critical pedagogy lens, IGD seeks not only to foster positive friendships and reduce prejudices by means of intergroup contact, but exploits these positive connections to build alliances for social justice action (Nagda & Gurin, 2013).

In addition, framing IGD within critical pedagogy encourages dialogue to move beyond learning about and understanding social justice topics. It seeks to engage the participants in critical reflection and critical analyses of both personal and interpersonal identities as situated within the broader structures of society (Madden, 2015; Nagda, 2006; Nagda et al., 2012).

This greatly relates to Freire’s beliefs on critical consciousness. The development of critical consciousness in IGD is praxis-oriented; it aims to involve participants in continuous cycles of dialogue, listening, reflection, examination and action, on the reality of social identities, oppression and broader issues, as shaped by history, cultures and politics (Alda et al., 2012; Freire, 2005; Zuniga et al., 2012).

Critical consciousness manifests itself through critical reflection and analysis. It occurs when participants become aware of their biases and preconceptions in relation to the experiences of others, and of how it is moulded by a wider social influence (Zuniga et al., 2007). Freire argues that critical pedagogy has a commitment to create an equal status of the participants within intergroup communication. Marginalized groups are

empowered and given a voice, and together with the rest of the participants, they share equal and cohesive dialogic interactions (Dunham, 2018). Also, IGD establishes a non-hierarchical relationship between facilitator and participants. “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but is one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (Freire, 2005, p. 80).

Critical pedagogy theory bridges the principles of intergroup contact theory and social justice education by placing them in a critical frame. Indeed, I believe that the above-mentioned tenets influence the critical dialogic framework of IGD, which itself draws further from Freire’s approach to the dialogical method: “dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make it and remake it... through dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don’t know, we can then act critically to transform reality” (Freire, cited in Shor & Freire, 1987, p.13).

3.3 The Research Approach

3.3.1 Transformative paradigm

I approach this study as community-based research through a transformative paradigm, considering it is situated in a non-formal setting and involving adult participants.

Emancipatory research, more recently referred to as transformative research by Mertens (2009), is rooted in a social justice and human rights approach to research, embracing a collaboration among diverse participants that include the most oppressed

(Mertens, 2009). This paradigm focuses on a strategy of shared life experiences and dialogue in order to fight power imbalances and prejudices (Noel, 2016).

3.3.1.1 Participatory action research

Participatory action research (PAR) is a research approach that is still developing after its introduction in the 20th century (James et al., 2008) and traceable to numerous scholars such as Freire and Lewin (Kindon et al., 2007). On account of its complexity and indistinct boundaries with other approaches such as action research and feminist research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019), it is hard to coin one universal definition. In this study, I use the term PAR to describe a research approach that seeks to give prominence to the collaborative relationship between the participants and the researcher. The participants form part of the community, especially individuals who are experiencing oppression. They contribute to the research process by imparting knowledge that becomes a catalyst for social justice action (Rahman, 1991).

PAR is a suitable research approach for this study, considering it is a typical methodological design in community-based research and definitely in line with the principles of transformative paradigm (Leavy, 2017). Furthermore, as Freire argues, PAR can offer a space for collaborative dialogue between marginalized groups and more privileged groups to challenge power imbalances and unmask social injustices (Chatterton et al., 2007; Freire, 2005).

3.4 Education for Sustainable Development

My prior knowledge and familiarity with the principles and values of ESD played a significant role in my choice of research approach. First, like IGD, ESD research is predominantly situated in education within the formal schooling, (Lockhart, 2016); however, the need for community-based practices are also emphasized within the ESD framework. The Berlin declaration stresses the need to build inclusive and empathetic relationships within the community, and places a special focus on excluded and vulnerable populations within society (UNESCO, 2021). The declaration attests that providing a transformative learning space to achieve a holistic empowerment of individuals will in turn “mobilize ESD to combat poverty, particularly extreme poverty, and provide learners with relevant competences to meet individual and societal demands” (UNESCO, 2021, p. 4). In addition, numerous experts stress the need for a radical educational reform that seeks an ESD that embraces real-world problems through an active and collaborative learning, where critical thinking is central (UNESCO, 2012). Consequently, I was enthused to work on a study that stresses education not simply within but by the community, one that seeks to achieve more cohesive, just and sustainable communities.

Furthermore, ESD puts emphasis on transformative pedagogy (cf. Literature Review) as a means to achieve a general change, including aspects that are attitudinal and behavioural, within the community, in order to live a more sustainable lifestyle. This made me come up with the first research question, specifically asking whether IGD can act as an educational tool that helps participants achieve a transformative change (Bonello & Pace, 2022).

As the researcher, I was convinced that the ESD theoretical underpinnings would guide me in the data analysis and discussion sections to answer the second research question. Informed by the results and in light of the literature on IGD and ESD; I would be able to determine whether there existed any similarities and links between the processes of IGD and ESD. Further to this, I would explore the usefulness of IGD as an educational tool in strengthening the competences of ESD.

The complex concept of ESD embraces a number of already established theories and pedagogies including the ones mentioned above, such as critical pedagogy. Besides, ESD in its broadest sense is “an educational process that is contextually relevant, participatory, emancipatory and leads towards sustainable development” (Pace, 2010, p. 322).

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I explained the multifaceted theoretical framework that guided me throughout this study. This in turn informed the methodology and research design of the study, as delineated in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Chapter 4 : Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present a review of the research method adopted, including the procedure and data collection tools that were utilized. I will also outline the recruitment process that was followed and describe the research sample. Subsequently, I will delve into the objectives and the curriculum of the IGD sessions and how validity and reliability were achieved through triangulation.

I will then shift focus on to the data analysis process, followed by a description of the ethical considerations taken throughout the study. Finally, I will explain the challenges and limitations experienced regarding this methodology.

4.2 Qualitative Research

As articulated by Murray (2014), qualitative research gives prominence to “active engagement with the social world. It is not simply the collecting of data but rather the development of a practical understanding of the world through a dialectical process” (pp. 596-597). Rooted within this view, a qualitative research method was deemed to be the best fit to address this study’s research questions, as qualitative studies typically tend to examine the what and/or how (Leavy, 2017).

Furthermore, a qualitative research approach, unlike quantitative methodology, gives prominence to the voice of those who normally go unheard in society; in this case, the people experiencing or have experienced homelessness (Van den Hoonaard, 2008).

Besides, considerable energy in qualitative research is directed at exploring and making meaning of their lived experiences, behaviours and feelings (Given, 2008).

4.3 Participatory action research

While adopting a transformative paradigm that includes also a critical perspective throughout this study, I embraced PAR integrated within the process of IGD. I opted for PAR as it has been used multiple times in IGD research (Dessel & Rogge, 2008), and there is a clear link between the principles of IGD and those of PAR; both follow three key values, namely: participation, action and community (Huffman, 2017; Judkins, 2012; Zuniga et al., 2007).

4.3.1 Participation

Participation is invariably crucial in PAR; however, there is no one fixed classical model of PAR. Rather, the level of participation varies within different types of research (Jordan, 2008). Participation in PAR may vary over a continuum, can take various forms, and may differ during different parts of the study (Kral & Allen, 2015).

In this study, the participation of participants was equally paramount, especially in the IGD process. Participants were given an active role in deciding the best time and the most convenient venue, and in setting up a communication agreement and adapting it as they deemed fit throughout the sessions. Additionally, apart from giving value to the knowledge and experiences brought by the participants in the IGD sessions, the participants themselves decided on controversial topic revolving around homelessness

to be tackled in IGD. Also, the participants worked as a group on a much-needed solution that would be of benefit to them and the community at large.

Kral and Allen (2015) state that research on IGD situated in collaborative participation positions participants as “studying with, rather than about” (p.254). Such participation can help participants to build trust by decreasing the imbalance of power dynamics between them and the researcher (Davis C. S., 2008). Unlike traditional research, PAR and IGD give prominence to the non-hierarchical relationship between researchers and participants ensuring a collaborative rapport (Davis, 2008; Edwards, 2017; James et al., 2008). Therefore, situated within a transformative paradigm, it was central to this research that I, as a facilitator, tried to diminish this power imbalance (Noel, 2016) by taking a back seat and encouraging active participation and listening. In this way, participants contributed also to the flow of the dialogue.

4.3.2 Community

As previously mentioned in the Literature Review, IGD studies are mostly used in academic settings. However, IGD studies based in community settings, as was this study, are encouraged (Dessel et al., 2006). Consistent with PAR principles, a clear focus of this research was on community empowerment and development (McIntyre, 2007). In fact, a small group of diverse people from two distinct identity groups, including individuals from marginalized communities, participated in the IGD sessions. The participants were encouraged to build relationships, the main aim being to develop a community capacity that promotes positive social action (Zuniga et al., 2007). The participants engaged in the collaborative process of IGD through dialogue, reflection and action on matters that

interested them. Following Huffman (2017), through PAR in IGD sessions, as a facilitator I put my efforts to “partner with other communities of knowledge/practice in productive, meaningful, and transformative ways” (p.3).

4.3.3 Action

PAR approaches focus on action as either part of the process, the research outcome, or both (Huffman, 2017). The four-stage model of IGD (cf. Literature Review) emphasizes action during its fourth stage (Zuniga, 2003) and collaborative action across diverse identity groups (Aldana et al., 2016). In this study I guided and actively involved the participants in order to move from dialogue to action. As a result, throughout the research process and as an outcome of IGD, some form of action was envisaged and actualized. This is very much in line with PAR and its influence of Freire’s work on transformative praxis, which highlights social justice action on matters and issues occurring in the participants’ community (Gaventa, 1988; MacDonald et al., 2006).

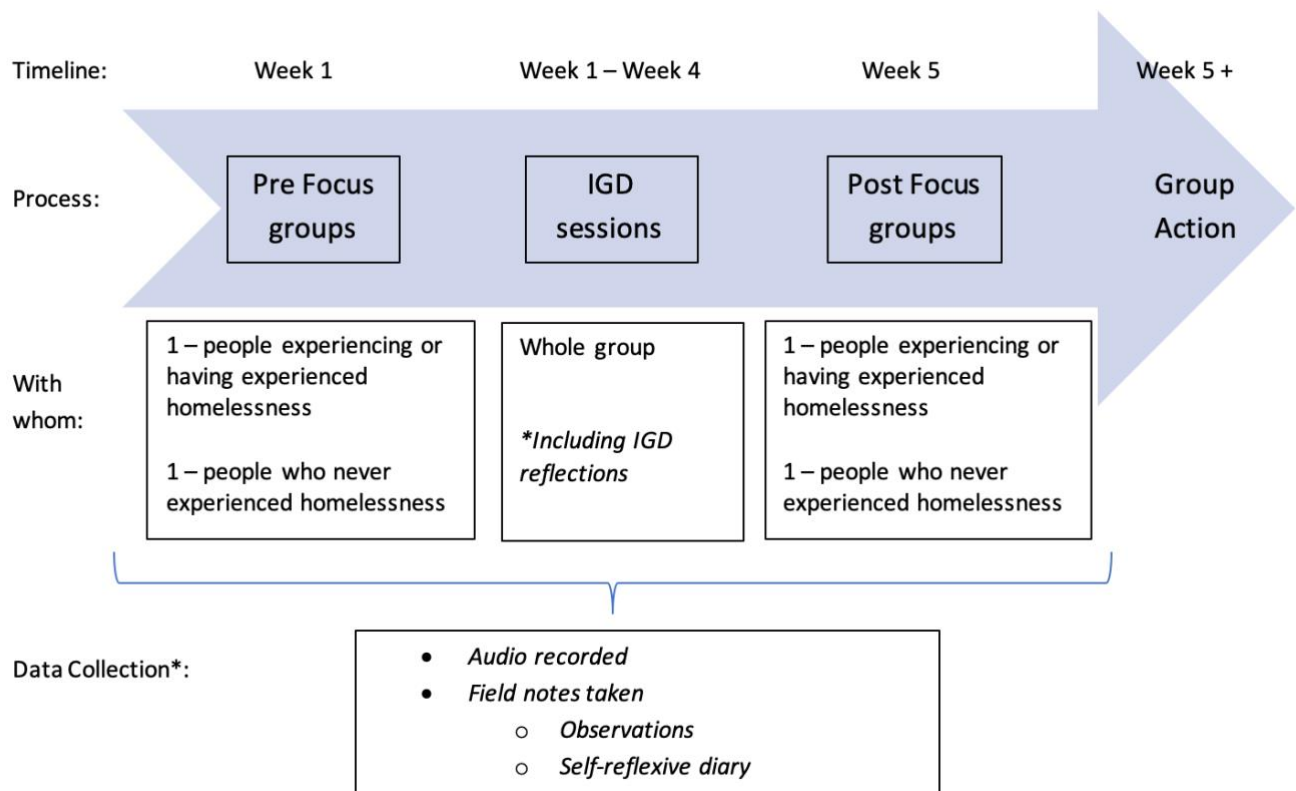
This research study used IGD sessions within the PAR approach, thus incorporating the above-mentioned principles. However, it is important to note that different studies weigh each value differently (Huffman, 2017). In this case, although all three principles were respected during the IGD sessions, community-based research with a critical lens was a major guiding principle.

4.4 Data collection

Data collection in qualitative research can take many forms, such as focus groups, observations and the researcher's personal diary (James et al., 2008). This study included also the participants' reflections.

Although the research for this project took a year, the data collection took place over a five-week period. Various research tools were implemented during the three stages of data collection, as shown in the flow figure below.

Figure 4.1 Timeline of Data Collection



4.4.1 Focus groups

In their study, Dessel and Rogge (2008) presented a collection of intergroup dialogue research sessions. Focus groups seem to be a common data collection tool in IGD research; especially used to study the effect, if any, of the IGD process on participants.

According to the literature on IGD, a common data collection tool typically employed was the pre-post-tests procedure (Murray-Everett, 2016). A pre-post-test is a practical evaluation tool that assesses changes, if any, that the participants might have experienced by participating in the sessions. This is usually a written test, and the participants are asked to fill one survey before the sessions and another after the session so that the researcher can compare results (EMpower, n.d). However, it has been noted that participants tend to delve into much less detail in written pre-post-tests than in pre-post interviews (Evinger, 2014).

In light of this, focus groups are considered to be the most suitable data-collecting tools that address the first research question and they also offer a practical way to explore the participants' experiences and transformative changes, if any, through IGD (Morgan, 2008). Moreover, the strength of semi-structured focus groups lies in the fact that they also offer a space for further probing, even beyond the original questions, based on the data that the participants share (James et al., 2008). Despite this, it was crucial for me as the researcher to read the room continuously and to be aware of when theoretical saturation had been reached (Low, 2008). When that happened I either moved to other questions or concluded the focus groups.

Following the participants' suggestions, and mainly due to their limited availability and convenience, the focus groups were conducted online. Conducting online synchronous focus groups rather than in-person focus groups was practical for all the participants while still providing a similar environment to the latter in terms of verbal cues observation and getting to know each other. However, shifting online might have its drawbacks, such as the risk of technology failure and sound interruption. In case of the latter I asked participants to repeat statements that sounded unclear (Moore et al., 2015).

In total, I carried out four online focus groups: two with each social identity group. One group was made up of participants who had experienced homelessness or were at the time of the study experiencing homelessness, while the other group consisted of individuals who had never experienced homelessness. Two focus groups took place prior to the first IGD session and thus were the pre-data collection focus groups. This was the first time that the participants who shared a similar social identity met the undersigned as a group. As a result, these focus groups were the first occasion where I could gain their trust (Huffman, 2017), as well as an opportunity to garner the participants' insights and visions that later helped me plan relevant IGD sessions. The other two semi-structured focus groups were held two days after the last IGD session, and represented the post-data collective focus groups.

Conducting focus groups was facilitated by the fact that extensive literature exists on the topic of IGD, to which I referred for guidance in order to prepare relevant open-ended questions based on the research questions (James et al., 2008). Both the pre- and

post-focus groups revolved around initial prepared questions on two main themes, namely, personal outcomes and process (see Appendix C and Appendix D). In the former theme, four further topics for investigation were developed: knowledge; emotions; views and attitude; and behaviour on homelessness. The other theme included questions that focused on the process of IGD.

4.4.2 Field notes

Field notes are another data collection tool which helps the researcher collect detailed and extensive data. Fetterman (2010) posits that it is beneficial to have two distinct sets of field notes: one to record observations and the other to document personal critical reflections.

4.4.2.1 Observations

Focus groups and IGD sessions were audio recorded and I used two digital audio devices throughout the data collection phase. The second one served as a back-up in case the first malfunctioned. Although the entire IGD sessions were recorded, I only transcribed what I considered to be relevant points and reflections.

Notwithstanding the benefits that audio recording presented, it obviously did not capture visual and other non-verbal communication. To make up for this factor, I took down handwritten observational notes regularly both during the focus groups and the IGD sessions. I recorded nonverbal cues, feelings and body language. Besides, I drew sketches of group seating and documented other occurrences that might not have been captured otherwise. Observational notes present further study credibility, as they

capture a more multifaceted perspective of both the participants and the process under study (Kawulich, 2005). These observational notes were checked after each IGD session or focus group to guarantee the reliability of the collected data.

4.4.2.2 Researcher's diary

Positioning myself as the facilitator alongside the participants throughout the process of the IGD and focus groups prompted the possibility of a personal diary. Having a researcher diary as another data-collection tool in this study opened an avenue into my insights and experience as the facilitator. I used it to write an evaluation after each session and reserved a space for personal reflections, thus serving as a personal and professional development tool.

In the evaluations I not only took note of what was positively contributing to the IGD sessions but I also identified what needed to be improved. Also, critically reflecting on my role as a facilitator helped me to realise which comments of mine functioned well and which ones needed attention. For example, I realized that certain theoretical terms that as an educator and facilitator came naturally for me were not being understood by everyone, and thus I took more care to ensure that I did not use such academic terms and to rephrase the input of the participants in such a way that it was understood by the rest of the group.

I documented my personal experience of the IGD sessions from a facilitator's perspective; including my feelings and views on the topics that were discussed. Reflexivity in research is a crucial factor that helps the researcher become aware of their

viewpoints and beliefs, and not allow them to obstruct the dialogue process (Intergroup resources, n.d.). Besides, the diary served as a personal reflective space where I could write a critical perspective on the outcome of each session. According to the literature, “the ability to document these processes and capture the researcher’s own insights, interpretations, and reactions can be beneficial to the analysis process” (Rodgers, 2008, p. 43).

Such reflective writings gave added value to the study, especially in relation to the second research question. I started reflecting and writing with a basic knowledge of IGD and ESD, noting prominent links during the process of IGD. Although it has its benefits, this tool is time-consuming as it requires regular input. I found this challenging due to my time restrictions and the mental exhaustion I felt following the sessions. However, I made efforts to block specific times and space for self-reflection and writing after each session, including those of focus groups (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

4.4.3 IGD reflections

Participants’ reflexive journals is a data collection tool that has been commonly applied across IGD research (Nagda et al., 2009). Journalling provides a personal space for individuals to conduct self-reflection and is especially helpful to individuals who feel more confident by putting their thoughts in writing (The Leadership in Diversity Group, 2019). However, considering that participation in this research was open to both literate and illiterate individuals, suggesting this tool might have embarrassed some of the participants. Instead, I allotted a slot in each session specifically for reflection on the topic of the day and on the dialogue process during that session.

Accordingly, the reflective exercise at the end of each session connected the process and the outcomes of IGD as experienced by the participants. The outcomes concerned the participants' personal reflections and included factors such as feelings, emotions and viewpoints, and what they might have learned, if such was the case. At the same time, this reflection fostered "the dialogue about the dialogue" approach, which encapsulated the group process (Zuniga et al., 2007, p.23). The participants reflected on their experience and feelings concerning the way the dialogue evolved, the parts of the dialogue that worked, and the features that might have needed improvement in later sessions. I varied the reflection exercises by implementing group discussions, round robins and short memo writings. This was done in order to cater for different learning styles.

4.5 Participants

4.5.1 Recruitment procedure

Before I set out on this research study, I did not know any individuals who were experiencing homelessness. Also, people experiencing homelessness are commonly known to be a hidden population that is hard to reach (Shaghaghi et al., 2011), and gatekeepers often prove beneficial in making connections (Wilson, 2019). I therefore opted for gatekeepers as a recruitment tool.

I requested help from YMCA Malta, to act as an intermediary. Its staff handed out an information letter in English (see Appendix A) to potential participants, explaining the research study and what the participants' role would entail. However, due to the low

response rate to the letter, which may be attributed to “the stigma and the shame” associated with homelessness, the YMCA Malta suggested that I should consider also ex-residents as potential participants (Calleja, 2021, para. 13). Ex-residents would be people who previously experienced homelessness. I accepted this suggestion. Once again, YMCA Malta contacted several potential participants and verbally explained to them the contents of the information letter.

Following this challenging process, I was invited by YMCA Malta to one of their shelters to meet interested residents and to explain further the study and answer any queries. As for the interested participants who previously experienced homelessness, I phoned them to explain the study in more detail and answer any questions for further clarification. Speaking directly with potential participants served not only to break the ice but also to encourage participation and gain their trust.

Snowball sampling is an acceptable technique in qualitative methodology that enables the researcher to reach hard-to-find participants (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). In fact, virtual snowballing sampling was employed to recruit participants from both social identity groups. I uploaded a post on my personal Facebook account, describing in brief the research study and inviting interested participants to contact me either via electronic mail or directly on social media. The post was shared a few times by friends on their personal profile and/or in groups. Thanks to this method, interested participants passed on potential referrals at an early stage of the research study. This made the process quicker and helped me to build up the necessary group populations as required (Manohar et al., 2018).

Ultimately it turned out that this sampling method recruited only participants who had never experienced homelessness. To ensure transparency, I explained in further detail and passed on an electronic version of the information letter in English to interested individuals.

4.5.2 The participants

In total, thirteen individuals showed interest in participating in this research study. Five of these were referred to me by YMCA Malta, while eight people who had have never experienced homelessness contacted me via electronic mail or through the social media.

Three of the latter group informed me that they could not commit themselves due to time constraints, while another person did not respond to my inquiries. As a result, I only received four signed consent forms of the eight interested individuals who had never experienced homelessness.

I only received three signed consent forms from people who were currently homeless or who had experienced homelessness at some time in their life. Two other individuals who were residing at the YMCA Malta shelter during the time of the study were interested in participating in this research. However, one could not commit themselves due to an irregular work roster. The other individual participated in the first focus group but then dropped out of the project due to personal life issues that cropped up during the time of the study. Although there are various differences among IGD research studies, IGD normally involves between eight and ten participants from two distinct social groups (Muller, 2015). In the end, the sample of the study was composed of seven

adult participants as shown in the table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Details of Participants

Participants	Nationality	Homelessness status	Short description
Lina	Maltese	Experiencing homelessness	45 – a mother – unemployed
Fiona		Previously experienced homelessness	38 – a mother – employed in hospitality sector
Sara			55 – a mother– employed in hospitality sector
Martina and Kris	Maltese	Never experienced homelessness	31 and 32 respectively – a couple living together - both employed in the public medical and health sector
Rosie			31 – single - employed in the social sector
Clayton			32 – married - employed in the private accounting sector

Note: To protect anonymity, pseudonyms are used in this table and in the rest of this study.

4.6 IGD sessions

The original plan was to conduct two-hour weekly sessions over six consecutive weeks. However, the feedback received from both the gatekeepers and from the potential participants during the recruitment period indicated that the period of six weeks seemed to pose a huge challenge for participants in terms of commitment. Eventually, I

delivered a total of twelve hours of IGD over four consecutive sessions, based on the four-stage model of IGD (Zuniga, 2003) (cf. Literature Review).

Although the sessions were mainly geared to address issues related to homelessness, I also included related topics such as identity, cycles of socialization and oppression. The discussions were animated by thought-provoking activities using visuals, videos, pair work and so on. The session plans (see Appendix E), were not fixed and I was constantly adapting the content and activities of the sessions. Flexibility is an important factor in IGD, as it gives agency to participants to direct the flow of the dialogue and ensures that the curriculum caters for the needs and concerns raised by the participants (Cannara, 2016). Below is a table describing in brief the activities that took place throughout the sessions.

Table 4.2 Sequential outline of the IGD sessions, general objectives and activities.

Session	Objectives	Activities
Stage 1 Session1 2 hours	To build a positive relationship between people who never experienced homelessness together with people who were at the time experiencing homelessness or have experienced homelessness before.	• Introduced myself as the facilitator. • Dialogue vs debate vs discussion. • Checked in with the participants. • Screened a video on sympathy vs empathy. • Active listening with 'LARA'. • Safe space vs brave space. • Developed the group's communication agreement. • Personal object activity. • Personal reflection exercise.

Stage 2	To engage participants in	
Session 2	dialogue around topics of	
4 hours	identity, power, discrimination and stereotypes.	• Revised communication agreement and active listening. • Checked in with the participants. • Group activity on how each person acts in a group. • Brainstormed the term 'identity'. • Everyone wrote on sticky notes words to describe themselves. • Social identity vs personal identities. • Activity on what identities they identify with followed by the ones we feel most important, the least etc... • Activity on social classes where in pairs the participants engaged in an activity on stereotypes. • Group discussion about the result on google following a search on the term "homeless". • Activity about the local scenario of homelessness including a video, statements and screenshots of news headings and public comments on social media. • Decided on a "hot topic". • Group reflection.

Stage 3 Session 3 <i>4 hours</i>	• To engage participants in dialogue around topics of identity, power, discrimination and stereotypes; positioning these within the context of individual, institutional and structural oppression; • To dialogue about a particular ‘hot topic’ by exploring multiple perspectives and sharing of experiences.	• Revised the communication agreement and active listening. • Checked in with the participants. • Individual vs institutional vs societal oppression including also conscious and unconscious oppression. • Circle of sharing on oppression. • Circle of Socialization linking it to poverty circle. • Brainstormed on conflict and ways how we respond to conflict. • Dialogued about the ‘Hot topic’ chosen by the participants related to the local housing issue. • Group discussion on what actions can be taken in this regard. • Group reflection.
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Stage 4 Session 4 <i>2 hours</i>	To empower all individuals to exercise active citizenship towards social justice.	• Revised communication agreement and active listening. • Checked in with the participants. • Group discussion on our roles in systems of oppression. • Worked on an action plan. • Group reflection.
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4.7 Credibility and Validity

Neutrality is a component that promotes credibility; however, it is useful to acknowledge that as a facilitator and researcher, I approached the study “with a background and a set of experiences that cannot be turned off” (Diebel, 2008, p. 555). Consequently, I made efforts to mitigate this bias and ensure validity by combining both method and data triangulation (Honorene, 2017). The former type of triangulation was attained through the implementation of focus groups, observational field notes and a self-reflexive diary. Honorene (2017) stated that data triangulation improved the validity and credibility of the research. In this study, data triangulation was achieved by recording data from different sources, including:

- individuals who were currently homeless;
- individuals who were not currently homeless but had experienced homelessness before;
- individuals who never experienced homelessness; and
- a personal critical and reflexive journey, as facilitator, of the process and of the outcomes of IGD.

4.8 Data analysis

I opted for Braun and Clark’s multistep framework to conduct a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, I transcribed all the audio recordings word by word in their original language to ensure that I did not misconstrue any shared experiences in translation. After familiarizing myself with the data through multiple readings, I coded the transcripts in their original language, manually, using QualCoder 3.0, a data analysis

programme that helped me sort and code the data. I highlighted significant quotes and labelled each one with a name tag, with different colour-coded quotes for different types of data and name tags.

Afterwards I started grouping and condensing the data into three overarching themes, based on the aims of the study and research questions, to help me organize the data into relevant subthemes such as knowledge, awareness, and skills. Besides, involving a mix of pre-determined codes and some codes that emerged from the literature, I also looked for any new coding based from the data itself and produced new subthemes.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Jensen (2008) asserts that “the most important consideration in gaining access to research participants in qualitative research is to do no harm” (p. 2). For this reason, I prioritized the required ethical considerations and took the necessary measures.

4.9.1 Ethical clearance

First, I ensured that before even starting the recruitment process, I would have obtained the approval and the ethical clearance from the Faculty Research Ethics Board and the University Research Ethics Committee of the University of Malta.

4.9.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation

The information sheets (see Appendix A) and the opt-in consent forms (see Appendix B) were distributed to all potential participants and when needed the information was also explained verbally in person either by the gatekeepers or by myself.

Additional safeguards were employed including an explanation of what the study entailed, highlighting the sustained IGD and the process of the focus groups. Participants were clearly informed that they were free to withdraw at any time during the study without the need for an explanation as participation was on a voluntary basis. Throughout the research study I was always available for any queries that arose.

4.9.3 Confidentiality

Another critical ethical consideration is that of guaranteeing confidentiality. I ensured that pseudonyms were used during all the stages of the study. All audio-recorded material was kept in a password-protected folder on a personal device and deleted once the study was concluded.

Considering the nature of this study, I emphasized confidentiality and respect during both the focus groups and before every IGD session. Establishing a respect for confidentiality within the group is not only fitting to human dignity but also protects all the participants especially the most vulnerable (Davis & Ellis, 2008; Ogden, 2008).

4.9.4 Respect, fairness, and dignity

Values and ethics have a significant place in qualitative research to ensure respect, fairness and dignity for everyone involved.

During the first IGD session, the participants and I negotiated a communication agreement that embraced the rules and guidelines that the participants felt were important in order to have a smooth and respectful dialogue. I read out the communication agreement at the beginning of every IGD session, not only to highlight what had been agreed upon as a group, but also to provide an opportunity for the participants to make changes if any were desired.

Considering the personal and sensitive nature of this study, I clearly emphasized to the participants, both during the recruitment phase and also throughout the IGD sessions, to disclose only that which they felt comfortable to share. To prevent any feelings of distress, at no time throughout the study were participants forced or pressured to disclose anything. On the contrary, the participants' interest and wellbeing was rigidly respected.

4.10 Challenges and limitations

This study had a number of limitations.

4.10.1 Homogenous and small sample group

In IGD, group composition is considered fundamental as it strives for equality between the two different social identity groups (Pettigrew, 1998). Recruiting participants proved to be challenging and this stage of the study required significant dedication and effort on my part and that of the gatekeepers due to a general lack of response. This resulted in several limitations, including, the small sample size and disproportionate number of participants in terms of sex and nationality.

In an effort to address these limitations, I employed snowball sampling, which entails participants recruiting others through acquaintance. However, the group who had never experienced homelessness comprised individuals of a similar age and educational levels, a common disadvantage of this sampling technique (Manohar et al., 2018).

Despite these limitations, having only Maltese-speaking participants ensured that everyone felt at ease to speak in Maltese, enabling them to articulate clearly their perceptions and experiences. This was especially the case since some individuals specifically mentioned that they were not comfortable speaking in English. As a result, I decided to conduct both the focus groups and the IGD sessions in Maltese. As a matter of fact, having participants who were not fluent in Maltese would have been a limitation in itself and the IGD sessions would not have worked smoothly as they did.

4.10.2 Facilitation

IGD is typically led by skilled co-facilitators who reflect both social identity groups present in the study (Nagda, 2006). This further ensures a power balance in the group (Zuniga et al., 2007). This proved to be another limitation of this study since I was the only facilitator in the sessions. Considering that IGD is a new approach in the local field, it was very difficult, nigh impossible, to find a professional facilitator knowledgeable on IGD, and one who was experiencing homelessness or had experienced homelessness.

In light of this limitation, I made efforts to be aware not only of my social identities but also of those of the various participants and how the diverse social identities might influence each other (Zuniga et al., 2007). Besides, I was determined to respect inclusiveness by, but not only, encouraging active listening and the active participation of all the participants.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methods used in this study, including an explanation of the data triangulation that was conducted, the data analysis, the ethical principles that had to be followed, and its limitations.

The following chapter presents the key themes that emerged in analysis, together with the interpretation and discussion of the results.

Chapter: 5

Findings and Analysis

Chapter 5 : Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present a description of the findings and the analysis of the data that emerged from the pre-post focus groups, the participants' reflections expressed during the IGD sessions, and the researcher's diary.

5.2 Themes and participants

The results are divided in three major themes and nine subthemes. These are further divided into categories according to the aims and research questions of the study.

- Theme 1 – the IGD outcomes for participants: findings relating to the effects of IGD on the participants such as knowledge, awareness and skills gained.
- Theme 2 – the IGD process for participants: findings dealing with the process of IGD as experienced by the participants, such as the need for more dialogue.
- Theme 3 – the IGD experience from the facilitator's perspective: delving into my experience as a facilitator, my reflections and my thoughts throughout the IGD sessions and focus groups.

The table below shows the themes, subthemes and categories.

Table 5.1 Themes, Subthemes and Categories

Themes	Subthemes	Categories
5.2.1 <u>Theme 1:</u> IGD Outcomes for participants	5.2.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Knowledge and awareness	5.2.1.1.1 The Definition
		5.2.1.1.2 The cause of homelessness
		5.2.1.1.3 Homelessness and the general public
	5.2.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills	5.2.1.2.1 Recognition of identities, privilege and oppression
		5.2.1.2.2 Active listening
		5.2.1.2.3 Empathy and understanding across differences
		5.2.1.2.4 Building relationships
	5.2.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: (Dis)Empowerment	5.2.1.3.1 Taking action
		5.2.1.3.2 The system is bigger than me!
5.2.2 <u>Theme 2:</u> The IGD process from the participants' lens	5.2.2.1 Subtheme 2.1 Sharing of experiences	
	5.2.2.2 Subtheme 2.2 Outside of the usual social bubble	
	5.2.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Structured and facilitated dialogue	5.2.2.3.1 Group norms
		5.2.2.3.2 The need for facilitation and mediation.
	5.2.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: The need for more IGD	
5.2.3 <u>Theme 3:</u> The experience and process of IGD from the facilitator's lens	5.2.3.1 Subtheme 3.1 Taking on multiple roles	5.2.3.1.1 A facilitator
		5.2.3.1.2 A researcher
		5.2.3.1.3 A learner
		5.2.3.1.4 A friend and confidant
	5.2.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Feeling the sense of vulnerability	

The results are corroborated by direct quotes taken from the input of the participants which have been translated into English for the purpose of this study. In view of the word limitation, the quotes in the original language (Maltese) are placed in Appendix F. Every quote is marked with a pseudonym followed by two acronyms – *Pseudonym [Acronym1-Acronym2]*. Acronym 1 shows the participant’s social identity group and Acronym 2 represents the data collection method used to record that particular quote. For example, in *Sara[PEH-postF]*, *Sara* is the pseudonym. This is followed by the acronym *PEH*, referring to the social identity ‘previously experienced homelessness’. The second acronym *postF* indicates that the quote was recorded during the post-focus group. Table 5.2 shows the two lists of acronyms.

Table 5.2 Two Acronym Lists

Social identity	Acronym 1	Data collection method	Acronym 2
Never experienced homelessness	<i>NEH</i>	Session reflection	<i>SR</i>
Previously experienced homelessness	<i>PEH</i>	Pre-focus group	<i>preF</i>
Experiencing homelessness	<i>EH</i>	Post-focus group	<i>postF</i>

Personal quotes from the researcher’s diary are included in the findings and analysis, written in the first person.

5.2.1 Theme 1: IGD outcomes for participants

Participants experienced several outcomes, mostly positive, while some were less positive. Certain outcomes were acknowledged by one particular group or other, while other outcomes were acknowledged by all the participants.

5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Knowledge and awareness

All the participants gave positive feedback on IGD in terms of gaining knowledge and awareness or aspects of them. The participants who experienced homelessness were the least to report that they had gained knowledge about and awareness of the other group. However, they still indicated that they had learned something from every person.

"...but yes you learn from others too." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...you learn something from every person... no one in particular... you learn something small from every person." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

5.2.1.1.1 The Definition

During the pre-focus groups, it was evident that the group who had never experienced homelessness felt ambivalent about who were the homeless. At first, Clayton and Rosie linked homelessness with those who *"don't have a roof over her head"* and *"a person without home"* respectively. The other two had a different view, more related to survival mode; as Kris stated, a *"hand-to-mouth"* mode of living.

However, throughout the sessions, discussions revolved around a wider perspective as to what can be considered as being homeless.

"Being homeless doesn't mean not having a house... you can have a house and you don't have what to eat and have nothing to wear." (Fiona[PEH-SR2])

"In fact, I don't feel poor because I'm in a shelter or because I'm homeless, but I feel poor family wise." (Lina[EH-SR2])

Consequently, a number of participants opened their perspective as to what 'homelessness' might mean to a wider and more real and inclusive definition.

"You might have a roof over your head but still be homeless...now I have a wider perspective of homeless." (Clayton[NEH-SR3])

Rosie further stated:

"Then again as they explained ... homeless doesn't simply mean rooflessness, but the solitude... no family... basically having nothing..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.1.2 The Cause of homelessness

The roots of homelessness were a common topic of discussion, both prior to and during the IGD sessions. Those who were experiencing or had experienced homelessness talked about their experience, while those in the other group expressed their preconceived thoughts on the matter. Clayton and Martina admitted that during the sessions they became aware of their own biases on homelessness and changed their attitudes and views.

"...before, the first thought that comes to mind when you hear 'homeless' are people using drugs... it can be many things that forces a person to end up homeless..." (Clayton[NEH-SR3])

"What I've learnt from these sessions is... because for me 'homeless' is someone who doesn't have a roof over his head and drug addiction... I admit that I always thought that... I learned that it's not the truth." (Martina[NEH-postF])

Rosie brought up the need to learn about the causes of homelessness, what happened before a person ended up experiencing homelessness, in order to tackle such issues. It

was noted that there was a general consensus on this matter among the other participants in the same social identity group.

"I think one of my main expectations [of IGD] is to learn about where the journey starts exactly, in the sense that it's not a question of curiosity... a question that I [...] I would like to identify where the problem is in the first place, especially when we work in social services, sometimes cases come to us when it's too late. [Clayton and Kris nodding]." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

5.2.1.1.3 Homelessness and the general public

The participants shared similar thoughts on the general public's perception of homelessness: that of lack of awareness or denial of the local situation. A main reason, they argued, was that people tend to associate homelessness with issues that existed abroad, where one could see people begging and living rough in the streets, while homelessness in Malta is mostly invisible.

"if you say that there are people who don't have a roof over their heads, they say 'it's untrue... I've never seen them'... first we want to make sure that people know that there are people who don't have a roof over their heads." (Martina[NEH-preF])

"Certain people tell you, 'no...homeless'? They will tell you, 'the homeless still exist?' Little do they know how many people are out on the street, who have nowhere to stay and nothing to eat..." (Fiona[PEH-preF])

Clayton and Kris further described their own lack of knowledge on and awareness of the matter when they were asked the following questions:

Researcher: Why did you decide to take part?
"Basically, it's something that I have no idea that it exists in Malta, homelessness..." (Clayton[NEH-preF])

Researcher: What are your expectations?

"When you travel abroad, you actually see them on the streets; here in Malta it is not that common. So it's like you're not aware of the situation, so you say it doesn't exist in Malta." (Clayton[NEH-preF])

"...personally, what I'll gain is more knowledge on the subject, especially in the local context, because these things tend to be invisible." (Kris[NEH-preF])

By participating in the IGD sessions participants from both social identity groups enhanced their awareness and challenged their own attitudes on the matter. People who had never experienced homelessness *"faced a bit from reality"*, as stated by Sara[NPEH-postF].

"I didn't expect to learn of people going through such huge problems..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

On their part, people who experienced homelessness argued that the general public tended to put the blame on them.

"You know what they'll tell you? Just like they told me... you should have been prepared... sorry." (Sara[PEH-preF])

Nevertheless, as a result of the IGD sessions they felt validated and reviewed their perception of the general public.

"There were people who were different and I felt a bit uncomfortable because I started asking myself 'who are these people?' ... but then I spoke openly, I went all out... because they showed interest. Do you understand?" (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...you can see that they care about you, not because they may have met you once or twice but they... how shall I put it... showed interest in what I was going through and they cared about the things I went through, so you enjoy it and feel more comfortable with them and you wish to keep meeting them... because you know that they're true friends and that they respect you... they won't point fingers at you, saying it's your fault or because of this or that... do you understand?" (Fiona[PEH-postF])

5.2.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal skills

Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills are related closely so I grouped them into one subtheme. The latter were specifically mentioned by one of the participants in the sessions.

"I think that these types of IGD are changing, as Kris has mentioned, our interpersonal skills for the better..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.2.1 Recognition of Identities, Privilege and Oppression

Throughout the sessions, participants engaged in a number of activities related to social class and on how power, privilege and oppression could be manifested in various ways. Consequently, the participants engaged in discussions on moments and situations when they felt oppressed or when they were themselves the oppressors. Some of these instances were specifically related to the topic of social class.

Subsequently, the topics of identities, privilege and gratitude were raised in the discussion especially by people who had never experienced homelessness.

"...I said 'goodness'! I take everything for granted... I know that I have a job, I know that I have a house, I know that I have a roof over my head, I know that I have food... while this person is worrying about... what will she eat? where will she sleep? what will she find? do you understand? I feel safe... unlike this person, do you understand?" (Martina[NEH-postF])

"... how I started the sentence was, how many things do I have in common with another person who was in the room but whose circumstances were different?... that also made me realize that I had certain privileges that others didn't have and thus they ended up in that situation..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

Through such topics participants also delved into systemic oppression and inequalities.

"...there are people who need help but this is not being given [...] The system isn't working..." (Kris[NEH-SR3])

In the course of the dialogue and activities that took place in the IGD sessions participants gradually became more aware of social injustices. One particular activity was about whether institutions and society at large at times increased oppression and poverty. As a group, participants were asked to brainstorm and identify a number of factors that might further hinder people from escaping poverty, specifically focusing on three institutions: Health, Education and Social Accommodation.

"...[referring to the activity] we started talking about the system... and what else it can offer... that was really interesting... when we had discussed about the health system, it was really interesting." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

5.2.1.2.2 Active listening

The participants considered listening – some specifically mentioned active listening – and active observation as essential skills for individuals participating in IGD. In the first

session, active listening was discussed and I also guided individuals on how to practise active listening using the 'LARA' technique. In the reflection at the end of the session, Rosie made some self-reflection on active listening in IGD and in real life.

"...you know what I want? active listening... to think of LARA, when I have an argument, because when I have an argument, I turn off everything... I turn off and think only from my own perception. So that's something I'd like to work on..." (Rosie[NEH-SR1])

5.2.1.2.3 Empathy and understanding across differences

The majority mentioned "empathy", "understanding", "open-mindedness" as essential skills required by individuals taking part in IGD. Prior to the sessions, the majority considered empathy to be important but at the same time they stated that it was impossible to understand fully the other, as others would not have passed through the same experiences. However, following the sessions, there were mixed views about understanding the other. Some participants still felt they could not fully understand the situation of others, while others stated that they could relate, empathize and understand others more.

"...and they shared part of their problems... which was similar to what I had been through myself. And it's the moment they understand... one can understand you... because they would have suffered part of the experience as well." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"... I enjoyed getting to know different perspectives, because you can empathize as much as you want but you can never think exactly like him." (Kris[NEH-SR4])

"The dynamic of a 'no judgement' atmosphere...[Martina nodding] that you are talking but the one next to you will not judge you... one is listening, one may not agree, but... I personally felt very comfortable. [Martina nodding]. The fact that you hear different circumstances but we relate and understand each other." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

The above quote links the skill of suspending judgement with empathy. Participants who had never experienced homelessness spoke about harnessing this skill by participating in IGD.

"I might have learned to assume less than before... that is, in these sessions I assumed less. I used to come to a conclusion without wanting to... even on myself... unfortunately... even on others' experiences... I come to a conclusion before I know what actually happened and what didn't happen. So it's like when you listen, listen, listen... I think that now I've learned to assume less... I think that's something that yes... it will definitely help me at the end [Kris nodding]." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

She again referred to this later on during the focus group, linking such skills to the world of work.

"...even in my work certain circumstances are difficult, but if I meet a person who has gone through the same situation, I try not to come to a conclusion right away but to hear more about the person." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"I very much agree with what Rosie said... the fact that without wanting to... one makes judgements... without knowing the whole story. How important it is to know things before judging! It comes automatically that you judge, but... let's say if you think of something... you keep it as an internal thought, and tell yourself 'no... it could be a million things... don't assume, basically'." [Rosie nodding] (Clayton[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.2.4 Building relationships

Prior to the sessions, the topic of building relationships was not mentioned by any participant. However, during and after the sessions, the topics of the progress of group dynamics and building the right relationships were a common thread in discussions that took place among the participants. They used certain words to describe the relationship such as “clicked”, “very comfortable” and “friends”.

Some participants stressed that confidence and openness, especially between people coming from a different background, was a gradual evolution.

“...I was comfortable, I was... normal. At first, I was a bit shy, but then you loosen up... because you don't know what you'll find, what will happen and what to talk about, what kind of people they are... and [then I found] we were all the same...” (Fiona[PEH-postF])

“I think [compared to] the first session in the last session there was more openness... there was more room where sharing was done without thought and hesitation...” [the others nodding and Rosie agreed] (Kris[NEH-postF])

Another aspect related to human connections was the realisation of shared commonalities between the members of the two groups, commonalities that were not anticipated prior to the sessions. On the contrary, judging from the answers given by the group who had never experienced homelessness, this group considered ‘homeless’ as the sole identity of the other, rather than considering the person as a whole. In the pre-focus group, they were asked the following question:

Researcher: Do you think you are more similar or different than a (another) person who is experiencing homelessness? [preF]

The majority did not find much in common. The phrases used were *"totally different"*, *"certainly the opposite"* and *"I feel far from comparing myself... to find certain compatibility with the person"*.

Similarly, the group who were experiencing or had experienced homelessness focused on the fact that the one could not understand or relate to them if one had not passed from similar experiences.

However, when the same question was put after the sessions, the general consensus among the participants was that of shared similarities with those who had previously been considered to be different. The phrases used were *"same type"*, *"very similar"*, *"I do not see large difference between us"*.

Furthermore, people who had previously experienced homelessness stressed the benefits of developing a good rapport with others and the building of friendships.

"... but I received like love... I made friends and company... I learned, we managed to write that letter... maybe one day we'll get somewhere. One way or another we'll get there...I will not give up...either one thing or another we'll do it for sure. If it's not for us, then for others who are suffering more than me. So I'm looking forward to keep meeting so that what we worked for isn't lost." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"Looking forward to... I enjoyed the group... it was a pleasure meeting you [...] I enjoyed it... looking forward to... God willing till next Saturday

won't take long, and we'll continue to work hand in hand...it's a nice gesture." (Sara[PEH-SR1])

On their part, people who had never experienced homelessness tried to explore the reasons behind such positive group dynamics, using positive terms such as “*something clicked*” and “*everyone seemed genuine*”.

"Everyone seemed honest about what they said... and everyone seemed to have shared their vulnerability; shared their experiences that might have been painful in the past, so it shows that that person is [now] ok... they opened up more with me, so they let me open up more with them... there was good communication." (Martina[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: (Dis)Empowerment

5.2.1.3.1 Taking Action

During the last IGD session, the participants engaged in collaborative action through teamwork. The participants took turns to discuss the issues that they wanted to tackle and different ideas were shared. However, as a group they all agreed to prioritize and address the issues related to the social housing situation in Malta. In fact, this was a topic that kept re-emerging throughout the sessions. The participants engaged in problem-solving, sharing of ideas, highlighting each other's potential and how it can be utilized, and planning group action. The action was based on sending an electronic mail to the current Minister of Social Accommodation and copied to the former president and founder of the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society¹ to set up an in-person

¹ The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society's ethos revolves around human rights and dignity, stressing inclusivity and a just society for all. <https://mfws.org.mt/>

meeting. In this meeting they would not only raise their concerns but also the real-life challenges that some of the participants had experienced or were still experiencing at the time of the study. Together they also compiled a list of recommendations to be raised in the meeting that they hoped might improve the current social housing situation (see Appendix G).

Varied responses and feelings were expressed by the participants concerning collaborative action. Some participants felt more empowered to act as part of a group rather than as an individual, especially when they had to address political and governmental institutions.

*"Now I feel stronger because I'm not alone, and there are people who know how to put words better than me. If, for example, I wanted to write something, there is someone who can help me. If I am a bit too lazy to write and explain myself, I mean, at least if I can, I'll do something else [...] it seems that everyone has their own potential to contribute."
(Fiona[PEH-postF])*

"But we want a group like you, one that shows interest in holding these sessions so that they come to know, because otherwise they do not come to know [the politicians]. If I write a letter and send it to him, he'll ask, who's this? Two are always better than one." (Sara[PEH-postF])

Participants from both social identity groups felt that with this action they would not only address the system but felt empowered to help others.

"...I think we can help many, many more people who are in need, just like me. I'd like to say... there's my name... there's my share... you see people enjoying themselves..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"If we are here as a group and we have written what we have written, the right action will be taken for us in the future and for those people close to us as well, because if you cannot afford rent, it's the reality and almost everyone has someone from their family who's going through the same situation... if not family, friends." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

Others pointed out the importance of bringing on board institutional support, especially to have a larger say in their community action.

"I'd like to bring YMCA on board with us, so that if we need to plan a meeting, there will be someone who is knowledgeable." (Martina[NEH-SR4])

On a related note, but more on an individualistic level, two different actions were mentioned. One is that participants felt more encouraged to follow the sessions in which they could share their experience, as they felt that it could impact them and society at large positively.

"...I would want to come and talk, but there is pain. There is suffering... I don't want to open the wounds again. Although, compared to how I was... I used to break down in tears immediately, today I can say I'm very strong and I can talk and not pity myself, because I'm not a poor thing... I've never been nor will I be... but for certain things, so they won't experience what I have experienced... and that these things, yes, they existed." (Sara[PEH-SR3])

Others indicated that following the sessions, they felt they were better equipped to increase awareness in the general community.

"What I can do indirectly... is awareness. For example, with my friends... listen regarding homelessness, they're not drug addicts... because that's

the mentality... drugs... instead, homeless, not because they don't have a roof over their head. I, as Martina, now I can inform others and increase awareness of these things..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"There's always room for knowledge, both for you personally and as Martina stated [...] to share, change this perspective that homelessness means one thing but it can mean other things..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.3.2 The System is Bigger than Me!

Most of the participants that had never experienced homelessness expressed the sense of helplessness, especially on an individual level. This was a repeated lament, participants felt clueless as to what they could do, and even from where to start, especially prior to the IGD sessions.

"Because I don't really have much control over these things. So what can I do?" (Martina[NEH-preF])

"...here in Malta I would find it difficult, but how can I help him? How can I improve his life there and then?" (Clayton[NEH-preF])

"But how do I feel after I stop talking to a person [experiencing homelessness]... I feel very much helpless. The reason is because it is irrelevant providing information on how to access the service... everyone knows the lack of human resources we have in Malta, and how far one needs to go to access them, God knows what can happen to that person..." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

Kris strongly expressed his frustrations with regards the governmental and political policies on homelessness. He felt hopeless on the matter both before and during the IGD session.

"Personally, the problem is I don't know from where to start, because as much as I don't have knowledge on this subject, I don't know where to start. On an individual level... I don't know... I can provide material support if there is a family involved, there's a need for a small fridge and I have an extra one... but it doesn't solve the problem, as we previously mentioned, money is something there and then. Systematically and... I don't really see that politics can improve things in this matter because it's barely approached as a subject. It's not very popular as a subject for a politician. For the politician, popularity comes first [others agree]."
(Kris[NEH-preF])

In general, this group still expressed the sense of helplessness on an individual level, even after the IGD sessions. However, various participants discussed and brainstormed plausible solutions ranging from awareness raising to the need to envision a long-term solution rather than a short one, and what needs to be addressed at a political level.

"And yes, what can I do?...I'm still helpless... what more can I do? How can I help these people?" (Martina[NEH-postF])

"... helpless because it's something much bigger than us... and how can I alone solve it? [...] As a person who experienced homelessness said, the more they help themselves not to give up and to work to get out... I think that... that's the best... and maybe listening to them, I think that also helps... the fact that you listen." (Clayton[NEH-postF])

"On an individual level... helpless because what can I do, such a radical change? I can donate to the foodbank and how many families will I help? But [it's in the] short-term, do you understand? ...I don't really like short-term solutions. I mean... if there are any factors that can be identified, locally, as to what leads to homelessness... perhaps a solution that identifies and anticipates homelessness can be found..." (Kris[NEH-postF])

5.2.2 Theme 2: The IGD process from the participants' lens

The participants indicated that they had never heard about or participated in IGD. At the end of the IGD sessions and also in the post-focus groups a number of reflections on the process emerged.

5.2.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: The sharing of experiences

Participants' experiences – particularly as a mode of learning in the wider sense of the term and personal growth – was a major topic that kept re-surfacing directly and indirectly throughout the focus groups.

"...I shared my experiences with you and from them I hope that others who were in the group will learn... I felt that I can give more... I gave others from my experiences..." (Sara[PEH-postF])

Sara expressed the same notion later in the post focus group.

"...the group that was present in the sessions I attended... I felt that I touched their hearts with my stories..."(Sara[PEH-postF])

Participants who had never experienced homelessness highlighted experience as a means of teaching and learning.

"They [referring to the other group] can also teach us about the situations and certain services that are available [Clayton and Martina nodding]. Because it's not enough to search online because knowledge doesn't come from online sources but from the people." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

Rosie further stressed the difference between, on one hand, what academic knowledge tells you about life and, on the other, the sharing of experiences.

"...I've got knowledge... from knowledge of the university, not due to work. But as I mentioned before, if you don't have contact, this is not a case of on a daily basis, but if you don't have contact with who is really going through the experience, the knowledge, it doesn't make a difference... like it's already there, but to practise it you don't have chance..." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

On a different note, participants who had experienced homelessness stressed that sharing experiences is a double-edged sword; thus, emphasizing both the benefits and the pain of sharing distressful times in life.

"Automatically at that time I felt anger and my pain surfacing... but later I felt relieved that I had removed a certain... heaviness that I had inside me. So sometimes it's nice to talk to people... with people who listen and understand you and especially so they don't make the same mistakes or try to avoid what I went through." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"When you share what you've been through... you feel that pressure inside you..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

At the end of the post focus group, Fiona stated that she would recommend IGD as it eased the pain by sharing experiences.

"I recommend them because I learned and it relieved me of the pain and to make new friends... it's enough... because when you talk, you're easing the pain..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

5.2.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Outside the usual social bubble

For the majority of the participants who had never experienced homelessness, the sessions were the first time they had engaged, on a sustained level, with people who had experienced or were experiencing homelessness. According to the participants, the

IGD offered a sustained space where people who are unlikely to meet and get to know in real life had the opportunity to meet and share experiences. Thus, IGD not only aided in surpassing the barrier but in making people listen to each other and instil understanding.

"To move outside the bubble... to move out from the people you usually frequent... those living in the same area as you. So it's like everyone is in the same pool, colleagues, friends... usually these have similar social backgrounds or else due to social pressures they don't show the circumstances. There [in the sessions] it was open... so in the open you'll be understood and, as we said, you can better understand their situation and you'll be more... Clayton, you used the term empathy before... I think it's a very important word." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"As Kris mentioned before... without wanting to, you meet similar people... or who have gone through an experience similar to yours. So unknowingly, you don't get to listen to people who have gone through different experiences. [Martina nodding] Or you may not even be aware that there are people who have experienced these things and this dialogue helped us meet these people and understand their experience." (Clayton[NEH-postF])

During one of the IGD sessions, Rosie argued for the need of governmental institutions to move out from their social bubble in order to meet directly with people in the community and become aware of the realities.

"...I think that the housing system as it stands, for example, there are these ongoing activities that we're doing... it doesn't cross [the minister's] mind... leave out this situation... but housing itself reaches people... but always the people must reach out for him." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

5.2.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Structured and facilitated dialogue

5.2.2.3.1 Group Norms

The majority of participants who had never experienced homelessness reported that there should be structured and facilitated dialogue in order to sustain orderly interaction.

"We've always adhered to the rules... and you always reminded us in every session, that we're here, that whatever is said here will stay here, that we pay attention to what we say so as not to hurt anyone... we listen to one another. I think as a group, we were all mature people... able to listen, understand and I think we gave each other a chance to talk as well." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"That I try not to judge but... but even as we discussed how important it is not to judge when you don't know the story... [if] a person is or has something or some experience you [shouldn't] take it for granted because they are drugged or whatever. (Clayton[NEH-SR2])

5.2.2.3.2 The Need for Facilitation and Mediation

Some participants stated that mediation is lacking in Malta, especially when involving people from different social identities and also conflict.

"I think that there must be some kind of mediation when these groups meet... it might be that certain things are not well understood. (Kris[NEH-postF])

Researcher: Do you mean mediation as a facilitator or something different? Facilitation is part of it but mediation... that you identify a way... misunderstanding that is creating conflict... you need interpersonal skills, to follow what the individuals are saying and get the gist out of it. I think it's important to have these IGDs, I think... in any situation if you have different groups with different ideas, if you bring them together, they'll come out with new ideas." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"...the mediation culture in Malta is very backward. Before we mentioned conflicts [...] if you have certain... differences that, can lead to a conflict, you need to have... that yes... the mediation will be present for you to

resolve that conflict that would have arisen. I mean, I think that yes... the sense of mediation is very important and... I don't think that everyone... unfortunately, has the necessary skills to tolerate certain themes that we discussed." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.2.4 Subtheme 2.4: The need for more IGD

The need for more time to dialogue and for more IGD sessions was a prominent theme that emerged in the post-focus group, comprising people who had never experienced homelessness.

"There's much more to be said. I feel, I... these sessions were very good but it's a very vast subject that needs attention. I feel I've barely grazed the surface." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"Actually, there were sessions where we wanted to talk more... kind of, everyone was so interested and wanted to say things, there were certain discussions that had more to be discussed... needed more time... but this subject is never ending..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

Rosie, before and after the sessions, recommended holding IGD sessions in varied work environments of the social services that directly worked with homelessness and in other work settings.

"...when it comes to some kind of conference or seminar... there are always professional people, those who are representing the minority... that bothers me a lot... because... there is the need of such IGDs... I'm sure I'll gain 100% from it, because you're literally meeting people that you're really providing a service for. This will affect my work for sure in the way I look at the situations and at the subject (Clayton and Martina nodding)." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"These types of IGD... I imagine them a lot taking place at work places. I wouldn't say that we will change mindsets... but maybe broaden them [...] I think if it were to reach those people who work with them directly or indirectly, especially if you work in social services, I think the change will be for the better...surely!" (Rosie[NEH-postF])

*Clayton: What are you referring to when you are mentioning work places?
"For example, you came to these types of sessions... and as you said, you gained something, personally, we remove this mentality... sort of... you may have a colleague who is going through a similar experience at work. Sometimes we take it for granted that only those who work [in such jobs] need to show interest in these types of topics, but if I have a colleague, what kind of skills shall I use and how shall I understand?" (Rosie[NEH-postF])*

5.2.3 Theme 3: The Experience and Process of IGD from the Facilitator's lens

Situated in a PAR method, the IGD sessions were a journey for myself as facilitator too.

By keeping a researcher diary, and conducting self-reflections and evaluations brought about further insight on the experience and process of IGD.

5.2.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Taking on multiple roles

Prior to commencing the IGD sessions, I was aware of my roles, namely, those of researcher and facilitator. However, two other roles emerged during the research, that of a learner, and that of a friend and confidant. All these roles created a multifaceted perspective of the IGD journey.

5.2.3.1.1 A Facilitator

My role as a facilitator was crucial throughout the IGD sessions. I found myself reflecting multiple times on the challenges faced in the sessions.

Session 1: Being a teacher for years made it harder for me to let go of the need to have something continuously going on. I felt uncomfortable when I had to embrace silence. I am now more conscious of this factor and will put more efforts to work on it.

Session 3: Today, I feel that the group were ok with having minutes of silence. It made me realise that it was more a matter of myself being afraid of the group's reaction to silence than actually the process of allowing silence. Silence offers time for reflection and to embrace what has been shared and embrace feelings and emotions of oneself, including me as a facilitator.

Furthermore, even though before and during the IGD sessions I engaged in self-reflection on my identities, biases and views, my academic background influenced my mode of facilitation.

*Session 1: From the start, I knew I had to pay attention to my background, my biases, my views, especially considering I did not have a co-facilitator. Today, I was surprised by my academic background being a form of identity. I personally do not tend to think about it much; I do not feel I am a very academic type. However, it hit me when one of the participants remarked that we were using words such as "djalogu" ("dialogue") and "active-listening". At that moment, I realised that such terminology might be fruitful for some of the participants to understand better, but for others it might be confusing. I feel that some participants are also interested in learning about the pedagogy of IGD and thus they are interested in the terminology used during the sessions. Whereas for others, I think it is more about **what we are doing** rather **what we call it**.*

Also, during the first session I was made aware of which activities might work and which might not, and what to prepare for the upcoming sessions.

Session 1: Also, I realised that while I tried to vary the activities to cater for different learning styles, which is something I learned as an educator, it seemed confusing for some participants, especially those who are not familiar with formal and informal educational activities. At the same time, I felt that these activities were beneficial to participants who are accustomed to such informal education. Thus, I feel I am in a dilemma: I need to find a balance that suits everyone!

In connection with this, the sharing of experience is a pedagogical tool in itself.

Session 2: I realized that hearing personal experiences was a major process that was understood, and an activity that was approved by everyone.

5.2.3.1.2 A Researcher

Although I did not want my role of researcher to impact the IGD sessions in a negative way, I would be lying if I said that certain emotions during the sessions were not in some way related to IGD being part of a research study.

High levels of anxiety due to the lack of control over the sessions, especially not knowing for certain who will attend, was a common thread throughout the sessions.

Session 2: Once again I started feeling anxious and worried about who will turn up! Especially considering that I know that commitment seems to be an issue for varied reasons to different individuals: some because of changes to their work schedules, some because of personal reasons, and others because they have other priorities.

On a different note, being an ESD researcher, I have social justice at heart, and seeing the participants working on a social justice action felt like a successful IGD.

*Session 4: Today, I feel ecstatic, knowing that these IGD sessions will not stop here, that actually the participants all pitched in and they actually want to do something about the situation. I took a step back and allowed them to work as a group, because I feel that this is their social action. However, at the same time, I feel that I am also part of the group. Thus, I offered my help and my feedback once the idea was very much formulated. I feel proud as a researcher and as a facilitator but most of all as an active citizen at heart, to see that they **all** were utilizing their diverse potential to work on a phenomenal action. It feels like a new small community that will continue to work for change.*

In a way I feel that the sessions were a success. Would they have been such if no action had been taken?...

5.2.3.1.3 A Learner

The role of learner cannot be overlooked; this experience was a learning curve for me as a researcher, facilitator, and individual. I started to gain knowledge and understanding and to relate to others and increase awareness even before the actual IGD sessions, because learning occurred even during the focus groups.

Post-focus group:

Today what struck me is the changes that a person goes through when s/he experiences homelessness. Not simply the lack of material things but the identity itself... the toll it takes on you as a person! Even simple things like the way you do everyday grocery shopping changes when one is in a shelter and once again when one moves into private accommodation. If I can say 'I can relate in a way', it was because it was an overwhelming change for me when I moved out of my parents' house, and this is something I decided to do myself. It was a successful goal for me personally, but still it was overwhelming and I still feel lost, let alone someone who has no choice.

Session 2:

"people see you happy and they assume all is ok! No one knows who is homeless if the person doesn't share it" (Lina[EH-IGD2]).

This quote stuck with me... so true and so deep! We easily assume... judge... do we want a person to look miserable first for us to offer help? Do we expect people to be continually sad and miserable when living in a shelter? So for months we expect people not to laugh and enjoy life in the way they can? How easy it is to have met or to meet in future individuals who, unknown to myself, are experiencing homelessness...

Session 3:

IGD starts with giving prominence to labels... this group and that group... but throughout the sessions, I became aware of the intersectionality of identities; that first of all labels might instigate more oppression on the one hand or more privilege on the other. However, we really tend to compare this with that... but after all I became aware that I shared more than one similarity with all the participants, irrelevant of the label. We are all human beings longing for belongingness and not to feel that we are outsiders. I have experienced this, multiple times in my life. Various identities might increase my sense of belonging in one circumstance but cast me out as an outsider in another. How sad that feels. The sense of belonging is very much taken for granted in our communities. We focus more on labels... on differences.

5.2.3.1.4 A Friend and a confidant

The development of group relationships was a common theme among all participants and myself as a facilitator, which might also be in itself a motivational factor for solidarity and further collaborative social action.

Session 4: Today, I was struck by one of the participants who referred to the rest of the group as friends. The bond we were developing as a group had not occurred to me before. Although personally I believe that it takes more time to build friendship, I definitely feel that as a group we've built a special bond which I cannot describe in words. I feel that we all confided in each other some of our personal... not secrets... but thoughts that maybe we don't usually share with friends, let alone people whom we have known for a few weeks [...] This relationship, I think, will keep us in a way bonded together, and I do hope we continue meeting as a group...

5.2.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Feeling the sense of vulnerability

The sense of sharing comes at a price, both positive and negative, for me personally and as a facilitator. To a certain degree, it helps in achieving group power balance, and also leads to a sense of deep empathy and emotional connectivity.

Session 3:

Today, I felt more part of the group and less as a facilitator; we all shared our vulnerabilities. Of course, I made sure to keep a balance and not make the session about me, but I do feel that sharing experiences of vulnerability not only helps the participants to understand an activity or to make them feel ready to open up, but also to be part of the group... as an equal.

Today I was distraught when Sara got emotional. This happened when Sara confided that it is not easy to share the story, but at the same time, she still believed in the benefits of sharing. I somehow felt the pain and right there and then, I asked myself: what can I do to lessen the pain? Part of me felt helpless... I felt her pain but part of me felt her strength and power in being brave enough as to share such painful experiences. However, her discomfort became my discomfort... I felt responsible in a way... Now I truly hope that these sessions will be ultimately worthwhile for all...

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of this study, grouped in three themes and nine sub-themes. Some of these were divided into further categories. The next chapter will present a discussion of the results in light of the literature review and the research questions.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Chapter 6 : Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion on the results presented in Chapter 5 in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Data collected in the pre-post focus groups, IGD reflections based on the input of the two social identity groups that feature in this study, and the researcher's diary are merged and triangulated in order to extract significant conclusions.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first presents a general discussion of the main findings on IGD supported by the literature in relation to the first research question. The second takes into account all the results and the light they throw on IGD and ESD.

6.2 Can sustained IGD between individuals experiencing or had experienced homelessness and others who never experienced homelessness, contribute to their awareness, empowerment and overall personal transformative change? If so, how?

6.2.1 Knowledge, Awareness and Attitudes

Participants experienced an increase in knowledge and awareness and challenged prejudices and stereotypes. This is mostly analogous to what other authors found in previous IGD studies such as DeTurk (2006), Halter et al. (2022) and Madden (2015).

The results indicate that all the participants who had never experienced homelessness gained knowledge and awareness on the topics. Participants in this group widened their perspective of the definition and causes of homelessness. Further to this, all the participants lamented the general public's lack of awareness on homelessness. The absence of a national definition of homelessness (Hudson, 2019) may be a reason for this. Such an absence is bound to create speculation and varied opinions. In addition, considering the invisible reality of homelessness in Malta (Broekroelofs, 2019; Caviedes, 2021), people are unaware of and in denial regarding this phenomenon (Vakili-Zad, 2006), or else feed on stereotypes, stigma and prejudices that society has ingrained over time. The fact that it has no national definition may give the sense that homelessness is not even a concern locally and continues to fuel this sentiment of denial.

An interesting outcome is the comparison of academic knowledge with that of real-life experiences. Rosie[NEH] stated that although she was quite knowledgeable on social matters due to her academic background, she felt that it was still not enough when compared to listening to actual experiences of people who had experienced homelessness. This highlights the validity of learning 'from' over learning 'about' the other (Todd, 2003). It appears that through the intergroup encounter, as Sara[PEH] stated, participants "faced a bit from reality" of the other.

Participants who never experienced homelessness gained more knowledge and became aware of common stereotypes regarding the subject of the study. Some acknowledged that as a result of the dialogue they challenged their own preconceived prejudices on homelessness. Participants reported on actual moments when they had previously

engaged in stereotypic behaviour. They stated that as a result of their IGD experience they did not want to engage in such negative behaviour again. Instead they planned to engage in social action by increasing awareness on the matter among friends, families and society at large. Participants in this group reported that as a result of the dialogue that they had gained more understanding of the local socio-political context and engaged in critical reflection on a personal level on systemic and institutional oppression and inequalities.

In the course of the dialogue, Rosie[NEH] and Martina[NEH] seemed to have developed a 'politicized' identity by apprehending intersectionality and how everything is interrelated to systems of power and privilege (Gurin-Sands et al., 2012). They not only appreciated difference but were critical about it by reflecting on privilege and social identities as situated within the local socio-political contexts. This indicates that through sustained IGD, participants engaged in meaning-making through cycles of dialogue, listening, reflection and action, leading to consciousness raising (Freire, 2005).

Results indicate that participants not only developed learning, but reflected on life experiences. This could lead them to act for a better outcome in the future, which would corroborate Madden's (2015) study on social class situated in community settings. This is very much in line with the aims of the critical dialogue model of IGD, which entails not simply dialoguing across difference but through a critical lens (Zuniga et al., 2007).

An emergent result in this study is that people who had previously experienced homelessness also acknowledged learning from others. This contrasts with what De Turk

(2010) posits, namely, that the marginalized group is the one that tends to educate and impart awareness to the other group. People who had experienced homelessness, prior to the IGD conducted in this study, stated that the general public showed no interest and no concern towards homelessness. They argued that instead, the public tended to blame them for their situation. However, during the sessions they felt heard and validated by the other group, thus following the sessions they engaged in self-reflection and challenged their own negative and preconceived attitude.

Considering these results, IGD may have great potential as an avenue for dispelling stereotypes and changing dominant narratives within both social identity groups by bringing reality closer to them.

6.2.2 Intrapersonal and Interpersonal skills

Results indicate the acquisition of enhanced intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, including active listening, building relationships, suspending judgement, and empathy. These outcomes are similar to those reported in the literature, including those mentioned in Griffin et al. (2012), Halter et al. (2022), and Sorensen et al. (2009).

All the participants identified 'listening' as one of the essential skills that helped one to benefit from IGD. Most participants regarded "empathy", "understanding" and "open-mindedness" as helpful. All these skills can in some way be interlinked, in the sense that to understand across difference and to empathize one needs to learn to practise active listening, especially through an open-minded approach. Active listening should not be overlooked as it is not a passive act, but a form of engagement with the group (Sorensen

et al., 2009). It entails being present and listening with open “hearts and minds to a world that we once blinded ourselves to with our own biases” (Nguyen, 2018, p. 9).

Although participants were already aware of the importance of such skills, participants who had never experienced homelessness reported how they were able to develop, enhance and exercise particular skills through IGD. Such skills included active listening skills, making fewer assumptions and suspending judgement. This result is very much in line with the literature, such as that of Frantell et al. (2018), Gray (2021), Griffin et al. (2012), and Halter et al. (2022).

Rozas (2007) stresses the importance of group norms as these create a feeling of safety and comfort. Actually, participants confirmed that highlighting group norms in every session helped to build smooth dialogue. Group norms may connect safe spaces with the much-needed communication skills; indeed, the former cannot be achieved without enhancing the latter.

6.2.2.1 Group dynamics and relationships

Both groups expressed an increase in engagement and positive rapport over time. This outcome contrasts with the findings of Miles and Kivlighan’s (2012) research, where it was reported that only the marginalized experienced an increase in engagement over time, while the dominant social identity group did not report express any changes over time. This outcome might depend very much on the group dynamics and the group context. In the case of this study, it seems that all participants shared personal

experiences that communicated vulnerability, and thus openness and trust were established gradually over time.

The benefits of engaging in sustained IGD and not in single encounters was evident also when participants showed a gradual increase in trust and comfort over time. The way such a group “clicked”, even across difference, was striking, as participants who had never experienced homelessness highlighted characteristics such as authenticity, openness and shared vulnerability. This is similar to the findings of Gray (2021). This outcome may show how in today’s society, where an individualistic and competitive way of life is the norm, individuals do not feel at ease to open up and are not accustomed to sharing their vulnerabilities, maybe due to fear of being judged. This brings up the importance of ensuring not only a safe space but also a brave space in IGD (Amplifier, n.d.).

This can be an indication of a potential paradigm shift through IGD. This entails participants moving from a space of sharing vulnerability in an unjust society to a space where everyone’s experiences and potential are merged into collaborative action. According to Orlovic Lovren and Pejatovic (2015, as cited in Orlovic Lovren & Popovic, 2018), such a paradigm shift takes place through adult participation in educational activities.

On a related note, all participants stated before the IGD sessions, that individuals from different social identity groups could not understand each other nor express any similarities. Actually, participants who had never experienced homelessness considered

'homeless' as the only identity of 'the other', rather than embracing the person as a whole. However, by the end of the sessions this changed significantly, as participants got to know other persons as a whole. Participants realized that they shared commonalities within and across social identities. This is in line with the findings of Garcia et al. (2019). Such commonalities could become a binding factor between the participants (Judkins, 2012).

Moreover, participants who had experienced homelessness emphasised the building of friendships, which is a common outcome in IGD studies (Gray, 2021; Hopkins & Domingue, 2015; Yeakley, 1998). The building of friendships takes time. Pettigrew (1998), in the Longitudinal Intergroup Contact Theory, posits that sustained contact can achieve positive outcomes including friendship across differences. According to this theory, in order to build friendships, one should highlight the commonalities among the group members (Pettigrew, 1998). This present study indicates that the sharing of experiences that revolve around commonalities and differences enables participants to build relationships but also understanding across differences, as also found by Yeakley (1998).

6.2.3 Compassion and Action taking

A common expectation of IGD was in fact the willingness on the part of the participants to learn how one can help people experiencing homelessness in the local context. This sequence, in which willingness precedes empathy, is similar to the findings of the study by Dessel et al. (2013) on LGBTQ identities, but different from other literature, where empathy typically precedes compassion (Galetz, 2019).

In this study compassion persisted throughout the sessions. By building connections and understanding across difference, combined with the honing of communication skills, the participants experienced an increase in empathy. This corroborated the outcomes of other IGD studies including those by Dessel (2010), DeTurk (2006), Gurin et al. (2004) and Halter et al. (2022).

Individuals who experience intergroup empathy usually display positive attitudes towards the other group and are also more likely to take some form of social justice action (Batson et al., 2002). In line with the study by Halter et al. (2022), participants who had never experienced homelessness, although coming from various academic backgrounds, all stated the desire to help. However, these participants had a minimal awareness of the reality and complexity revolving around the local situation of homelessness. A less positive outcome was that although most participants gained more knowledge and awareness of the local socio-political context of homelessness, this reality check increased their sense of helplessness especially on an individual level.

Nevertheless, Rosie[NEH] and Martina[NEH] developed a sense of empowerment on an individual level. After the sessions they felt they were better equipped to increase awareness in the general community. However, for some reason they still felt helpless on the bigger picture of homelessness. This may have been addressed by allotting time for debriefing through reflection and dialogue; and maybe also the need for more IGD sessions. In fact, all the participants who had never experienced homelessness expressed their willingness to attend more IGD sessions. This is surprising considering

that time commitment was a huge struggle among prospective participants during the recruitment phase. This may indicate that once participants gained experience of the benefits of IGD, they became more willing to commit time and energy to it.

On the other hand, IGD helped participants who had experienced homelessness to increase their sense of confidence. They felt that by sharing their experience with others they could educate them and also help the situation of homelessness at large. Gray (2021) in fact obtained similar results. Although, as argued by Alimo (2012), empowerment and confidence typically occur prior to action taking, in the case of this study action took place first. This raised the confidence of the participants and motivated them to continue to share their experiences. The participants recognised the power of their experience and identity and harnessed them for the benefit of themselves and the betterment of society at large, similar to the findings of Gray (2021).

Yet, the same participants reported feeling painful emotions such as sadness and anger when sharing past experiences. According to Gurin et al. (2013, as cited in Cannara, 2016), such 'negative emotions' are expected, especially when participants move outside their safe zone. However, over time, such negative emotions decrease while positive outcomes increase. In fact, although IGD prioritizes ensuring a safe space that allows for vulnerabilities, participants are encouraged to challenge themselves and move into a 'brave space'. Nevertheless, the results of this study indicate that revisiting and sharing past traumatic experiences can be cathartic, thus it can also have a positive effect on participants.

On a different note, in this study a group action that benefits homelessness in general was carried out. This very much contradicts the critics of IGD who allege that its key focus is on the relational growth rather than social action (Gorski, 2008, as cited in Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands & Osun, 2009), and, that it tackles social justice only through micro experiences (Buckley & Quaye, 2014).

Furthermore, the participants increased their sense of empowerment through collaboration. In their group action, they worked together to challenge the *status quo* by directly meeting the Minister of Social Accommodation. A sense of achievement was expressed by the participants who had experienced homelessness; a feeling that together with others, they could make a difference and achieve what they were after. This indicates that participants increased their sense of agency by establishing a group alliance.

6.2.4 Facilitator's lens

6.2.4.1 Outcomes – personal and professional growth

On a different note, the results offered a glimpse into the outcomes and processes of IGD from the standpoint of a facilitator's first-hand experience. Some of these concur with those mentioned in the minimal research available on IGD facilitation. These include the sense of reciprocity in learning, as the IGD sessions provided a learning curve for both participants and myself as facilitator (Gurin et al., 2013). In line with the research findings of Weaver and Pye (2010), I experienced personal and professional growth. The latter stress 'learning by doing', similar to learning by facilitating highlighted

by Rapoport (1999). I developed facilitation skills further through cycles of reflection on and evaluation of the sessions. This involved the group process and adapting activities to suit the group dynamic in line with Zuniga et al. (2007) and Evinger (2014).

Apart from this, I never considered myself as an expert but rather a learner in collaboration with the participants; according to Nagda & Maxwell (2007), such mind set is crucial for facilitators. Consequently, like the participants, I expanded my personal growth in terms of understanding across difference, gaining knowledge, awareness, empathy and compassion for others (Evinger, 2014). As recorded in the researcher's diary, my concern emerged when I felt the "*discomfort of the others*" and wanted to act upon such inequalities and oppression.

Similar to Vasques-Scalera's (1999) research on facilitators, I took on a 'politicized' identity when I engaged in self-critical reflection on intersectionality, recognizing identities within the bigger picture's socio-political narrative. Moreover, I experienced the building relationships within and across difference and participating in the group social action. As researcher and facilitator, I felt satisfied that engaging in group action meant that it was a successful IGD. Indeed, Batson et al. (2002) warn that a change in attitude but with no follow-up action is actually not a positive outcome.

However, reducing the stigma and the taboo around the topic of homelessness may indirectly result in a 'positive outcome' in terms of people experiencing homelessness becoming more open to ask for help and accept services. In my view, changing the

narrative and view on homelessness is still a positive and progressive step towards a better transformative society.

6.2.4.2 Pedagogy

Despite myself being aware of my identities and biases, it was striking that the language I used still exhibited in a way privilege as an academic, as it was understood by some participants but not by others. At the same time, it indicates that the participants were in a space that was safe and comfortable enough as to flag it.

Given my academic background as an educator, it also proved to be challenging at times to shift from the role of a teacher to that of facilitator, this is similar to the findings by Buckley & Quaye (2014). One example is recorded in the researcher's diary, namely, the sense of being "*uncomfortable with embracing silence*". Probably this is attributable to the years I have spent delivering lessons in a formal classroom. However, I learned to embrace silence as an important aspect of IGD. In line with the observations of Evinger (2014), silence offered an avenue for the participants but also for myself as facilitator to reflect on the sessions, the emotions, the stories we heard, the activities, and so on.

It was noted that this shift from traditional teaching was a struggle also for several of the participants, who belonged to two social identity groups and are not accustomed to such non-formal set-ups. This difficulty with IGD pedagogy is explored by French et al. (2021) and found to be especially experienced in formal educational institutions. Nevertheless, the results in this study show that it may also be the case in non-formal

and community settings. This was manifested by participants when they looked in my direction expecting my input and also actually stating that they were not familiar with the activities in which they were asked to participate. In the researcher's diary it was recorded that it was also a challenge for the facilitator to adapt to diverse learning styles. I also observed that as a facilitator, as proposed by Nagda and Maxwell (2007), modelling certain skills might have proven beneficial. For example, sharing my own personal vulnerable experiences made others feel comfortable enough as to share their own personal experiences, a strategy that is also featured in Evinger (2014).

6.2.5 IGD and Transformative Change

IGD as an educational process that conveys a transformative learning experience to diverse learners, is widely recognized in literature (Moss et al., 2017). The findings in this study further indicate this connection.

Firstly, results demonstrated that all participants experienced a change in awareness and attitudes especially towards 'the other'. One example is that of participants who never experienced homelessness admitted challenging stereotypes on the causes of homelessness. Hoggan (2016), argues that a change in worldviews is a result of transformative learning.

Secondly, through the process of critical reflection on their own identities and the identities of others as situated within the existing power structures, participants fostered critical consciousness, which is a key feature of the socio-emancipatory view of transformative learning (French et al., 2021; & Taylor, 2008). Furthermore, aligned with

this view of transformative learning, participants developed a sense of individual and collective agency through collaboration and group alliance, which ultimately resulted in group social justice action (French et al., 2021; & Taylor, 2008).

As indicated by the findings, IGD was a learning experience for both participants and facilitator; whereas participants who used to experienced homelessness also expressed teaching others through their sharing of experiences. This is also in line with transformative learning that strives for a learning environment where there is equality between facilitator and learners (Taylor, 2008).

In the next section IGD as a transformative process is discussed further vis-à-vis ESD transformative principles.

6.3 In what ways can IGD serve as a tool for ESD and contribute to its general aims?

There is no literature directly proposing IGD as a pedagogical tool for ESD. In this section, the findings on the pedagogy of IGD is compared with that of ESD and substantiated further by the literature. Based on the findings, the outcomes of IGD are also discussed vis-a-vis the transformative notion of ESD.

6.3.1 Pedagogy

UNESCO (2010), proposes that ESD pedagogy should involve “learning activities [that] include a mix of knowing, understanding, valuing and acting” (p. 22). In fact, ESD

transformative pedagogies include action-oriented learning, a learner-centred approach, collaborative and real-world learning, future thinking activities, encouraging critical reflection and engaging in systemic analysis such as community-based and problem-solving projects (UNESCO, 2018b).

This very much resonates with IGD principles, that is, the combination of the critical-dialogic approach through the four stages of IGD (Zuniga et al., 2007). The early stages attempt to engage learners in building a safe space for understanding by building relationships and equipping participants with skills such as communication and critical thinking (Zuniga, 2003). This was attested in the findings of this present study where participants mentioned specific activities that helped them to hone skills such as active listening through the LARA method (see Appendix E). This was mentioned by Rosie[NEH] after the first IGD session.

The fourth stage does in fact emphasize alliance building and action. The findings of this study further indicate that through community-based IGD, participants engage in teamwork and problem-solving. Following relevant activities that addressed local systemic inequalities, participants became aware of their own and others' identities, privilege and oppression in relation to the society we lived in. They further identified the current issues related to the local scenario of homelessness, and then planned and worked on plausible solutions.

Another pedagogical comparison is that of a learner-centred approach in ESD with conjoint learner-facilitator roles, where both participants and facilitator are both

educators and learners in the process (Zuniga et al., 2007). This was very much highlighted in the results, when Sara[PEH] explained that by sharing her experience she felt she was teaching others. Also, all the participants and the facilitator stated that IGD was a learning curve.

Furthermore, IGD tends to include varied and structured activities in order to encourage active participation (Zuniga et al., 2003). In this study, short videos, visuals, and pair-work engaged participants in dialogue and reflection (see Appendix E). In fact, IGD focuses on learning rooted in the participants' experiences, moving away from the 'Banking concept of Education' of teaching where information is passed on from experts to learners (Freire, 2011). This was stated by Rosie[NEH], when she argued that real-life knowledge was lacking in academic knowledge. This brings out the importance of experiential learning over theoretical knowledge. These results might shed light on the significance of combining formal with non-formal learning that is situated in real-life (maybe through IGD), as highlighted in ESD (UNESCO, 2018b).

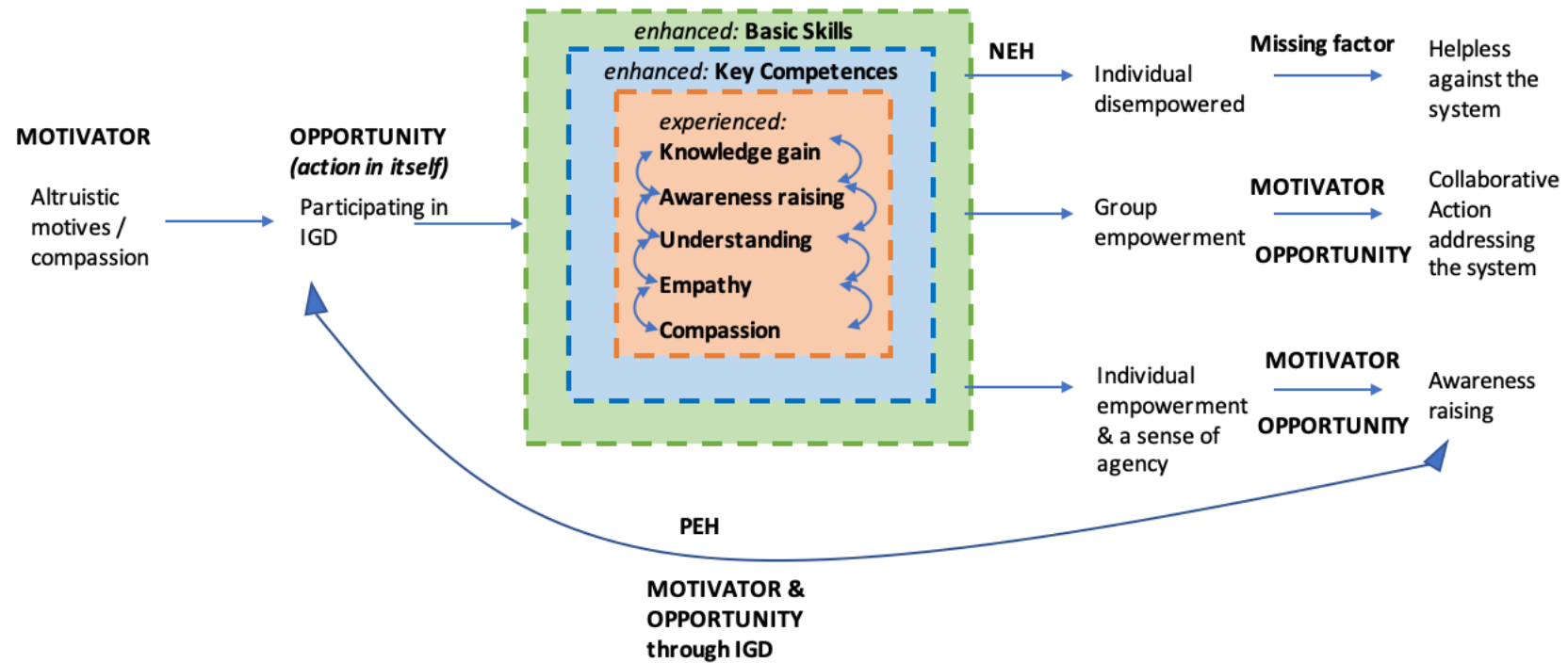
The ESD for 2030 Roadmap attests that ESD learning content should incorporate sustainability issues in relation to the 17SDGs (UNESCO, 2020). However, ESD topics are varied and likewise, IGD topics vary according to the diverse societal groups participating in the dialogue. In the case of this study, the dialogue and group action revolved around homelessness and socio-economic backgrounds. These are in line with SDG1-Poverty and SDG11-Sustainable Cities and Communities. In general, IGD principles and pedagogy address SDGs, in particular SDG4-Quality Education, and SDG10-Reduced Inequality through IGD subjects such as oppression, discrimination, social inequalities.

6.3.2 Journey and Outcomes

The key aim of ESD as a holistic learning process is to guide and inspire individuals into becoming active-citizens (UNESCO, 2020). Such a transformative process occurs in stages which are very much dependent on key ESD competences and basic skills. Opportunity and motivation are two other factors that influence whether an individual ultimately engages in sustainable action (UNESCO, 2018b; UNESCO 2020).

Taking into account the ESD transformative stages (UNESCO, 2020) and based on the work by Giangrande et al. (2019) and UNESCO (2018b) on key ESD competences; the diagram on the next page, illustrates the amalgamation of the ESD transformative process and other significant factors and skills, with the IGD findings in terms of journey and outcomes.

Figure 6.1 The amalgamation of ESD transformative process with the IGD findings in terms of journey and outcomes.



Adapted from Giangrande et al., (2019); UNESCO, (2018b) and UNESCO, (2020).

In this study, IGD participation was on voluntary basis, and findings indicate that altruistic motives and compassion for self and others were the common motivating factors for participation of the participants. This is further evidence that there is no linear process leading from knowledge to action but is more a multi-layered process (Hungerford & Volk, 1990). This also applies to the transformative stages of ESD (UNESCO, 2020). Similar to what is articulated in the ESD roadmap for 2030, in this study participants started with compassion and in the course of their IGD experience they raised their awareness of the complexity revolving around homelessness in the local situation and eventually developed empathy (UNESCO, 2020). In fact, all the participants reported positive outcomes in terms of knowledge and self-awareness. Thus, participants may have enhanced their intrapersonal competence, which together with critical-thinking competence were further honed by participants who had never experienced homelessness. This was evident when the participants stated that they had developed an understanding of the local socio-political context and engaged in critical self-reflection also on systemic and institutional oppression and inequalities.

The participants may have enhanced their interpersonal competence by relating with the others, understanding across difference and building relationships. The majority also developed empathy through skills such as suspending judgement, which may have enhanced compassion further. Active-listening was also given prominence not only as a skill needed for IGD but also as a skill that is enhanced by IGD. Participants who had never experienced homelessness highlighted certain skills acquired from IGD that would be beneficial in their professional life too. This brings to the fore the interplay between

the key ESD competences and the basic skills needed to live in today's world such as communication skills, which are indispensable in ESD (Wiek et al., 2011). The results indicate that participants gained transversal skills through IGD. Such acquired skills including communication and social skills are given prominence in ESD, as they can be used not only in one instance and for one particular scenario but in varied scenarios in professional and everyday life, ensuring a holistic and relevant learning (UNESCO, 2018b).

The results of the last session may indicate that participants engaged in a number of key ESD competences including strategic, systemic thinking, interpersonal and anticipatory competence, when as a group they envisioned a more idealistic society and reflected on what was needed to be addressed and by whom, in order to achieve a social and just society. Similar to what is prominent in the ESD roadmap for 2030, facing some of the real-life inequalities and oppression through dialogue and the building of relationships appeared to be motivational factors for participants to commit themselves to action against the status quo (UNESCO, 2020).

Motivational factors may vary in different contexts and with different audiences. This study indicates that for participants who had experienced homelessness, IGD was in itself an opportunity for them to take action. This motivated them to continue sharing their story as a means of awareness raising beyond IGD.

Results suggest that IGD is an educational opportunity as well as an opportunity for action. This shows that these two factors go hand-in-hand in IGD, since how can one can

become an active citizen if one has an opportunity to learn but without an opportunity to act? Or when one has an opportunity to act but without enough knowledge and awareness? IGD, in collaboration with NGOs and in this case the Minister of Social Accommodation, helped in providing an opportunity for participants to work on their action and actualize it.

A striking finding is the feeling of helplessness on an individual level felt mostly by the participants who had never experienced homelessness when it comes to addressing the system at large. The findings suggest that increasing knowledge, awareness, empathy and compassion are not always enough to motivate action. Indeed, gaining more knowledge and awareness of the local scenario seemed to discourage the participants further. Also, the findings suggest that the participants felt that they were enabled to address short-term goals but not long-term goals on an individual basis. Participants sometimes did not recognize and value the importance of short-term goals; instead they were very eager to reach difficult long-term goals and ended up feeling overwhelmed when seeing the big picture. Lauren et al., (2016), argues that “self-efficacy [encourages] the adoption of difficult behaviour after engaging in easier behaviour” p.29. Thus, the missing factor might have been the development of self-efficacy to bridge the short-term with the long-term actions. ESD pedagogy aims to address the development of self-efficacy in learners, through the emphasis of problem-solving pedagogy (UNESCO, 2012).

Consequently, I wonder whether instead of considering IGD only as a serving tool for ESD in a unidirectional way, one should consider it in a bi-directional way; that is, ESD and IGD principles and pedagogy, can contribute to each other to achieve a personal and societal transformative change.

On a different note, the above diagram also captures my experience as a facilitator and learner. Apart from gaining professional development, I also experienced a transformative process. I also embarked on this research motivated by a desire for social action, namely, making the community a better place. Moreover, I enhanced my skills and ESD competences which resulted in personal growth in terms of knowledge, understanding, compassion and empathy. Finally, I felt empowered not only to participate in collaborative action but to continue raising awareness through IGD and ESD.

6.4 Conclusion

Throughout the data analysis process, it was apparent that the process and outcomes of certain subthemes could overlap, such as active listening skills (Frantell et al., 2019). Indeed, certain factors could be classified under more than one theme or subtheme. However, in the discussion themes and subthemes were discussed as all-encompassing in order to give an overall picture of the IGD process and outcomes in relation to ESD transformative education.

Although some of the results concerning outcomes and processes may be similar to those of other research studies on IGD, the results obtained in this study have their own geographical, cultural and socio-political specificity – that of local Maltese influence. For example, in the case of the main topic itself, homelessness, the local reality is totally different from that which pertains overseas.

In the next chapter, I shall conclude with a summary of the findings and an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the study, as well as by giving recommendations for further research and actions on this topic.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

Chapter 7 : Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study is to examine whether sustained IGD could be a transformative learning experience to its participants and facilitators. Correspondingly, this study also explored IGD as an effective pedagogical tool for ESD in the community.

In this chapter, I will provide an overall summary of the main findings with respect to the aims and research questions of this study. I will also review the limitations and challenges encountered throughout the study, discuss its implications and significance, and propose suggestions for further research.

7.2 Main findings

In general, the findings corroborate previous IGD research. They show that IGD can affect positively the participants' and the facilitator's cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and bring along empowerment and behavioural change (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Frantell et al., 2019). The findings seem to indicate that community-based IGD on homelessness promotes equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. The facilitator also highlighted the development of professional growth in terms of enhancing further facilitating skills. In terms of process, the importance of group norms and the sustained approach to dialogue was very much stressed by both the participants and the facilitator.

Several findings emerged in terms of the IGD process and outcomes, including:

- the learning experience and change in attitude experienced by all participants, including the marginalized group;
- the comparison of academic knowledge with that of real-life experiences;
- moving from shared vulnerability to an enabling community through group alliance and group action;
- people who had never experienced homelessness were more discouraged, when compared to those who had, to act on an individual basis to challenge the *status quo* after becoming more aware of the complex reality; and
- shifting from traditional formal education to non-formal settings was a struggle also for adults in community settings.

In light of these findings and the reviewed literature, there is the potential that the IGD process and outcomes of both the participants and the facilitator reflect ESD principles at different levels (cf. Figure 6.1), including ESD key competences as formulated by Giangrande et al. (2019) and UNESCO (2018b), and the transformative stages of ESD (UNESCO, 2020).

One of the significant results is that the participants felt empowered to engage in group action, a benefit that gained traction in the course of this study. Participants committed themselves to follow-up meetings, and following the IGD sessions we worked in a group on a list of recommendations (see Appendix G) to be passed on to the president of the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society and the Minister of Social Accommodation. YMCA Malta did in fact support this group action and as a group we

attended the Malta meeting of the Platform Against Homelessness, where Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society was present. Following this meeting, and with the help of the YMCA Malta, we managed to set an in-person meeting with the Minister, where we shared our concerns and issues related to social housing and social benefits. All the participants were satisfied that our action had helped others by challenging the *status quo* and reaching the political level. This very much resonates with ESD's goals of empowering active citizenship and societal transformation.

7.3 Limitations

In spite of my efforts to address the limitations of this study, some persisted.

7.3.1 Low Consistent Attendance

There should be an equal representation of members from both social identity groups in IGD (Zuniga et al., 2007). In fact, originally each social group was planned to include five participants. However, due to unexpected drop outs, the total number of participants was seven. Commitment was challenging for the participants, especially for those individuals who were experiencing homelessness. Consequently, I never met the entire group all at once. Also, one of the participants did not attend the post-focus group. Understandably, this may have left its impact on the results and the group dynamics, especially considering the sensitive nature of the study. Low and inconsistent attendance is indeed a common limitation in IGD studies (Frantell et al., 2019).

7.3.2 No Conflict

One of the four stages of IGD, features the introduction of ‘hot topics’ by addressing conflicting views and controversial issues; that helps the participants to develop the necessary conflict resolution skills that enable them to remain calm and lucid during difficult conversations (Neely, 2016). However, this did not figure out in this study which may be considered as another limitation.

7.4 Further research

As stated earlier, IGD is a relatively new area of study, especially locally and in relation to ESD. Based on the findings of this study, below I suggest a number of avenues for further research on IGD.

- Exploring the bi-directional influence of ESD and IGD to contribute to personal and societal transformation and action.
- Conducting research with similar aims in relation to IGD as a potential educational tool for ESD, but in varied educational settings, focusing on different social identity groups and employing different methodologies.
- Considering that participants in the present study did not engage in dialogue on conflicting topics, one could analyse the outcomes and processes of an IGD in similar dialogue settings where a ‘hot topic’ about conflicting views is present.

Considering it is a new educational tool in Malta, it opens an avenue for research on IGD locally:

- in both formal and non-formal educational settings;

- about different social identity groups besides homelessness;
- with a larger group sample;
- employing different methodologies such as mixed methods;
- using a longer time frame and more IGD sessions;
- conducting longitudinal studies to study also actualized actions; and
- conducting co-facilitated IGD sessions.

The last of these suggestions requires more research on IGD facilitators, both locally and internationally. Research should take into account both the process and outcomes as experienced by facilitators.

7.5 Recommendations

Promoting more active citizenship and achieving a more cohesive society requires the cooperation of diverse stakeholders that include governmental agencies, NGOs, educational institutions and facilitators. Following the process and findings of this study, below I propose a number of recommendations regarding the local situation on homelessness, IGD and ESD.

7.5.1 Governmental agencies and policy makers

7.5.1.1 On Homelessness

- Articulate a national definition;
- publish national statistics;
- organize national awareness campaigns; and

- establish more transparency and efficiency regarding the process of providing social accommodation and social benefits.

(Refer to Appendix G: for a thorough list of recommendations compiled by the group.)

7.5.1.2 On IGD & ESD

- Prioritize ESD beyond the formal educational sector and consolidate it in adult education within community-based learning environments, for example, by addressing it in work places through IGD; and
- provide funding for such activities.

7.5.2 NGOs

7.5.2.1 On Homelessness

- Engage in future research on homelessness, especially studies that include the active participation of people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness;
- organize awareness-raising campaigns and activities (including IGD); and
- strengthen collaborations with the government that include the active participation of people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness.

7.5.2.2 On IGD & ESD

- Provide capacity building on IGD for workers, including social workers, youth workers and ESD practitioners; and
- strengthen collaborations with formal educational institutions to act effectively as a bridge between formal and non-formal education; between theoretical knowledge and real-life knowledge.

7.5.3 Educational institutions

7.5.3.1 On Homelessness

- Encourage future research on homelessness, especially studies that include the active participation of people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness.

7.5.3.2 On IGD & ESD

- Strengthen relationships with international educational institutions that can share expertise on IGD;
- prioritize ESD beyond formal schooling and consolidate it in adult education within community-based learning environments, for example, by addressing it in work places through IGD;
- integrate IGD units in post-secondary curricula, especially in courses related to social and community services (including courses specifically for ESD); and

- introduce intergroup facilitation and mediation courses specifically for IGD.

7.5.4 Facilitators

- Introduce a peer-to-peer facilitation platform as a means of professional development; and
- develop an IGD Toolkit consisting of a resource book or dedicated website.

7.5.5 Personal responsibility

- Engage in continuous professional development regarding facilitations skills; and
- implement IGD sessions at work and where opportunity arises.

7.6 Conclusion

ESD is the catalyst to achieve a personal and societal transformative change resulting in a more sustainable world (UNESCO, 2020). However, we are still struggling as we seem to be incapable of providing the necessary answers to address successfully local and global challenges. I believe it is unrealistic to say that IGD can provide us with all the answers. However, I hope that this present study has brought out the power of dialogue and of sharing experiences through structured and sustained IGD vis-à-vis ESD principles. Furthermore, I hope that this study has underlined the transformative power that lies in adult education and in the community as a learning environment. It was indeed satisfying to see an intended action come to fruition over a period of months;

having people from diverse sectors in society, including marginalized individuals, come together and believing that change is possible, united by a common goal: that of achieving a more just society through social justice action.

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Appendix A

Information sheet

Homelessness: breaking the silence

Facilitated Intergroup dialogue in Maltese communities

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

I am student reading for a Master's degree in Education for Sustainable Development, at the University of Malta. In partial fulfilment of this degree, I am carrying out a study titled *Homelessness: breaking the silence!*, under the supervision of Dr Vincent Caruana. This is an invitation to be part of the research study.

The general aim of this research study is to explore the outcomes and process of sustained intergroup dialogue focusing on homelessness. Intergroup dialogue differs from debates and discussions, it encourages conversation between individuals from different societal groups; on matters that are rarely discussed in society. This study will also attempt to examine whether long term intergroup dialogue is an effective educational tool for Education for sustainable development in the community.

I would like to invite you to attend 2-hour intergroup sessions which will be conducted weekly or over a weekend. The total participation time during the facilitated sessions will be around 8-12 hours. Throughout the sessions a safe space will be provided where a well-balanced group of adults comprising of homeless individuals together with housed individuals will be guided to dialogue on matters that focus on homelessness. Through intergroup dialogue, the study will not simply give voice to the diverse participants but aims to also understand the participants' life experiences. Past research has shown, that intergroup dialogue not only sets ground for consciousness raising of all the participants, but also strives to build relationships amongst the diverse participants; with the main aim to promoting positive social action. Only small parts of the inter group dialogue, mainly the group reflections will be audio recorded. During the sessions, me as the researcher will be taking observational notes to help me in my data analysis.

Should you wish to participate in these sessions, you will also be asked to partake in a pre-post focus group. The first focus group will be conducted prior the commencement of the intergroup dialogue sessions where your insights on homelessness in Malta will be discussed and another focus group will be held after the last session where your insights on homelessness will be further discussed and you will also be asked to share any feedback on the intergroup dialogue experience. Each focus group will last approx. 45minutes and will be audio recorded. All the sessions and the focus groups will be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for all the participants.

The importance of confidentiality will be emphasized throughout the sessions. To avoid any collected data from being identifiable to the general public any audio recorded material will be digitally altered and audio recordings will be saved in a password protected folder on a personal laptop that only I as the researcher will have access to. All audio-recordings will be transcribed verbatim (word by word), with the use of a fictitious names to ensure anonymity. Further to this, once the data analysis will be finalized all audio recorded material will be deleted. Also, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased.

In order to participate in this research study, you must be at least 18 years of age. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be deleted.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Researcher
Mariosa Caruana
Email

Supervisor
Dr Vincent Caruana
Email

Appendix B

Homelessness: breaking the silence!

Subtitle: Facilitated Intergroup dialogue in Maltese communities

Participant's Consent Form

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Mariosa Caruana. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in a number of 2-hour intergroup dialogue sessions which will be conducted weekly or over a weekend. The total participation time during the facilitated sessions will be around 8-12 hours and it is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me. I am aware that during the sessions I will be part of well-balanced group of participants from two social identity groups (homeless and not homeless individuals).
I will also be asked to partake in two focus group sessions - a pre and post focus group. The first focus group will be conducted prior the commencement of the intergroup dialogue sessions where my insights on homelessness in Malta will be discussed and another focus group will be held following the last session where my insights on homelessness will be further discussed and I also be asked to share any feelings and feedback on the intergroup dialogue experience. Each focus group will last approx. 45minutes and it is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks/entails the following risks. Nevertheless, should in the unlikely event, I experience any distress, contact details of support service will be provided.

5. I understand that I will likely benefit from this study by having an opportunity to be more knowledgeable and empowered to better the homeless situation in the society. In this study, participation is of crucial importance, from sharing my knowledge and experiences in the sessions, to choosing in a group, a topic of tension revolving around homelessness, to be tackled in intergroup dialogue. In addition, I together with the other participants, we will be guided to work on a much-needed solution benefitting the community at large.

Furthermore, I also understand that this research may benefit others by offering new insights into empathic, critical, and action-oriented dialogue moving beyond the debates and discussions. This study hopes to be a good eye opener to the current local situation of homelessness and thus shedding the light on the need of fewer stigmas and stereotyping to a more inclusive society. Further to this, this study will positively reduce the gaps in much needed research studies on homelessness in Malta.

6. I am aware that focus group discussions and intergroup discussions, should be considered confidential and that I should not disclose details of those participating and/or of the nature of discussions to others.
7. I am aware that, if I give my consent, the focus groups and parts of the intergroup sessions will be audio recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed), while the audio recording itself will be digitally altered to make my voice unrecognizable.
8. I am aware that, if I give my consent, extracts from the recorded parts of the intergroup sessions and the focus groups, may be reproduced in these outputs, either in anonymous form, or using a pseudonym [a made-up name or code – e.g. respondent A].
9. I am aware that my data will be pseudonymised; i.e., my identity will not be noted on transcripts or notes from my interview, but instead, a code will be assigned. The codes that link my data to my identity will be stored securely and separately from the data, in an encrypted file on the researcher's password-protected computer, and only the researcher, the academic supervisors and the board of examiners will have access to this information. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cupboard. Any material that identifies me as a participant in this study will be stored securely for the duration of the study.

10. I am aware that my identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research.
11. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
12. I understand that all data collected will be erased on completion of the study and following publication of results.
13. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Kindly fill in the following using blue ink

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

.....

Mariosa Caruana

Dr Vincent Caruana

Email

Appendix C

Pre focus group

(The focus group questions were used with both groups. The parts in brackets are minor amendments for the group of individuals experiencing homelessness)

Welcome note:

Good afternoon, welcome to this focus group. I would like to thank you for your interest in this educational project and for taking the time to attend this focus group. My name is Mariosa Caruana and I am reading a Master degree course at the University of Malta.

As part of my studies I am doing research on intergroup dialogue between people who are experiencing homelessness and people who are not.

The reason we are having this focus group is to briefly get to know each other and to gain a more complete experience of your thoughts, attitudes and views about this topic and the upcoming sessions.

Your input is very important, so feel free to share your honest and open thoughts with us even if it might be different from the rest of the participants. It is important to inform you all that there are no right or wrong answers during this focus group. All comments and input are valuable to the study whether positive, negative or of a neutral stance.

I will be writing short notes whilst we are discussing but in order to ensure I have taken into account all your comments, the focus group session will be audio recorded. Please let's give each other time to finish what they say to avoid speaking all together.

Confidentiality is very important during these sessions so whatever is said today let's keep it between us and also let's refer to each other on a first name basis only.

About them:

- 1) Let's start by introducing ourselves
(age, nationality, education, work, status)

Personal outcomes:

- 2) What is the reason you decided to take part?
- 3) What are your expectations?

Knowledge

- 4) What comes to mind when you hear the term "homeless"?

Emotions

- 5) Do you feel you are knowledgeable about homelessness?
- 6) Do you think you can understand what a (another) person who is experiencing homelessness goes through? (do you think that society understands or tries to understand what you go through?)

Views and attitudes

- 7) What are your views on homelessness in Malta? Abroad? What do you think society thinks about this matter? Do you think that there are particular traits and characteristics that the majority of people who experience homelessness have?
- 8) Do you think you are more similar or different than a (another) person who is experiencing homelessness?

Behavior

- 9) Have you ever met a (another) person experiencing homelessness?
- 10) Have you ever helped someone who is experiencing homelessness? Or the situation at large? Do you want to do something about homelessness? Do you feel you can?

Process

- 11) What do you think IGD is about? Have you ever participated in similar dialogue projects?

12) Do you think any particular skills are required for dialogue during the sessions?

13) Do you think through dialogue it might help in some way the situation of homelessness in Malta?

14) What are your thoughts when you hear the term conflict?

15) Are you expecting this experience to change you in any way? *If no why? If yes how so?*

Is there anything else you would like to comment about that we haven't discussed yet?

Thank you for your time and honest participation.

Appendix D

Post focus group

(The focus group questions were used with both groups. The parts in brackets are minor amendments for the group of individuals experiencing homelessness)

Welcome note:

Good afternoon, once again welcome to this focus group. I would like to thank you for your interest and commitment in this educational project and for taking the time to attend this focus group.

The reason we are having this focus group is to gain a more complete experience of your thoughts, attitudes and views about this topic and the past sessions.

Let me remind you all that, your input is very important, so feel free to share your honest and open thoughts with us even if it might be different from the rest of the participants. It is important to inform you all that there are no right or wrong answers during this focus group. All comments and input are valuable to the study whether positive, negative or of a neutral stance.

I will be writing short notes whilst we are discussing but in order to ensure I have taken into account all your comments, the focus group session will be audio recorded. Please let's give each other time to finish what they say to avoid speaking all together.

Confidentiality is very important during these sessions so whatever is said today let's keep it between us and also let's refer to each other on a first name basis only.

About them:

- 1) Let's start by a round robin of how we are feeling today.

Personal outcomes:

- 2) Any positive or negative feedback on the whole journey?

Anything in particular that struck you?

- 3) What have you learned about yourself throughout the sessions?
- 4) What have you learned about others during the sessions?

Knowledge

- 5) Do you feel you have learned anything throughout the sessions? skills?

Emotions

- 6) How was it for you to share your experiences?
- 7) Were there any particular emotions during/after the sessions?
- 8) How do you feel now following all the sessions?
- 9) Do you think you can understand more what a (another) person who is experiencing homelessness goes through? (do you think that society understands or tries to understand what you go through?)

Views and attitudes

- 10) Following the sessions, what are your views on homelessness in Malta?
Abroad? What do you think society thinks about this matter?
- 11) Following the session, do you think you are more similar or different than a (another) person who is experiencing homelessness? (Do you feel you are more similar or different than someone who is not experiencing homelessness?)

Behavior

- 12) Do you want to do something about homelessness? Do you feel you are able to?
- 13) Were there any moments during the sessions that you felt empowered? Were there any moments during the sessions that you felt disempowered? Overall do you feel more empowered or more disempowered following the sessions? How so?

Process

- 14) What do you think IGD was about?
- 15) Do you think any particular skills are required for dialogue during the sessions?
Did you learn any new skills?

- 16) How did you feel during the sessions? Did you feel comfortable to share your thought freely? What was the most challenging part throughout the entire sessions?
- 17) Do you think through dialogue it might help in some way the situation of homelessness in Malta?
- 18) What are your thoughts when you hear the term conflict? How were disagreements handled? How did you feel?
- 19) What can each one of you do to make the programme better?
- 20) Would you recommend a similar project to someone else? Was it a waste of time? Was it a changing experience?

Is there anything else you would like to comment about that we haven't discussed yet?

Thank you for your time and honest participation.

Appendix E

Session Plans

Session 1: <i>Creating an Environment for Dialogue</i>			
Outcomes: Participants will be able to: • differentiate between dialogue, discussion and debate; • build relationships with others; • get to know each other; • develop communication skills; and • differentiate between empathy and sympathy.			
Activities			Approx. Time
			Resources
Introduction	• Greet the participants. • Introduce yourself and explain your role as a facilitator throughout the IGD sessions, highlighting the fact that you are no expert but everyone is a learner, point out also the circular seating setup, that might create a sense of equal participation (Neely, 2016). • Discuss the flow of the agenda.	5min	PowerPoint presentation

What is IGD?	• Explain the differences between dialogue, discussion and debate, through a table comparing the different communication styles, relationship goals and end-goals (refer to table 5.1 in (Nagda & Gurin, 2007)). • Explain what IGD is, including a definition and also describe the 4-stages of IGD. • In a group dialogue discuss about the expectations of participation level from the group (including sharing of experiences, participating in dialogue and listening, engaging in action etc...), setting commitments, dates of sessions etc	10min	PowerPoint presentation
Check in	• Taking it in turns, invite the participants to introduce themselves by sharing their name and answer the following questions: ○ <i>Why did you decide to join this dialogue?</i> ○ <i>Share something about yourself that you would like the rest of the group to know about.</i>	20min	PowerPoint presentation
Dialogue communication skills	• Ask the participants what they understand by sympathy and then ask them what they understand by empathy. • After sharing of ideas, show the animated video titled 'Brenè Brown on Empathy vs Sympathy' to differentiate between empathy and sympathy (Simon, 2016). • Following the video, ask the following questions to initiate a group discussion about the difference between the two, in relation to everyday life: ○ <i>What are your thoughts about this video?</i> ○ <i>Anything that struck you? Or anything you do not agree with?</i> ○ <i>How does this relate to everyday life situations?</i> ○ <i>Is it easy or challenging to empathize with others?</i>	15min	PowerPoint presentation

	Following the discussion, explain the importance of empathetic listening and share the 'LARA' method (<i>Listen, Affirm, Respond, and Add Information</i>) as a communication tool, especially useful across differences (Cornell University, 2016). Conclude this activity by inviting participants to share their thoughts or experiences related to active listening with 'LARA'.		
Communication agreement	- Divide the group in pairs or groups of 3 and ask them to come up with agreements needed to ensure a respectful space and smooth dialogue. - Pool the ideas as a larger group and only include the ones that all participants have agreed on. - Suggest other agreements that might have not been mentioned but may be critical to be included within the agreement. - Inform the group that during every session they will be reminded of the proposed communication agreement and that they are free to amend or add along the IGD sessions.	5min	PowerPoint presentation; Pen/markers and paper; and Large flipchart or chart
Brave space	- Explain the importance safe space and that it is a collective responsibility to follow the communication agreement to ensure a safe space for all. (Through the use of a diagram) introduce the idea of a brave space. Highlight the importance of taking it a step further, of challenging our comfort zone, because through discomfort change might occur. - Conclude this activity by a brief group discussion about safe space and brave space, to also grasp the group's idea on this.	5min	PowerPoint presentation
Personal Object activity	- Invite participants to take turns to answer the following questions when showing their item: <i>Describe the item.</i> <i>Why did you choose to bring this item?</i> <i>What does it say about your background and who you are today?</i>	45min	PowerPoint presentation

	<i>Adapted from the activity titled 'Our Ethnic Backgrounds and Racism' from the resource book 'Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation' (Everyday Democracy, 2008).</i> • After all participants and the facilitators have shared their item, thank everyone and pose the following questions and allow sometime for discussion: ○ <i>How did you feel sharing?</i> ○ <i>Did you learn something new from this activity?</i> ○ <i>What struck you most?</i>		
Reflection	• Give two different coloured sticky-notes to every participant, and ask participants to write the answer to the first question on one colour and to write the answer of the second question on the other sticky-note (inform choice of colours beforehand) ○ <i>How are you feeling after the first session?</i> ○ <i>What are your expectations for the upcoming sessions?</i> • Invite participants to stick the sticky-notes on a board. Share the answers to the whole group and allow time for any feedback or comments. • Ask participants to share one word that describes how they are feeling now that the first IGD session has come to an end.	10min	PowerPoint presentation; Sticky-notes
Conclusion	• Thank the participants and invite them to the upcoming sessions.	2 min	PowerPoint presentation

Session 2: *Exploring Social relationships, Identities and Conflict*

Outcomes:

Participants will be able to:

- get to know each other;
- develop communication skills;
- recognize their own engagement style;
- apprehend different engagement styles;
- define identity;
- differentiate between personal and social identities;
- identify their own identities;
- understand different perspectives;
- identify the causes of homelessness;
- describe social class;
- list different social classes;
- explore preconceived stereotypes and prejudices on different social classes;
- become aware of their own social class;
- become aware of the reality of others;
- recognize the influence of images on the views and attitudes on homelessness;
- explore the stereotypes and stigma on homelessness and its effects on the individual;
- empathize and understand across difference;
- identify certain policies related to homelessness in Malta;
- examine the historical and current forces shaping social classes;
- analyse myths from facts; and
- identify how classism manifests itself in reality.

Activities		Approx. time	Resources
Introduction	• Welcome back the participants. • Discuss the flow of the agenda, highlighting that today is stage 2 of IGD • Go through the communication agreement and ask participants whether there is any need for revision of the agreement.	3min	PowerPoint presentation
Check in	• Invite participants to check in by taking it in turns to answer the following questions: ○ <i>Share your name</i> ○ <i>How are you feeling today?</i> ○ <i>How was your day?</i>	10min	PowerPoint presentation
Engagement style	• Remind the participants about active listening using the LARA method. • Invite each participant to think about the following and to choose the one most fitting for them: ○ <i>In a group setting like this, am I (more often than not) the person who...</i> ▪ <i>Talks a lot?</i> ▪ <i>Only speaks when I have something important to share?</i> ▪ <i>Brings an alternative perspective?</i> ▪ <i>Hardly talks at all?</i> • Ask the participants to share their answers and then to answer the following questions: ○ <i>Why did you pick the category you picked?</i> ○ <i>How does context play a role?</i> ○ <i>What other aspects stand out when we participate in group settings?</i>	20min	PowerPoint presentation

	This activity was adapted from an IGD session delivered by Universal Human Rights Initiative (UHRI, 2022).		
Identities	• Using sticky notes ask participants to write some of the words they would use to describe themselves. • Read the answers and divide them into two categories – personal identities and social identities. • Discuss with the group what do they think the difference between the two categories is and then explain the difference between personal identity and social identity. • Show them a picture of the social identity wheel and explain it. • Divide the participants in pairs or groups of 3 and through the use of the social identity wheel, allow participants to dialogue about the commonalities and differences between each and every participant taking account the local context. • Ask them to discuss the following questions: ○ <i>I think about this aspect of my identity the most...</i> ○ <i>I think about this identity the least...</i> ○ <i>This part of my identity has the strongest effect on how I see myself as a person...</i> ○ <i>I think this part of my identity has the most effect on how people treat me...</i> • Invite participants to share and debrief in the larger group. This activity was adapted from an IGD session delivered by UHRI, (2022).	50min	PowerPoint presentation
Socio-economic class	• Introduce this activity by asking the participants the following question: ○ <i>What do you understand by social class? (follow up by a definition and short explanation)</i> • Put up 6 charts around the room representing 6 social classes.	50min	PowerPoint presentation; Charts/flipcharts;

	• Divide the participants in pairs and ask them to think of characteristics that come to mind when they think of the following social categories and to write them down on sticky notes and stick them on the corresponding chart. ○ Upper class ○ Owning class ○ Middle class ○ Working class ○ Lower income ○ Poor • Ask participants to be spontaneous – to write the first thing that comes to mind. • Allow some time for participants to go around the room and read the answers. • Invite the participants to think of their current social class and then ask them to think of the social class they were in as children. • As a whole group, ask the following questions: ○ <i>What stood out?</i> ○ <i>Did you note any stereotypes associated with each social class? Are they true?</i> ○ <i>Do you think who is homeless is also poor? And who is poor is also homeless?</i> ○ <i>Can individuals move from one social class to another? If yes, what helps individuals to move up the social class ladder?</i> Conclude by highlighting that homelessness is a situation and that it is not a fixed element in the identity of the person concerned.		Sticky notes; Pens/markers.
BREAK			
Check in	• In a round robin ask the participants: <i>How are you feeling after part 1 of the session?</i>		PowerPoint presentation

“Homeless” Stereotypes, stigma and prejudices	• Do a google image search with the term ‘homeless’ and share a screenshot of the results. • As a group discuss the following questions: ○ <i>Is this what comes to mind when you hear the word homeless?</i> ○ <i>What does the word ‘homeless’ mean to you?</i> ○ <i>Do these photos show the reality in Malta?</i> ○ <i>In Malta, what do you think is the public’s perception on homelessness?</i> • Show the video titled ‘<i>Homelessness in Malta - A social experiment</i>’ and allow some time for participants to engage in discussion about this video (Willingess Team Malta, 2018). • To conclude this activity, share a number of screenshots of posts uploaded on social media, include some that portray typical stereotypes and prejudices on homelessness (for example the idea that only foreigners are homeless in Malta); whilst include others that give a more realistic picture (for example the idea of hidden homelessness) and ask the participants to share their thoughts about such statements.	50min	PowerPoint presentation
Choosing a hot topic	• Invite participants to dialogue about their personal sense of socio-economic security including ways that makes them feel more/less secure. Also encourage dialogue about what ways are actions by leaders taken or could be taken to increase a better socio-economical security for all. Guiding questions: ○ <i>What factors influence our sense of socio-economic security?</i> ○ <i>What’s going on in our community that a dialogue on homelessness could address?</i> ○ <i>As a citizen what actions are you or would you like to take so as to address poverty?</i> • Divide participants in pairs and allow them to brainstorm and to choose a controversial topic revolving around homelessness that they feel the need to be addressed through dialogue.	15min	PowerPoint presentation

Reflection	- As a group reflection, ask participants to answer one of the following questions: <i>What stuck with you?</i> <i>Mention one thing you learned today? (can be an idea, an emotion, a skill etc.)</i> <i>What would you change or keep in these dialogue sessions?</i>	10min	PowerPoint presentation
Conclusion	Thank the participants and invite them to the upcoming sessions.	2 min	PowerPoint presentation

Session 3: *Social Justice & Hot Topics*

Outcomes:

Participants will be able to:

- get to know each other;
- develop communication skills;
- define oppression;
- identify different types of oppression;
- explore the social power dynamics that fuel class privilege and oppression;
- reflect on values such as fairness, equality and justice;
- analyse the role of the health, education and social accommodation institutions in mitigating or further hindering the person's ability to escape poverty;
- empathize and understand across difference;
- apprehend the diverse realities in different social classes;
- become aware of the reality faced by people experiencing homelessness or other forms of social exclusion;
- recognize similarities across difference;
- explore the role of the family, and social systems in shaping their views and values;
- develop communication skills for when dealing with difficult conversations;
- recognize the personal role they play in society; and
- identify homelessness as a situation and not a fixed identity.

Activities		Approx. time	Resources
Introduction	• Welcome back the participants. • Discuss the flow of the agenda, highlighting that today is stage 3 of IGD	3min	PowerPoint presentation

	• Go through the communication agreement and ask participants whether there is any need for revision of the agreement. • Revise what was covered in the previous session.		
Checking in	• Invite participants to check in by taking it in turns to answer the following questions: ○ <i>Share your name</i> ○ <i>How are you feeling today?</i> ○ <i>What are you bringing with you from last week?</i>	15min	PowerPoint presentation
Oppression and Power	• Brainstorm the term oppression. • Explain the different types of oppression including, individual, institutional and societal oppression whilst also tap into conscious and unconscious oppression with the use of relevant and real-life examples. • Invite the participants in a circle of sharing by asking the following questions: ○ <i>Think of a moment when you experienced oppression.</i> ○ <i>How did you feel?</i> ○ <i>Who was the oppressor?</i> ○ <i>Did you feel you can do something about the situation?</i> ○ <i>Think of a moment when you were in a privileged position.</i> ○ <i>How did you feel?</i> ○ <i>How did you make use of that privilege?</i>	45min	PowerPoint presentation
Cycle of socialisation	• Explain the diagram of cycle of socialisation. • Ask the participants to go through the stages keeping in mind their own life experiences. • Allow some time for sharing of experiences.	25min	PowerPoint presentation

Cycle of Poverty	- Ask the participants to discuss: <i>Do you think that poverty is passed from one generation to the other?</i> <i>Do you think a person can escape poverty?</i> <i>Do you think institutions and society at large, help or add more oppression on people experiencing poverty?</i> - After this group discussion ask the participants to divide themselves into 3 groups and each group will explore a different institution and its structural factors that perpetuate further poverty. The three institutions are: - Education - Health - Social accommodation - Participants are asked to make a list of factors and/or circumstances under each institution that further impact the person's ability to escape poverty. - Pooling of results. This activity was adapted from the activity titled 'The Cycle of Poverty' (Learning for Justice, n.d)	50min	PowerPoint presentation
BREAK			
Check in	- In a round robin ask participants: <i>How are you feeling after part 1 of the session?</i>	10min	PowerPoint presentation
Conflict in dialogue	- Explain the two-dimensional model of the 5 modes for responding to conflict including - competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating (Lawless & Trif, 2008). - Ask the participants to think of a moment where they were in a conflict with others. - Ask them to share how they acted considering the 5 modes for responding to conflict.	25min	PowerPoint presentation

	Share some tips for dialogue in conflict including a reminder of the difference between dialogue, debate and discussion.		
"Hot topic"	Allow participants to dialogue about a topic revolving around homelessness that they feel the need to be addressed further. Also, incorporate a social justice lens to the topic under dialogue by asking questions to aid the flow of the dialogue.	50min	PowerPoint presentation
Reflection	- As a group reflection, ask participants to choose one of the following questions and share their feedback: <i>What stuck with you?</i> <i>Mention one thing you learned today? (can be an idea, an emotion, a skill etc.)</i> <i>What would you change or keep in these dialogue sessions?</i>	10min	PowerPoint presentation
Conclusion	Thank the participants and invite them to the upcoming session. What to expect next week.	2min	PowerPoint presentation

Session 4: <i>From Dialogue to Action</i>			
Outcomes: Participants will be able to: • get to know each other; • explore problem-solving strategies; • assess the current situation of homelessness; • prioritize the needs of homelessness; • recognize the role of NGOs and other institutions in mitigating the issue of homelessness; and • plan and design an action.			
Activities		Approx. time	Resources
Introduction	• Welcome back the participants. • Discuss the flow of the agenda, highlighting that today is stage 4 of IGD • Go through the communication agreement and ask participants whether there is any need for revision of the agreement. • Revise what was covered in the previous session.	5min	PowerPoint presentation
Check in	• Invite participants to check in by taking it in turns to share one word that describes how they are feeling today.	8min	PowerPoint presentation
Target, Agent, Bystander, Ally	• Explain the four roles. (SFWAR, n.d) • Invite participants to discuss the following questions in groups of 3: Think of a time you spoke up or wish you had spoken up against discrimination and identify which role you were playing in that moment.	32min	PowerPoint presentation

	○ <i>What is difficult for you to reflect on and what is not?</i> ○ <i>What are the risks of being an ally? And what about the benefits?</i> ○ <i>Who is most empowered to be an ally?</i> ● Conclude this activity by sharing in the larger group.		
Action Planning	● Invite the participants to sit in one group and to reflect on the following questions: ○ <i>What is the problem you would like to address most?</i> ▪ <i>Whom does this problem affect mostly?</i> ▪ <i>What are the causing factors of this problem?</i> ▪ <i>Do you think there is a solution to this problem?</i> ● Ask participants to share one or two ideas that they would like to address through action. ● Invite the participants to choose one or two they all agree on (if there are two or more popular answers there can be more than one group working on a different solution). ● Encourage the group/s to start planning on their chosen action. ● Support the group/s in all steps of the project - in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation phase. Can provide some guiding questions: ○ <i>Considering my everyday life and commitments, is this a realistic action?</i> ○ <i>What are the challenges that as a group we might need to overcome?</i> ○ <i>Are there any people or organizations that can help us?</i>	50min	
Reflection	● As a group reflection, ask participants to choose two of the following questions and share their feedback: ○ <i>How are you feeling?</i> ○ <i>Share one thing that you have learned?</i> ○ <i>Share one thing you would have changed or kept as is throughout the sessions?</i>	20min	

	○ <i>Would you like to say something to the rest of the group?</i>		
Conclusion	Thank the participants and ask them whether they are interested to keep in contact as a group and if yes, check the best way that suits the majority of the participants.	5min	

Appendix F

Original Quotes

5.2.1 Theme 1: IGD outcomes for participants

5.2.1.1 Subtheme 1: Knowledge and awareness

"...però iva titgħallem minn haddieħor ukoll." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...but yes you learn from others too." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...ta' kull persuna kien fih oġġett li titgħallem hux...m'hemmx dik u l-oħra...minn ta' kulhadd qisek titgħallem xi haġa żgħira minn kull persuna..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"...you learn something from every person... no one in particular... you learn something small from every person." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

5.2.1.1.1 The Definition

At first, Clayton and Rosie linked homelessness with "m'għandhiex saqaf fuq rasha" – "don't have a roof over her head" or "persuna m'għandhiex dar" – "a person without home" respectively.

"Inti ma jfissirx li għax inti homeless m'għandekx dar... jista' jkollok dar u m'għandekx x'tiekol u m'għandekx x'tilbes." (Fiona[PEH-SR2])

"Being homeless doesn't mean not having a house... you can have a house and you don't have what to eat and have nothing to wear." (Fiona[PEH-SR2])

"Fil-fatt jiena nħossni fqira mhux għax qiegħda x-xelter jew homeless, imma nħossni fqira fil-familja." (Lina[EH-SR2])

"In fact, I don't feel poor because I'm in a shelter or because I'm homeless, but I feel poor family wise." (Lina[EH-SR2])

"Jista' jkollok saqaf fuq rasek u tkun xorta waħda homeless...jiġifieri nfethet iktar issa l-perspettiva ta' homeless." (Clayton[NEH-SR3])

"You might have a roof over your head but still be homeless...now I have a wider perspective of homeless." (Clayton[NEH-SR3])

"Then again, kif spjegaw huma...homeless ma jfissirx il-fatt biss li inti bla saqaf, ifisser is-solitudni...bla familja...qisu bażikament m'għandek xejn..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"Then again as they explained ... homeless doesn't simply mean rooflessness, but the solitude... no family... basically having nothing..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.1.2 The cause of homelessness

"...qabel, l-ewwel ħsieb li tisma' homeless huma nies b'esperjenza ta' drogi...jista' jkunu ħafna affarijiet li tkun giegħlet persuna tispicċa homeless..." (Clayton[NEH-SR3])

"...before, the first thought that comes to mind when you hear 'homeless' are people using drugs... it can be many things that forces a person to end up homeless..." (Clayton[NEH-SR3])

"Jiena li tgħallimt f'dawn s-sessions li ..għax jien għalija homeless xi ħadd li m'għandux saqaf fuq rasu u l-vizzju ta' droga...nammeti li jien dejjem hekk kont naħseb...tgħallimt li mhux minnu..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"What I've learnt from these sessions is... because for me 'homeless' is someone who doesn't have a roof over his head and drug addiction... I admit that I always thought that... I learned that it's not the truth." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"Jiena naħseb waħda mill-expectations [għall-IGD] li għandi l-iktar biex nara l-journey eżatt minn fejn tibda, fis-sens mhux kwistjoni ta' kurżità... kwistjoni li jiena [...] nixtieq nagħraf fejn il-problema tkun in the first place, speċjalment meta naħdmu fi social services, hija xi ħaġa li l-kas jasal tard wisq [Clayton & Kris nodding]." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"I think one of my main expectations [of IGD] is to learn about where the journey starts exactly, in the sense that it's not a question of curiosity... a question that I [...]I would like to identify where the problem is in the first place, especially when we work in social services, sometimes cases come to us when it's too late. [Clayton and Kris nodding]." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

5.2.1.1.3 Homelessness and the general public

"...jekk ħa tgħid li hawn nies ma għandhomx saqaf fuq rashom ħa jgħidu mhux veru ...qatt ma rajthom jien...l-ewwel irridu naraw li nies ikunu jafu li hawn nies m'għandhomx saqaf fuq rashom..." (Martina[NEH-preF])

" if you say that there are people who don't have a roof over their heads, they say 'it's untrue... I've never seen them'... first we want to make sure that people know that there are people who don't have a roof over their heads." (Martina[NEH-preF])

"Ċertu nies jgħidulek, le...homeless? jgħidulek mela għadha teżisti l-homeless? Mur għidilhom kemm hemm nies barra fit-triq li ma għandhomx fejn joqogħdu u m'għandhomx x'jieklu..." (Fiona[PEH-preF])

"Certain people tell you, 'no...homeless'? They will tell you, 'the homeless still exist?' Little do they know how many people are out on the street, who have nowhere to stay and nothing to eat..." (Fiona[PEH-preF])

Researcher: *Why did you decide to take part?*

"Basically hija xi haġa li m'għandix idea li teżisti Malta, homelessness..." (Clayton[NEH-preF])

"Basically, it's something that I have no idea that it exists in Malta, homelessness..." (Clayton[NEH-preF])

Researcher: *What are your expectations?*

"Meta ssiefer barra, actually tarahom barra fi triq, hawn Malta mhijiex daqshekk komuni mbagħad. Allura qisek ma tkunx aware tagħha l-haġa, allura tgħid hawn Malta ma teżistix." (Clayton[NEH-preF])

"When you travel abroad, you actually see them on the streets; here in Malta it is not that common. So it's like you're not aware of the situation, so you say it doesn't exist in Malta." (Clayton[NEH-preF])

"...li nkattar l-għarfien tiegħi dwar is-suġġet speċjalment fil-kuntest lokali, għax it-tendenza li jkunu invizibbli dawn l-affarijiet." (Kris[NEH-preF])

"...personally, what I'll gain is more knowledge on the subject, especially in the local context, because these things tend to be invisible." (Kris[NEH-preF])

"...affaċċjaw ftit mir-realtà" – "faced a bit from reality" (Sara[NPEH-postF]).

"Ma stennejtx li hawn nies li għaddejjin minn dawn il-problemi daqshekk kbar..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"I didn't expect to learn of people going through such huge problems..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"Taf x'ha jgħidulek? bħalma qalu lili...imissek ħsibt..sorry." (Sara[PEH-preF])

"You know what they'll tell you? Just like they told me... you should have been prepared... sorry." (Sara[PEH-preF])

"Kien hemm nies li kien hemm min kien differenti u qisni ħassejtni naqra skomda għax bdejt ngħid min huma dawn in-nies? [...]imma mbagħad kont open, imbagħad qisni ħrigt all out...għax kien hemm l-interest, fhimt?" (Sara[PEH-postF])

"There were people who were different and I felt a bit uncomfortable because I started asking myself 'who are these people?' ... but then I spoke openly, I went all out... because they showed interest. Do you understand?" (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...tarahom li huma jimpurtahom minnek, mhux għax rawk darba jew darbtejn imma huma, kif taqbad tgħidha...interessaw ruħhom f'dak li kont għaddejja jiena u **impurtahom** fl-affarijiet li għaddejt, allura iktar tiegħu pjacir u thossok komda magħhom u li tkun tixtieq tibqa' tiltaqa' magħhom...għax tkun taf li huma ħbieb ta' vera u li jirrispettaw...mhux jippuntaw subgħajk lej, għax tort tiegħek jew għax hekk, fhimt?" (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"...you can see that they care about you, not because they may have met you once or twice but they... how shall I put it... showed interest in what I was going through and they cared about the things I went through, so you enjoy it and feel more comfortable with them and you wish to keep meeting them... because you know that they're true friends and that they respect you... they won't point fingers at you, saying it's your fault or because of this or that... do you understand?" (Fiona[PEH-postF])

5.2.1.2 Subtheme 2: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal skills

"Jiena naħseb li dawn it-tip ta' IGD qed iżidu kif semma Kris, interpersonal skills tagħna għall-aħjar..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"I think that these types of IGD are changing, as Kris has mentioned, our interpersonal skills for the better..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.2.1 Recognition of identities, privilege and oppression

"...għidt istra ara naqra jiena kollox foregranted...naf li għandi xogħol, naf li għandi dar, naf li għandi saqaf fuq rasi, naf li għandi ikel...u din qed thabbel rasha...x'ha tiekol, fejn ha torqod, x'ha ssib, fhimt? Jiena nħossni safe...din le, fhimt?...istra..."(Martina[NEH-postF]).

"...I said 'goodness! I take everything for granted... I know that I have a job, I know that I have a house, I know that I have a roof over my head, I know that I have food... while this person is worrying about... what will she eat? where will she sleep? what will she find? do you understand? I feel safe... unlike this person, do you understand?" (Martina[NEH-postF]).

"... kif bdejt is-sentenza kienet, kemm għandi affarijiet komuni ma' persuna oħra li kienet fil-kamra iżda ċirkostanzi kienu differenti...dik ukoll gegħlitni nifhem li jien kelli ċertu privileggi li ħaddieħor ma kellux u b'hekk spiċċat f'dik is-sitwazzjoni..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"... how I started the sentence was, how many things do I have in common with another person who was in the room but whose circumstances were different?... that also made me realize that I had certain privileges that others didn't have and thus they ended up in that situation..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"...le għax ikun hawn nies li qed ikollhom bżonn għajjnuna u mhux tingħata [...] Is-sistema mhux taħdem..." (Kris[NEH-SR3])

"...there are people who need help but this is not being given [...] The system isn't working..." (Kris[NEH-SR3])

"...bdejna nitkellmu ħabba s-sistema...u x'tista' toffri iktar...kienet vera interessanti dik...meta kellna tas-saħħa...kienet vera interessanti." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

"...we started talking about the system... and what else it can offer... that was really interesting... when we had discussed about the health system, it was really interesting." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

5.2.1.2.2 Active listening

"...taf x'nixtieq jien? active listening...naħsibha bħal dik LARA, meta jkolli argument, għax meta jkolli argument nitfi kolloxx...nitfiha u nitfa' perċezjoni tiegħi biss. Allura dik xi ħaġa li nixtieq naħdem fuqha..." (Rosie[NEH-SR1])

"...you know what I want? active listening... to think of LARA, when I have an argument, because when I have an argument, I turn off everything... I turn off and think only from my own perception. So that's something I'd like to work on..." (Rosie[NEH-SR1])

5.2.1.2.3 Empathy and understanding across differences

"...u sharjaw parti mill-problemi tagħhom...li bħalhom għaddejt minnhom jiena. U hemmhekk qisu jifhmuk...qisu jifhmek il-bniedem..għax ikun ġarrab parti mill-esperjenza li jkun għadda dak li jkun." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...and they shared part of their problems... which was similar to what I had been through myself. And it's the moment they understand... one can understand you... because they would have suffered part of the experience as well." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"... ħadt gost li sirt naf perspettivi differenti, għax dak li jkun tista' tempattizza kemm trid qatt ma tista' taħsibha eżatt bħalu." (Kris[NEH-SR4])

"... I enjoyed getting to know different perspectives, because you can empathize as much as you want but you can never think exactly like him." (Kris[NEH-SR4])

"Id-dinamika ta' no judgement atmosphere...[Martina nodding]; illi isma' inti qed titkellem imma ma jfissirx ta' ħdejk ħa jiġġudikak...qed jisma', jista' ma jaqbilx, imma...jien personalment ħassejtni komda hafna. [Martina nodding]. Il-fatt li tisma' ċirkostanzi differenti imma qed nirrelataw u nifhmu lil xulxin." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"The dynamic of a 'no judgement' atmosphere...[Martina nodding] that you are talking but the one next to you will not judge you... one is listening, one may not agree, but... I personally felt very comfortable. [Martina nodding]. The fact that you hear different circumstances but we relate and understand each other." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"Jiena forsi tgħallimt nassumi inqas, milli kont qabel...jiġġifieri f'dawn is-sessions assumejt inqas. Is-soltu kont nasal għall-konkluzjoni bla ma rrid...anke fuqi...sfortunamanet...anke fuq esperjenzi ta' ħaddieħor...li nasal għall- konkluzjoni qabel naf x'għara u ma ġarax.

Allura qisek meta tisma', tisma', tisma' naħseb li issa tgħallimt nassumi inqas...naħseb dik hi xi ħaġa li ehe...ħa tgħinni żgur at the end [Kris nodding]." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"I might have learned to assume less than before... that is, in these sessions I assumed less. I used to come to a conclusion without wanting to... even on myself... unfortunately... even on others' experiences... I come to a conclusion before I know what actually happened and what didn't happen. So it's like when you listen, listen, listen... I think that now I've learned to assume less... I think that's something that yes... it will definitely help me at the end [Kris nodding]." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"...anke fix-xogħol tiegħi ċertu ċirkostanzi li jkunu diffiċli, imma nipprova jekk niltaqa' ma' persuna li għaddejja mill-istess sitwazzjoni, ma nasalx għall- konkluzjoni mill-ewwel imma tisma' iktar minn fejn ġej il-persuna hux." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"...even in my work certain circumstances are difficult, but if I meet a person who has gone through the same situation, I try not to come to a conclusion right away but to hear more about the person." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"Jien naqbel ħafna ma li qalet Rosie, il-fatt li...bla ma trid...tiġġudika..mingħajr ma tkun taf l-istorja kollha, kemm hu importanti li qabel tiġġudika tkun taf l-affarijiet. Bla ma trid tiġġudika, imma...ejja ngħidu li jekk jgħaddi ħsieb ma testernaħx imbagħad...iżżommu għalik, u tgħid le...jista' jkun mit-telf ħaġa...tassumix, basically." [Rosie nodding] (Clayton[NEH-postF])

"I very much agree with what Rosie said... the fact that without wanting to... one makes judgements... without knowing the whole story. How important it is to know things before judging! It comes automatically that you judge, but... let's say if you think of something... you keep it as an internal thought, and tell yourself 'no... it could be a million things... don't assume, basically'." [Rosie nodding] (Clayton[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.2.4 Building relationships

"...kont komda kont...normali. Ifhem għall- bidu kont daqsxejn mistħija, imma mbagħad tintelaq...għax ma tkunx taf x'ha ssib ma' wiċċek...x'ha jiġri u fuq xiex ħa nitkellmu, x'tip huma u hekk...u kollha l-istess konna..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"...I was comfortable, I was... normal. At first, I was a bit shy, but then you loosen up... because you don't know what you'll find, what will happen and what to talk about, what kind of people they are... and [then I found] we were all the same..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"Naħseb mill-ewwel session għall-aħħar session kien hemm iktar openness...kien hemm iktar lok fejn sharing sar bla ħsieb u bla eżitazzjoni..." [the others nod and Rosie agreed] (Kris[NEH-postF])

"I think [compared to] the first session in the last session there was more openness... there was more room where sharing was done without thought and hesitation..." [the others nodding and Rosie agreed] (Kris[NEH-postF])

Researcher: Do you think you are more similar or different than a (another) person who is experiencing homelessness?

The phrases used were “totally different”, “ċerta li l-oppożt” – “certainly the opposite” and u “nħossni lil hinn li nista’ nikkumpara lili nnifsi...li nsib ċertu kompatibilità mal-persuna” – “I feel far from comparing myself...to find certain compatibility with the person”.

The phrases used were “l-istess tip” – “same type”, “simili ħafna” – “very similar”, “ma narax li hemm differenzi kbar bejnietna” - “I do not see large difference between us”.

*“... imma ħadt qisu mħabba...ħadt ħbieb u kumpanija...tgħallimt, irnexxielna nagħmlu dik l-ittra...forsi xi darba naslu xi mkien. B’xi mod jew ieħor ħa naslu...mhux ħa naqta’ qalbi...jew ħaġa **jew** oħra ħa nagħmluha żgur. Jekk mhux għalina għal ħaddieħor li qed ibati iktar minni, fhimt? Allura qisni looking forward li nibqgħu niltaqgħu biex dak li ħdimna għalih ma jintilifx.” (Fiona[PEH-postF])*

“... but I received like love... I made friends and company... I learned, we managed to write that letter... maybe one day we’ll get somewhere. One way or another we’ll get there...I will not give up...either one thing or another we’ll do it for sure. If it’s not for us, then for others who are suffering more than me. So I’m looking forward to keep meeting so that what we worked for isn’t lost.” (Fiona[PEH-postF])

“Looking forward...ħadt pjaċir mal-grupp...ħadt pjaċir li ltqajt magħkom [...] ħadt pjaċir...looking forward. Jalla jerġa’ jasal nhar is-Sibt u ma ndumux, u nibqgħu naħdmu id f’id...ġest sabiħ.” (Sara[PEH-SR1])

“Looking forward to... I enjoyed the group... it was a pleasure meeting you [...] I enjoyed it... looking forward to... God willing till next Saturday won’t take long, and we’ll continue to work hand in hand...it’s a nice gesture.” (Sara[PEH-SR1])

Whilst, people who never experienced homelessness, tried to explore the reasons behind such positive group dynamics, using positive terms such as “xi ħaġa clicked” - “something clicked”, and “kulħadd deher ġenwin” – “everyone seemed genuine”

“Kulħadd qisu kien onest fuq li beda jgħid...u kulħadd qisu qasam il-vulnerabbiltà tiegħu; speċi qal l-esperjenzi forsi li fil-passat wegġġgħatu, allura turi li dak li jkun li ok...dan fetaħ

iktar miegħi, so ħa niftaħ iktar miegħu...kien hemm komunikazzjoni tajba."
(Martina[NEH-postF])

"Everyone seemed honest about what they said... and everyone seemed to have shared their vulnerability; shared their experiences that might have been painful in the past, so it shows that that person is [now] ok... they opened up more with me, so they let me open up more with them... there was good communication." (Martina[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.3 Subtheme 2: (Dis)Empowerment

5.2.1.3.1 Taking Action

"Issa nħossni iktar b'saħħti għax m'iniex qiegħda waħdi, u hemm min jaf ipoġġi l-kliem aħjar minni u jekk eżempju xtaqt nikteb xi ħaġa, hemm xi ħadd li jista' jgħinni. Jekk jien qiegħda daqsxejn lazy biex nikteb u nispjega ruħi, ngħid għall-inqas jekk nista' nagħmel xi ħaġa oħra.[...]allura kulħadd qisu għandu l-biċċa tiegħu biex jagħti sehm." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"Now I feel stronger because I'm not alone, and there are people who know how to put words better than me. If, for example, I wanted to write something, there is someone who can help me. If I am a bit too lazy to write and explain myself, I mean, at least if I can, I'll do something else [...] it seems that everyone has their own potential to contribute." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"Imma rridu grupp bħalkom, li tinteressaw ruħkom tagħmlu dawn il-laqqgħat biex ikunu jafu, għax il-bqija ma jkunx jafu [il-politikanti]. Dan mhux ħa nkun jien u ħa nikteb ittra u nibgħathielu, għax jgħidlek din min hi? Ikunu tnejn dejjem aħjar milli waħda." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"But we want a group like you, one that shows interest in holding these sessions so that they come to know, because otherwise they do not come to know [the politicians]. If I write a letter and send it to him, he'll ask, who's this? Two are always better than one." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...nimmagina nistgħu ngħinu ħafna ħafna iktar nies li huma fil-bżonn, bħali l-ewwel waħda. Nixtieq ngħid...hemm ismi, hemm sehmi...tara n-nies jieħdu pjacir...qed jgħixu mill-ftit bħalma qed ngħix jien." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"...I think we can help many, many more people who are in need, just like me. I'd like to say... there's my name... there's my share... you see people enjoying themselves..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"Jekk qegħdin hawnhekk bħala grupp u ktibna dak li ktibna, l-azzjoni abbli noħduha għalina 'l quddiem u għal dawk in-nies close tagħna wkoll, għax jekk inti ma tkunx tista' taffordja l-kera, hi ħaġa reali u kważi kulħadd għandu xi ħadd mill-familja tiegħu li għaddej mill-istess sitwazzjoni...jekk mhux familja,ħbieb." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

"If we are here as a group and we have written what we have written, the right action will be taken for us in the future and for those people close to us as well, because if you cannot afford rent, it's the reality and almost everyone has someone from their family who's going through the same situation... if not family, friends." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

"Jien nixtieq indaħħal l-YMCA magħna, ħalli jekk ikollna bżonn nagħmlu laqgħa, ikun hemm xi ħadd jifhem." (Martina[NEH-SR4])

"I'd like to bring YMCA on board with us, so that if we need to plan a meeting, there will be someone who is knowledgeable." (Martina[NEH-SR4])

"...inkun irrid niġi nitkellem, però hemm il-wegħhat. Hemm it-tbatija...ma nixtieqx niftaħ nerga' l-feriti. Għalkemm għal fejn kont...kont nibki mill-ewwel, illum nista' ngħid veru b'saħħti u nitkellem mhux biex jithassruni, għax jien m'inx miskina...jien la qatt ma kont u lanqas ħa nkun...biex ċertu affarijiet, ma jgħaddux minn xiex għaddejt jiena...u li dawn l-affarijiet, iva kienu jeżistu." (Sara[PEH-SR3])

"...I would want to come and talk, but there is pain. There is suffering... I don't want to open the wounds again. Although, compared to how I was... I used to break down in tears immediately, today I can say I'm very strong and I can talk and not pity myself, because I'm not a poor thing... I've never been nor will I be... but for certain things, so they won't experience what I have experienced... and that these things, yes, they existed." (Sara[PEH-SR3])

"Li nista' nagħmel jiena indirettament...għarfien. Eżempju ma' sħabi...isma' fuq homelessness, dawn mhux vizzju ta' drogi ta'...għax dik il-mentalità...drogi...isma' homeless, mhux għax m'għandix saqaf fuq rasha fhimt. Jien bħala Martina, issa ngħarraf lil ħaddieħor u iktar awareness fuq dawn l-affarijiet..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"What I can do indirectly... is awareness. For example, with my friends... listen regarding homelessness, they're not drug addicts... because that's the mentality... drugs...instead, homeless, not because they don't have a roof over their head. I, as Martina, now I can inform others and increase awareness of these things..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"Dejjem hemm spazju għall-għarfien, kemm għalik personali u kemm kif qalet Martina taqsam[...] imma taqsam li tgħid, isma' biddlu din perspettiva li l-homlessness ifisser mod imma jista' jkun ifisser mod ieħor..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"There's always room for knowledge, both for you personally and as Martina stated [...] to share, change this perspective that homelessness means one thing but it can mean other things..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.1.3.2 The system is bigger than me!

"Għax ma tantx għandi kontroll ta' ħafna minn dawn l-affarijiet hux. Mill-ftit x'nista' nagħmel?" (Martina[NEH-preF])

"Because I don't really have much control over these things. So what can I do?" (Martina[NEH-preF])

"...hawn Malta nsibha diffiċli, ngħid, imma dan kif ħa ngħinu jiena? Kif there and then nista' ntejjiblu ħajtu?" (Clayton[NEH-preF])

"...here in Malta I would find it difficult, but how can I help him? How can I improve his life there and then?" (Clayton[NEH-preF])

"Iżda kif inħossni wara li nieqaf inkellem mal-persuna [homeless] inħossni... helpless waħda u sew, ir-raġuni għaliex irrelevanti tagħtix l-għajjnuna biex taċċessa s-servizz...kulhadd jaf l-lack of human resources li għandna f'Malta, u sakemm tasal biex taċċessahom, Alla jaf x'jista' jiġri minn dik il-persuna, jiġifieri." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"But how do I feel after I stop talking to a person [experiencing homelessness]... I feel very much helpless. The reason is because it is irrelevant providing information on how to access the service... everyone knows the lack of human resources we have in Malta, and how far one needs to go to access them, God knows what can happen to that person..." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"Jien problema qas naf minn fejn naqbad kieku, għax daqskemm m'għandix għarfien fuq is-suġġett, qas naf minn fejn nibda. Fuq livell indiviwal... jien naf...nista' ngħaddi appoġġ materjali jekk ikun hemm familja involuta, ikun hemm bżonn xi fridge żgħira u jkolli żejda, suq...però mhux ħa ssolvi l-problema, kif għidna l-ewwel, tal-flus ta' dak il-ħin. Sistematikament u...ma tantx qed nara li l-politika tista' tavvanza fuq dan l-istadju għax bilkemm tapproċja s-suġġett. Ma tantx huwa popolari bħala suġġett għall- politiku [others agree]" (Kris[NEH-preF])

"Personally, the problem is I don't know from where to start, because as much as I don't have knowledge on this subject, I don't know where to start. On an individual level... I don't know... I can provide material support if there is a family involved, there's a need for a small fridge and I have an extra one... but it doesn't solve the problem, as we previously mentioned, money is something there and then. Systematically and... I don't really see that politics can improve things in this matter because it's barely approached as a subject. It's not very popular as a subject for a politician. For the politician, popularity comes first [others agree]." (Kris[NEH-preF])

"U iva x'nista' nagħmel?...għadni li helpless, fhimt...x'nista' nagħmel iktar fuq hekk? kif nista' ngħinjom lil dawn in-nies? Fhimt?..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"And yes, what can I do?...I'm still helpless... what more can I do? How can I help these people?" (Martina[NEH-postF])

"...helpless għax hi xi ħaġa ħafna ikbar minna...u kif jiena persuna waħdi nista' nsolviha?[...] Kif kien hemm persuna qalet, li esperjenzat homelessness, li iktar ma jgħinu iktar infushom biex ma jaqtgħux qalbhom u jaħdmu biex joħorgu...naħseb dik...dik l-aħjar...u forsi li tismagħhom, naħseb ukoll tkun qed tgħin...il-fatt li tisma'." (Clayton[NEH-postF])

"... helpless because it's something much bigger than us... and how can I alone solve it? [...] As a person who experienced homelessness said, the more they help themselves not to give up and to work to get out... I think that... that's the best... and maybe listening to them, I think that also helps... the fact that you listen." (Clayton[NEH-postF])

"Fuq livell individwali...helpless għax jien x'nista' nagħmel, bidla daqshekk radikali? Nista' nagħmel xirja l-foodbank u kemm ħa ngħin familji? Imma short-term, tifhimni? ...jien ma tantx jogħġbuni soluzzjoni short-term. Tipo...jekk hemm xi fatturi li jista' jiġu indentifikati lokalment li jwasslu iktar għal homelessness...fors i jstgħu jiġu indentifikati xi soluzzjoni biex tanticipa homelessness..." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"On an individual level... helpless because what can I do, such a radical change? I can donate to the foodbank and how many families will I help? But [it's in the] short-term, do you understand? ...I don't really like short-term solutions. I mean... if there are any factors that can be identified, locally, as to

what leads to homelessness... perhaps a solution that identifies and anticipates homelessness can be found..." (Kris[NEH-postF])

5.2.2 Theme 2: The IGD process from the participants' lens

5.2.2.1 Subtheme 4: The sharing of experiences.

"Huma [referring to the other group] jistgħu jgħallmuna wkoll is-sitwzzjonijiet u ċertu servizzi li hawn ukoll [Clayton & Martina nodding]. Għax billi nidhlu onlajn u nfittxu mhux biżżejjed għax l-għarfien ma tiħdux onlajn iżda min-nies." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"They [referring to the other group] can also teach us about the situations and certain services that are available [Clayton and Martina nodding]. Because it's not enough to search online because knowledge doesn't come from online sources but from the people." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"...knoweldge hemm..fis-sens u sar bl-isforz bl-għarfien tal-università, mhux fix-xogħol. Però kif semmejt l-ewwel jekk ma jkollokx kuntatt, din m'hemmx każ ta' one daily basis, iżda jekk ma jkollokx kuntatt ma' min vera qed jgħaddi minn l-esperjenza, in- knowledge, ma tagħmilx differenza...bħal speċi qiegħda hemmhekk iżda biex tipprattikahx, m'għandekx ċans...." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"...I've got knowledge... from knowledge of the university, not due to work. But as I mentioned before, if you don't have contact, this is not a case of on a daily basis, but if you don't have contact with who is really going through the experience, the knowledge, it doesn't make a difference... like it's already there, but to practise it you don't have chance..." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"...qsamt l-esperjenzi tiegħi magħkom u minnhom nispera li jitgħallem haddieħor li kien fil-grupp...ihtar ħassejtni li kelli nagħti...tajt li haddieħor mill-esperjenzi tiegħi..." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...I shared my experiences with you and from them I hope that others who were in the group will learn... I felt that I can give more... I gave others from my experiences..." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"...jiena...il-grupp li kien hemm fil-laqqgħat li ġejt jiena...qisni ħassejt li missejtilhom il-fond ta' qalbhom bl-istejjer tiegħi..."(Sara[PEH-postF])

"...the group that was present in the sessions I attended... I felt that I touched their hearts with my stories..."(Sara[PEH-postF])

"Awtomatikament dak il-ħin ħassejt rabja u l-wegħgħat ħirġin...però wara ħassejtni komda li neħhejt ċertu...toqol li kelli ġo fija. Għalhekk sabiħ kultant li titkellem ma' nies ...ma' nies li jisimgħuk u jifhmuk u speċjalment biex ma jagħmlux l-iżbalji jew jipprovaw jevitaw l-affarijiet li għaddejt minnhom jiena." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"Automatically at that time I felt anger and my pain surfacing... but later I felt relieved that I had removed a certain... heaviness that I had inside me. So sometimes it's nice to talk to people... with people who listen and understand you and especially so they don't make the same mistakes or try to avoid what I went through." (Sara[PEH-postF])

"Meta tirrakkonta minn xiex tkun għaddejt u hekk hux...thoss dik l-għafsa ġo fik..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"When you share what you've been through... you feel that pressure inside you..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"Nirrakkomandahom għax bħalma tgħallimt jien u taffejt naqra mill-uġiġh u li tagħmel ħbieb ġodda...biżżejjed ukoll...għax inti meta titkellem qed ittaffi..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

"I recommend them because I learned and it relieved me of the pain and to make new friends... it's enough... because when you talk, you're easing the pain..." (Fiona[PEH-postF])

5.2.2.2 Subtheme 5: Outside the usual social bubble

"Li toħroġ mill-bubble...li toħroġ min-nies li s-soltu tiffrenkwenta...li joqogħdu fl-istess area li toqgħod inti. [...] Hemmhekk [fis-sessjonijiet] kienet fil-beraħ...allura fil-beraħ tinftehem aħjar u kif għidna, tista' tifhem aħjar is-sitwazzjoni tagħhom u tkun naqra iktar...empatija l-ewwel użajt Clayton...naħseb kelma importanti ħafna." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"To move outside the bubble... to move out from the people you usually frequent... those living in the same area as you. So it's like everyone is in the same pool, colleagues, friends... usually these have similar social backgrounds or else due to social pressures they don't show the circumstances. There [in the sessions] it was open... so in the open you'll be understood and, as we said, you can better understand their situation and you'll be more... Clayton, you used the term empathy before... I think it's a very important word." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"Għax kif semma l-ewwel Kris, għax bla ma trid int tintefa' ġo nies li huma simili...jew li għaddew mill-esperjenza simili tiegħek. So bla ma trid ma tismax nies li għaddew minn esperjenzi differenti minn tiegħek. [Martina nodding] Jew lanqas tkun aware li hawn nies li jkunu epserjenzaw dawn l-affarijiet u dan id-djalogu għen biex niltaqgħu ma' dawn in-nies u tifhem l-esperjenza tagħhom." (Clayton[NEH-postF])

"As Kris mentioned before... without wanting to, you meet similar people... or who have gone through an experience similar to yours. So unknowingly, you don't get to listen to people who have gone through different experiences. [Martina nodding] Or you may not even be aware that there are people who have experienced these things and this dialogue helped us meet these people and understand their experience." (Clayton[NEH-postF])

"...jien naħseb li s-sistema tal-housing kif inhi, eżempju għaddejjin dawn it-tip ta' attivitajiet li qed nagħmlu aħna...ma tgħaddilux minn rasu [ministru]... ħalli s-sitwazzjoni tagħna...imma l-housing stess jasal hu għand in-nies...imma dejjem in-nies iridu jfittxu lilu.." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

"...I think that the housing system as it stands, for example, there are these ongoing activities that we're doing... it doesn't cross [the minister's] mind... leave out this situation... but housing itself reaches people... but always the people must reach out for him." (Rosie[NEH-SR4])

5.2.2.3 Subtheme 6: Structured and facilitated dialogue

5.2.2.3.1 Group norms

"Dejjem żammejna mar-regoli...u dejjem fakkarna f'kull session, li isma' qegħdin hawnhekk, li ħa jintqal hawnhekk ħa jibqa' hawnhekk, li noqogħdu attenti x'jintqal biex ma nweġġgħu lil ħadd...nisimgħu lil dak li jkun. Naħseb b'ħala grupp, konna kollha nies maturi...kapaċi nisimgħu, nifhmu u naħseb tajna ċans lil xulxin nitkellmu wkoll." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"We've always adhered to the rules... and you always reminded us in every session, that we're here, that whatever is said here will stay here, that we pay attention to what we say so as not to hurt anyone... we listen to one another. I think as a group, we were all mature people... able to listen, understand and I think we gave each other a chance to talk as well." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"Li nipprova ma niġġudikax però...imma li anke kif iddiskutejna kemm hu importanti li ma tiġġudikax meta ma tkunx taf l-istorja...mhux għax persuna hija jew għandha xi ħaġa jew xi esperjenza teħodha forgranted li għax drogata jew whatever." (Clayton[NEH-SR2])

"That I try not to judge but... but even as we discussed how important it is not to judge when you don't know the story... [if] a person is or has something or some experience you [shouldn't] take it for granted because they are drugged or whatever. (Clayton[NEH-SR2])

5.2.2.3.2 The need for facilitation and mediation.

"Jien naħseb li jrid ikun hemm xi tip ta' medjazzjoni imma meta jiltaqqgħu dawn il-gruppi...jista' jkun, ċertu affarijiet, jistgħu ma jinftehmux sew.

Researcher: *B'ħala medjazzjoni qed tifhem b'ħala facilitator jew xi ħaġa differenti?*

Facilitation parti minnha imma mediation...li inti tidentifika tali mod...misunderstanding li qed joħloq kunflitt[...] għandek bżonn interpersonal skills, li qed issegwi x'qed jgħidu l-individwi u toħroġ is-sens minnu. Naħseb importanti li jkun hemm dawn IGD, naħseb jiena...f'kwalunkwe sitwazzjoni jekk ikollok gruppi differenti b'ideat differenti, jekk ħa tlaqqagħhom ħa joħorġu b'ideat ġodda." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"I think that there must be some kind of mediation when these groups meet... it might be that certain things are not well understood. (Kris[NEH-postF])

Researcher: *Do you mean mediation as a facilitator or something different?*

Facilitation is part of it but mediation... that you identify a way... misunderstanding that is creating conflict... you need interpersonal skills, to follow what the individuals are saying and get the gist out of it. I think it's important to have these IGDs, I think... in any situation if you have different groups with different ideas, if you bring them together, they'll come out with new ideas." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"...il-kultura tal-medjazzjoni f'Malta għadha lura ħafna. L-ewwel semmejna l-kunflitti [...] jekk inti għandek ċertu...differenzi li, isma' jistgħu jwasslu għal kunflitt, irid ikollok...li ehe...il-medjazzjoni tkun hemm biex inti ssolvi dak il-kunflitt li nqala'. Jigifieri naħseb li ehe...is-sens ta' medjazzjoni importanti ħafna u...ma naħsibx li kulħadd

...sfortunatament, għandu l-iskills neċessarji biex jittollera ċertu temiet li ddiskutejna aħna." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"...the mediation culture in Malta is very backward. Before we mentioned conflicts [...] if you have certain... differences that, can lead to a conflict, you need to have... that yes... the mediation will be present for you to resolve that conflict that would have arisen. I mean, I think that yes... the sense of mediation is very important and... I don't think that everyone... unfortunately, has the necessary skills to tolerate certain themes that we discussed." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

5.2.2.4 Subtheme 7: The need for more IGD

"Hemm ħafna iktar x'jingħad. Inħoss, jiena...dawn is-sessions kienu tajbin ħafna iżda huwa suġġett vast ħafna li għandu bżonn l-attenzjoni jiġifieri. Inħossni jiġifieri li barely grazed the surface." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"There's much more to be said. I feel, I... these sessions were very good but it's a very vast subject that needs attention. I feel I've barely grazed the surface." (Kris[NEH-postF])

"Pjuttost kien hemm sessions li xtaqna nitkellmu iktar...speċi ta' tant kien li jinteressa lil kulhadd u ried jaqsam dak li x'kellu x'jgħid, kien hemm ċertu diskussjonijiet li kien hemm iktar lok ta' x'jintqal...iktar lok ta' ħin li...imma dan is-suġġett never ending kieku ma nieqfu qatt..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"Actually, there were sessions where we wanted to talk more... kind of, everyone was so interested and wanted to say things, there were certain discussions that had more to be discussed... needed more time... but this subject is never ending..." (Martina[NEH-postF])

"...meta niġu biex niltaqqgħu għal xi tip ta' konferenza jew seminar...dejjem nies professjonisti, dawk li qed jipprezentaw il-minoranza jkun hemm...jien dik tweggħgħani ħafna...għax...dawn IGD hemm bżonn għalihom...jien żgur ħa nieħu 100% minnha għax int littermalment qed tmiss ma' nies li vera qed tagħti servizz għalihom.. Jien bidla fi xogħol ħa jkun hemm żgur kif il-mod kif inħares lejn l-affari u lejn is-suġġett (Clayton and Martina nodding)" (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"...when it comes to some kind of conference or seminar... there are always professional people, those who are representing the minority... that bothers me a lot... because... there is the need of such IGDs... I'm sure I'll gain 100% from it, because you're literally meeting people that you're really providing a service for. This will affect my work for sure in the way I look at the situations and at the subject (Clayton and Martina nodding)." (Rosie[NEH-preF])

"Dawn it-tip ta' IGD li saru...nimmaġinahom ħafna fuq postijiet tax-xogħol. Kieku mhux ħa ngħidlek li ħa nbiddlu l-mentalitajiet...imma forsi nifthuhom ftit [...] naħseb kieku jmiss vera dawk in-nies li jaħdmu magħhom dirett jew b'mod indirett, speċjalment jekk taħdem fi social services, naħseb li l-bidla tkun għall-aħjar...żgur hux!" (Rosie[NEH-postF])

Clayton: Meta tgħid fuq postijiet tax-xogħol Rosie...x'jiġifieri imma?

"Eżempju inti ġejt dawn tip ta' sessions...u kif għid spjegajt inti ħadt xi ħaġa, jiena għaliha nneħħu dil-mentalità...li bħal speċi...inti fuq post tax-xogħol jista' jkollok kollega li għaddej minn xi esperjenza simili. Jiġifieri ġieli noħduha foregranted li daww li jaħdmu b'mod dirett biss, għandhom bżonn ikunu interessati f'dawn it-tip ta' topics; imma jekk jiena għandi kollega, x'tip ta' skills ħa nuża? u kif ħa nifhem?..." (Rosie[NEH-postF])

"These types of IGD... I imagine them a lot taking place at work places. I wouldn't say that we will change mindsets... but maybe broaden them [...] I think if it were to reach those people who work with them directly or indirectly, especially if you work in social services, I think the change will be for the better...surely!" (Rosie[NEH-postF])

Clayton: What are you referring to when you are mentioning work places?

"For example, you came to these types of sessions... and as you said, you gained something, personally, we remove this mentality... sort of... you may have a colleague who is going through a similar experience at work. Sometimes we take it for granted that only those who work [in such jobs] need to show interest in these types of topics, but if I have a colleague, what kind of skills shall I use and how shall I understand?" (Rosie[NEH-postF])

Appendix G

**The following is a list of points that were discussed collectively
as a group.**

Questions that we wish to pose:

1. What is the reason for the excessive waiting time for an individual seeking help to receive help? (especially for housing);
2. How can NGOs help further? From our own experience, it seems that people are not aware of other NGOs that offer support apart from the YMCA;
3. How can the YMCA help the residents become more autonomous? What is the effect of frequent changes of staff on the residents?; and
4. What is the meaning of homelessness? (the lack of a national definition) What do we know about it? How do people and organisations define homelessness?

Social accommodation:

1. The need for more awareness about housing;
2. Is the correct information being shared? Is there actually something being done from their end to pass on the correct information and ensure the people most in need are actually informed? For example, the correct information on social benefits;
3. Why, in reality, do people who are in need end up waiting years—over 5 years—to obtain housing accommodation? Thus, the need to reduce excessive waiting time; and

4. What are the procedures and criteria that the

Social Accommodation department abides by? Is there a particular checklist that the department must follow in order to determine eligibility?

The need for more awareness, especially of all the services available, was very much highlighted as a group. We further discussed about how, despite the presence of information dissemination tools such as social media and living in year 2022, there are still a great number of individuals who are uninformed.