

THE INTIMATE ENEMY:  
GENDER VIOLENCE BETWEEN  
*PUBLIC EMANCIPATION* AND *PRIVATE OPPRESSION* OF LOVE  
MODELS OF PREVENTION

*Ignazia Bartholini, Senior researcher – University of Palermo*

# Index of Presentation

- › 1. Introduction
- › 2. Purpose of reflection
- › 3. The macro-level of gender violence
- › 4. The dynamics of the micro-social level
- › 5. Roles and meso-social level
- › 6. Some empirical examples
  - › 6.1 Some Models of Prevention
  - › 6.2 An experience of best practice against gender violence in Rome
- › 7. Conclusions

# Background

Gender violence in many countries of Europe finds a possible explication in a general “masculine decline” and a more general emancipation of women in public sphere.

Istanbul Convention recognizes that:

*violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal relationships between the sexes, which have led to the dominance of women and the discrimination against them by men.*

Convention also includes crimes committed "in defense of honor".

## Feminism and gender inequality

Despite "*Feminism has marked for women the re-appropriation of speech and expression, for a long time instruments of their (of women) exclusion*" (Pauncz 2016: 279), gender violence is rooted in a proximal and emotional level of intimate life.

This level is independent from all normative frameworks and cultural achievements in the field of gender equality.

# Purpose of reflection

- › My intention is not to dwell on the various structural factors of domestic violence (economic conditions, addiction, alcohol ecc.), but to highlight how the intimate relationship creates different forms of male oppression, that are accepted and shared by female partners on a deeply intimate and emotional plane.
- › This plane deals with their relationship with mothers and female figures of their past and of their personal biography and belonging to their context of reference.
- › There would be no gender-based violence without oppression.
- › Oppression indicates the will of adapting by woman to behavioral and dynamic patterns of role that symbolically rebuild those links with a feminine culture that feminist emancipation in the public sphere has cut off.

## Two interpretations of gender violence in Italy

**Franca Bimbi** leads to violence against women in gender dynamics and exercise of masculine power.

Violence is viewed as a structural field within the dynamics of post-patriarchal domination.

The dynamics of power concern the cultural matrices of gender violence which is the subject of contemporary debate not only on the sociological but also on the legal level.

To explain this inequality, it is necessary to resume P. Bourdieu's definition: "violence against women is a consequence of the male hierarchy of women, a hierarchy protected by a cultural scaffold, erected in the name of known and recognized symbolic principle".

## Two interpretation of gender violence in Italy

The hierarchy of men and women is culturally rooted and not just in sexual difference (De Beauvoir 1949).

Gender violence, in fact, fits within cultural patterns, structurally and unknowingly shared by all participants.

It is a phenomenon intrinsic to a dominant patriarchal culture, which is kept alive through transmission from one generation to another of roles, values and social norms.

# Two interpretation of gender violence in Italy

**Consuelo Corradi** analyzes the violence through a three-dimensional theoretical model:

a **microsocial level**, in which concrete situations eliciting violence and types of face-to-face interaction are taken into account;

a **mesosocial level**, where elements: such as identity, roles and power are considered;

a **macrosocial level**, incorporating the perception and role of bystanders and the community, as well as the representation of love and its consequences.



# Macro-social level of gender violence

For Consuelo Corradi:

- › On **macrosocial level**, gender violence is caused by:
- › the gradual abandonment of the idea of male domination and supremacy which was based on the Italian family;
- › the abandonment of most of the religious values, that in marriage and the traditional family posed the foundation of society and for a long time (until 1974) prevented the divorce;
- › the progressive professional empowerment of women;
- › the resulting sexual emancipation of women that began in the sixties and is symbolized by the case of “Franca Viola” – the first Sicilian woman who refused the marriage as consequence of a sexual assault by a man.

## Microsocial level of gender violence

R. Collins sustains that inside the couple, the emotional sharing is necessary for the maintenance of the same relationship.

This “forward panic» is based on *durée* and oppression.

In my opinion, the forward panic of domestic violence is explained with the concepts of ***durée*** and ***oppression***.

- › The concept of ***Durée*** indicates the temporal succession of violent experience when it is perpetrating on symbolic and material level, but mainly it describes the cause-and-effect of the actions of the partners mutually involved in a temporal perception of violent experience (Bartholini 2013).

# Micro-social level of gender violence

**Oppression means:**

a stifling structure of forces and barriers that tends to immobilize and limit the behaviors.

It defines also a phenomenon - based on the voluntary acceptance of a "habitus" (Bourdieu 1996) - which connotes the interactions of a ritualized violence among members of a couple" (Bartholini 2013: 59).

It is an emotional condition necessary to fix the violent ritual of relationship.

**Domestic violence is a ritual with specific roles.**

## Roles and mesosocial level of gender violence

Oppression and *durée* facilitate the assumption of a private role that often subverts the public role of women:

from a model of winning woman in the public sphere to that of acquiescent victim in the private sphere.

Commonly it believes that a woman is unintentionally victim of violence.

My opinion, derived by a lot of interviews conducted to woman-victims of violence - is that a lot of them "choose" to become victims of they partners and they voluntary accept this role.

## Roles and mesosocial level of gender violence

It creates that is a symbolic relationship with the traditional models of "good wife" and sometimes "good mother" that they have unconsciously inherited from a patriarchal and traditional culture.

In comparison to the models of their mothers and grandmothers, these emancipated women of the XXI century perceive themselves as inadequate.

And this gap between public sphere and private sphere that favors their private submission to roles of a violent patriarchal culture

## Roles and mesosocial level of gender violence

Erving Goffman *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1969) uses a “dramaturgic metaphor” to describe the importance of assuming certain roles in the success of the performance.

In a violent performance there are the role of perpetrator and victim but also of viewer.

The **viewer** exerts the most important role giving perpetrator and victim visibility and identity.

## Roles and meso-social level of gender violence

It is interesting to note, that the ability of adapting to a particular frame is not innate for the partners involved in a violent relationship, but acquired.

The dynamic by which they participate in certain experiences within specific interpretive schemes is precisely indicated by Goffman (2001) with the term “framework”.

It constitutes a real work of adapting to reality. It is practised by all those who do the same experiences at the same time and in the same place, and turns itself into a set of “life-styles” (Goffman E., *Frame Analysis*, 1973).

## Roles and mesosocial level of gender violence

In the case of violent action, the drama gives the opportunities that the participants can be recognized in a own role impersonating a mask, whatever it may be, within that same frame.

Then:

Women, through their role as victims, will re-establish the symbolic link with their mothers. "The good mother is lazy ... and she endures for the good of the family".

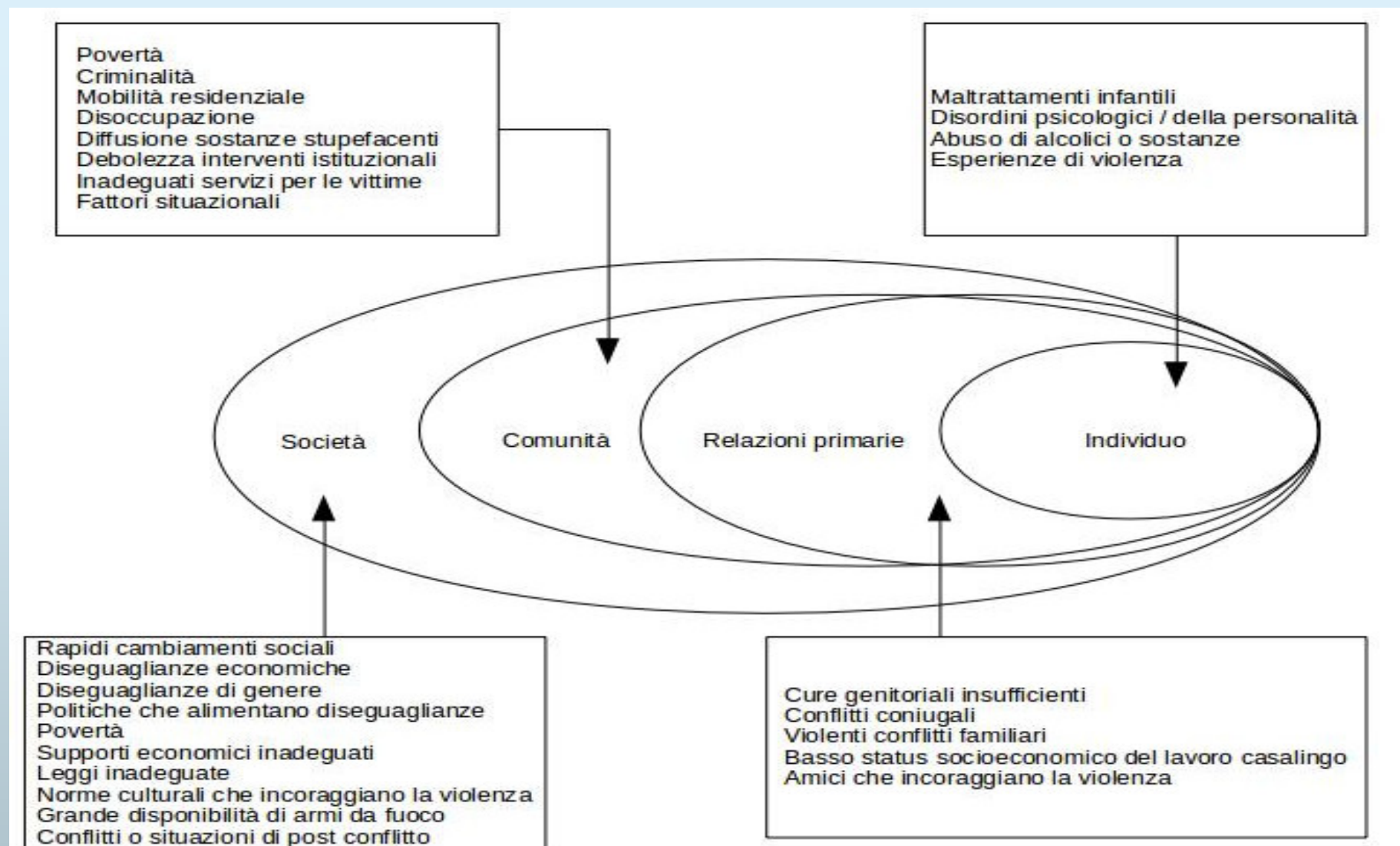
Men will redefine their identity through their own role of perpetrators – identity which in postmodern society has been humiliated by emancipated women in the public sphere.



## Some operational suggestions

- › Socialization processes are fundamental to helping work for victims, perpetrators and witnesses, and above all to interrupt the process of cultural transfer of violent action.
- › In general, the various operational proposals articulate their own reflections from one of the most critical points above: the multidimensionality of the phenomenon, which requires approaches capable of acting on multiple levels.
- › It is difficult to imagine effective interventions that do not work in conjunction with the different levels of scale.
- › Gender violence is conceived as a unitary and multidimensional phenomenon, interventions must also be thought of in a holistic operational key.

# An operational model of intervention policies against gender violence



# An operational model of intervention policies against gender violence

- › Reparation policies can move towards:
  - › 1. victim (it is the most well-known typology of anti-violent centers, listening centers, anti-opposing centers, houses of refuge)
  - › 2. perpetrator (here of course the call is to the sanctioning and warning actions that can be practiced).

## False Men's Center and Circle of Men

- › In Italy, the "False Men's Center" in Florence and the "Circle of Men" in Turin represent the two best examples in the field of male re-education.
- › **False Men's Center** is an experimental project that welcomes violent men and works with multidisciplinary team of educators, psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists with specific training.  
The "center guests" are accompanied and directed towards promoting change for their social and family reintegration.  
The "taking over" of the mistreatment does not replace the criminal proceedings, but acts in parallel.

## False Men's Center of Florence

- › Meetings are held weekly by a group of men who share common information, support each other, to find the sense of being men, husbands, and fathers.
- › The most commonly methodology used is the “work of group”, which allows to work on individual beliefs, motions, and prejudices.
- › The groups of violent men focus primarily on the victim's security and the attribution of responsibility for violent behavior.

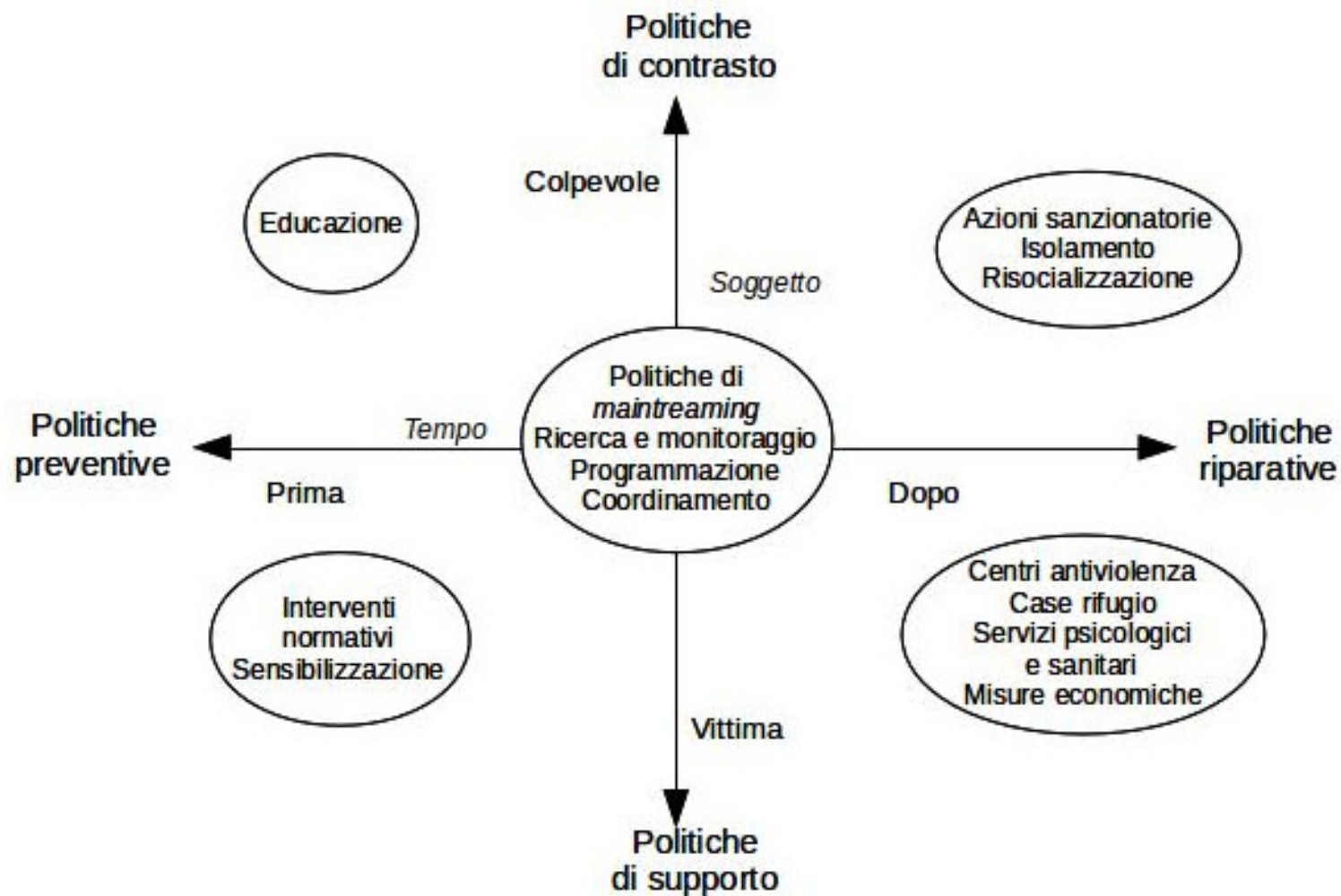
## False Men's Center of Florence

- › The center's agents argue that change in violent man can only occur through the awareness of their actions.
- › During the recovery path it is imported that he recognizes how violence is always produced by a choice and never by fortuitous events.
- › To achieve this goal, C.A.M. considers it essential to work closely with the Anti-Violence Centers in order to ensure safety in women and men through a three-dimensional and integrated approach.

## False Men's Center of Florence

- › To achieve this goal, C.A.M. considers it essential to work closely with the Anti-Violence Centers in order to ensure safety in women and men through a three-dimensional and integrated approach.
- › Among the various strengths of the Listening Center we can remember:
  - › a. the multidisciplinary work of the various operators,
  - › b. networking with the various agencies in the area.
- › Interventions addressed to abusers take into account an approach that may include multiple levels of analysis focusing on socio-cultural factors related to the context of origin, above all, gender relations and roles.

# Intervention policies against gender violence



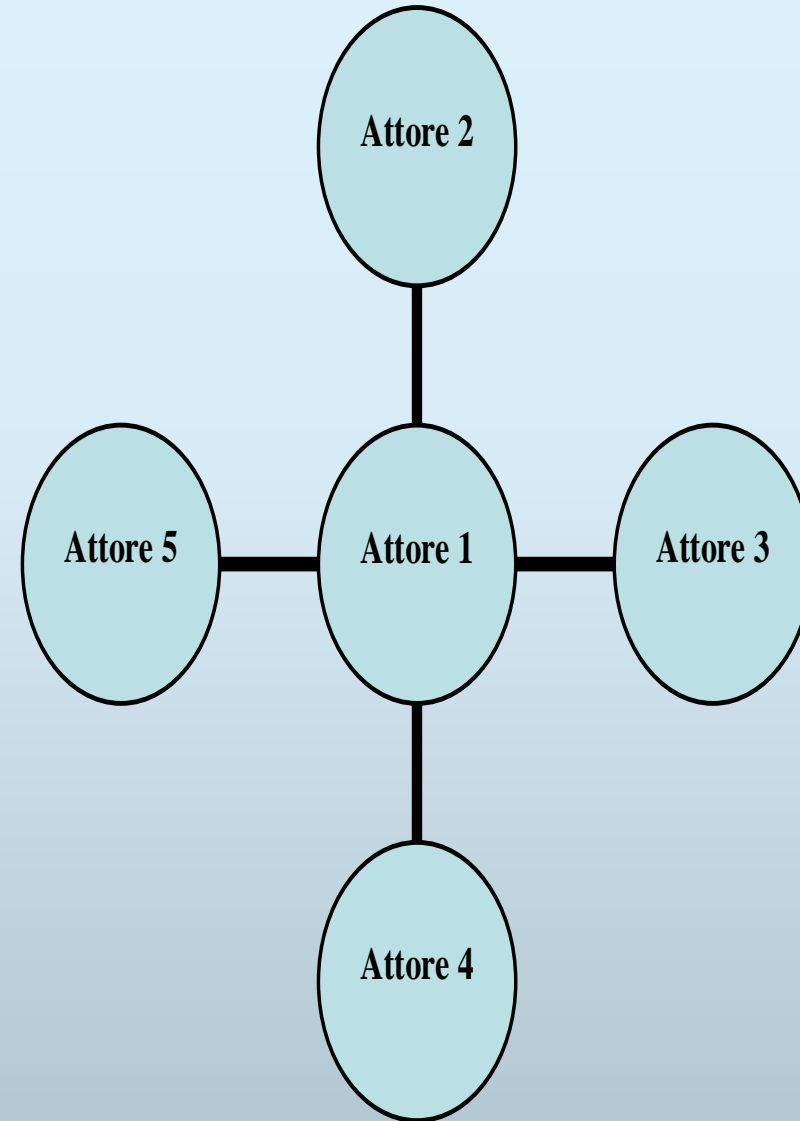
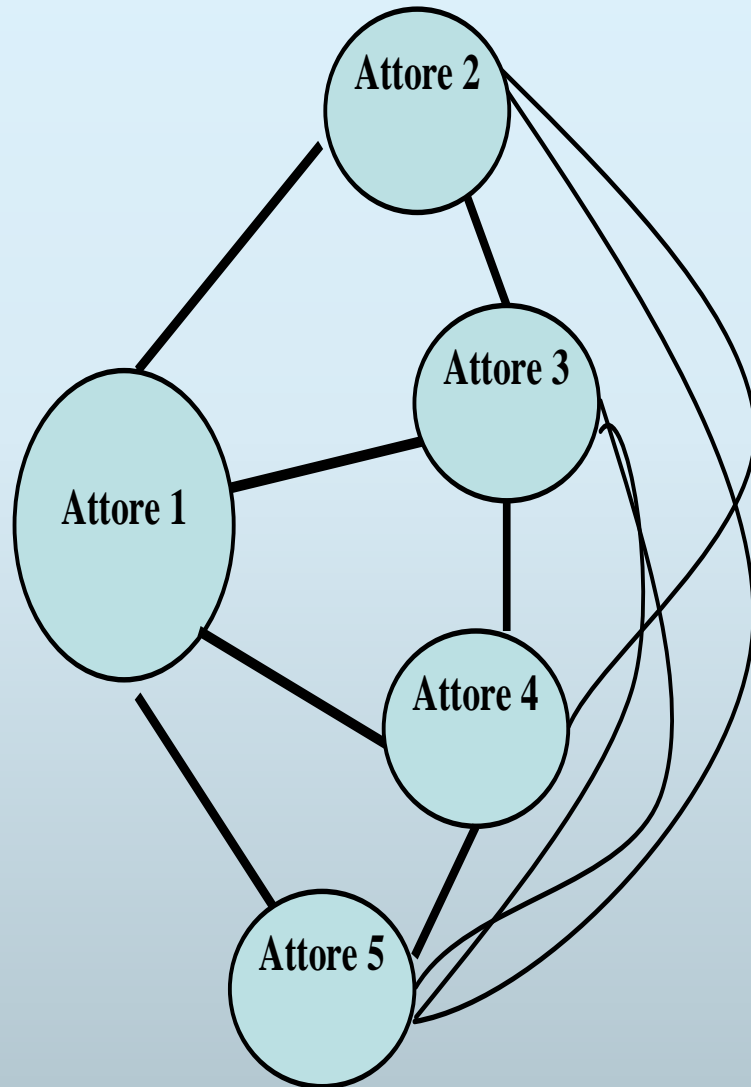


# An experience of best practice against gender violence in Rome

- › The first institution of Women's Gender and Solidarity of our country was Solidea, in Rome in 2004. One year after its establishment, Solidea finances the project of an Observatory on Women Victims of Violence.
- › In 2010, Solidea signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the promotion of shared strategies aimed at preventing and combating the phenomenon of gender violence.

Solidea therefore acts as a new collective actor based on a "stable model of cooperative transactions between individual and collective actors".

# Solideia in Rome



# Conclusion

$\pi$

- › Gender violence is a constitutive and institutional practice of pathologic relationships aimed at achieving reparation,
- › is realized in a context characterized by oppression and *durée*.
- › is determined by a man who is almost never a stranger for the woman but is her partner and at some time her intimate enemy.

# Solideia in Rome

The main goals of the Solideia network are:

- › a) provide integrated and complex responses to the problem of intra and extra-family violence;
- › b) to raise the phenomenon of violence, question cultural stereotypes and stimulate a different awareness among younger generations;
- › c) to promote prevention actions against ill-treated behavior;
- › d) to educate the building of a culture of equal opportunities;
- › e) to plan interventions to help victims rebuild their lives;
- › f) to promote and plan the training of operators who come to the phenomenon for their profession;
- › g) to connect with other similar national and foreign experiences;
- › h) to collect and analyze data on the phenomenon;
- › i) to promote at the provincial level the dissemination of Anti-Violence Centers and the establishment of a network between them;
- › l) to promote the quality of reception and response of spatial services to women victims of violence;
- › m) to promote the planning and implementation of interventions aimed at preventing domestic violence, protection, and support for victims.

# Solideia in Rome

The main goals of the Solideia network are:

- › a) provide integrated and complex responses to the problem of intra and extra-family violence;
- › b) to raise the phenomenon of violence, question cultural stereotypes and stimulate a different awareness among younger generations;
- › c) to promote prevention actions against ill-treated behavior;
- › d) to educate the building of a culture of equal opportunities;
- › e) to plan interventions to help victims rebuild their lives;
- › f) to promote and plan the training of operators who come to the phenomenon for their profession;
- › g) to connect with other similar national and foreign experiences;
- › h) to collect and analyze data on the phenomenon;
- › i) to promote at the provincial level the dissemination of Anti-Violence Centers and the establishment of a network between them;
- › l) to promote the quality of reception and response of spatial services to women victims of violence;
- › m) to promote the planning and implementation of interventions aimed at preventing domestic violence, protection, and support for victims.

But we must remember that "most of the relationships, even the most intimate and loving ones, enclose a conflicting component".

The important thing is that the conflict does not turn into pathological behaviors and that the couple does not become the theater of identity defects of men and women, the **intimate enemies** of this millennium.

$\pi$

Thank you for your patience