



INGRiD

INtersecting GRounds of Discrimination in Italy



Current anti-discrimination practices in Italy: an empirical analysis

By



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The INGRiD Project

INGRiD's priority is to combat discrimination using an intersectional approach which considers the (many) identities that each individual expresses and their interaction with wider systems of exclusion and discrimination. In Italy there are numerous actors involved in combating discrimination which, however, often focus on single factors of discrimination (gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc.). Still, a lot of work remains to be done in order to fully recognise the impact of the intersection of all these dimensions in creating dynamics of exclusion, disadvantage, and discrimination.

INGRiD seeks to promote the intersectional approach in policies and practices of the actors involved in the fight against discrimination in Italy, and namely in the following territories: Trentino, Alto Adige, Veneto, Liguria, and Marche. INGRiD adopts a trans-sectoral approach involving a variety of stakeholders, and combines empirical research, training, innovation of practices, dissemination, and policy advice.

- Counter discrimination by promoting an intersectional approach.
- Increase the effectiveness of anti-discrimination services in preventing, recognising, and counteracting 'multiple discrimination' and consolidate a local and national network that works with an intersectional approach.
- Raise awareness on 'multiple discrimination' among professionals who work in public and private services, transforming them into 'active agents' of the struggle against discrimination.
- Dialogue with policymakers at local, national, and European level to promote more inclusive rules and practices and raise citizens' awareness by increasing their ability to recognise and combat discrimination.

INGRiD includes empirical research, training, exchange of best practices, and awareness-raising. INGRiD's action is informed by research work that explores the "hidden" dimensions of discrimination, both in legislation and in the practices and the implementation of the concept of intersectionality to understand its potential as an intervention tool in the social and legal field. Through the work of partners in the area, INGRiD offers a wide range of training actions aimed at professionals in public and private services (law enforcement, public transport, teachers, public employees, social services) and consolidates the work of a network of branches in various Ligurian provinces and in Trento. Through an awareness-raising campaign carried out with journalistic investigations and by initiating a dialogue with political decision-makers, INGRiD promotes the importance of an intersectional approach in the fight against discrimination. Strongly rooted in the territory, INGRiD constantly looks at the supranational dimension to contextualise the Italian case in the broader European landscape and be inspired by the best practices of other countries, in order to act in a transnational perspective for the adoption of new rules that guarantee an effective protection against all acts of discrimination.

The report

This Report is the result of a collective research work within the Center for Religious Sciences of the Bruno Kessler Foundation. In particular, the following people took part in the theoretical dialogue on intersectionality and the conduction of focus groups activities with organisations committed to fighting discrimination: Valeria Fabretti, Daniele Ferrari, Ilaria Valenzi, Nausica Palazzo, Carlotta Giorgis, Stefania Yapo, and Deborah S. Iannotti. Furthermore, the following people contributed to the development of research tools in the areas of education, data collection, and analysis with the schools involved: Valeria Fabretti, Mario Garofalo, Stefania Yapo, and Deborah S. Iannotti. The Report is edited by Valeria Fabretti; the second Chapter was written in collaboration with Deborah S. Iannotti. A heartfelt thanks goes to the coordinator and partners of the INGRiD project for supporting us and sharing useful documentation for research as well as to the contact people of the organisations, professionals, teachers, and students who graciously agreed to participate in the research activities.



The Center for Religious Sciences at the Bruno Kessler Foundation (FBK-ISR) is a non-denominational research unit financed mainly by the Province of Trento. FBK-ISR studies the role of religion (communities, minorities, practices, beliefs, institutions, and other actors) within processes of change in contemporary society, including digitisation, migration, growing cultural diversity, the polarisation of beliefs, and disagreement. The research team at FBK-ISR brings together expertise in sociology of religious diversity, social epistemology, philosophy of recognition and inclusion, research methodologies, and applied ethics in the field of medicine and health. FBK-ISR is involved in a number of research and action projects both at the international and national level, with focus on inclusive societies, tolerance and interreligious dialogues, intersectionality, non-discrimination, and participation of young people in social media.



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Abstract

As part of the activities related to the INGRiD project, the Report offers an interpretation of the main challenges that the intersectional perspective poses to the understanding and contrasting of discrimination phenomena. With particular focus on the territories involved in INGRiD, the report explores how the intersectional dimension affects discriminatory phenomena and how it is handled by the social actors involved in the field of inclusion. The first part deals with intersectionality as a cross-disciplinary field of study and its possible impact on new research methodologies and the intervention in complex and plural social fields. In the second part, intersectionality is discussed as an interpretative key of the discriminatory phenomena detected on the territories and as an intervention approach according to the perspectives and experiences of social professionals actively involved in the field. Finally, the intersectional analysis of marginalisation is immersed in the educational context by analysing the points of view and experiences of teachers and young teenagers. The conclusions focus on possible approaches to the fight against intersectional discrimination both in social and cultural intervention (training, education, and citizenship awareness).

Introduction

Intersectional discrimination can be defined as a specific form of discrimination based on multiple levels which cannot be distinguished and separated. In other words, intersectionality refers to a situation in which several discriminating factors (legally known as *grounds*) manifest simultaneously aggravating the vulnerability of a person or social group (FRA, 2018).

While the “intersectional idea” has its roots in the analysis of the marginalisation of women of colour in the US social and academic context, in the late eighties/ early nineties this approach established itself as an inquisitive framework in US law theory. Eventually, in recent decades, the intersectional approach has travelled across disciplines at the international level. In our complex, plural, and interconnected societies, intersectionality is key to understanding the multiple experiences, conditions, and allegiances within today's fragmented societies.

Within this quest, the intersectional framework clearly has the potential to transform and improve legal, social, and educational research. However, to cope with the growing use of the term across several scientific disciplines, it seems appropriate to compare the European and Italian frameworks against the backdrop of the US legal and socio-anthropological experience. By looking at the fragmented, partial response offered by institutions at national and local level, INGRiD intends to contribute to creating a national network of qualified services against discrimination and to disseminate appropriate knowledge and awareness of the underlying social, cultural,



and political dynamics, both among interested institutions and citizens. Its strategy, therefore, privileges the strengthening of institutional capacities and service networks' professionals by supporting five territories where anti-discrimination policies are more fragile (Veneto, Liguria, and Marche) or absent to date (Trentino and Alto-Adige/ Südtirol) and providing up-to-date, effective training for different individuals and target groups chosen on the basis of an analysis of specific needs at the local level: teachers and students, public transport drivers, and public officials.

Within the INGRiD framework and with a specific territorial interest, this report explores how the intersectional approach relates to the discrimination phenomenon and how it is received and applied by social actors dealing with inclusion-oriented work.

The Centre has also issued a juridical report to complement the sociological analysis with a comparative juridical approach on International, European, and Italian anti-discrimination law¹.

This report is organised as follows.

In the first section, we develop an interpretative analysis of intersectionality as a theoretical enterprise, research tool, and intervention practice. We then discuss how the intersectional approach contributes to the study of oppressive social constructions that create, reinforce, and juxtapose with the positionality of groups and individuals (Bello, 2020:63). Finally, this section highlights the potential of the intersectional approach for crafting both new research and intervention tools in contemporary plural societies.

In the second part, we extend our investigation by presenting a qualitative analysis of the intersectional aspects of discrimination experienced in the territory taken into consideration. A delicate balance was struck between the sensitivity and culture of the workers and operators and the main tenets of the theory. A micro-sociological approach was applied in our qualitative inquiry in order to highlight local dynamics and the potential intersectional manifestations.

In the conclusions, we present INGRiD's results and possible developments by tackling several dimensions. First, we discuss how social categories can be used to prioritise actions and interventions. Then, we offer several ways to strengthen local social networks. Finally, we highlight the need for the identification of educational priorities and training approaches under an intersectional lens.

1. Intersectional Theory: an interdisciplinary laboratory

1.1 A concept in transition

In the last two decades intersectionality, born within legal theory in the

¹ The results of this study can be found in "Intersectionality as a legal approach: a multilevel perspective between international law, law European, Italian law and comparative perspectives".



United States in the early nineties, has spilled over several disciplines and into the international discourse. The concept of intersectionality goes way back and is rooted in the postcolonial, queer, and Black feminist studies during the sixties and seventies, which questioned any essentialist representation of women.

These approaches were the harbingers of a new radical take on the categories of sex and race². The most important milestones in the genesis of intersectionality as a field of study are the contributions of black feminist authors (especially *An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force*, by Mary Ann Weathers, 1969), who highlighted the multiple oppression of black women and criticised Western white feminism as blind to the racist engineering of society and the interconnection of oppressive experiences. In the English and French³ contexts, the colonial experiences of those years accelerated the process of development of the intersectional approach. In the Italian context, on the other hand, the academic debate has been slower to adopt an intersectional discourse. This reluctance might be the result of two simultaneous phenomena: on the one hand, Italian scholarship's reluctance to face the heavy legacy of the country's racist past; on the other hand, the Italian feminist movement's limited willingness to question its own theoretical and practice assumptions (Perilli 2009).

While feminist theories had raised the "problem of intersectionality" well before naming it (Perilli and Ellena, 2012), the term was coined by US activist and jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989 and 1991). Starting from the debate within Critical Race Theory, Crenshaw included the critical perspectives emerged in the Black feminist community into the developing legal debate related to the limits of equal opportunity policies based on "sex" and "race"/ "ethnicity"⁴. Therefore, Crenshaw mainly saw intersectionality as a legal instrument capable of exposing the systems of oppression and violence suffered by black women, as opposed to legislative measures based on single categories such as sex or gender. However, the scope of Crenshaw's work extends far beyond the legal field and connects to the development of other disciplines and, above all, the understanding of social situations in a complex world. As Davis (2008) recalls, intersectionality – as a theory or a set of theories – offers new potential and perspective to a broad range of approaches within the social sciences.

Regarding sociological scholarship, in particular, intersectionality grafts smoothly into a vast set of studies, ranging from social stratification and systems of power to gender inequalities and racism, from multicultural studies to identity and subjectivity theories. However, we should also em-

² In the awareness of the inappropriateness of the term "race" within whichever scientific discourse, and the stigmatising effects that this concept still produces in political and everyday language, we intend to apply it here only when and as used by the bibliographic contributions we reference in the analysis.

³ For a reconstruction: Perilli, 2009.

⁴ Ibidem



phasise that different theoretical strands in the social sciences have long nurtured an intersectional perspective. For instance, in the early 20th century, Georg Simmel, one of the fathers of sociology, elaborated the concept of the *intersection of social circles* to explain the multiple affiliations of the individual in differentiated societies⁵. A good example would also be found in developments in relational sociology (Donati, 2011), which sees social relationships as the constitutive element of social dynamics, both in identity and subjectivity; or even the recent reflection on intercultural, or the theories of diversity⁶ and *super-diversity*⁷ (Vertovec, 2007).

Overall, these strands of thought have deeply questioned the idea of identity as a set of distinct affiliations, proposing a dynamic vision in which coexistence, negotiation, and ambiguity are foundational characteristics. These hypotheses fluctuate in a particularly fruitful intellectual *momentum* that characterises contemporary thinking about society, pinned in the critique of the ethnocentric idea of modernity and the *instance of difference*.

What does this set of theories we call “intersectional” add to the sociological reflection on identity as an intersubjective relation and on social inclusion/ exclusion?

One could simply answer by referring to the attempt to address, intentionally and systematically, the position of the subjects in relation to the systems of power and domination (known as *positionality*) in its connections with the question of identity and subjectivity, or to grasp how different social categories enter into the processes of subjectivation and intersubjective relationship (Marchetti, 2011) and identify where situations of greater vulnerability are created. Therefore, this discourse takes into consideration how social positions are constantly co-constructed and re-defined along the multiple, changing, and interconnected axes of differentiation/ identification of interest based on the biographical experience of the subjects (Perilli and Ellena, 2012). Indeed, a staple of the intersectional approach is the rejection of the idea of separability between categories or elements of identity within the dimension of the subject (McCall, 2005) and the consideration of the constant negotiation by individuals in their daily

⁵ Simmel (1908, trad. it. 1989: 355-6) explains how, in the transition from traditional to modern and differentiated societies, the different social circles may be imagined no longer as concentric, but rather intersecting circles. “Groups to which the individual belongs make up, so to speak, a coordinate system, in such a way that each new coordinate that is added determines it in more precise and unambiguous way. (...) Participation from time to time in each one of them still leaves a large room for individuality; but the more numerous they become, the more unlikely it will be that other people still present the same combination of groups”. The key to Simmel’s thinking is therefore the concept of *Wechselwirkung*, “translatable with the expressions ‘reciprocity effect’ or ‘mutual influence’, thanks to which reality is conceived as a network of interrelated phenomena” (Jedlowski et al., 2002: 93).

⁶ Among these, from a philosophical perspective, Paola Parolari (2014) highlights the relevance of the concept of *transdifference* proposed by Breinig and Lösch (2002), which radically questions a binary view of difference (we vs. them).

⁷ On the relationship between intersectionality and superdiversity, a useful contribution is offered by Geerts, Withaecx, and Van den Brandt, 2018.



life.

In sociological terms, therefore, intersectionality is no longer just a useful tool to illuminate the conditions of vulnerable subjects or groups, but a key for the interpretation of the identity and position of these individuals and groups in contemporary society, characterised by multiplicity and simultaneity (Perilli and Elena, 2012). Under this lens, intersectionality leads to a better grasp on the mutability and ambivalence of social conditions which, far from being solely determined by structural factors (social stratification, racism, etc.), can show opposite contextual elements: in other words, individuals present not only and necessarily an intersection based on mere vulnerability derived from lived situations, but more likely a set of disadvantages and advantages, weaknesses and resources which play out on different axes and in different contexts of life (Lutz, 2015).

The constant attention to such fluidity, co-construction, and ambivalence of conditions of the subjects present in the social sciences leads in some cases, and especially in post-structuralist approaches, to a critique of intersectionality itself. The concern for an accurate representation of identity would be reduced, in fact, to the attempt of application of a multiplicity of categories that would do nothing but redefine the subject according to the protection of consolidated privileges and hierarchies (Lynn, 2010). According to this criticism, paradoxically, intersectionality would help stabilise relations as unitary categories (for example, black women). This type of criticism suggests the need to overcome a formalist and geometric vision of intersectionality (Perilli and Ellena, 2012), as suggested by the theory of relational sociology, according to which individuals and groups in society do not “occupy positions” but rather “live relationships”.

However, as the next paragraph will show, it is possible to say that, for the purpose of study and analysis of real situations, a delimitation is needed which entails the conditions and ambivalences of the subjects. Relinquishing a delimitation of the categories affected by discrimination risks exasperating the representation of possible intersections to the point of making intercepting real forms of exclusion and subordination impossible (Butler, 1990).

It is then crucial to critically examine this aspect, especially in reference to the European context, where the debate on intersectionality has dealt with a number of more articulated identity categories rather than the classical “big three – gender, race, and class.

1.2 A method for social research

If intersectionality has affirmed itself as a new paradigm⁸, the discussion on “how to study intersectionality” remains rather rough. This reflec-

⁸ We refer here to Bello’s idea (2020) that, despite the different interpretations and formulations, many scholars recognise the emergence of a set of theoretical elements and possible research tools.



tion concerns primarily the use of social categories, which both a premise and a possible limit of the intersectional approach.

In the well-known *The Complexity of Intersectionality*, Leslie McCall (2005) identifies several methodological options linked to the consideration of social and identity categories in intersectional studies. According to McCall, during the eighties, a first set of scholars and feminist scholars identified the risk of reductionism in the use of categories, regarded as simplistic fictions incapable of capturing the complexity of social phenomena, and favoured a rather complex anti-categorical approach⁹. At the methodological level, this approach is based on open research techniques capable of de-constructing categories themselves (for example, new ethno-methodologies and forms of semantic, discourse, and narrative de-construction).

A second approach looked at the complexity of intersectionality in an intra-categorical lens. These scholars focused on particular social groups and neglected intersections to reveal the complexity of concrete experiences as a tool to study individuals or groups whose identity crosses traditional boundaries (Dill, 2002) rather than simply rejecting categories. Therefore, in this case, the focus is on particular intersections between categories (for example, “black women”, “poor migrants”, etc.). This type of study adopted mainly qualitative methodologies, with a micro-sociological stance. The third approach, less often applied but regarded by McCall as the most promising, is based on inter-categorical complexity, which requires the provisional adoption of existing analytic categories to document relationships between different social groups in their changing and conflicting configurations and inequalities. According to the author, this approach is useful to empirically map relationships between multiple groups and analyse how they change, simultaneously taking into account many intersections within each group or category (e.g. studying the difference between the condition of black men and black women; then the difference between black Latin American men and black Latin American women, and so on, reaching a complex and articulated model). This approach might benefit from a comparative framework based on a macro-sociological frame which requires large scale surveys.

These different methods refer to equally diverse research interests and levels of inquiry, from the understanding of the subjective and biographical experience up to the reconstruction of the web of inequalities and power relations that make up society and its institutions.

This debate leads towards an important point in our study. Indeed, if used in a pragmatic, contextualised, and dynamic way, categories themselves can be a useful tool for the social scientist or the scholar of intersectionality. Indeed, categories are always social constructions (which in turn inflict forms of subordination)¹⁰, never neutral (Choo and Ferree, 2010),

9 McCall cites, among others, Fraser, 1989.

10 As Bello (2020) recalls, processes of categorisation themselves are exercises in power and discrimination as they determine the choice of protected factors and define



and necessarily unable to explain the complexity of subjective experience.

Pragmatism is needed when using categories for empirical research as a working definition, even a provisional one, is required to analyse social reality.

Contextualisation is also needed because, as recalled by Bello (2020) in line with Crenshaw's approach, categories are difficult to generalise and their selection must be based on relevance in order to understand situated dynamics. It is therefore crucial to spot when some variables are recognised at the expense of others, or are invisible¹¹. Social categories are elements of mediation between structures and subjectivity that situate this relationship in a context – a concept known as situatedness (Rebughini, 2018).

Dynamism is also fundamental when considering that, as suggested by Walgenbach (2012), categories are plural and interdependent and that, as acknowledged by Crenshaw herself (1991: 1297), categorisations are not one-sided, but negotiated processes in which subaltern subjects participate, “sometimes even subverting the process of naming in ways that strengthen their power” – reclaiming.

This last point highlights the importance of acknowledging the agency of subjects in intersectional studies (Collins and Bilge, 2016; Rebughini, 2021), even in surveys, also starting from the way subjects define themselves. In the analysis of situations of subordination, it is in fact necessary to consider individuals' agency within the context's constraints (Nash, 2008; Rebughini, 2021).

Ultimately, then, the idea of circularity between structure and subject – a key aspect of relational sociology – stirs the construction of methodologies in intersectional social research.

1.3 An instrument for intervention

In her introduction to *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (2019), Patricia Collins invokes in multiple ways the potentialities of the concept of intersectionality at the service of social change as a political and collaborative as well as intellectual tool. Intersectionality as a “project” invests in knowledge production – in this respect, Collins refers to forms of cultural resistance in which subordinate groups highlight new knowledge about their own condition, in opposition to the social injustices they experience (following in the steps of the aforementioned critical studies on race or feminism as well as de-colonial knowledge). Therefore, it is important to stress the prominence of direct experience as an intersectional cognitive

the boundaries of anti-discrimination law.

11 On this reflection, see Ludvig (2006), Walgenbach (2007), or Davis (2015), who underline how, for example, the racial factor is less considered in studies on intersectionality in Europe. According to Perilli and Ellena (2012), this social group is particularly neglected in Italy.



source.

Secondly, intersectionality is a tool for social intervention (or social action). This aspect is rooted in the genealogy of intersectionality as a project at the service of emancipation and inclusion. Starting from Crenshaw's formulation, many contributions – especially Mari Matsuda's within Critical Race Theory – have progressively recalled the need for shared commitment from below and the development of coalitions in the struggle for rights¹². The direct participation of subordinate groups in intersectional social actions is necessarily linked to the role of the agency of subjects in subordination processes, a concept most often cited by scholars who focus on intersectionality as empowerment (Crenshaw, 1991; Matsuda, 1991). As Bello (2020) notes, in fact, attention is paid in these contributions to the role of oppressed groups in raising demands linked to collective and situated conditions rather than individualistic demands. In agreement with Bello, however, the importance should be highlighted of recovering and considering the particular biographical experiences and combinations of identity, and the resources in possession of the subject to cope with conditions of subordination. In this sense, "the agency lens is an in-depth tool for intersectional investigations" (Bello, 2020: 167)¹³.

Such sensitivity also allows, in our opinion, to identify with greater flexibility and openness conditions and intersections that are difficult to associate with one or more communities. A further consideration that stems from considering intersectionality as an instrument of action invests its impossible neutrality. As more generally for social innovation, intersectionality as a project of subversion necessarily implies the adoption of regulatory criteria, such as those inherent in the interpretation of the ideas of justice or social equality. This type of analysis already involves the very definition of the underlying issue in any theory of change, that is the selection of criticalities, or real urgencies, to which social action should try to answer. Therein lies one of the meanings in which the adjective "critical" can be understood, according to Collins (2019), when referring to intersectionality. It is, in fact, about asking what change is crucial with respect to a certain context and what is needed for it to happen. It is worth recalling how this aspect highlights the relevance of different categories and intersections in the eyes of the social actor involved in the mobilisation. In other words, therefore, the selection of the categories of interest and its normative assumptions always require an explanation.

By recalling the classification proposed in one of Crenshaw's best known articles (1991), we may assume that the intersectional perspective can identify different levels of issues or urgencies. On a structural level, criticalities may concern discriminatory effects in access to goods and rights, which are also products of the interaction between social structures, policies, and services (for example, how difficult it is for women of colour to

12 Please refer to the reconstruction in Bello (2020), par. 2.4. pp. 108 et seq.

13 On the idea of agency in intersectional studies: Colombo and Rebughini, 2016.



access women's shelters or aid centres)¹⁴. On the political level, however, the intersectional key highlights the need to address the instances of those who, placed at the intersections between multiple categories, do not benefit from strategies and interventions generated by organisations pursuing political goals driven by a mono-categorical point of view. In this respect, intersectionality seems to have awakened the so-called identity politics. The critiques made by "second-wave feminism" scholars are centred around the fact that, by emphasising identities and group membership, categories become crystallised in identity-based policies which fuel social conflicts¹⁵. Indeed, in order to escape the trap of fixed categorisations, we need to develop new interventions which are free from social stigmatisation. Among these innovative approaches, a set of ideas based on the transversality of policies has emerged, an approach where activism is seen as a tool for permeating the public space.¹⁶

Finally, the goal of intersectional intervention is to achieve effective social representations and counteract stereotyped views and prejudices which de-humanise subjects and groups. Different studies have contributed, for example, to the de- and re-construction of imaginaries on black women in different eras and in different contexts. It is easy to see, then, how these fictional social constructions still permeate Western societies, for example the imaginaries related to Muslim migrants or veiled Muslim women.

It should be emphasised that these negative stereotypes do not only concern the intersection between ethnicity, gender, and religion, but are the result of a more complex superimposition of symbolic and semantic elements. As stressed by Meer (2012), at the origins of current Islamophobia there is also a process of "racialisation" of the Muslim religious minority that is rooted in the relationship between the categories of religion and race. Finally, when it comes to the analysis of the interventions aimed at contrasting stereotyped and dehumanising intersectional representations, it becomes central to decipher the discriminatory process as a denial of the humanity of the individuals or groups concerned, which produces a degradation of identity¹⁷, self-disdain¹⁷¹⁸, or even, in Crenshaw's (1991) terms, *intersectional dis-empowerment*.

14 In regard to the analysis of similar dynamics referring to the case of Roma women, see Corradi, 2013 and 2018.

15 Let us cite here Adrienne Rich's (1987) reflection on the "politics of locations".

16 In the words of Gerda R. Wekerle (2000: 203): "Within the same city, different groups of women may be simultaneously engaged in making multiple claims in different arenas and spaces". Perilli and Ellena (2012) refer to Nira Yuval-Davis's work (1999) on the concept of transversal politics which, referring to transversal feminist politicians, stands as an alternative to often exclusionary cosmopolitan universalism and often essentialist politics of identity.

17 Here we can recall the idea of identity of the excluded, evoked by H. van Amersfoort (1978).

18 Central to the understanding of this dynamic, one of the most accredited theories of intersubjective recognition: Honneth (1992).



2. Intersectionality in practice: perspectives and experiences from the field

2.1. Detecting discriminations in Italy

As emerged in the previous paragraphs, the concept of intersectionality contains great investigative potential, both as method and as intervention. The ambiguity of the term allows generalists and experts in the field to use its epistemological potential in order to highlight hidden categories of analysis. Although born overseas in a different historical and social context than the European dimension in general and the Italian one in particular, the instruments of intersectional theory allow us to reveal discriminatory practices which are silent as they are included in the country's institutional engineering. In Italy, the term "intersectionality" exists as a direct translation of the English term and struggles to enter the common debate. Indeed, Italy is still struggling, as Vincenza Perilli states (2009), to come to terms with its fascist, racist, and colonial past. Indeed, the country still struggles to acknowledge its own institutional racism and patriarchal culture as well as its multicultural nature. On the other hand, discourses within the Italian feminist movement have prioritised Italian gender issues such as universal suffrage, reproductive rights, and divorce rights in open conflict with the Catholic patriarchy. Within a broader European framework, these late conquests did not keep up with the British and French feminist movements, where de-colonial discourse was already a reality.

In the following paragraph, we will try to outline discriminatory phenomena in Italy and determine whether an "intersectional sensitivity" is present in the analysis of those institutions which deal with discrimination.

In the last two decades in Italy, the National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) has registered an exponential growth of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. According to the "White Paper on Racism in Italy", the period 2018-2019 registered the highest number of discrimination episodes: 5,340 cases of verbal violence, 901 cases of physical and personal violence, 177 cases of damage against property of people of non-Italian origin, and 1008 cases of discrimination. In its otherwise careful analysis, however, the White Book fails to represent the intersectional nature of these acts.

For example, how many of the aforementioned acts of physical violence targeted women or members of the LGBTQ+ community with a migratory background, or how many of these victims were people with disabilities and belonging to an ethnic minority?

In Italy, UNAR is the body responsible for promoting equal treatment and the removal of racial discrimination. UNAR has become a point of institutional reference for the recognition and understanding of migrants' rights and a catalyst for those individuals, associations, and local authori-



ties that work daily to eradicate racial discrimination. Although UNAR plays a key role in promoting equality, the approach used in data classification is not intersectional. Therefore, according to Equinet (European Network of Equality Bodies), "horizontal issues" are missing, that is, issues that collect different levels of discrimination in everyday life and that are at the basis of intersectional investigation. One can speculate that the lack of intersectional data is due to two closely related factors. First, UNAR itself is modelled after the approaches of International and European law and the definitions of the major International conventions, which lack an intersectional vision. Second, in addition to monitoring websites, platforms of aggregation, and social media, UNAR collects reports of discrimination through a telephone contact centre for associations and individuals. Therefore, data are recorded as reported by the victim, who may frame their experience in one of the classic discrimination grounds if they have no intersectional awareness. An initial outline of what we could define as "intersectional approach" made a timid appearance in UNAR's National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti, and Travellers 2012-2020, which shows how women of the RST communities are more discriminated than men from the same communities¹⁹.

UNAR's 2020 report to Parliament saw a timid attempt to take into consideration an intersectional approach in addressing discrimination. However, it should be noted that, in all of the five times intersectionality is mentioned in the 181-page report, it is always cited in relation to the European context. It is therefore apparent how intersectionality is one of the keys to understanding European strategies for fighting discrimination; eventually Italy, as a member of the Union, will have to adopt the same interpretative standards. In a note on p. 70, the report lists the definitions of "additive discrimination" and "intersectional discrimination". As regards the intersectional approach, UNAR explains, "however, here it is not possible to distinguish among the different cases and further investigate the issue of multiple discriminations. It is also necessary to note that the detection of cases based on "gender" as discrimination ground is not within the competences of the UNAR Contact Centre; such cases are addressed directly by the competent Office for interventions in the matter of gender equality and equal opportunities". Therefore, despite a glimpse of intersectional sensitivity, we cannot see UNAR as a body that adopts an intersectional approach or provides intersectional data.

UNAR data on multiple discriminations 2015-2020

The following data set presents data relating to the five-year period 2015-2020 in which UNAR has presented its yearly findings to the Italian Parliament. UNAR defines multiple discrimination as a coexistence of dis-

¹⁹ It should be noted that the Strategy for the inclusion of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti 2012- 2020 did not directly mention "intersectionality", nor did it apply an intersectional approach, but only recognised that double discrimination of women of the RSC communities should be interpreted as intersectional data. <https://unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51449/Strategia-Rom-e-Sinti.pdf/2d0685a5-fdc5-d722-80d9-96914f46f148?t=1619795400688>



criminary factors that can compete in the same “discriminatory case”. The term “multiple discrimination” appeared for the first time in the 2018 report and has then become a constant in the following documents.

It should be noted that it was not possible to retrieve data relating to multiple discrimination for the 2015-2017 period because the term was absent, as the cases were divided by single grounds. It is interesting to note how, in the period 2018-2020, references to multiple discrimination change from year to year. In fact, from a detailed breakdown in 2018 (with particular attention paid to highlighting the condition of multiple jeopardy suffered by the RST communities) we move to a multiple, but aggregate, figure in 2020. It is important to remember that the decrease of discrimination cases for such period must be attributed to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions rather than an increase in societal tolerance. Indeed, the “2020 Report” specifies how most cases of discrimination were registered online rather than on the streets. It is important to remember that the data registered here refer to cases reported to the Contact Centre by individuals or associations, while online data are surveyed through general monitoring of the web and the main social platforms.

Dati UNAR su discriminazioni multiple 2015-2020

Multiple discriminations	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Racial-Religious Ethnic or personal Beliefs	47,1%	52,8%	60,4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ethnic-Racial-Disability	47,1%	52,8%	60,4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Religion or Personal Beliefs-Disability	n/a	1,9%	0,9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Disability-Religion or Personal Beliefs	n/a	n/a	0,9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ethnic Racial-Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti	n/a	n/a	0,9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ethnic Racial-Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	17,6%	11,3%	14,2%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ethnic Racial-Sexual Orientation-Religion	5,9%	5,7%	6,6%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity-Religion or Personal Beliefs	5,9%	3,8%	0,9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ethnic Racial-Sexual and Gender Orientation-Religion or Beliefs	n/a	3,8%	1,9%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Disability-Religion or Personal Beliefs-Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti	n/a	1,9%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Religion or Personal Beliefs-Roma, Sinti and Caminant	n/a	5,7%	3,8%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sexual Orientation-Religion or Personal Beliefs-Sinti, Roma, and Caminanti	n/a	1,9%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity-Roma, Sinti and Caminanti	n/a	1,9%	2,8%	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: UNAR, Reports to Parliament²⁰

²⁰ UNAR’s Reports to the Institutions are available here <https://www.unar.it/portale/>



2.2. The picture in the territories surveyed by INGRiD

A series of bilateral meetings allowed us to interview the representatives of some partner organisations on dynamics and problems relating to anti-discrimination intervention in the target contexts²¹. These are three regions of Northern Italy: Liguria, Veneto, and Trentino, South-Tyrol. In particular, this preliminary research activity involved: ARCI Liguria, Veneto Lavoro, the Antidiscrimination Desk of Trento, De Marchi Foundation (based in Trentino), and Alexander Langer Stiftung Foundation (based in South Tyrol). Although different in nature and mission, these organisations pursue the prevention, contrast, and monitoring of phenomena of exclusion and discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or nationality, disability, age, religion, and personal beliefs. The interviews were integrated with the examination of the documentation shared by the INGRiD partners regarding the research and intervention activities made in recent years, and summarised in the next section.

At a first glance, the documentation showed a lack of systematic definition of cases and homogeneity in methodological practices. This lack stems from the low investment by the institutions in research and social mapping of the territories. The associations have tried to make up for it through targeted surveys, which are however crafted with different methodologies and therefore do not allow the accumulation and comparability of data. A first finding is precisely the lack of connection between institutions in charge of monitoring and data collection and external bodies that can assist in this activity. ARCI²² Liguria’s ten-year working experience with the Liguria Region and UNAR is emblematic in its alternation of propulsive phases – under the direction of governmental bodies, with the activation and coordination of branches and antennas on the territory – and phases of fragmentation, institutional disengagement, and deprivation of financial support. To date, ARCI coordinates its own network of branches throughout Liguria, also supported by INGRiD. A partially similar path involved Veneto, one of the territories with the highest number of foreign residents. Here, especially since obtaining external funds²³, Veneto Lavoro has gradually taken on the coordination of the Regional Anti-Racial Discrimination Observatory, established in 2013 through a memorandum of understanding between the Veneto Region and UNAR²⁴. In the case of the Trentino

[relazioni-alle-istituzioni](#)

²¹ The interviews were conducted online between February and March 2021.

²² In Liguria, Arci was the leader of the network of third sector entities whose experimentation led to the establishment of the regional centre for preventing and contrasting discrimination (2009-2015), based on the Memorandum of Understanding between UNAR (National Body against Racial Discrimination) and the Liguria Region.

²³ Reference is made to the RECORD project – Territorial network for the emergence, contrast, and detection of ethnic-racial discrimination, FAMI 2014 - 2020 - OS 2 - ON 3 - letter I) - year 2016-2018.

²⁴ The Observatory promotes actions aimed at preventing and combating discrimination based on race and ethnic origin. The activities of the Observatory are carried out



area, however, given the absence of a system of collection based on single reports and the fragmentation of local initiatives, the Trento Anti-Discrimination Desk was born, also through INGRiD, in a move from spontaneous forms of mobilisation by volunteers and activists to an organised, professional one. Significantly, the Desk has adopted an intersectional approach since its inception.

At the same time, several respondents stress how problematic it is to depend on individuals to report cases, given the reluctance they might feel. In many cases, victims struggle to frame their experiences in terms of discrimination, as also reported in other studies for victims with limited cultural instruments (D’Ancona, 2017). As we will see (par.2.2.), other respondents highlighted the opposite risk, that is a tendency to incorrectly present episodes as discrimination cases. People with a migratory background, for example, may interpret discrimination differently, both for lack of knowledge of the Italian legal system and for cultural reasons – in fact, discrimination is itself a cultural construct.

In this regard, respondents state that individual and/ or collective meetings (for example focus groups) aimed at discussing potentially discriminatory dynamics have proven particularly useful in developing the awareness of victims and empowering them.

However, the concept of positionality reminds us that some conditions (or, better, positions in relation to power) imply the existence of constraints with respect to the possibility of reporting: this lens explains, for example, the limited reports of incidents of discrimination in the workplace involving migrants, as in the Italian legal system the residence permit is bound to an employment contract.

People with a migrant background, in fact, are the main target of the intervention of the respondent organisations.

In terms of racial discrimination, respondents have listed their main concerns as related to the following areas: housing (access to the rental market, more requests for references or financial guarantees compared to natives, treatment within the building management, etc.); relations with the Public Administration (for example arbitrariness of public officers in issuing certain documents, racist attitudes by social services, limited access to some goods and services depending on the length of the residence permit, etc.); job placement (systematic channelling towards unskilled, precarious, heavy, and low-paid jobs, non-recognition of professional skills, difficult access to training courses, etc.). Another crucial point deals with the relationship between social and healthcare services (local healthcare agency, hospitals, emergency rooms, counselling centres) and the frequently discriminatory behaviour of their staff. As noted by the Alexander Langer Foundation, for example, we can recognise a tendency to medical-

in concert with the Territorial Anti-Discrimination Network spread across the board in the Veneto area and divided into territorial antennas, information points, and radars.



ising the psychological distress of asylum seekers, which deprives them of the possibility of accessing adequate forms of support, not necessarily of psychiatric nature; or underrating the discomfort experienced by young migrant women when opting for pregnancy termination; or the impossibility to access reproductive programmes and planned parenthood centres.

The fieldwork carried out by Veneto Lavoro between 2016 and 2018 ²⁵also highlighted another kind of discrimination in the regional territory: ethnic profiling by the police, or more or less conscious racial, ethnic, and religious stereotypes when it comes to stops, control of documents, body searches and the attitude in these circumstances; on public transport, selective control of tickets; bias by banking institutes in the provision of financial services; racism in school context.

Access to opportunities for marginalised groups and social consideration of diversity make up the general framework for discrimination according to several respondents.

Several examples of intersectional discrimination were shared during the interviews. Migrants are widely reported as the most vulnerable group, both during their journey and in the host country.

The intersection between migratory status, gender, and religious affiliation is another intersection highlighted by respondents – for example, the well-known question of the veil for Muslim women. According to the reports, wearing the veil has resulted in lower chances to get the desired job or even to apply for documents which require a full face photo like ID cards.

Religion as a factor in dynamics of intersectional discrimination is a theme of particular interest to FBK-ISR. The analysis shared by the Alexander Langer Foundation on the right to worship in reception communities for migrants, refugees, and/ or asylum seekers is a case in point. The recognition of this right by operators seems limited or inhibited by a consideration of religion as an element which concerns the private sphere and/ or particularly difficult to handle. In this case, the perception of conflict linked to religious diversity prevails over the rights of migrant people. Significantly, this lack of recognition appears at the higher level of institutional governance, as shown by an episode occurred in the Province of Bolzano about the request to set up a prayer room for Muslim migrants, or the overall de-commitment regarding provisions for Ramadan. The case of Muslim migrants, especially when coming from areas such as Afghanistan, has highlighted that the operators’ perception and their role as decision-makers is influenced by negative stereotypes based on the association between Islam and violent radicalism. At the same time, the theme of discrimination

²⁵ Research report by the Territorial network for the contrast and detection of ethnic-racial discrimination (RECORD), edited by Cristina Cominacini and Francesco Della Puppa, kindly shared by Veneto Lavoro.



on the basis of belief, frequently associated with the case of Islam, is present for other religions or affiliation too and, not infrequently, operators seem to lack intercultural competence.

However, interviews also highlighted how organisations experience some challenges with intersectionality, both as a theory and methodology for social action, e.g. a legal system that operates by single categories, but also strongly sectoral social policies and lack of connection between social services.

According to respondents, social workers need to step up to this challenge, but it is necessary to set the conditions for them to gradually handle an intersectional approach.

First, training. However, some respondents point out that social workers need to address their own stereotyping of their charges as vulnerable and/ or incompetent, resulting in paternalistic approaches.

Second, networking. As shown by the focus groups conducted with public and third sector organisations in the social field (par. 2.2), collaboration between services is regarded as a necessary condition for multidimensional and intersectional welfare.

2.3. Representations and applications of intersectionality in social work

The bilateral meetings paved the way for a more in-depth understanding of the topics and contexts under investigation. Starting from the thematic inputs mentioned above and with the active contribution of partners (par. 2.2), a set of institutional and non-profit bodies was selected in the three territories: Liguria, Veneto, and Trentino. Attention was paid to organisations that work for and with different target groups: people with disabilities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, (ex) prisoners, primary, middle, and high school students, women (victims of violence), and religious minorities (in terms of composition of the groups see the Annex). Each focus group aimed at creating an environment where information, points of view, and experiences related to different forms of intolerance and discrimination would be shared as well as the intervention practices (prevention and contrast) in place in said territories. Key representatives were therefore invited to participate in the focus groups according to their professional role. Most professionals work in the coordination, design, and implementation of intervention policies and prevention and support of the victims²⁶. Some relevant differences exist in the composition of groups: the presence of a representative of the local regional authority in the case of Liguria; the absence of a representation of religious minorities in the case of Veneto; the recurrence of the focus on the educational field in Veneto²⁷.

²⁶ The focus groups were followed by some in-depth interviews with participants who shared significant examples of multiple and intersectional discrimination.

²⁷ Regarding the composition of the groups, see Annex 1.



The data collected and discussed here were analysed by themes in order to identify shared ideas, debates, and approaches. We should underline, finally, that the results of each focus group cannot be considered representative of the territorial reality. However we will recall below some distinctive aspects, based on the thematic specificity that such conversations have in relation to partner organisations and local issues.

2.3.1 Identifying and interpreting cases of discrimination with an intersectional approach

While confirming a general lack of systematic data collection on the territories, the organisations that took part in the focus groups shared partially different views of discrimination phenomena. As concerns the meeting with the organisations active in Liguria, the emphasis was on the structural and institutional dimension of discrimination intertwined with the political and cultural climates. In the first case, there are obstacles related to the relationship between migrants and families and administrative services, also because of selective access to digitised procedures, and delays in completion of the practices for obtaining the required documentation to access the job market and healthcare.

On the other hand, in terms of representations and narratives, the focus groups highlighted widespread negative imaginaries on migration which are at the basis of day to day discrimination. Many examples illustrated how negative representations of migrants foster discriminatory attitudes when it comes to job offers, renting of a house, or treatment on public transportation. The organisations of Veneto especially highlighted the educational context, pointing out how teachers – including those engaged in educational programmes aimed at promoting diversity – still lack awareness of gender issues and their own prejudices on students with a migratory background. Several participants reported the use of stereotyped textbooks and teaching materials, including those encouraging migrants students to only pursue technical and professional education. On the other hand, even the youth population, albeit willing to recognise and address discrimination, tends to reinforce certain hierarchies of privilege as inevitable and see migrants as subordinate.

Some participants in the focus group in Trentino who work with extreme social marginalisation (as in the case of homeless people) explained how the resident population turns its own discomfort with seeing homelessness into requests for the erasure of people and situations. Also, professionals and victims themselves struggle to recognise intersectional discrimination. As evidenced by a participant in the Veneto focus group, criteria and interests at stake deserve particular attention, for example in the case of systematic job placement into low skilled jobs. In such cases, the operator sees discriminatory treatment by the employer based on the intersection between gender and origin or migratory status (for example, the offer of “sub-qualified” jobs), but the need for a job prevails. Therefore, here oper-



ators should reflect with victims to identify what is acceptable and what is not. Listening, even in the form of a group discussion or focus group, can offer access to subjective interpretations of apparently marginalised conditions. During a focus group organised by Veneto Lavoro for an in-depth study of the condition of migrant women of Bengali origin, for example, the participants seemed to invite us to consider their representation of the veil worn not as a symbol of subordination but as a “polysemic” object, which can be associated with multiple meanings and uses in everyday life practices.

Faced with the emergence of a constellation of situations of exclusion and oppression which are not always intelligible in their dynamics and possibility to be addressed by all the actors involved, we can ask whether an intersectional approach can facilitate intervention. As can be seen starting from the preparatory meetings (par. 2.2), intersectionality emerges as a construct still “under consideration” in social work. In most of the interventions, this is outlined as a word – often heard for the first time during our meetings – to name the need, well understood by those who work with people in vulnerable situations, to simultaneously consider their different identity and social characteristics in the awareness that, especially in situations of severe marginality, there are problems that cannot be addressed individually. The different examples shared during the meetings range from the overlapping of drug addiction, mental distress, and past experiences of detention in the case of homeless people, to sex workers dealing with conditions linked to migration, gender, sexual orientation, and social stigma. ANFASS highlights how disability is often combined with other types of vulnerability, such as being a victim of gender-based violence. Furthermore, Viva Voce highlighted the difficult condition of women prisoners, regarded as failed caretakers. Participants also pointed out the need to see the subject as a whole and also look at their potential resources as well as weaknesses, or to grasp their possible double positioning. In fact, discriminated subjectivities can find themselves in a position of ambivalence in which they also enact oppressive behaviours. Once again, the experience of people in detention is emblematic.

The need for grasping complexity as a constitutive element of situations of exclusion and the different positions of the actors involved can be fertile ground for an intersectional approach, to which most of the participants had not been previously exposed.

However, in several cases, intersectional awareness remains limited, as does the connection between organisations. An intersectional approach seems to be maturing within ARCI Liguria, with capillary presence and networking on the territory favouring the development of real “construction sites” for developing and sharing new interpretative approaches to discrimination. The representative present at the focus group underlines how this awareness was nurtured “from below” and “before the reflection on intersectionality arrived”, through meetings with women and more recently with the establishment of the LGBTQIA+ legal help desk in La Spezia.



Some participants noted how intersectionality could be seen as a “niche” approach or relevant only to cases where the main focus is on discrimination based on gender and/or sexual orientation. A certain backwardness of the Italian context is felt, in this sense, by the representative of the GEA Cooperative, active in the field of sports as a space for combating discrimination discourses, for example, access for women from ethnic minorities to leadership roles in the world of soccer – a futuristic notion in our country.

Positionality also emerged from focus groups as another useful construct to analyse complex situations of discrimination and, in particular, those in which discrimination does not manifest as a deprivation of opportunity, but as an absence of privilege. The issue emerges clearly in the contribution offered by the contact person of the Interreligious “Observatory against Violence on Women” based in Trento, which highlights the attempt to problematise male privilege in religious traditions – a privilege shared by social workers themselves. During the discussion with Veneto third sector organisations, in particular, this point emerged as a critical issue that can preclude adoption of an intersectional approach in social work and that requires the implementation self-reflexive work practices.

2.3.2 Intervening in discrimination cases according to an intersectional approach

Focus groups also highlighted the scarcity or sectoriality of cognitive and procedural resources available to third sector organisations to provide an effective response. In several cases, participants shared the fear that this “sense of impotence” could undermine the willingness to recognise and address discrimination that are presented to them. Such disorientation concerns especially those organisations that are not “on the front line” in the management of cases of discrimination (e.g., those involved in job placement). In this sense, there is a need for a transfer of knowledge from institutions and organisations more directly involved in the response – such as information desks – to the diverse bodies involved in the fight against exclusion.

These considerations highlight fragmentation as a huge challenge for intersectional intervention. In fact, some witnesses denounced the radical segmentation that afflicts policies, services, and social organisations. Together, the legal framework only provides partial and sectorial instruments. Therefore, the need to identify a prevalent body in charge of the marginalised person leads to privileging a particular aspect.

As regards public services, it is worth recalling the reflection offered by the representative of the Liguria Region, who pointed out some challenges stemming from the very internal logic of the governmental institutions and PA, including political discontinuity and the widespread outsourcing of services to the third sector, which exempts the public sector from cultivating specialised skills. The rigidities, discontinuities, and limitations within the



public sector must be taken into account if one wants to create monitoring programmes. The experience of the Regional Observatory in Liguria (see par. 2.2), which showed little ability to systematically collect data when embedded in the Region, is a warning in this regard. As suggested by several organisations, approaches and responses remain fragmentary, as reflected by the uncertain progress of the school system in the field of education to diversity. Here, discretionality by the individual school or teacher prevails over systematic coordination of proposals at the territorial level.

In contrast, respondents recognised greater flexibility and propensity for cooperation in non-governmental organisations and third sector bodies in the social field, citing flexibility as a constitutive character of this organisational space (Brandsen et al., 2008). However, according to our focus groups, even this realm shows difficulties in implementing proper networking.

In fact, intercepting phenomena of intersectional discrimination emerges as a particularly complex endeavour for the organisational and governance structure of social response actors (Orlandini and Andersen, 2015).

Challenges include competition between organisations to secure funding and reputation as well as multiple constraints arising from the relationships with the PA, both as a regulator and as a client. Even with some dynamism observed, a more radical revisiting of the organisations' modus operandi is required to develop an intersectional approach. "Contamination" is cited as an opportunity for mutual enrichment, together with the need to question the idea of a rigid "sphere of responsibility".

The structural constraints leave little room for intersectional social intervention, for example, in the case of the relationship between secular and religious organisations. In fact, only a minority of organisations collaborates in a systematic way with the religious minorities present on the territory. As emerged during the two focus groups attended by an Imam representing the main local Muslim community, intersections of vulnerability based on gender, sexual orientation, and Islam require a "multifocal" vision. While generally recognising such intersections, few organisations actually dialogue with Muslim communities, whose fragmentation also complicates the identification of contact representatives. Against this backdrop, Imams tend to report the discrimination of individuals as members of a religious minority, while gender and sexual orientation discrimination within the Islamic community itself remains invisible, to the detriment of the new generations.

An intersectional response also requires a review of the relationship between professionals and targets of their intervention, starting from a critical evaluation of the approaches to listening with focus on empowerment. As pointed out by the Centro Astalli of Trento, active listening of the victims or people at risk of exclusion circles back to the topic of networking, since empowerment also means enabling the person to access an articulated set of interlocutors and forms of support.



Following the reflection of the spokesperson of the independent project Libera la Parola – an open laboratory of Italian language learning and construction of relationships generated by the experience of the Centro Sociale Bruno of Trento – intersectional work is based on providing marginalised people with tools to become protagonists of their own struggle against discrimination, without over-determining the forms of oppression to which they are subjected. The practice that makes this approach possible is, according to this interviewee, collective organisation, in which experiences and points of view of discriminated subjects can emerge in a relational key and initiatives of mobilisation can be born.

Some participants also recalled the political nature of intersectionality as promotion of minority activism. The ARCI Liguria contact person for cyber-bullying emphasised the promotion of forms of youth mobilisation against a backdrop of fragmentation, especially for adolescents. Recent environmental mobilisations exemplify the possibilities offered by the world of social media.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the interpretation of intersectional intervention as a form of mediation between conflicting demands, suggested by an experienced independent professional participating in the Trentino focus group. Starting from rooted social hostility against some social groups, we need to rethink the position of the social worker towards the perpetrators of discrimination. Cultural intervention must find credibility with interlocutors who struggle with their own prejudice by recognising their point of view as well. Similar evidence is reported by Veneto Lavoro for the training activities developed by the FAMI-RECORD project with public transport operators²⁸ (see par. 2.2 and conclusions). According to trainers, participants expressed discomfort with the difficulties they encounter on a daily basis, in particular absence of support from their employer.

Therefore, we can imagine an approach that mediates between the fight against discrimination and the social issues that may generate discrimination in the first place.

²⁸ Final report by the implementing body SOS RIGHTS, RECORD Project – Territorial network for the emergence, contrast and detection of ethnic discrimination, FAMI 2014 - 2020 - OS 2 - ON 3 - letter I) - year 2016-2018.



The three Focus Groups – Summary of findings

	Findings	Intervention
Focus Group in Veneto	<p>Diffusion of discriminatory imaginaries linked to hierarchies of privilege even in educational contexts.</p> <p>Difficulty in sharing between operators and victims of parametres for the recognition of the discriminatory aspects in the cases narrated.</p> <p>Limited dissemination of the intersectional approach in the analysis of cases</p> <p>Necessary active listening to the individual stories and collective comparisons.</p> <p>Potential intersectional value in the narrations by the victims</p>	<p>Limited instruments and/ or lack of knowledge and tools in third sector organisations</p> <p>Need to increase cultural awareness of operators and people at risk to avoid discriminatory behaviour</p> <p>Limited gender awareness and presence of stereotypes in education and work</p> <p>Need to raise awareness in schools with systematic interventions with an institutional direction</p>
Focus Group in Liguria	<p>Emphasis on the institutional dimension of discrimination: administrative and operational obstacles in social services</p> <p>Youth malaise related to cyberbullying phenomena</p> <p>Intersectional perspective emerges via focus on gender and sexual orientation</p> <p>Intersectionality and the religious factor: issues close to the Muslim community</p>	<p>Logical specification of local authorities of the PA: conditioning and limits to networking capacity</p> <p>Need to network with communities religious</p> <p>Risks that intersectionality weakens the intervention: working on models of community organisation that combine radical criticism and tangible intervention</p> <p>Inclusion and visibility of intersections in the profiles of operators and volunteers</p> <p>Need to test new strategies, how to work “upstream” on factors that feed vulnerabilities</p> <p>Promote political activism of minorities</p>
Focus Group in Trentino	<p>Hostile climates and nuanced forms of discrimination</p> <p>Simplified view of intersectionality: need to develop awareness in victims</p> <p>Positionality allows to see the victim’s possible ambivalent relationship with discrimination</p>	<p>Limited room for intersectionality in the context of fragmentation of policies and services</p> <p>Beyond the rhetoric of networking: need to build the work upon the relativisation and complementarity of the roles involved</p> <p>Need for working tools able to recognise the needs of all parties involved in discriminatory processes</p> <p>Strengthen the social capital of people at risk of discrimination</p>

2.4. Youth, education, and intersectional discrimination

The exploratory research in the school sector aimed to explore the social representations of adolescents and their experiences related to the diversity, intolerance, and discrimination; the dynamics that favour the formation of discriminatory ideas and behaviours in the school context and the interventions able to prevent or counteract them. Transversally, we investigated intersectionality as an epistemological and methodological tool capable of capturing the complexity of the experiences of discrimination that occur among young people, in school and out of school. Activities involved some classes of two secondary schools, the Professional State Institute “G.B. Garbin” (School A) and the Classical High School “Tron - Zanella” (School B), both located in Schio, a town located north of Vicenza, in the Veneto region²⁹. The two schools were chosen as contexts characterised by a certain diversity in relation to both the socio-economic and cultural composition of the student population and the curricular and extra-curricular educational offerings. These contextual aspects offer, in fact, the possibility of enriching the interpretation of the results with reference to the possible variables at play.

2.4.1 Focus groups with classes

Between April and May 2021, 3 focus groups were held, lasting one hour each, with students of two classes of III and IV grade of School A; 2 focus groups were held with students of a III grade class of School B³⁰.

Using a participatory, dialogic approach and interactive tools, participants were asked to express and argue their point of view on discrimination in the daily life of young people and in the school environment. Cases and examples were used to explore the role of the contexts and actors involved in the experiences of exclusion and discrimination. As part of the experience, a short questionnaire was built together with the students which was circulated internally within the two schools involved, thus reaching anonymously 69 young people³¹; the results were discussed during a final meeting.

Since it was not administered to a methodologically controlled sample, the questionnaire cannot be considered as a data collection tool representative of the two school contexts; it should rather be understood as an artefact around which collective reflection was exercised³².

29 The town, with a population of 38,681, features a large industrial area at its outskirts and a high density of foreign residents (over 13% of the population).

30 Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the meetings took place online on school time.

31 62% of respondents were female, 49% were 18 years old, 56% attended a vocational school.

32 Starting from a socio-material (Landi and Viteritti, 2016) and three-step approach



Homosexuality in particular emerges as a “problem” generated by labelling and that can create not necessarily manifest, but inner discomfort. Some students of School B also drew attention to the frequency of patriarchal stigma against girls considered “easy”. The words of these students show the fear of being involved in these dynamics, considered common and, in a sense, out of control. During the meetings, ethnic origin emerged as the second ground for peer discrimination, strongly present in the social life of young people, even though, as some emphasise, the new generations have more and more opportunities for direct contact with diversity and are therefore less likely to enact discriminatory behaviours. The results of the questionnaire, on the other hand, highlighted the issue of disability, as the majority of respondents reported making friends with a disabled classmate as being “quite” or “very” difficult.

Participants in focus groups in both schools shared the idea that these forms of exclusion can mainly be attributed to the lack of tools - knowledge but also the right “lexicon” - to approach disabilities. School A students also cited discrimination on the basis of socio-economic status.

An intersectional reading of the cases and examples of discrimination provided during the focus groups, though a challenge for the young respondents, opens up some interesting aspects. First of all, homophobic tendencies are more frequent among and towards male students, consistently with some studies conducted on the Italian youth population (Patri et al, 2011), while female students experience greater peer discrimination based on physical appearance, lifestyle, and sexual behaviour. Some participants highlighted the deep discomfort that these experiences produce in the young people involved, also because of a lack of peer solidarity: “even among us we lack solidarity to support and react, instead we tolerate this type of thing” (School B student). In addition, age increases the need to express one’s own individuality, making young people more exposed to non-acceptance by others. At the same time, self-awareness can support the victim’s ability to fight back.

Other forms of intersection are apparent in the case of prejudices associated with young people with migrant backgrounds that are more closely linked to origins and/ or religious affiliations in particular (above all, coming from Muslim countries).

As we will see better by reading the results of the interviews (see Par. 2.4.2), even when discrimination affects an institutional level, as in the case of the behaviours put in place by teachers, young people focus above all on negative prejudices.

Discrimination is seen as the deprivation of social esteem through gossip, far more than explicit treatment or “striking actions”. As social psy-

(Samson et al.) to education, the questionnaire is considered as an artefact capable of “leading out” from oneself and from one’s point of view, thus urging attention to the diversity of positions, and to “mediate”, or to make people think about known (the ‘starting from’) and the unknown, thus facilitating the cognitive and reflective process.



chology and sociology have suggested (Livolsi and Volli, 2005), this form of communication encompasses functions that are closely related to the dynamics of discrimination: first and foremost, the re-establishment of the identity and ties of the group that produces these communications starting from the normative devaluation of others and the deterioration of their social “reputation”. This is confirmed by the questionnaire, as the majority of young respondents state that “excluding” or “mocking” someone before getting to know them is much less serious than verbally or physically attacking them. The impact of such behaviours is not always obvious, and therefore recognisable by peers.

Discrimination on social networks was a large part of the discussions. The peculiarities of this communicative space seem to make it even more difficult to navigate the ambivalence and intangibility of processes of stigma.

School a students engaged in a more lively discussion on the need to take into account the intentions of the subject who enacts the behaviour in order to establish whether it is actually discriminatory. A certain tendency to weigh discriminatory phenomena more according to the intentions rather than the effects on the victims seems to emerge from the responses to the questionnaire, considering that 23 out of 69 respondents indicated their agreement with the statement “It is not possible to establish whether or not a behaviour is discriminatory without knowing the motivations of the person who performs it”.

Most of respondents in both schools cite issues emerging also in other studies on youth “social” interactions: communicative nonchalance (“people feel more free when using a keyboard”), ambivalent use of irony (“there is not always the intention to offend”), emphasis (“on social media it is common to try to make a fuss”), and underestimation of the effects (“young people don’t think that what is said on social networks has real consequences”). School B girls were more inclined to recognise the discrimination risks in communication on social networks, while School A boys were inclined to question the boundaries of hate speech starting from the notion of individual freedom and individual expression. In this sense, we can hypothesise that gender and social status are combined in different positions with respect to the phenomenon, as has already emerged in other studies³³.

Let us now briefly consider the findings on the theme of agency and reaction to discriminatory phenomena. A first point, also found by the social professionals involved in the educational field (Paragraph 2.3.1), concerns the spread of a certain degree of acceptance of forms of social exclusion that affect certain groups, which are inevitably considered at a disadvan-

³³ Similar evidence emerged in the project DISCUSSING HATE AND YOUTH CULTURES Online (DICODINO) created by FBK-ISR in the 2018/19 school year. Information and research reports are available on the webpage: <https://isr.fbk.eu/en/projects/detail/dico-dino/>.



tage. This emerged not only during the focus groups but also in the questionnaire, as 25 of the 69 respondents agreed with the statement “A certain degree of exclusion of certain people or groups is normal in a society”. Limited propensity to react in the face of the phenomena of discrimination - observed or experienced - is also tied to disorientation with respect to the tools and relationships to activate. If, as explained by a student from School B, “teachers at our age are no longer a reference point”, the peer group does not necessarily offer a solid backbone. In the social space, moreover, denouncing discrimination or supporting victims is inhibited by the difficulty of inserting oneself in exchanges: “I often don’t interfere, because I do not know the dynamics or for fear of exposing myself in a space so problematic to govern”, “maybe I don’t write anything because I’m afraid of getting involved”. The gap returns between the two dimensions, as far as it is possible to distinguish them in the hybrid sociality of young people: while 66.7% of respondents would intervene in front of an episode of discrimination in face-to-face interaction, only 33% would do so online.

Ultimately, the focus groups highlighted the role of the school with respect to processes of discrimination. In this regard, there is a significant distance between the two schools involved: while School B students predominantly see school as a place where one learns to respect others and fight discrimination, for School A students school largely emerged as a place in which discrimination is experienced and perpetuated in large part by their classmates. In both contexts, teachers are not trusted to share cases of discrimination and schools need to do more about discrimination - especially with reference to social networks, counselling, and support services to the victims.

2.4.2 Interviews with students and teachers

Based on the results collected through the focus groups, in-depth interviews were conducted with 6 students aged between 17 and 18 (3 from School A and 3 from School B) and 3 teachers of the classes involved (2 from School A and 1 from School B). The former explored subjective representations of diversity and discrimination, direct and indirect experiences of intolerance, hostility, discrimination in school and extracurricular contexts, and proposals for developing anti-discriminatory approaches and practices in the school environment. Interviews with teachers, on the other hand, explored the personal analysis of the context: the school community and class groups; intersectional discrimination in the school context; the challenge of inclusion in teaching and educational practices; the skills and training necessary to address and combat intersectional discrimination in school settings.

The students

The group of students interviewed was homogeneous in terms of key social markers³⁴. Although many of them did not have direct experience with

34 Student respondents belonged to the white, middle-class majority, residing near



discrimination, all the students pointed out, confirming what had already emerged during the interview, that in the classroom what is presented as a joke has the potential to turn into stigma. For the interviewees, structural issues start from the relationship with the teachers and the power dynamics that arise from such interactions, e.g. a teacher’s “dislike” of a student. Although these instances can be interpreted as consequences of interactions between human beings, they can actually be the indicator of hidden inequalities and the resulting stereotyping of the student population. Specifically, those who do not excel in a particular subject and cannot afford extra hours of tutoring may be labelled as lazy. Such contexts create asymmetrical and dysfunctional dynamics between teachers and students. We can think of those who come from economically disadvantaged families and belong to ethnic minorities with low proficiency in the Italian language.

As for the relationship between peers, interviewees were most concerned with discrimination based on physical appearance and the difficulty of defining one’s own identity (including sexual identity) at this phase in their lives. They realise that they are re-proposing in the classroom dynamics of discrimination suffered in the family context and that they have now internalised almost automatically. Girls told us how constant social pressure and sexualisation of the female body makes it difficult for them to find safe spaces to dialogue with each other. At the same time, interviewees report that, thanks to the hours of civic education and a few hours of social work, they were able to find such spaces. At school and during some hours donated by some teachers, they were able to discuss in class the most urgent and burning issues of current affairs. The hours of civic education are a useful moment of encounter for students of both schools, even though in different ways. In School B, students practice finding connections between present and past moral and ethical dilemmas. In School A, on the other hand, the preference is for moments of group brainstorming regarding events of local daily life and possible solutions. A small minority stated that they use social media as a platform for learning about gender issues, sexual issues, and diversity. Rather than following individual influencers, respondents prefer to follow institutional channels or media outlets that are generally recognised and accepted for their authority. Although no participant stated that they were familiar with the concept of “intersectionality”, they recognised that this concept can serve to develop a collective consciousness that is more attentive and sensitive to the multiple diversities that make up society. The unanimity of the group affirmed that projects like INGRID are essential to build a more just and egalitarian future in Italy.

the centre of Schio. It is important to reiterate that participation in the interviews was on a voluntary basis, a condition that allowed students with less discriminatory experiences to feel more free and comfortable. Indeed, a careful and sensitive intersectional analysis cannot fail to take into account that discrimination represents the trauma resulting from the continuous clash between the situation of the minority and the privilege of the majority.



After the focus groups and interviews, some students from School B asked our research team to present the INGRiD project and the theme of intersectional discrimination during the student assembly on November 29, 2021. The presentation took place online with the participation of 12 classes (about 250 students).

The teachers

Teachers reported the structural difficulties of Italian schools. They are more aware than students of the class and social differences between a high school and a technical institute; they often point out perceived differences that are reminiscent of commonplaces and stereotyped visions of school. School B teachers often remarked how the “atmosphere is different” there and School A teachers repeatedly stressed how they are left alone to manage “complex realities”. A challenge arises from having to manage diversity and the dynamics of integration of young people with a migrant background. The processes of discrimination against minors with a migrant background are fed by the crucial transition from first-grade to second-grade in high school. This is where guidance counsellors of the secondary school, as reported by several studies (Bonizzoni et al., 2014), act in directing and channelling the students in the three addresses provided by the upper secondary education in Italy according to criteria conditioned by variables such as socio-economic and cultural status and background.

A very interesting fact that emerged from the interviews is how discriminatory dynamics between teachers and pupils are the litmus test of asymmetrical dynamics within the teaching staff itself. Class boards often reflect power dynamics (based on seniority) specific to each educational institution. Respondents claim that there are different cultures of teaching and mindset among teachers on how to intervene in a class, for example by looking for a practical solution or pursuing more reflexivity. Some teachers expressed the wish to receive more diversity training, especially for cases of special educational needs. It is important to note that the majority of respondents are unaware of how ableism is a discriminating practice in all respects (for example, asking a subject with special education needs to provide equal performances without adequate tools is ableism).

Unanimously, the teachers agreed with the need to have more hours of training on diversity and discrimination. They also agree that their classes are very sensitive to issues of civil rights and liberties. The generation gap between teachers and students tends to increase every year thanks to fast resources that young people have at their disposal (the so-called “generation Z” grows at a faster pace than past generations). All claim that the two years of the pandemic have sharpened social differences and have alienated contexts that were previously difficult to penetrate. Schools need more facilities and resources to support teachers who at the moment feel they have to do everything by themselves without adequate social and psychological training. They also reiterate how difficult it is to cope with the home, school, and society without adequate strategies, fight against dis-



crimination, and seek effective integration with positive repercussions for the society of tomorrow.

Conclusions: research supporting social and educational intervention

The study of the various intersections between multiple “axes” of discrimination in conjunction with a careful analysis of historical and social realities allows us to highlight hidden discriminatory practices and work on multiple solutions. The intersectional consideration of inequality however, is in contrast with a policy scenario – Italian but also European - that appears overall fragmented with a disconnection between anti-discrimination measures, still mainly addressed in categorical terms, and measures for the promotion of equality, inspired instead by a more comprehensive approach. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the capacity of the local level to direct interventions that are at the same time sensitive to the dynamic nature of intersectional relations of oppression and aimed at a certain degree of systematicity and replicability of practices.

In these conclusions we will try to recall some indications emerging from the study that are considered useful with respect to this challenge. In particular, we will focus on the identification of significant criteria to orient network work in the field of social intervention and to direct the training and educational approach in an intersectional key.

As recalled in the first part of this Report, an important part of the reflection on the concept of intersectionality within the social sciences social sciences concerns the use and/ or possible overcoming of social categories. The perspective used in this work refers to the suggestion made, among others, by Leslie McCall (2005), who proposes an “instrumental” and non-essentialist approach to the use of categories, to decode both the relationship between groups and the experience of individuals or subgroups that belong to several social spheres simultaneously. This approach is usefully complemented by an exploratory research perspective that considers intersections in their dynamism and uniqueness at the contextual level and thus deliver criteria for intervention in the field.

It is therefore possible to imagine a fruitful and circular relationship between “Research and intervention”, in continuity with the very roots of this model (Barbier, 2007) and in an intersectional key, according to which:

- research proceeds from the reference to possible typological intersections between variables or categories - used in a pragmatic, contextualised, and dynamic sense (cf. par. 1.1) - to explore their recurrence and the deviations deriving from the complexity of phenomena in their specific manifestations, thus providing orientation evidence for social work;

- social workers use these provisional points of arrival as a guideline for selecting interlocutors- other profiles with specific competencies, organ-



isations, and social formations of other types such as movements, representatives, and communities, necessary for the pursuit of effective actions with respect to the cases of intersectional discrimination that it is possible to imagine in the contexts of intervention;

- intervention practices and dialogue with victims or individuals and groups at risk of discrimination, in turn, can capture additional forms and dynamics of intersectional type “from within” of the different situations of oppression, including the subjects’ consideration of self and their margins of manoeuvre (cf. Paragraphs 1.1, 1.2. and 1.3); it can thus deliver useful elements to a new typological construction, more refined and more able to intercept phenomena in action.

This circular dynamic, which represents a further way to enhance the bottom-up transformative power of intersectionality (Bilge, 2013), can affect support to victims of discrimination as well as school education, or training of key figures and awareness-raising in citizenship.

It is worth noting, in fact, that both educational services and spaces, as we have seen, seem to express a difficulty in their methods and in their proposals, due to the extreme complexity of social needs and the absence of institutional rules and the instability of partnerships (cf. Paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3). Moreover, as systemic theory suggests (Luhmann, 1995), an intrinsic aspect of any complex scenario is precisely the loss of the possibility of using univocal criteria for the relationship between parties, which must be rather referred to the identification of specific strategic opportunities.

Thus the problem of selection emerges: of interlocutors for partnerships - key issue of the local governance processes involve the Third Sector - but also of contents and methods for educational intervention and awareness-raising.

The results of the qualitative study conducted confirm the usefulness of the circular approach between research and intervention as functional to define criteria guidelines for interpretation and intervention in an intersectional key.

In fact, they reinforce the plausibility of a flexible use of categories, showing the need for the identification of significant intersections in vulnerable situations to emerge from listening to and extensive discussion with the subjects involved.

In particular, the narration of life situations, even in dialogue with multiple voices, can be addressed by operators in an intersectional key - that is, urging a story of character “identity”, not limited to the single circumstance of lived discrimination - to capture the subjective interpretation not only of the characteristics of vulnerability but also of the resources that the person can access. In this regard, the connection between the legal perspective and the sociological one seems particularly fruitful. In fact, even for the purposes of an identification of the keys offered by anti-discrimination law, one has to ask how the victim could react or could have reacted with respect



to the oppression suffered. Starting from the evidence collected, it seems that this requires more openness on the part of the professionals/ and of society to the consideration of individual agency and a de-construction of the widespread association between vulnerability and Incompetence. The case of migrant women is emblematic in respect to job placement - often under qualified and/ or hindered from religious affiliation - which requires the search for interpretative alignment with operators. In terms of labelling based on negative representations targeting gender, appearance, and lifestyles, the young respondents actually helped to outline intersections less present in research.

Findings suggest that identification of the relevant variables should be a criterion for selecting intervention partnerships.

Starting from the cases that emerged, it would be advisable to work on forms of coordination capable of intercepting vulnerabilities and specific discrimination arising from the intersection of aspects such as:

- psychological distress - drug addiction - poverty – migratory status (-> social marginality, deprivation of specific support);
- gender - origin/ ethnicity - belonging to a religious minority (-> job exclusion/ disqualification, denial of access to education);
- origin/ ethnicity - migratory status - belonging to a religious minority (-> social contempt, deprivation of the right to worship);
- detention - belonging to religious minorities (-> deprivation of the right to worship);
- gender - history of detention (-> social contempt and job exclusion/ disqualification);
- disability - gender-based violence (-> discomfort);
- gender - sexual orientation - sex work experience (-> social contempt);
- young age - gender - sexual orientation - lifestyles (-> social contempt);
- student status - origin/ ethnicity - migratory status;
- language skills (-> school assessment and guidance).

It is worth noting that some of these intersections involve variables usually not foreseen in the lists of categories taken in consideration in intersectionality studies (see Par. 1.2), conditions that may derive from experiences and/ or personal choices in life, past or present (as in the case of detention, carrying out certain professions, or sexual behaviour). In this sense, the exploratory path undertaken suggests questioning ourselves on the possibility of broadening the spectrum in the interpretation of intersectionality bringing back to the “social condition” aspects that do not merely refer to systems of domination and oppression. Moreover, this point also concerns



the possible positive consideration of intersectionality, as a specific combination of a set of personal resources and social issues that the subject can use to cope with exclusion.

The survey suggested the following indications:

- strengthen dialogue between actors engaged in research and mapping and actors involved in intervention, sometimes within the same organisation;
- invest in the dissemination of knowledge within territorial networks;
- focus in particular on the transfer of information and skills from organisations engaged in intervention (e.g. victim support desks) to those who work in a more indirect way on the contrast of the phenomena of exclusion; in turn, the latter can provide broader readings of the scenarios and the social challenges that characterise the contexts of intervention;
- intentionally and systematically support the transition from the sharing of knowledge to the mutual contamination of different perspectives and professional skills.

Instead, with respect to the challenge of developing awareness-raising and/ or training on intersectional discrimination, the results of the survey, together with the analysis conducted on the evaluation reports of the training interventions carried out by the Anti-Racial Discrimination Observatory of Veneto (see Annex no. 2), seem to suggest to:

- rethink interventions based on cultural awareness starting from an approach aimed at avoiding regulatory conflicts and to enhance, instead, the media aspect with respect to the different positions and perspectives at stake, especially in contexts characterised by social tension;
- adopt methodologies and tools capable of balancing theoretical and practical contributions, using where possible the epistemological potential inherent in direct testimony from victims of discrimination.

In educational contexts, in particular, there is a need to strengthen the role of teachers as reference figures for young people with respect to any discriminatory experiences possibly lived or observed, not only in the school space, and to develop sensitivity and skills for the development of systematic educational interventions. The need also emerged for young people to have access to tools and spaces to narrate one's experiences and one's points of view, even in a horizontal dimension within which the different perspectives and angles can be shared in an open reflection. Even in this space, in fact, if the mere transmission of knowledge on discriminatory phenomena seems insufficient, while peer sharing can prove effective in supporting the inclusion of subjectivities in the process of understanding. Witnessing, in fact, transforming the transmission of knowledge on multiple identity and social conditions into biographies, contrasts a stereotyped



reception and offers itself as particularly effective - because "credible" - in terms of intersectionality.

Intersectionality as a recovery of the religion variable in a relational key

In intersectional studies, the consideration of the religious variable, and specifically the question of belonging to a religious minority, is still neglected.

As part of the research conducted and discussed in this Report, a certain difficulty also emerges on the part of institutional organisations, the third sector, and educational sectors to deal with the plural and diversified religious dimension in the context of the interventions aimed at fighting discrimination. When present, recognition of this dimension within the living conditions of people with which one finds oneself working does not always lead to full awareness of the ways in which it is related to the other variables which help trace the (albeit mobile) perimeters of conditions of vulnerability. This difficulty is also expressed in the limitation of the collaboration, in these initiatives, with religious leaders and the faith-based organisations active in the territories.

The emergence of the intersectional perspective, however, seems to precisely offer an opportunity for a more in-depth and systematic understanding of the weight and role of religions in contemporary societies, which are both secular (or secularised) and multi-religious. Alongside the non-religious, there is an articulated set of references to the religious, in its various traditions and declinations, made up of community, groups, individuals but also places, practices, and symbols more and more evident in public space (Casanova, 1991).

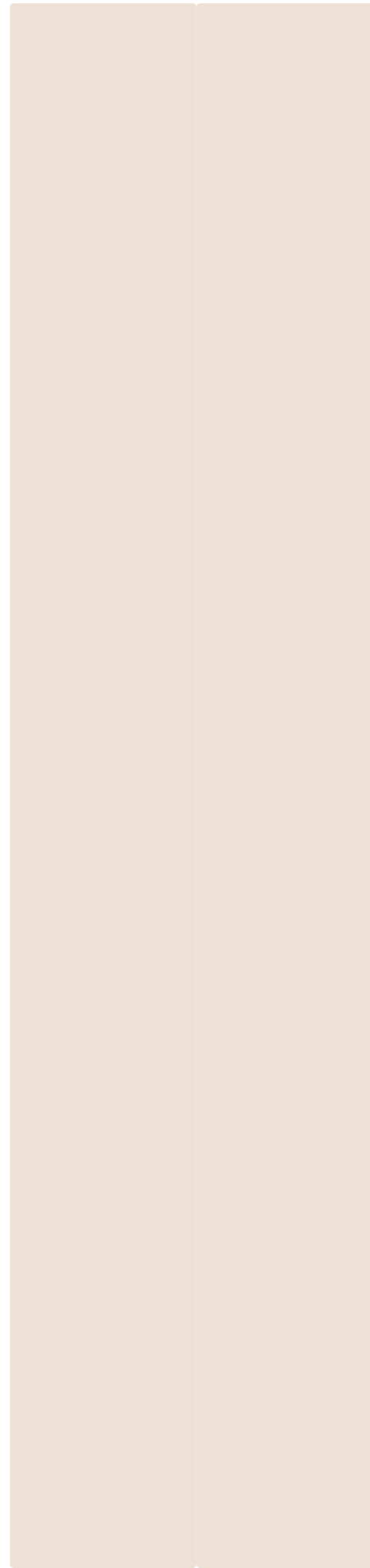
In this, intersectionality can be grafted onto a cultural and interpretative terrain that is now favourable. In fact, the critique of the unique narrative of the relationship between religion and society in the key of the "classical thesis of secularisation" - according to which religion has become a residual and totally private dimension of individual life - has allowed the emergence of more relational interpretative schemes which, bringing with them less tension to the generalisation of a standard model - of an ethnocentric type because it is based on the parable of the religious within certain Western contexts - open up the possibility of grasping the different contexts and the different forms of today's complex relationship between the religious and the secular. One can think of the concept of multiple secularities or that of post-secularity, which basically suggests that the forms of secular diversity should be read in their interpenetration (Göle, 2005) and mutual transformation in a dialectical and not necessarily oppositional relationship (Rosati and Stoeckl 2012).

Precisely in this openness to the understanding of secularised societies



in which religions are nevertheless present, the potential arises for intersectional readings. To better understand, for example, the condition of migrants who arrive on the European continent by investigating if and how the relationship with religious experience (and with communities and religious places) is a constraint or an opportunity, a form of resistance or inclusion, local or transnational belonging, or to understand the new forms of racism with reference to the intersection with anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, in that process that Meer (2012) defines “racialisation of religion”.

Not unlike what happens for other forms of marginalisation, moreover, the condition of a religious minority is the result of a multidimensional process: what makes a group a minority within a societies are not just social and economic conditions, such as employment of a disadvantaged position or exclusion from power and rights, but also some more intangible cultural factors, namely being the recipient of low social esteem or even hatred. A process of discrediting, which concerns some minorities more than others and that it is important to understand if we want to explain why belonging to a religious minority can contribute to situations of subordination and exclusion.





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Annex 1

Liguria	Veneto	Trentino
ARCI Liguria ARCIGAY Liguria Imam of Genova Regione Liguria Centro Antiviolenza Mascherona	GEA coop. Sociale CESTIM Association Le Fate Association Stella Cooperative La Esse SOS Diritti Liquidambar Veneto Lavoro ASSIST	Centro Astalli Liberalaparola ANFASS Trento Anti-discrimination Help desk Forum trentino per la pace Interreligious observatory against violence against women Imam of Trento Teachers without borders Il gioco degli specchi Dalla viva voce Board of religious belongings of Trento Volunteer of Casa Circondariale of Trento

Annex 2 – The training experience of the Anti Racial Discrimination Observatory in Veneto. Weaknesses and strengths

	Criticalities	Points of strength
Police forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to have more resources Partiality of the intervention training and need for experiment modalities also through IT and network tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking of commands local police Comparison between students coming from mterritorial realities different Active participation of cultural mediators Interest in the topic of Restorative Justice
Public transport workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited availability to listen, understanding the issues proposed and dialogue Questioning the role of the teacher, apparently also in terms of age and gender Inappropriate language of some participants who has hindered the correct communication with teachers Use of some materials difficult to understand, not at all calibrated on the knowledge, sensitivity and cultural background of the participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration and participation of managers and officials of the Company to individual meetings Emphatic approach to people present in the classroom, avoidance of regulatory oppositions Interest in the topics of the proxemics, language, understanding of cultures different and towards interventions capable of providing parctical tools Collection of opinions of participants on the measures put in place by the transport company to prevent and counteract episodes of discrimination

INGRID's partners

CENTRO PER LA COOPERAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE
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