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**GROWING UP IN A POOR NEIGHBOURHOOD: DOES IT MAKE
ANY DIFFERENCE?**

Young people's trajectories in two working class
neighbourhoods in Milan and Paris

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Introduction to the research: objectives, context and design

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to examine with a qualitative, ethnographic approach and in particular through participant observation and in-depth interviews, the conditions in which the situation of a specific disadvantaged population, in particular young people coming from working class households, could be endangered in terms of social exclusion, poverty and social disadvantage in two different national - France and Italy - and local contexts – Quarto Oggiaro in Milan and the Haut Montreuil in the Paris urban area. In fact, there are specific conditions, which may vary from one environment to another and can increase or decrease these risks.

We will focus in particular on social trajectories (especially in education and the labour market¹), inter-generational and family trajectories and the living conditions, experiences and practices of young people residing in relatively poor and deprived, lower-class neighbourhoods.

One of our main objectives is to understand if, and if so how, neighbourhood poverty can affect the opportunities and social outcomes of the people living there; in particular young people. What we mean to observe are the spatial mechanisms which, next to other important elements, such as the family and social background, influence an individual's life, structuring opportunities and deprivations regarding, in particular, education, the labour market, family relations and, more in general, social relations and social capital. Therefore, it is important to note that the objective of this research is not the one of giving a portrait and description of these two specific neighbourhoods. In fact, we are more interested on the general processes and mechanisms.

In doing so , we will also consider in particular:

Institutional settings and their mechanisms

Structural characteristics of the neighbourhoods, such as the presence or absence of specific services and infrastructures (schools, etc.). As various scholars have shown, there are unequal opportunities of access to material and symbolic goods offered by the city (Please see: Pinçon-Charlot, Préteceille - 1986 - on the relation between urban segregation, social class and public amenities in Ile de France).

¹ Labour market will not be the focus of this research but it is one of the aspects in young people's trajectory, conditioned by neighbourhood and family effects

Rationales and social practices of the actors involved

With regard to the phenomena of social exclusion, poverty and social disadvantage, to be noted first is a decisive structural mechanism: in every modern society, no matter what the level of development and the democratic standards, there are processes of exclusion of a part of the population. However, for at least twenty-thirty years, a 'new' and large-scale emergence of social exclusion, poverty and social disadvantage phenomena seems to be attested in European societies, traditionally less troubled by these phenomena than the United States.

Not all the difficulties connected with work and employment are to be explained solely on the basis of the model of the crisis² affecting the "old" economic system (that of the intensive phase, applying Polanyi's concepts).

On the contrary, the problem seems to concern the broader model of social regulation, established during the so called 'thirty glorious years'.

Europe, even with all the existing differences among its countries (Esping-Andersen 1990, Mingione 1997), has traditionally had a "qualitative" labour market, with better jobs, guarantees and social protection for its workers.

On the other hand, Europe has shown higher unemployment rates than the US for instance, and this has always constituted a problem for European competitiveness. This issue, linked to unemployment and sustainability of the labour market, has been looming even larger in the new context of globalization.

This high and persistent unemployment in Europe (including Italy and France) has generally been addressed boosting employment and creating more low-paid jobs for the unskilled people who used to be assisted by the welfare state. According to Esping - Andersen, the main actors of this socio-economic process are both the economy (the market) and the State³. From the point of view of the market, the changes occurring in Western economies, such as the problems of unemployment and competitiveness, have been steadily modifying the labour market, worsening the quality and protection of jobs and increasing inequalities among workers. In particular, as we will observe in our research, there are inequalities between adults and younger people, who become at a certain extent the outsiders of the labour market. In fact, the labour market has become increasingly polarized with a wide gap between high and low wages and between stable and unstable working careers (Morris and Western, 1999; Gallie, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 2002).

This "new" economic cycle, called Post-Fordism, has increased the demand for jobs in the service

² For more references on this, please see the first part of the chapter dedicated to the neighborhood.

³ To be precise, according to the definition of Esping-Andersen (1990), the third important actor is the family, which, as we see, has a great role when dealing with poverty, social disadvantage and exclusion

sector, requiring more flexibility, which in most cases translated into precarious jobs. This change has been accounted for by economists and exponents of the business world as a process correlated with the nature of post-industrial society and economy, since services and immaterial products needed a different type of labour force and different work relations (more flexibility).

«A growing share of labour supply, socialized in industrial countries to continuative and high productivity careers, with an income adequate to high life styles and consumption standards, does not find any more satisfactory employment opportunities. All industrial countries have thus entered a phase of chronic excess supply. The excess is not absolute since the service sector offers many working opportunities, of which a large share is although not stable and enough paid to satisfy the expectations and life strategies of the potential workers. It's a question of imbalance that strikes the modes of social regulation of work» (Mingione,1997 p. 207). As we have seen, the other important actor involved in these important changes is the State and its welfare system. Public policies to address the labour market and the problems connected with inequalities and poverty have significantly changed in the last years due to radical transformation of the welfare system.

As a result, many social transformations have occurred at various different levels, such as the one described in the market economy, the demographic changes affecting the households models with the erosion of the male breadwinner model (even where it was not completely developed as in the case of Italy) and higher working rates for women, or the transformation within the political system, bringing about progressive transfer from the national to other levels.

These are all elements that have also brought about a profound change in the capacity of the State to respond to the emerging social issues, leading to forced reshaping and recalibration of the functions and capacities of the welfare state. As we will see in the case of France and Italy, every welfare state is different and so reacts in a different way to the output coming from the economy and society. However, some common trajectories can be discerned at the European level. The common line seems to be cutting benefits and social protection, favouring a different approach than in the past with welfare-to-work model policies. The preferred solution is work incentives to increase participation in the labour market for the workers previously excluded. This drive towards employment may not be a problem in itself but it becomes critical since most of the people involved, having very low qualifications, are forced to accept low paid jobs and are therefore more likely to become working poor, especially if their low wage combines with particular household characteristics, which can differ from country to country and sometimes between different areas in the same national context.

1.2 Between institutions and individuals

The concepts of poverty, social disadvantage and social exclusion have recently undergone a process of methodological transformation. In accordance with the most important recent literature (Moulaert, 1995; Paugam, 1996; Moulaert and Scott, 1997; Mingione, Kazepov and Zajczyk, 1997; Mingione and Oberti, 2003), we will not simply focus on the classification of poverty and on its purely economic dimension but will view it as a multi-dimensional process occurring at different spatial levels (Moulaert, Morlicchio and Cavola 2008).

Social exclusion and other connected phenomena such as urban poverty and social disadvantage (1979) have been theorized as multidimensional processes which combine different exclusion mechanisms: exclusion from the labour market, social rights, education (through no access or drop out), the housing market etc.

However, as stated by Moulaert and others (2008), to arrive at a real multi-dimensional and dynamic analysis of this phenomena, it is necessary to spell out the articulations between all the mechanisms in action.

For this reason, the analytical perspective to study these phenomena is to focus on processes leading to poverty and disadvantage.

As Morlicchio (2000) notes, numerous exclusion processes depend mainly on lack of access to regular labour markets. Kazepov, Benassi and Mingione (1997), in a study examining different European welfare systems in a urban perspective, underlined how following a model of path dependency, the specificity and particular institutional structure (labour market, welfare state and the family) traditions, social and familiar networks at local level, demographic situation, etc. have a role in the structuring and emergence of phenomena such as social exclusion, social disadvantage and poverty. Therefore, accurate institutional analysis could be important to evaluate the existing relationship between labour market dynamics, the welfare state and informal networks. In fact: «It is true that utilitarian logics provide the easiest access to the atomized dimension of the individual – but these are socially meaningless because utilitarian behaviour cannot occur without the concurrent presence of institutions, norms and culture in society» (Mingione, 2006, p. 4). With regard to institutional settings and structural social differences, especially when comparing France and Italy, we cannot neglect the role of immigration and of the immigrant presence (and not only of the first generation), which, in the two contexts of our research (at both national and local level) differ in proportion and qualitatively. However, we can generally say that the position of immigrant workers in the labour market is almost always weaker, these people very often occupying vulnerable and unprotected positions (Pugliese, 2002) Something which has a consequence on the

development of young people coming from these households. So much we will observe in the two contexts in the case of young people of immigrant origins. However, we will pay particular attention to the local manifestation, in order to verify this hypothesis also at the micro level in the two areas of our empirical study.

From an individual perspective, particular attention has to be paid to the dynamic dimension (Hill 1981; Duncan 1984; Walker 1994; Leibfried 1999) observing all most significant biographical events that may lead, at both the individual and family levels, towards trajectories of social disadvantage and poverty.

«La difficulté consiste alors à analyser les inégalités, non plus de façon statique, c'est-à-dire en identifiant les groupes défavorisés et en recherchant pourquoi leur condition sociale n'évolue pas, mais, au contraire, à repérer dans des trajectoires diverses les processus qui conduisent certains individus à un cumul de handicaps et d'autres à cumul d'avantages. Autrement dit la notion d'exclusion encourage, au moins implicitement, à mettre l'accent à la fois sur l'instabilité des situations et sur les processus par lesquels les inégalités se constituent et se renouvellent» (Paugam, 1995 p.568-569).

Of course, in the analysis of individual trajectories and experiences we will find a combination of more personal (in most cases family) characteristics with institutional elements both at a national and local neighbourhood level. In fact, even if individual trajectories are fundamental to understand processes such as poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage, in order to better understand profiles and trajectories, they do not suffice in themselves. In concrete terms, this is important when we analyze trajectories such as those of young people, which may prove incomplete or may hide some important elements of the individual's life story. In these cases, taking into account intergenerational trajectories and institutional variables can help to complete the frame. Even more, recognizing the existence of "*embeddedness*" through which « the economic actor is not an atomized and utilitarian individual, but is in fact positioned within specific historical and institutional contexts in various social networks" (Ghezzi and Mingione 2007), in order to understand individual and group /family trajectories, we should consider the entire social system consisting of welfare and labour regimes, educational systems, family and social kinships and demographic situations.

To conclude this part, individual trajectories cannot be independent from those of other individuals living in the same area or neighbourhood, which means that we cannot fail to take account of and investigate the community and neighbourhood's influences, If we wish to identify the precise mechanisms of reproduction of social disadvantage and poverty, it is always necessary to observe them in their concrete and local articulation.

1.3 Two units of analysis

The already mentioned sociological literature applied the concepts of social exclusion, poverty and social disadvantage to a complex and articulated spatial unit. The level of analysis, as we will see in our research, is twofold, with configuration at the national level, as many studies have shown (Paugam, 1996; Castel 2004), but also at the urban and neighbourhood level, with all the local peculiarities (Moulaert, 1995; Madanipour, Cars and Allen, 1998). The neighbourhood represents the scale on which the institutional mechanisms concretely perform. It is at this micro level of observation that we can better observe how the phenomena that interest us are shaped and crystallize with particular configurations due to local characteristics and peculiarities (strength of familiar kinships, neighbourhood solidarity, deprivation/presence of services, working opportunities, local social policies, presence of legal or illegal forms of organisations such as citizens' associations or criminal networks. etc).

«Place as “social space” crystallizes the particularity of exclusion processes, social welfare regimes, local policy, and so on, but also of local demography, network dynamics, school and labour market dynamics. Place becomes a multidimensional exclusion and integration process by itself: as a vortex of social forces, it rejects or accepts, integrates or repulses, deteriorates or upgrades its inhabitants, and so on». (Moulaert, Morlicchio and Cavola, 2008 p.150)

These processes at the local level can be also influenced by the impact of economic restructuring. As some important studies have shown (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez 2002; Moulaert et al. 2003), socioeconomic subsystems (production, labour markets, distribution of income and wealth) have decisive power in the processes of poverty and exclusion because they have considerable impact on the local urban structure of the labour market, on income distribution but also on other phenomena such as the housing market. In particular, real estate has a relevant role in residential dynamics; in fact, processes of urban regeneration and restructuring may in some cases generate gentrification, driving poor income households towards concentration in less desirable neighbourhoods or keeping them there, generally characterized by limited availability of services. Thus, as in the case of both Quarto Oggiaro in Milano and Montreuil, there is a strong impact of public local policies on spatial and social polarization. Of course, this phenomenon also changes in manifestation and intensity depending on the institutional settings, at both the national and local level, and it also depends on democratic control at local level (the role of the municipalities as institutional and political organs), on the political situation (at both national and local level), and so forth.

1.4 France and Italy: two institutional contexts

Some fundamental processes can show a certain similarity in different European urban contexts: unemployment, educational failures, degraded living conditions, segregation, etc.

However, depending on each context, following a path dependency logic, every element combines in a different way, producing as a result phenomena which can vary in essence or intensity. In fact, every society relies on particular agencies of socialization, institutions, policies and urban contexts which are linked to different integration models.

France, for instance, has traditionally been characterized by a strong role of the State, a an ample supply of public services, basic reference to secular values and long-standing immigration due to its long colonial experience and industrial process.

«Par tradition, l'Etat est extrêmement réticent à répondre aux revendications à fondement ethnique ou culturel. Au nom d'une vision de la République unifiée contre les conditions, les statuts à caractère héréditaire, l'Etat a prétendu nier les divisions ascriptives autres que le sexe et l'âge, les clivages ayant pour base l'origine culturelle ou la confession reçue étant particulièrement suspect » (Lagrange, Oberti 2006 p. 18).

Traditionally, the French model of cohesion rests on the idea of "*Citoyenneté Nationale*", which is a central and unifying concept, together with the paradigm of "Intégration Sociale", to be assured by important institutions such as school and the welfare state (Etat Providence). This main principle can be seen as a pact of citizenship between the individual and the State:

«L'idée fondatrice était qu'en étant ou en devenant Français, on acceptait d'appartenir à cette 'communauté nationale de citoyens' et donc de renvoyer dans la sphère intime et privée les autres dimensions de son identité » (Lagrange, Oberti 2006 p 19).

Social cohesion in France is considered at the national scale, which is why the emergence of alternative social models, such as cohesion at the neighbourhood and local level, is viewed with suspicion and sometimes rejected in the name of national cohesion (Lagrange, Oberti 2006). The concept of "*Société Nationale*" is theoretically a guarantee for everybody to have similar opportunities, independent, for example, of residence.

However, as is the case in other European country this national system of social integration worked (and not always completely) only for a certain period and is now undergoing radical transformations.

Compared to French society, Italian society has a different profile, characterized by a less dominant role of the State, lack of reference to secular values, more recent immigration, an absence of

important and structured urban policies and in general a lower level of segregation.

Even if it is fundamental to recognize internal and regional differences, we can say that in Italy a greater role seems to be played by more informal actors, such as the family, local communities, intermediate structures and religion. While in France, as we observed, social integration and solidarity passes firstly through public institutions such as the school, Italy has developed a less strategic approach to education. For labour market entry, for example, social capital still seems to play a greater role than in France, where on the contrary:

« Le système scolaire actuel comporte, en effet, de nombreuses filières savamment hiérarchisées, les meilleurs permettent à l'élite l'accès aux grandes écoles et aux postes les plus recherchés, les moins valorisées offrent des formations et occupations inadaptées au marché de l'emploi et ne pouvant conduire qu'au chômage. A ce mécanisme de ségrégation interne s'ajoutent les pratiques diverses et souvent subtiles des classes supérieures ou moyennes pour éviter les établissements à trop forte concentration d'enfants des catégories populaire ou immigrées, dans lesquels les filières et les options sont souvent peu attractives et les conditions d'apprentissage parfois médiocres» (Paugam 1995, p. 568).

By comparing France and Italy we are able to identify weaknesses and strengths which can have contrary effects in the two contexts. The apparent less important role of local communities and the lesser responsibilities attributed to the family are often pointed to as an example of weaknesses in French society, which is more rigid in its institutional role, in particular at times like the present time characterized by a sort of "recalibration" of the Welfare State and of the role of the State itself. On the contrary, lesser legitimacy for the State, a more limited role for the public institutions in the domain of solidarity, less efficiency in the public services and the part played by cronyism - "*Clientelismo*" (Ferrera,1996) are the weaknesses attributed to Italian society. Italy seems to show less quality although the ample scope assigned to informal dimensions related to family, local and economic aspects allows for the development of flexibility, rendering Italian society less rigid.

As Lagrange and Oberti (2006 p. 22-23) recognize : «Cette comparaison conduit à un étrange paradoxe. La plus grande efficacité de la société française à lutter contre les inégalités sociales et à assurer une meilleure protection sociale produit simultanément un fort sentiment d'exclusion, surtout dans les quartiers populaires et immigrés les plus ségrégués ».

By contrast, Italian society, despite its difficulties in guaranteeing a high level of citizenship and reduction of inequalities, seems to be able to integrate part of the vulnerable population through social and family networks. However, as we will better argue for instance in the chapter dedicated to the family and its role, we should not perceive Italy and France in complete opposition: the first one as the "kingdom" of family and informal relations and France as totally ruled by State and

formal dynamics.

Another important difference between the two contexts concerns immigration. While France had a strong colonial history, Italy had traditionally been a country of emigration and internal migration from the South to industrial cities of the North. So much is attested, for example, in the Milanese neighbourhood we studied, Quarto Oggiaro.

As in the case of immigrants coming to France from Maghreb and Central Africa, internal migration in Italy has seen a difficult process of integration, often going through a stage of discrimination and inequalities. However, the main difference between the old process of immigration in Italy and France lies in the fact that Italian migration was by people of the same nationality, even though marked regional differences existed. On the contrary, French immigration from Maghreb and Africa had an ethnic, racial connotation. In addition, a significant difference is that, it was not so rare for people from Southern Italy, to achieve solid socio-political status in Northern cities, while in France it was generally “denied” to people from Northern or Central Africa.

Nowadays the situation is changing: in France the second and third generations are “formally” integrated, even though serious problems of strong and real social integration (not only limited to ethnic and racial aspects) still exist, as the events of 2005 in the “Banlieues” clearly witnessed.

On the other hand, a new challenge is open for Italy, where (foreign) immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon which has been underway for about twenty years (Ambrosini, 2009; Ambrosini and Abbatecola 2010). The first immigrant presence was generally established in medium small provincial cities, where the immigrant workers assumed strategic importance for the local economy, although social and political integration remained very limited.

Only recently has the number of immigrants increased appreciably, also in the large urban centres. In the city of Milan, for example, the rate of immigration increased from the 7% registered in 2001 to 13% in 2007.

1.5 Changes and transformations in the two models

Having considered the two institutional frameworks, it is to be noted that significant transformations are underway and new challenges are opening up in both France and Italy.

As far as France is concerned, many scholars have recognized that during the eighties important changes affected the concept of solidarity, the integration of social forces and the role of the State. Over a period of at least 30 years, many problematic aspects have arisen concerning the fundamental principle of solidarity, which has been seriously undermined with the sharp rise in unemployment. As Castel (1995) pointed out, it was too difficult to maintain a principle of social protection focused only on employment.

«Passé un certain seuil de la quantité et de la durée du chômage, l'assise de prélèvements sur les seuls salaires ressemblait à une pyramide inverse. Depuis les années soixante dix, l'exclusion prend sa source dans l'ordre socio économique lui-même. Au lieu que l'exclusion soit le moyen d'un chantage à l'intégration sociopolitique, elle devient le signe d'une désagrégation produite par l'ordre socio-économique, la preuve de sa défaillance»

(Donzelot 1995 ; p. 95).

In order to address this 'new' social phenomenon a number of several solutions were implemented in the eighties, such as the 'RMI' (Revenu Minimum d'Insertion) and other policies related to the city and classified under the name of "Politique de la Ville".

"*L'idéologie Republicaine*" has always been considered the counterpart in opposition to the concept of "*Communautaire*", against which Durkheim theorized the existence of a new form of solidarity, which he described as organic: a concept that became strategic at the end of the nineteenth century for the analysis of modern society, and which worked as a reference point for public action during the twentieth century. However, even if traditionally France has always rejected the "*Communautaire*" approach, we seem to have recently seen something of a revival of this concept. In any case, it is to be noted that in French political and academic debate this concept can prove somewhat sensitive and is very delicate to handle. This is the reason why, when implementing policies such as "*affirmative-actions*" addressing specific groups, the public institutions immediately implement strategies to underline the strong social characterization, and so protect the 'Republican Dogma'.

« Il y a d'abord un retour à la conception communautaire du social à travers la valorisation du local du quartier, du groupe, de l'ethnie..., bref, de tout ce qui véhicule l'idée d'une possible solidarité par la similitude des conditions et l'appartenance à lui-même. Sans doute l'importance conférée à la notion et la pratique de médiation s'expliquent-elles par ce retour du communautaire: il s'agit de

renforcer le lien social, ici et là où les rapports se vivent, sans renvoyer les problèmes à une instance étatique lointaine, mais en puisant dans les ressources cachées, inexploitées, d'une socialité concrète, d'une solidarité active dont on avait oublié l'importance » (Donzelot, 1995 p.95).

We must clarify that even if the change has been quite considerable, this does not mean that the State has completely forgone its place. In fact, what we see is more a renegotiation of its role and transition from “consultation” to “implication”.

« Par ce terme, on désigne les procédures contractuelles, de responsabilisation des structures communautaires – quartier, ethnie, ville – et des individus en rupture de socialisation. Le passage de la formule de la consultation à celle de l'implication correspond à celui d'un besoin de légitimation démocratique d'une action centralement déterminée à celui d'un besoin de l'incitation à l'autodétermination des individus et des entités communautaires. Il s'agit de créer un pouvoir d'agir par l'attribution conditionnelle des moyens de cette action et non plus de faire cautionner le pouvoir dans son action. L'état ne peut continuer à occuper cette position où l'exécutif décide puis cherche sa caution démocratique par la consultation au prix, éventuellement, de la satisfaction de quelques revendications syndicales » (Donzelot, 1995, p. 95).

As we have seen in the case of France, major challenges are also facing Italy and in its cities. The most important, as everywhere in Europe, concern the Welfare State and specifically the role of the family with its sustainability over the long term. In Italy we observe a sharp incongruence between “new emerging social risks” (including an emergency for young people) and an ‘old welfare configuration’ (Barbieri 2005). Thus the need for a new model, able to handle social risks and guarantee social citizenship, has been widely acknowledged (Ferrera 2004; Boeri e Perotti 2002).

In particular, the first problem relates to the labour market. As Barbieri and Scherer (2004) demonstrate, since the seventies in Italy we have seen emergence of the risk of entrapment in very precarious occupations.

This influences also the chances of accomplishing full transition to adulthood in a reasonable time (Billari, Rosina 2004; Benassi, Novelli 2007) and more in general contributes to the creation of social exclusion, having marked generational characterization among young people.

Another element concerns the risks for the old generations. In fact, the constant increase in the number of dependent old people has significant consequences on the balance with the active population on the labour market. Thirdly, some scholars register a general risk of increasing economic inequalities, poverty and social exclusion, for both households and individuals (Boeri, Brandolini 2004; Brandolini, Saraceno 2007).

All the problems outlined here recall possible solutions which are by no means easy to find. As we have seen, the traditional Italian welfare state is typically family-based, since the family is at the

basis of this model. However, with regard to re-proposal of the Italian family model as a functional equivalent for public social assistance, it is to be recalled that due to the increasing difficulties that the family as an institution has to face, this role risks becoming unsustainable in the long term (Saraceno 2002). Even if this does not imply a current crisis.

In fact, as Mingione (2001) underlined, we can identify some trajectories that the family is following. First of all, we see an overloading of family responsibilities due to the ageing of the population and the model of prolonged co-habitation between young adults and their parents, a phenomenon which also has quite important demographic consequences, for being so overburdened, the family can experience a weakening of its care capacitors and economic initiative of the community and parental networks. These are indeed even more fragile due to the demographic decline and show less solidarity because of a general increase in individualism within Italian society.

However, another tendency that Mingione recognizes, is a sort of cultural “resistance” to the externalization of services, which has consequences in the form of poor employment opportunities for women and young people and relates to the development of services provided by immigrant women within households and to a gendered redistribution of care.

It is also to be borne in mind, as we have seen, and that unlike the traditional French model, in Italy the level of public initiative is lower and more characterized by pronounced localism: an aspect which is particularly significant if we consider the marked dualism between Northern and Southern Italy.

«Nel Nord, maggiormente toccato dai mutamenti demografici (accentuato invecchiamento della popolazione, più forte e lunga denatalità, instabilità del matrimonio, diffusione delle famiglie di fatto e nascite al di fuori del matrimonio), il mutamento sociale ha indebolito le capacità regolative e micro-redistributive della famiglia nucleare standard. La fragilità delle reti di solidarietà informali ha incrementato la vulnerabilità degli individui isolati socialmente e/o creato sindromi nuove, quali quelle delle persone “problematiche” espulse dalle famiglie (un anziano non autosufficiente, un figlio problematico, la madre sola teenager) che non possono o non vogliono farsene più carico (Micheli, 1996). Le derive da isolamento individuale possono essere intese come una risposta delle famiglie ai processi di sovraccarico: di fronte a responsabilità insostenibili un numero crescente di reti familiari si spezzano o abbandonano i soggetti più problematici. Sebbene queste sindromi siano meno diffuse rispetto agli altri contesti europei, soprattutto perché sono più persistenti il modello matrimoniale e la tradizione di solidarietà informale e volontaria, la loro gravità è evidente: isolamento sociale ed abbandono hanno risvolti pericolosi proprio perché il modello di welfare conta di più sulla solidarietà informale ed è avaro di programmi e servizi di reinserimento»

(Mingione 2001, p. 14-15).

For this reason it is to be noted that even if the family has traditionally had an important role in the Italian welfare state, its forced role (Familismo Coatto) seems not to be the only or best answer today to manage the phenomena described. As is evident, even if it continues to play its important role, at the same time it is also showing certain limitation, in particular in the large urban centres of the North, as we will see in the neighbourhood standard for our research, Quarto Oggiaro.

1.6 The local contexts

The neighbourhoods we selected - Quarto Oggiaro in Milano and the “Haut Montreuil” for the Paris urban area: Ramenas Lèò Lagrange, Branly-Boissière and Signac-Murs à Peches - are traditional working-class areas with a notable presence of public housing projects, experiencing significant transformations taking place at both the socio-demographic and territorial level (Préteceille 2003, Cousin and Préteceille 2008).

In fact, both neighbourhoods are now populated not only by the working class but in particular areas seem to present situations of “mixité sociale”.

An important point to note is that the two areas differ in terms of the presence of the immigrant population or population of immigrant origin. In fact, the French neighbourhoods are much more ethnically characterized due to the different level of immigration at the national level. However, significant transformations in Quarto Oggiaro, one of Milan’s most known and traditional working class areas, relate also to immigration, which rose from the 5% registered in 1999 to 15% in 2007 (Torri, Vitale 2009), a value two percentage points higher than the city average.

We opted for three similar neighbourhoods in Montreuil (it is more about an administrative differentiation and we can simply define this area as the Haut Montreuil) and one in Milan, in order to have an equal number of inhabitants of about 30,000.

There are differences, however, and the first is quite evident: the Milanese neighbourhood is actually in the city, while Montreuil is an independent medium-size town with about 100,000 inhabitants, although it is connected and orientated to the capital (especially the Southern part, with the underground line number 9). As we will see in the analysis, there is a real fracture between the “Bas Montreuil” and “Haut Montreuil”, which also applies to the population, service provisions, public transportations, etc.

Our choice is due to the socio-demographic characteristics of the territory: we also based our selection on a classification of socio-professional categories proposed by Préteceille (2003) and

later on also applied to the case of Milan (Cousin, 2007).

These two local contexts show similar characteristics from the socio-demographic, historical and also structural point of view (such as the considerable presence of social housing projects). At the same time, both neighbourhoods are also subject to fundamental changes affecting their territory and urban profile.

In Quarto Oggiaro and Montreuil important re-qualification projects have already been implemented (Urban Pic 2 in Milano and a regeneration process of the “Bas Montreuil” and “Centre Ville”) while others have just been launched (for example the Acacia-Boissière residential area).

All this seems also to boost the real-estate supply and, as a consequence, a change in the profile of its population. Due to these particular situations and status of the neighbourhoods, we hold them to be the right local settings for our analysis.

In addition, with regard to their territorial positioning, both are traditionally disconnected from the rest of the city, although transport has improved in both areas fairly recently. Quarto Oggiaro, as suggested by one of our witnesses, “was traditionally isolated from the rest of the city. It is a place which you can access only along bridges surrounding the neighbourhood. However, transport has improved somewhat in recent times, thanks to the ‘Passante Ferroviario’ and the improvement of the bus line 57. Anyway, you always have the feeling of crossing borders when you get here” (Don Mario, Church of San Nazaro).

The same feeling of spatial disconnection seems to be experienced by most of the citizens living in the three neighbourhoods of Montreuil and even more, as we will note, transport conditions are pretty difficult there.

To conclude this section we can also say that both neighbourhoods are stigmatized from the point of view of the media and public opinion. As we will see, this stigmatization seems to be based on various different elements but always connected to the populations living there.

In both cases young people play, or are subjected to, a role which can however differ. Also to be mentioned in this respect is the role of criminality in both neighbourhoods, albeit of a different nature. In Quarto Oggiaro, due to historical reasons such as the transfer of ‘territorial control’ from criminal groups known as “*La Mala*”, hegemonic during the sixties and seventies, for at least 20 years organised crime seems to have played a major role in shaping the economic structure, living conditions (through the commerce of occupied flats) ways of life and social practices of an important part of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants.

1.7 The main issues of the analysis

In order to maintain an intergenerational perspective, fundamental when studying phenomena such as poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage, we decided to consider *family) trajectories*.

For this reason our objective was to interview at least two people from different generations in the same family: parents and children, when possible also including grandparents.

Even though the main target is constituted by young people, this generational perspective through which they are observed will also offer us information about processes involving other generations in the same family. In fact, as some scholars have argued (Segalene 2010), observation of two or three generations enables us to provide a more complete framework of the situation and trajectories, which to a certain extent can also be reproduced from generation to generation.

For this reason, we believe that a perspective of family trajectories should prove interesting for our study. Particular attention will be paid to the dynamic dimension (Hill 1981; Duncan 1984; Walker 1994; Leibfried 1999), observing all most significant biographical events that may lead, at both individual and family levels, towards trajectories of social disadvantage and poverty.

Specifically, we will observe some issues which the sociological literature on generations and cohorts considers important, such as social mobility, one of the most decisive factors when we analyze family trajectories, also connected to other socio-economic aspects such as the residence, education, employment and income.

Our objective is therefore to contextualise family trajectories in the entire process of reproduction of poverty and social disadvantage, in order to estimate their meaning and role in the whole process, to see how they act and to what different extents in the two contexts. Moreover, we will observe how the family, together with other decisive factors, such as the external context of the neighbourhood, school and some personal characteristics can participate, being an important element influencing young people's trajectories and the mechanisms of reproduction of poverty and social disadvantage.

Education

School is an element closely connected with the territorial and local level, representing a considerable important tool for social mobility. This is why all strategies around educational choices are decisive for middleclass families. This is particularly true for France (Zavanten, Duru-Bellat, 2006; Oberti 2007), although similar strategies seem to be visible also in our Milanese neighbourhood.

For example, in Quarto Oggiaro (Torri, Vitale, 2009) during the academic year 2007/2008 only 34% of the students attributed to the scuola media Graf, through the so called 'bacino di utenza',

and 37% to the scuola media Gian Battista Vico, in reality attended those schools. This means that a large part of the households made different choices and in particular decided to send their children to other schools located outside the neighbourhood.

As we will observe in a dedicated chapter, with regard to the relationship between education and the neighbourhood, a recent study on young people living in “at risk” areas, underlines that these people experience major risks of becoming “entrapped” within the neighbourhood (Zajczyk, Borlini, Memo, 2006). As we will seek to show in our research, this is true, related to educational choices, of both the French and Italian case. In particular, it seems to be evident in the neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro, where the educational supply, mainly of professional schools, is quite rich. This can indicate a sort of neighbourhood effect on the educational and working segmentation even if the family variable should never be underestimated. However, even if the existing relationship between school and occupation is not linear, we cannot deny the role of social inequalities in determining the chances of obtaining educational qualifications (Schizzerotto, 2002; Torri, Vitale 2009)

Employment dynamics

Even if employment will not be the focus of this research, whose main focus is more on the neighbourhood, since the labour market goes often beyond the borders of the neighbourhood, we will pay attention to the trajectories and dynamics concerning young people, but also their parents, in order to see whether family professional experiences exert a decisive influence – on the labour market. In particular through social capital.

With regard to employment, it must be borne in mind that it is determined by macro structures, referring thus to a higher levels, such as the welfare state and the institutional characterization of the labour market, what we can also labour regime. At the same time it is also influenced by more micro dynamics, such as informal and community networks, which may facilitate access.

As we have seen, France and Italy have different institutional patterns; France has implemented policies such as the RMI/RSA or others specifically targeting young people who entered the labour market. On the contrary, Italy can traditionally count better on social and community networks as a potential but informal resource to access the labor market.

In a few words, we could argue that in France young people’s integration in the labour market is more an issue concerning the State, while in Italy the family seems to be the actor who is most concerned.

However, if policies represent a structural element following political and institutional decision, in contrast we can see how in Montreuil and Milan social relations and networks act and evolve. For

instance, we see that in a specific economic period like the current one, characterized by economic crisis and rising unemployment, local actors start to implement behaviours which on the contrary they have not resorted to in the past. Secondly, we also note different attitudes towards community resources and networks,

depending on the ethnic community of origin.

Spatial Mobility and living conditions

With this term we mean, for instance, residential mobility according to the family of origin, from “bad” to “good” areas inside the neighbourhood, or on the contrary immobility. Especially for Italy, strong family networks and relations are seen to have an influence on the immobility of children, who have a tendency to reside close to their parents home. This is due to the fact that they can more easily receive support in some of the household activities, such as childcare.

However, as underlined for the case of Milan (Benassi, 2005), the city has become increasingly selective, in particular due to the housing supply and services for households. For example, on the evidence of the 1991 to 2001 census data, we see that the city of Milan expelled a very large proportion of medium-low income families, in most cases consisting of young couples. Much the same seems to happen to a lesser degree in the neighborhood of Quarto Oggiaro. In fact, recent attempts at requalification of the area seem to have boosted the housing market, even if costs remain lower than those of other city neighborhoods, forcing new couples to move outside the city, to the surrounding provincial area (Baranzate, Bollate, Novate etc.). As we have seen, the same phenomena seems to occur in Montreuil, where through urban regeneration and gentrification processes the poorest part of the population seems to have been driven over the years to more peripheral neighborhoods, such as those involved in our study.

Social relationships and practices⁴

The issue of the quality of social relationships in neighbourhoods is at the centre of those phenomena we intend to study. They play indeed a major role in favouring or decreasing the risk of poverty, social exclusion and social disadvantage. Tackling the issue of social relations, it is important to bear in mind that a low income is just one of the conditions but not the only one which can account for a situation of poverty or disadvantage. In fact, we observe situations of severe deprivation that do not have as a necessary consequence social exclusion or serious social disadvantage. Here, we can attribute an important role to social relations and informal networks

⁴ This part, dedicated to social relations and practices, will occupy more space in this section than other elements already addressed in the introduction and second section.

intervening in such situations.

The phenomena connected to the loss of social links (“liens sociaux”), appears in different spheres of collective life such as employment, family, neighbourhood, school, and cannot be limited to the dissolution of primary social networks. Even if the structural weakness of the family is indicative of why more and more individuals become socially vulnerable and so have no other choice but to fall back on the assistance of the social services or charity associations (also in France, where the welfare state and social policies are more developed and guarantee much more assistance than in Italy: as stated in the national report of *Secours Catholique*, 1 480 000 people have benefited from their help), what should be understood by the term social link is a general insecurity of social identities, which is beginning to be questioned.

« (...) Le problème essentiel pour une partie importante des individus est celui de la menace de perdre la place qu'ils occupent dans la société, c'est-à-dire le lien fragile qui les relie aux autres, épreuve d'autant plus douloureuse qu'elle est vécue le plus souvent comme une expérience individuelle. La question n'est pas celle d'une frange de la population qu'il serait possible d'opposer au reste, mais plutôt celle de la remise en question au moins partielle du processus de construction identitaire qui avait permis à des groupes sociaux de se protéger et de s'organiser dans la lutte collective en fonction d'un avenir prévisible et partagé, ce que les sociologues ont appelé à une époque une « communauté de destin », en référence au modèle de la classe ouvrière »
(Paugam, 1995 p. 571).

In particular, spatial segregation in poor neighbourhoods may translate into degradation of social relations and collective identities. Wilson (1987) suggests a process by which neighbours' status, choices, or values can lead to a concentration of positive and adverse attributes in particular neighbourhoods, which affect the aspirations, attitudes, motivations or on the contrary frustrations of those individuals who grow up in these areas, and hence their attainments and success. Hence, the behaviour and values of children's friends, neighbours, and acquaintances alter their perceptions, influence their behaviour, and structure their norms in much the same way as do the behaviour and values of their own parents. At the same time, Wilson also recognizes the potential risk of the opposite case. Growing up in a 'good' neighbourhood may have an adverse effect on poor or minority family children. In fact, according to Wilson, poor family children raised in more affluent neighbourhoods may view themselves as being in competition with the others in their neighbourhood. It is at the same time important to recall that, even if France seems to have experienced certain phenomena in its “*Banlieues*” comparison with the American ghetto is not really possible. In fact, they differ in several aspects such as ethnic characterization, the degree of poverty, the degradation of the neighbourhood conditions and the level of criminality.

In any case, what could be observed, both in France and in Italy, is a kind of return to the private sphere and a hypothetical weaker sense of social life, due also to the fact that people can lose control of public spaces, sometimes occupied by specific groups (criminals, etc.).

At this point, individuals may implement different strategies in order to organize themselves and escape or at least resist stigmatization. These behaviours can range from an attitude of total avoidance towards the neighbourhood and its life, with discrimination and construction of sub-hierarchies to distinguish themselves from those considered inferior or whose behaviour is criticized (Elias and Scotson, 1965).

Given that these kinds of relations are not based on mechanical effects of spatial proximity, the need is for us to investigate how in a specific situation and at certain characteristics (of the actors and context) different processes might combine. Therefore, only with analysis of the representations and social practices, paying attention to which spatial level they act upon, can we have a concrete idea of relational dynamics in the neighbourhood.

This is why in our research we cannot fail to look at the representations that each (social) group has of one another concerning the behaviours and the interactions occurring in collective spaces and understand the daily social co-existence: for example, adults *vis-à-vis* young people, young people *vis-a-vis* the police, people living in private houses (“*Pavillons*”) *vis-à-vis* the inhabitants of the social housing projects, etc.

The idea of cohabitation has to do with the concept of exchange, taking different forms and strategies, from cooperation to conflict and avoidance.

Let us see which are the most relevant strategies in the two contexts of study, paying particular attention to the exclusion processes. Avoidance phenomena can occur on a twofold scale: neighbourhood/rest of the city, and may lead households with more possibilities to boycott certain public spaces or services, thanks to their economic or social capacities. It is to be borne in mind that the particular experience of cohabitation also depends on the position of individuals in the social mobility and residential scale. The researches of Chamboredon, Lemaire (1970) and Pinçon (1981) show that lower social class households and families experiencing negative social mobility have the greatest problems of cohabitation with groups of different social status (both higher or lower as in the case of immigrants). On the contrary, individuals and groups experiencing positive social mobility seemed to show a more positive attitude towards cohabitation and social mix.

With regard to these aspects, comparison between Italy and France may prove particularly interesting due to a general different level of segregation (Cousin, Préteceille 2008), the institutional structure, but also to the role that social networks can play in the two contexts.

In fact, as Paugam (2001) underlined, the models of poverty in the two countries seem to be

different. Italy traditionally presents a model which could be defined as integrated, since it is not affected by the same level of social precariousness that seems to occur in France, for instance.

However, due to some processes recently affecting Italian welfare and society (Mingione, 2001), significant trajectories of change or convergences may be observed, specifically, related to those mechanisms acting and contributing to the reproduction of poverty, social disadvantage and exclusion. An interesting point is to be seen in the conjunction between relational aspects and immigration.

1.8 Specification of the target

Considering the population involved, we can base our hypothesis on the previous studies and sociological literature (Benassi 2005; Zajczyk 2003, 2005) that identified the following population at risk of poverty and social disadvantage with:

Children;

Young people;

Mono-parental families (especially in the case of a female parent who is excluded from the labour market);

Elderly people

In our empirical research, through in-depth interviews, we will focus particularly on adolescents and young people (15-30). As part of the literature has underlined, young people are a central target for analyzing phenomena such as poverty and social disadvantage in specific urban areas. For instance, when the French sociologist Chamboredon (1970, 1971) analyzes social local relations structuring and organizing collective life, he considers young people (with their social differences) as being at the centre of local class relations.

“Ainsi, par l’effet des distorsions démographiques, qui sont à imputer aux conditions sociales de l’assignation à résidence dans ce type de localité, les jeunes des classes populaire sont mis sur le devant de la scène et exposés à la vindicte des classes moyenne »

(Lagrée, 1995 p. 328).

In particular, in the French context, as the events of 2005 suggest, we can see a certain relevance (which is at the same time a socio-political construction) of the “Problem Jeunes” in low social class neighbourhoods. In this way, young people are considered to be the object of micro and macro social dynamics, passing for example, from inequality to the actual discriminations deliberately

implemented, such as the barriers they come up against to access the labour market or the strategies implemented by middle class households, through educational choices and “schooling” phenomena. In this perspective comparison with the Italian case should be interesting, observing whether similar dynamics involve young people and to what extent. For example, an issue such as the relation between young people and the police, which is particularly central in the French urban context, may prove of a less importance in the Milanese neighbourhood or could assume a different significance because of the less ethnical characterization of the target involved.

It is to be noted that in the category ‘young people’ we decided to include, for different reasons, also the population between 25 and 30 years old. As we will see in the following sections, this is due to the institutional differences regarding the different social policies and the welfare state typology. In fact, in this way we are first of all able to include French RMI recipients. RMI is an institutional factor having some effects on the mechanisms of reproduction of poverty and social disadvantage and it can also prove a source of information on the macro or national differences between France, where RMI measures have been implemented for more than 20 years, and Italy, where on the contrary there is a complete lack of this kind of national policies.

We also considered the fact that, particularly in Italy but not exclusively, the phenomenon of prolonged co-habitation of children with their parents is widespread, and even people over 25 years old can be dependent on their family.

We hold that looking simultaneously at people between 25-30 and at a younger population from 15 to 25 years old could prove interesting because it allows for observation of all trajectories at the same time, ranging from educational experience to entry (or non-entry) in the labour market, which as part of the Italian and French literature has recognized is a critical transition in an individual’s life (Chauvel 1998; Castel, 2004; Reyneri 2009).

A significant difference between France and Italy and as a consequence, between Montreuil and Milan, concerns the immigrant presence. The phenomenon of immigration is quite recent in Italy (where we are now also beginning to see ‘second generations’) but on the contrary is much developed in France, mainly because of its colonial past. On the other side of the Alps, we see therefore a presence of “third and fourth” generations originating from Maghreb, together with a more recent immigration or “second generations” from central Africa, whose families settled in France during the eighties (Kakpo, 2006). Montreuil, for instance hosts the biggest Malian community in France and possibly in Europe, which exemplifies the different proportions and roles that immigrants have in the two contexts.

This is why, to keep this variable under control, we decided to make a distinction in

our sample, composed by young people from low working class families, between:

Young immigrants of the first generation;

Young people from second, third generations;

Young people who have been French or Italian citizens for at least four generations

With regard to the first group, it is one of the most predominant in the Italian immigration model, which as we have said, is quite a recent phenomenon. As a consequence, the other group composed by “second and third generations” plays a smaller parts in Italy, where the development of second generations is only beginning (Mingione, Borlini, Vitale, 2008; Ambrosini and Berti 2009).

At this point, an important element relates to the ethnic origins of the people involved.

As Kakpo (2006) observed for the case of France, there are common experiences between young people from Maghreb and those originally from Sub-Saharan Africa. First of all, they may share the same neighborhoods (cités), public housing buildings (HLM), the same streets, and they usually have the same tense relations towards police officials. However, as we will observe, they can have very different attitudes towards specific issues.

« On doit pas pour autant associer systématiquement sous le terme de « jeune de cités », les garçons d'origine subsaharienne et maghrébine. Par-delà les expériences communes de ces garçons, les différences tiennent aux structures familiales, aux modes de socialisation, aux rapports à l'école, aux institutions socioculturelles, au quartier ».

(Kakpo, 2006 p.86)

These are all important elements that we set out to investigate during our empirical research.

With regard to Italy, the specific phenomenon of internal immigration from Southern regions is particularly relevant to our neighborhood case study of Quarto Oggiaro, a working class area which between the 50's and the 70's saw a massive inflow of families from Southern Italy, concentrating here because of the many public housing projects.

This group was not ethnically (even if regionally) characterized, shared a common language with the other inhabitants and developed a very good socio-political representation. However, they also experienced to some extent phenomena of residential segregation, inequalities and real discrimination processes.

Today, in the neighbourhood we still have a number of young people belonging to the third and fourth generation of internal immigrants and still living in the neighbourhood. That is why, it could be interesting, from an intergenerational and family perspective, to see what are the experiences, the trajectories and the dynamics of this particular population and to attempt a comparison, for instance, with the French third and fourth generations originally from Maghreb.

Methodological Annex

Genesis and development of the research

As probably happens for most researches and to most researchers, this work has undergone a long process of conceptualization starting from the end of the first year of my PhD, when I presented the draft project.

At the outset I just had some general ideas about how to frame my research questions: I wanted to observe some vulnerable profiles in two local contexts and I knew that my interest was in international comparison. I wanted to study the different experiences of social disadvantage in two national and local contexts: France and Italy. This I had decided from the beginning, due also to some common researches and academic cooperation between my University and Sciences Po Paris. I believed that comparison between Italy and France could be interesting because the two models showed certain differences and similarities at the same time. The differences were due mainly to the institutional setting, role of the welfare state and different model of society. Unlike Italy, France has traditionally been more focused on a clear idea of society based on republican values, even if to a certain extent these values and ideals have undergone a searching process of revision and discussion at the socio-political level. Another interesting element, although it did not become the main object of this research – considered more as a variable to take into consideration, rather than an independent object of study – was immigration. In Italy, unlike France, this is quite a recent phenomenon, opening up major and indeed decisive challenges for Italian society at both the national and local level. The local context in France has mobilized this variable of immigration more often, since most of the young people we met were French citizens of immigrant origin. However, despite the differences which made the comparative research more interesting and worth conducting, the Italian and French models also presented various similarities. In fact, despite some differences in degree, both countries have, for example, a welfare state and similar, or at least comparable, institutional structures and policies.

Later on I developed a more precise theoretical framework – that of neighbourhood effects – in order to observe how certain profiles particularly at risk of social disadvantage could have been affected not only by the determinants which were usually investigated, such as the family and social background, but also by their residence, the neighbourhood where they lived and grew up. Following this literature, I decided to focus on young people from working-class neighbourhoods. However, at the same time, given the methodology chosen – ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews – I also decided to study their families, in order to observe both individual and family-

intergenerational trajectories.

The choice of focusing on the neighbourhood and its effects was inspired both by academic interest and by my personal experience. In fact, I had known Quarto Oggiaro since I was a child, having spent there most of my weekends and days off during school holidays at my grandparents place. Since my childhood I have always been aware of the differences between that particular place and others, such as the more residential area of Brianza, where my parents moved when they got married.

In particular, I always noticed a different behaviour on the part of my parents when I was in Quarto Oggiaro. At home I was much more independent, spending my time alone in our garden or at the park with my friends and neighbours. On the contrary, when I was in Quarto Oggiaro I was always accompanied by an adult and my social relations were limited to a few children my family knew. I did not have many contacts with the external reality of the neighbourhood, even when I grew up. Of course, this was due more to the “avoiding” strategies implemented by my parents and the perception they had of the neighbourhood rather than any real lack of sociability, which, as we registered through our interviews, has certainly never been lacking in the neighbourhood. Thus my relationship with this neighbourhood has always been very ambivalent. On the one hand I viewed it as an intimate place, that of my childhood, but at the same time I also assimilated a kind of distant regard and also some stereotypes. What is more interesting, as often happens for its inhabitants, I assimilated the negative stigma attributed to the place. For example, I never “confessed” to my class mates living in Brianza, that the place where I spent most of my weekends was Quarto Oggiaro, a neighbourhood well-known in the media as traditionally associated to crime, drugs and violence. I generally said I was going to Milan, and later on, when they used to ask me which neighbourhood, I started saying Viale Certosa, an area on the fringe of Quarto Oggiaro, which however does not experience the same level of stigmatization.

Therefore, when I started my research I was also influenced by this experience and wanted to understand better certain dynamics and issues, such as how neighbourhood stigmatization works and affects people’s lives – in particular young people’s – and more in general my objective was to understand if living in this kind of neighbourhood could under certain conditions be a decisive element in the process of reproduction of phenomena such as social disadvantage.

As far as the choice of the local contexts was concerned, I first identified these neighbourhoods on the basis of my direct knowledge and experience for the case of Quarto Oggiaro in Milano and through suggestions offered by colleagues and professors from the OSC – Observatoire Sociologique du Changement at Science Po Paris, and in particular Edmond Préteceille. I then confirmed my selection based on a classification of socio-professional categories proposed by

Préteceille (2003) and later on also applied to the case of Milan (Cousin, 2007).

I was looking for traditional working-class areas, which although did not present the highest levels of segregation – this worry proved more of an issue in the case of France, where it is somewhat more difficult to find intermediary conditions - but still experienced stigmatization. At the same time, I was interested in observing some working-class contexts to be defined as in “transition”, in order to analyse the functioning and dynamics of social relations and understand the interconnections between social mix and segregation.

Quarto Oggiaro was the context of the two that I was better acquainted with because of my personal experience. In the case of the Haut Montreuil the situation proved more complicated at the beginning, since I did not know the neighbourhood or the city and I was in the condition of a foreigner, although, as we will see later on, this had more positive than negative consequences in the relationship with the target.

Access and field research

From now on we will focus more closely on the field access to Montreuil because, unlike Quarto Oggiaro, it was a context unknown to me where I had to start every single contact from the beginning. On the contrary, in Quarto Oggiaro my work began directly with a list of contacts (associations, acquaintances, churches, shops, police department) and from that I started to recruit contacts for interviews. Of course, this job had not proved easy there, either, but the type of work was different.

To return to the French case, before and after choosing the Haut Montreuil as the context of my research, I visited the neighbourhood several times. The first time, a rainy afternoon of December, I went by myself, taking a bus from Montreuil city centre, without a clear idea of where to go. The second time, however, I went better equipped, taking a map with me, while the third time I was accompanied by a friend of a friend who had been living in Montreuil for many years. From that moment on I started to have a clearer idea of the place, of the streets, transport, and then I “just” had to decide the precise borders of my study-area and start approaching my target, which of course was no easy task. For a couple of weeks I continued with my *flaneur* attitude; I explored the neighbourhood, observed the houses and buildings, talked to shops-owners and sometimes also directly to young people. However, it was no simple matter to hold interviews at the outset. Quite spontaneously I started to assume the attitude of what Schutz (1979) defined as the *foreigner*, which I did naturally since it also corresponded to my real status «L’etnografo per professione visita

luoghi e culture lontane. La sua condizione è simile a quella di uno straniero immigrato il quale, qualche tempo dopo il suo arrivo nel paese ospite, riesce a comprendere la gran parte dei significati e dei simboli prodotti all'interno della comunità, ad apprendere il linguaggio e le norme che ne regolano la vita quotidiana, osservando tuttavia un atteggiamento più distaccato e profondo rispetto a quello dei nativi, per i quali lingua e cultura sono largamente dati per scontati»(Marzano 1999, p. 568).

This practice proved very useful for a better understanding of the environment in which I was acting. However, after a few weeks, I went on to the second step and started contacts with more institutional contexts. I visited associations, schools and municipal centres. The real access to the research field took place when I visited the *Antenne de Quartier* at Jules Verne Square. The clerk told me that I ought to meet Giorgio Molossi, an old trade unionist of Italian origin who had been living in the neighbourhood for more than 40 years. I called him the same day, and the day after we met in the office of the *Antenne*, which from then on became my “informal base”, the place where I could also hold some interviews, and in particular with institutional actors, members of associations and parents, while the young people usually preferred more neutral places such as streets, bars or the *Sandwicherie Chez Salem*, which became my second home for more than six months. Giorgio, then, became very important for my research. In part, I could also compare his role, despite all the differences of research context and age, to the role Doc had in William Foot Whyte's work: *Street Corner Society*.

“E vuoi cambiare le cose? – continuò a chiedermi Doc. Direi di sì – risposi -. Non capisco come si possa venire da queste parti dove c'è un tale sovraffollamento, dove la gente è senza denaro e senza lavoro, e non desiderare di cambiare le cose. Ma ritengo anche che ognuno dovrebbe fare il mestiere a cui è portato ed io non voglio essere un riformatore, né sono tagliato per la politica. Voglio solo capire queste cose come meglio mi riesce e scriverne, e se questo può avere qualche importanza.” (Whyte, 1968 p.374).

Similarly, I think Giorgio, and with him also other members of the association *Ensemble Notre Quartier* (Together Our Neighborhood), was interested in favoring any possible action that could potentially improve the situation of the neighborhood, especially from the point of view of sociability and social relations. In fact, as Giorgio told us, his main concern – and probably, as we will see throughout the research, one of the main problems of this neighborhood – was the lack of social relations between people from different social milieus, and in particular the residents of the *Pavillon* (small independent houses) and those of the social housing projects. In contrast with the advice offered by Doc – “Non occorre che diciate chi siete o cosa volete, basta che diciate che siete mio amico e tutto va bene” – I always took a very independent and autonomous

approach to the neighborhood, and I also openly declared the objective of my research. However, Giorgio represented an important entrance key. Unlike other persons (such as the employees of the municipality or other members of associations), Giorgio is a sort of wise authority in the neighborhood, which he calls *Village*, and he is very much respected. Therefore, the fact of being introduced by him always helped me to gain young people's trust, have access in some cases to private houses, and meet all the associations, including the more community-based ones that could be difficult to access, such as the Malian association.

On entering the field I introduced myself as an Italian student doing research in sociology, as in fact I did later on in Quarto Oggiaro. With young people I never mentioned the fact I was doing a PhD or that I was based in Paris at Science Po, considered one of the best academic institutions in France. I was wary about these aspects, fearing all the possible status barriers they could have given rise to. However, as pointed out above, the fact of being a foreigner coming from Italy – a country very often associated with immigration in France due to the old process that started during the thirties and ended around the seventies – turned out to be in most cases an element drawing us together. They perceived me as a foreigner, like their parents or even much as they themselves are often perceived.

Being a foreigner was also easy from the point of view of language because, again, most social barriers and social differences are expressed through language. In this way, we were on a same level. In their opinion, I could not understand all the language and grammar mistakes they often made, and sometimes the fact of correcting me also worked on their self-esteem, making the atmosphere more relaxed.

In the case of Milan, I usually shared the same language with my interviewees and, for the above-mentioned reasons, this could have been an element creating a distance between us. For this reason, I made every effort to maintain an informal level of communication, also through the language I used. However, I noticed that language was generally less of an issue in Quarto Oggiaro than in Montreuil, most probably due to the higher level of discrimination perceived by young people there and in particular to their ethno-racial characterization.

In general, in Quarto Oggiaro things were different than in Montreuil and to a certain extent we can also say that access proved paradoxically even more difficult, although I knew the neighborhood perfectly well and in some cases already had contacts. Here, contrary to my experience in the Haut Montreuil, I did not find a real *gate keeper*, a key person like Giorgio. I personally set out to access all the associations, churches and people and then, of course, each individual became a key contact for another person, with a sort of snowball effect. However, although I was able to discuss certain issues with friends or relatives in the neighborhood I found no one who could stand as reference for

any doubt or need of information. To this end I had to build stronger contacts with each association and social actors in the neighborhood: *Associazione Baluardo*, *Cooperativa San Martino*, *Acli*, *Churches* and *Oratorio*.

In some cases, things could have been complicated by the local institutional context. First of all, I had no institutional reference like the *Antenne de Quartier* in the Haut Montreuil. The *Consiglio di Zona*, which is the lowest administrative level, seems a very long way from the neighbourhood, and not only in geographical terms. Moreover, as we said, in Quarto Oggiaro there is considerable penetration on the part of organized crime with consequent strong social control, and people were not always very ready to talk, especially if their first impression was of being faced by a journalist, as also happened in the Haut Montreuil. The people had had enough of seeing their neighborhoods depicted simply as places of relegation, social disorder and crime. This is something that we registered both in the Haut Montreuil and Quarto Oggiaro. However, in the French case, people tended to emphasize the role of the neighborhood and the importance of saving it from stigmatization, while in Quarto Oggiaro they were more focused on the people themselves, judging unfair any general picture of the residents that portrayed them, for instance, as being involved with crime. This difference is probably due to the fact that, as we will observe throughout the research, characterization of the neighborhood as “*the*” contemporary social problem, is more typical in the French public debate.

In both areas I generally had no problem in accessing the neighborhood and, especially in the Haut Montreuil, my presence was quite taken for granted by the young people. In fact, with most of them I also established a sort of acquaintance or friendship. We met at the *Sandwicherie Salem*, to drink or eat something together and talk about various issues. However, being a man researching on young people in working class neighborhoods, I had a big handicap: I am not a football fan and I know nothing about soccer, which probably somewhat limited my contact opportunities, especially during the World Championship.

Similarly, in Quarto Oggiaro I also established some relationships with the young people of the neighborhood and in particular with those who were more active in the associative life there, while with the others, especially those we defined as “Quartoggiaresi Doc”, often exhibiting the most disadvantaged profiles, it was usually more difficult, after the interview, to maintain any type of relationship, especially when they were together with their peer group.

Methodological tools

In our empirical investigation we opted for ethnographic research, referring to both open-ended , in-depth interviews and participant observation conducted through face-to-face interaction with young people, their families, and the organizations and institutions of the neighbourhood. We made this decision for two important reasons in particular: first of all, because the neighbourhood effect ethnographic approach entails direct access to the condition of poor neighbourhoods and residents (Small 2010). By doing so, we were able to track down and identify some of the mechanisms producing an observed effect or accounting for the absence of an expected relationship. Moreover, this methodology of investigating neighbourhood effects casts light on how the residents of poor neighbourhoods take important decisions about their situation (inside and outside their household): all elements which are impossible to capture with quantitative methods. In-depth interviews, for example, proved very useful to investigate the intimate perception residents have of their neighbourhood and of the social relations taking place there and of all the strategies young people and their families may use to create a distance from or attachment to the neighbourhood. This particular qualitative approach was of great importance in analysing the social dynamics and relations occurring both in the family and in the neighbourhood. For all these reasons, in our research, we have decided to give particular prominence to life stories and narrations of different generations, in order to outline the main mechanisms through which the different elements such as mainly the family and the neighbourhood (together with more personal attributes) act. Because of this methodological choice, the transcripts of interviews will at times, turn out to be very long.

However, as far as the neighbourhood is concerned, it made it easier to observe all the social mechanisms and dynamics, and the use of public spaces in the neighbourhoods. Through participant observation we were able to observe the structuring of social and group dynamics live, as it were, in an ongoing process. For this reason I tried to spend most of my time in the neighbourhood. I observed interactions in the neighbourhood's public spaces, at school, during classes (possible only in Quarto Oggiaro) during the breaks, during leisure activities in the *oratorio* or young people's social centres, in parks, on the underground, and at street corners and bars. Moreover, knowing – as pointed out above – that although where segregation is strong neighbourhoods are not closed areas but to some extent interconnected with other places, we also observed some areas where we knew these young people would occasionally go: Les Halles and Trocadéro in Paris, Parco Sempione in Milan.

I also tried to take part in almost every event taking place in the neighbourhood during the almost one year of field research. Therefore, I also attended more formal and organized events such as

meetings of associations, meetings of social workers and in particular festivities and public events such as the neighbourhood party taking place every year in all the neighbourhoods of Montreuil, an end-of-year concert at the *Lycée Juan Jaures*, parties, events and rap concerts organized at *Parco Vivibile* in Quarto Oggiaro. As noted in the specific chapter on the neighbourhood, it is interesting to observe how very often the rationales and dynamics of social relations of the neighbourhood are reproduced outside, for example, with segregation and lack of communication and interaction between people from different areas of the neighbourhood and, moreover, between different social groups.

To conclude, using these qualitative tools that inevitably create a relationship between the researcher and the people he/she studies, I also tried to keep a critical distance from the phenomena I observed, although it was always easy.

In fact, maintaining the attitude of a foreigner (Schutz 1979) is a particular and at times difficult experience.

For this reason, the real of objective of the researcher should be: «spaesarsi[...] e in qualche modo sdoppiarsi tra ciò che egli è nella sua vita ordinaria e quello che diventa nel mondo che sta studiando. Certamente, resta la stessa persona ma, quando lavora sul campo, gli toccherà condividere, se non altro parzialmente, alcuni aspetti di quel mondo» (DalLago, De Biasi 2002, p. XV).

In my work I therefore adopted an ethnographic approach to receive as outcome the real living experience of my target. In fact, one of the most important characteristics of ethnography is that it works on the basis of experience: «il fatto di sgorgare dall'*esperienza* del mondo sociale» (Dal Lago, De Biasi 2002, p. XI).

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

The Haut Montreuil

- 1) R: Woman, 30 years old. A single mother of a 4 years old child. Sans papier from Mali. They squatted a small apartment in neighbourhood. She works as a cleaning lady in a school with the false documents of a friend.
- 2) J: Man, 21 years old from Tunisian origins. He accomplished high school education. He lives with his parents and he is currently searching for a job.
- 3) K: Woman, 25 years old from Tunisian origin, married and of a child. She is living with her brothers and sister after their mother died. She studied for three years at university (DEUG).
- 4) G: Man, 29 years old. Sans papier from Mali.
- 5) Bouma : Man, 25 years old. French nationality. Unemployed and lives with his uncle in a residence for immigrants.
- 6) Mohamed: 19 ans. French nationality but original from Mali. Cité Rose Quartier Ramenas.
- 7) L: Man 26 years. French nationality. His mother is French, while his father is from Algeria. He works in the families' restaurant and bar.
- 8) H : Man, 17 years old. Original from Algeria. Student.
- 9) Kadir: 18 ans. Tunisian and does not have French nationality.
- 10) Matthieu : 19 years old. French origin. Unemployed.
- 11) Sabrina : 20 years old. French nationality. University Student. (Sister of n.7)
- 12) Louise : 17 ans. Original from Antilles.
- 13) Souhil: Man, 16 years old. French father and Algerian mother. His parents are divorced. He has been definitively expelled from School.
- 14) C : Man, 15 years. Algerian origins. Student at *collège Fabien*.
- 15) J : Man, 30 years old. Guadalupe origin. Unemployed and lives with his divorced mother.
- 16) Claire: Woman, 50 years old (mother of n. 15) working in a hospital.
- 17) Edwige: Woman, 67 years old. From Guadalupe (mother of n. 16)
- 18) Jasmine: Woman, 15 years old. Original from Congo. Student living with her mother, father and sisters.
- 19) Chantal: Woman, 15 years old.. Original from Antilles. Living with her mother and younger brother.
- 20) J : 17 years old, from Romania with Rom ethnical origin. School student.
- 21) M : Woman, 56 years old woman. From Romania with Rom ethnical origin. (Mother of n.20)
- 22) L: Man, 26 years old. French mother and Algerian father. Interrupted university. He works as educator in a municipal SMJ (*Service Municipal Jeunesse*).
- 23) Nathalie: Woman, 58 years old. Used to work as a teacher. She retired and lives with her husband and son (n.22)

- 24) Anne Marie: Woman, 80 years old. Widow and lives alone at *Cité des Roches* (Mother of n.23.).
- 25) Hackim : 21 ans. Cité des Roches. Unemployed but received a job offer few days before our interview. French nationality, original from Maghreb. He lives with his mother, father and brothers.
- 26) S: Woman, 18 years old. Student from Moroccan origin.
- 27) F: Woman, 17 years old. Student from Moroccan origin.
- 28) F: Man, 14 years old. Student from Moroccan origin.
- 29) Halima: Woman, 50 years old. From Morocco. Single mother (mother of n. 26, 27, 28). Unemployed and RMI recipient.
- 30) D : Woman, 15 years old. Student
- 31) L : Woman, 45 years old. Mother of n.30
- 32) Claire : Woman, 17 years old. French mother and Romanian father of ROM ethnical origin. She did not accomplished education and she is currently unemployed.
- 33) Charles: 26 years old. French mother and American father. Unemployed. He did not accomplished education.
- 34) Jeanne : Woman, 55 years old. French origin. Musician. Divorced single Mother (Mother of n.32 and 33).
- 35) Fatia : Woman, 20 years old. From Morocco and lives in Montreuil since 8 years with her father, mother and sister. Her two brothers are in Morocco. Student at *Lycée professionnal*.
- 36) M: Woman, 50 years old. (Mother of n.35). Housewife.
- 37) R : Man, 19 years old. French with Guadalupe and Malian origins.
- 38) T : Man, 15 years old. Student at collège *Fabien*.
- 39) Tahir : Man, 18 years old. In Montreuil since 7 years. Original from Madagascar but French nationality, as also his entire family. Student at Lycée Professionel (environment and ecology). Lives with his mother, step father, brothers and uncles.
- 40) E: Woman, 40 years old. Housewife from Madagascar. In France since 6 months. French nationality obtained through her husband but she does not speak French.
- 41) S. Man, 18 years old. Original from Srilanka. Unemployed.
- 42) Mohammed : Man, 28 years old. Original from Morocco. Working as a manager in a bank.
- 43) M: Man 60 years old. Father of n. 42. Retired.
- 44) A: Man 17 years old. From Algerian and Italian origin. Student.
- 45) E: Man 19 years old. Student.
- 46) Karima : Woman, 40 years old. From Algeria. Single mother (mother of n. 45)
- 47) O: Man, 26 years old. French origins.
- 48) Julien, Man, 23 years old. French nationality and Guadalupe origins. Lives with his mother and sister. Employee.
- 49) O: Man, 19 years old. Unemployed.
- 50) N: Man, 55 years old from Mali (Father of n. 49)
- 51) Michael : Man, 23 years old. French origin. Did not accomplish education . Unemployed. He lives with his mother, brother and sister. He is converted to Islam.
- 52) A: Woman, 50 years old. Widow (mother of n. 51). She works as a car instructor.
- 53) Ambrogio : Man, 40 years old. Italian origin. Father of a 15 years old boy attending school. Employee.

- 54) Nassim: Man, 19 years old. French/Algerian origin. Student at *école de commerce* in Paris. He lives with his mother and sister.
- 55) J. Woman, 45 years old. Algerian nationality. She is divorced and employed for an association of the neighbourhood. (Mother of n. 54).
- 56) A: Woman, 53 years old. Mother of a 20 years old boy.
- 57) Fabrizio : Man, 20 years old. Italian origins. Lives in a *Pavillon* with his parents.
- 58) C and M: Parents of n. 57.
- 59) Sylvie : Woman 57 years old. She used to live in the neighbourhood for 25 years. Mother of a 19 years old boy, works as a teacher.
- 60) K: Man, 21 years old. French/Algerian origins. Lives with his single mother.
- 61) N : Man, 24 years old. Original from Algeria. Lives in a small but private property apartment with his father, mother and brothers. He has a degree in Law and just entered the labour market.
- 62) Yassin, 17 years old. Brother of n. 61. He did not accomplish his studies and is going to start an activation process called *formation*.
- 63) Fatima: Woman 55 years old. Mother of n. 61 and 62. Housewife.
- 64) Michael: Man, 22 years old. He accomplished his high school studies. Unemployed.
- 65) Caroline: Woman, 25 years old. French and Malian origin. Although many difficulties, she accomplished her study and works in a hospital.
- 66) Anne: Woman, 61 years old. Mother of n.65.
- 67) T : Man, 60 years old from Mali. Father of 7 children
- 68) Florian : Man, 21 years old. Congolese origin. He did not accomplish education. He works as educator for an association.
- 69) M : Woman, 48 years old. She divorced two times and works as a teacher in a kinder garden. She is a mother of a 25 years old having established his own firm.
- 70) Luc: Man, 16 years old. Student in Vincennes and lives in a Pavillon with his mother, father and sister.
- 71) L: Woman, 44 years old. Mother of n. 70. Film director.

Associations and institutional actors

- 72) Representative of *FACE –PLIE*, an association of enterprises to promote employment in depressed areas.
- 73) Association *ENSEMBLE NOTRE QUARTIER* (Hubert a 65 years old man and others volunteers)
- 74) Giorgio, representative of the association *ENSEMBLE NOTRE QUARTIER* who had the role of *gate keeper* for this research.
- 75) Antenne Jules Verne
- 76) Social Assistant *Collège Fabien*.
- 77) Jacques Munier. Priest of the Church near the Jules Verne Square.
- 78) Teddy. Educator *SMJ – Service Municipale Jeunesse*
- 79) M. Educator *SMJ - Service Municipale Jeunesse*

- 80) Social Assistant lycée Jean Jaurès.
- 81) Lynda educator *SMJ - Service Municipale Jeunesse*
- 82) Responsible person for the *Ludothèque Leo Lagrange*.
- 83) Josette Magne association *Rue et cités*.
- 84) *Service pour l'emploi ville de Montreuil* (Office for work and integration)
- 85) T: Woman, School Teacher *Collège Fabien*.
- 86) Association LEA – Lieu Ecoute Accueil.

Quarto Oggiaro

- 1) Luisa: Woman, 42 years. A divorced mother of two girls (n.2 and 3). She suffers of an chronic illness. She works temporarily as receptionist in a firm. She is from Sicilian origins.
- 2) Jennifer: Woman, 17 years Left school when she was sixteen and she is attending a professional course for make-up artists. She lives with her mother and sister.
- 3) Noemi: Woman, 20 years. She did not accomplish high school and started to work as a receptionist. However she expresses the wish of pursuing education. She lives with her mother and sister.
- 4) S: 20 years old. He did not accomplish education and experienced troubles with justice, due to drogue dealing.
- 5) Mary: Woman, 22 years old. She works as a hair dresser and lives with her mother, grandmother and sister.
- 6) Aidan: Man, 15 years. From Albania. He still attends the last year of *scuola media*.
- 7) B : Man, 45 years old father of n.4. Employee in a logistic company.
- 8) Luca: Man 23 years old. He did not accomplish education. He recently had troubles with justice for drogue dealing. He lives with his mother and sister, while his father works in another region.
- 9) Giovanna: 45 years old. Housewife (mother of n.8). She is from Sardinia and moved in the neighbourhood when she got married.
- 10) Andrea: Man 25 years old. He did not accomplish education but he is currently working in informatics He lives with a friend in the neighbourhood.
- 11) Marianna: Woman, 55 years old (mother of n.10). She works for an association.
- 12) Marco: Man, 25 years old. He did not accomplish education but he claims having a good working position. He affirms having experienced some problems with drogue dependency in the past. He is now active in the associative life of the neighbourhood.
- 13) T: Man, 26 years old. He did not accomplish high school and has some problems with drogue dependency (brother of n.12).
- 14) E: Man, 58 years old. Retired. He has always had problems with drogue dependency. (Father of n. 12 and 13).
- 15) Francesco: 19 years old. He has a very instable residential situation. After his mother lost their public housing flat, he moved with his sister and her partner. He is attending the first year at the professional school Istituto Greppi.

- 16) M : Social operator of the *Cooperativa San Martino*, assisting Francesco until he became 18 but still in contact with him. He is the one helping him in situations of emergency.
- 17) Arianna: 23 years old. She did not accomplish education and she is now working in a bar. She is married and lives with her husband, child and brother. (Sister of n.15).
- 18) Jessica: 22 years old. She accomplished high school education but she is currently unemployed. She lives with her mother, father and brother.
- 19) Concetta: Woman, 50 years old. Housewife. Mother of n.13. She is originally from Basilica.
- 20) Ali, 25 years old. He studied Information technology in Egypt and works illegally in a phone and internet centre.
- 21) Edoardo: 27 years old. He accomplished high school and works at a shopping mall in the neighbourhood.
- 22) Ilaria: 22 years old. University student.
- 23) L: Window, mother of two girls (mother of n.22). She works in a restaurant. She is originally from Puglia.
- 24) A: 80 years old. (Mother of n.23)
- 25) Carla: Woman, 70 years old. Retired receiving a minimum income (*pensione a reddito minimo*). (Mother of n.26).
- 26) Adriana: Woman, 45 years old. She did not accomplish education. She is unemployed as also her husband.
- 27) G: Man, 20 years old. He did not accomplish high school education and had troubles with justice. The same thing happened couple of years before to his brother.
- 28) Ahmed: Man, 23 years old. He accomplished high school education in Egypt. He works illegally as a mason.
- 29) Claudio: Man, 27 years old. He is working temporarily in a call centre. He lives with his partner and two children.
- 30) Ester: Woman, 20 years old. She did not accomplish high school education. Unemployed and single mother of a two years child. Moroccan origin.
- 31) K: Woman, 27 years old. She accomplished high school education. She has two children and she is married (Sister of n.30).
- 32) H: Woman, 63 years old. (Mother of n. 30 and 31).
- 33) P: 21 years old. She accomplished a professional certificate and used to work as hair dresser. She is now unemployed and lives with her mother and sister, while her father is in prison.
- 34) Rosario: 17 years old. He left school after an experience at *Istituto Professionale Greppi*. He is now working in a bar.
- 35) Carlo: Man, 24 years old. University student.
- 36) A: Man, 60 years old. Retired, former employee at Alfa Romeo.
- 37) Christian: Man 17 years old. He failed a first educational experience at *Istituto Tecnico* and he is now attending the *Istituto Professionale Greppi*.
- 38) R: Man, 21 years old. He accomplished high school at *Istituto Tecnico*. He has been unemployed since two years.
- 39) B: Woman, 41 years old. Divorced single mother (mother of n. 37 and 38). She works as cleaning lady in a luxury hotel of the city centre. She is original from Puglia.

- 40) Alona: Woman, 18 years old. She came to Italy from Ukraine to reach her mother who got married with an Italian man. She attends *Istituto Tecnico*.
- 41) Gianni: Man, 36 years old. He did not accomplish high school education and started to work at the age of 16. He has been spending a very long period of unemployment, interrupted by a few short working experiences.
- 42) Anna: Woman, 30 years old. She did not accomplish high school education. Unemployed. (Sister of n. 41)
- 43) L: Man, 65 years old. (Father of n.40 and 41).
- 44) Sonia: Woman, 22 years old. She accomplished high school and works as a secretary.
- 45) Stefania; Woman, 50 years old. She accomplished school and works as a secretary. (Mother of n.44).
- 46) Mirko: Man, 19 years old. He did not accomplish high school. Unemployed and spent more than one year at *Centro Penitenziario Beccaria*.
- 47) F. 16 years old. Unemployed. He lives with his parents and sister.
- 48) Abdul: Man, 22 years old. From Egypt. He accomplished high school in his country, where he also started university. He is now working with a stable contract as a mason.
- 49) G: Man, 24 years old, He did not accomplish high school education. He works as storekeeper. He lives with both his parents.
- 50) Sara: Woman, 18 years old student at *Istituto Tecnico*.

Associations and institutional actors

- 51) Teacher Istituto Greppi
- 52) School director of Istituto Greppi
- 53) School teacher of Scuola Media Graf
- 54) School teacher of Scuola Media G.B Vico
- 55) Don Mario, priest of Church San Nazaro
- 56) Don Alberto, priest of Church Santa Lucia
- 57) Association Quarto Oggiaro Vivibile
- 58) Sportello Acli Via De Roberto
- 59) Responsible person of *Cooperativa San Martino*
- 60) Three social operator of *Cooperativa San Martino*
- 61) Association Spazio Baluardo
- 62) Responsible person of CTS (Centro Ricreativo e Sociale – Comune di Milano)
- 63) Responsible person of ASL service covering Zona Decentramento 8

2. An attempt at a theoretical frame

2.1 Neighbourhood poverty

As already pointed out several times in this research, one of our main objectives is to understand if, and if so how, neighbourhood poverty can affect the opportunities and social outcomes of the people living there; in particular young people. What we mean to observe are the spatial mechanisms which influence an individual's life, structuring opportunities and deprivations regarding, in particular, education, the labour market, family relations and, more in general, social relations and social capital.

In this chapter we aim to provide a theoretical framework for our research to explain better our analytical perspective.

Two of the main theories directly or indirectly connected to neighbourhood poverty and neighbourhood effects (which should not be simply characterized as negative influences) are the theory of social disorganization and the theory of isolation; both research traditions of the Chicago school of sociology (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1925).

The former, the social disorganization theory, argues that neighbourhood poverty produces social disorganization in societies. With regard to the point made above, this theory was developed to provide an explanation of crime rate variation between different neighbourhoods. Shaw and Mckay noted, in the case of Chicago, how crime rates varied following the strength or weakness of local institutions and the social participation of citizens – all aspects favouring the development of an informal higher social control. On the contrary, neighbourhoods presenting high levels of crime were considered to be socially disorganized, a characteristic attributed to ethnic heterogeneity, residential instability and a high neighbourhood poverty rate. Thus one of the main assumptions of this theory is that neighbourhood poverty reduces an area's sociability, i.e. social control, social participation and the creation and maintenance of strong local institutions.

“Informal social control also generalizes to broader issues of import to the well-being of neighbourhoods. In particular, the differential ability of communities to extract resources and respond to cuts in public services (such as police patrols, fire stations, garbage collection, and housing code enforcement) looms large when we consider the known link between public signs of disorder (such as vacant housing, burned-out buildings, vandalism, and litter) and more serious crime” (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997, p.918).

This theory of social disorder has come in for fairly severe criticism over the years. The opponents of the theory argue that poverty in a neighbourhood does not automatically correspond to a state of

disorganization and disorder, an argument that we can also verify in our empirical research and which has been advanced in different periods by leading ethnographers and sociologists such as Whyte (1943), Gans (1962) and Wacquant (1997). Another author opposing this idea of poverty-stricken neighbourhood as vector of social disorganization is Jane Jacobs, who exerted a great influence on contemporary urban sociology and ethnography. She conducted a research, summarised in a book entitled '*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*' (1961) on the role of *Public Characters* in the production of civic sense and social order.

As it is well explained by Michel Duneir, the ethnographer of *Sidewalks*, through the words of one of his main characters Hakim, *Public Characters* are those people living a great part of their life in the street, in the sense of a public space, until they become entirely part of that place, like a sort of fitting.

"What Jane Jacobs means is that the social context is patterned in a particular way because of the presence of the public character: his or her actions have the effect of making the street life safer, stable, and more predictable" (Duneier, 1999 p.8).

Without giving way to exaggerated romanticism such as Duneir was attacked by Wacquant (2002) for, we can however recognize, as sometimes emerges also in our empirical research, that even in poor neighbourhoods and socially disadvantaged contexts, there may be an organized and well-functioning society based on social participation, relations and exchanges.

Similarly, Whyte (1943) affirms in the introduction to his well-known work:

"It is customary for the sociologist to study the slum district in terms of 'social disorganization' and to neglect that an area such as Cornerville has a complex and well-established organization of its own. I found that in every group there was a hierarchical structure of social relations binding the individuals to one another and that the groups were also hierarchically related to one another" (Whyte, 1943 p. viii).

In much the same way, in our neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro, for instance, social relations and especially those related in some ways to criminality, are firmly based on hierarchical and well-structured models. An example is the illegal market of apartments conducted with squatting operations. All the requests come to the people managing the "business". Some of them come from the people directly involved in the criminal organization, while others reflect situations of poverty and disadvantage of which the organization takes charge. Thus, without meaning any idealisation of these situations, we can see how, for example, criminality plays a role in stabilizing a sort of social order, precarious and based on illegality as it may be.

Also in the French context of the Haut Montreuil, relations and in particular those among young people, are well structured and there are all the elements to exclude the possibility of social

disorder. Young people seem in a way to be the “guardians” of security and safety in the neighbourhood, since they protect their buildings and the so called ‘bas des immeuble’¹ from occupation and use by outsiders .

As is argued in some of the literature, the term social disorganization has no certain definition.

It has been used for various aspects: neighbourhood inability to supervise and control children and adolescents, lack of trust and social relations among neighbours, lack of social participation, absence of institution or high crime rates (Small, 2004; Wilson 1987; Sampson and Wilson 1995). This conceptualization is too broad and all these definitions can to some extent be associated with neighbourhood poverty but none in a very specific way. Therefore, as done by Small (2004) in his important ethnographic study on social capital in Boston, particular focus should also be directed in our research on social relations and participation in social life, activities and institutions of the neighbourhood.

Looking at all these elements, we can consider the other theoretical approach mentioned at the beginning, namely the theory of social isolation, which argues that in poor neighbourhoods people are isolated from the rest of society. This theory seems to come far closer to neighbourhood studies, since it is similarly based on Julius Wilson’s work (1987) on the transformation of African American neighbourhoods (Small, 2004). Wilson makes an historical excursus of black American inner cities, showing how these neighbourhoods were segregated from the racial point of view but class integrated, due to proximity between lower- and middle-class households, a social mix later on lost with the acquisition of civil rights during the sixties and seventies, when middle-class families abandoned these neighbourhoods, which remained still racially homogeneous but became more homogeneous from the social point of view.

“Today’s ghetto neighbourhoods are populated almost exclusively by the most disadvantaged segments of the black urban community, that heterogeneous grouping of families and individuals who are out of the mainstream of the American occupational system. Included in this group are individuals who lack training and skills and either experience long term unemployment or are not members of the labour force, individuals who are engaged in street crimes and other forms of aberrant behaviour, and families that experience long-term spells of poverty and/or welfare dependency. These are the populations to which I refer when I speak of the *underclass*. I use this term to depict a reality not captured in the more standard designation *lower class*. It is true that long-term welfare families and street criminals are distinct groups, but they live and interact in the same depressed community and they are part of the population that has, with the exodus of the more

¹ This term refers to the main entrance of social housing buildings and is a very much used concept in the French discourse on peripheral areas and neighbourhoods. It represents quite often one of the objects of dispute and allocation between young people and adults.

stable working and middle class segments, become increasingly isolated socially from mainstream patterns and norms of behaviour. It is also true that certain groups are stigmatized by the label *underclass*, just as some people who live in depressed central-city communities are stigmatized by the term *ghetto* or *inner city*, but it would be far worse to obscure the profound changes in the class structure and social behaviour of ghetto neighbourhoods by avoiding the use of the term *underclass*”(Wilson 2002 p.262-263).

Supporting this thesis, the first studies associated with the ‘neighbourhood effects’ hypothesis, showed how living in a poor neighbourhood decreases, for example, the possibility for people to enjoy a large mainstream relational network, also including middle-class people (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Fernandez and Harris 1992; Cohen and Dawson 1993; Wilson 1996; Elliott 1999).

On the contrary, there is a strand of the literature completely opposing this view, estimating neighbourhood effects as minimal and negligible (Wellman 1999). This opposite theoretical framework argues that social ties and relations are not limited to the residence neighbourhood. Indeed, due to technological progress and improvement in transportation, social networks, relations and daily life more in general can be increasingly facilitated between different areas and cities (Wellman 1999).

As we will argue later on in our research, our hypothesis is on the contrary that neighbourhood effects and conditions matter as far as the specific target of our analysis (young people) is concerned. In fact, from the point of view of neighbourhood effects studies, it must be noted, as we will see more fully in the explanation of the neighbourhood effects approach, that their weight and proportion can change appreciably depending on the target, affecting mainly, for example, children, adolescents and old people – in a few words, all those individuals whose existence is more limited to the residential neighbourhood.

Considering also all the criticisms levelled emphatically with this approach, we can focus our attention on the most important issue, i.e. the mechanisms by which these phenomena appear to happen, with particular attention to social relations.

For this reason, due to the central role played by social relations in determining individual outcomes - for example through role models and peer effects - it is important to bear in mind the role of culture and agency.

2.2 Neighbourhood poverty and culture

Discussing poverty, sociologists have always been very cautious in dealing with culture. As we will see in the chapter dedicated to school and education, this reluctance is mainly due to the fear of being accused of 'blaming the victim' (Ryan 1976; Wilson 1987). Therefore, after peaking in the sixties (Lewis 1965, Hannerz 1969) culture has for a quite long time been excluded from poverty studies. Today it seems to be back, considered as a variable, at least to take into account as one of the factors contributing to increasing or decreasing the effects of neighbourhood poverty, in particular on social capital (Small 2010; Lamont 2010). However, a problem which still remains open concerns the mechanisms by which culture may act on neighbourhood poverty (Sampson and Wilson 1995).

As scholars recognize, discussion of culture in the context of urban poverty has made some progress, but some major challenges are still open:

"The first one is how to define and think about culture. Much of the discussion of culture defines it either following Parsons, as a group's norms and values or, more generally, as a group's worldview. The former definition is probably the most common conception of culture in inner-city research. It is also the staple of conservative explanations about what is wrong with the inner city; it is the conception behind the arguments that urban blacks have low marriage and employment rates because they do not value the family unit, education, or hard work". (Small 2004 p.8-9).

Following this perspective individual actions are determined by *values* and *norms* which the subject decides to follow or not. However, through specific conceptualizations² scholars have shown that culture can have an influence on individual behaviours independently of norms and values. In this perspective, strong criticism has been levelled at an excessively simplistic vision of culture as something limited to values, even if in any case they seem to hold an influence over people's actions.

A second specific conceptualization of culture, is, for example, to be seen in the *worldview* proposed by Hannerz (1969; 2004), with distinction between a mainstream worldview and another more typical of the ghetto³. However, this approach presents strengths and weaknesses. On the one

² We can for example mention the concept of 'habitus' proposed by Bourdieu (1977), Goffman's frames (1986) or the concept of toolkit proposed by Swidler (1986).

³ As we have argued several times in this research, and indeed in the introduction, neither of the areas of our two case studies can be labelled as a ghetto, due to the different degree of segregation and poverty concentration in European and American cities (Wacquant 2006). "Constatant la singularité de chacune de ces configurations ségréégatives, Loïc Wacquant démontre le non-sens de la thèse de la ghettoïsation (au sens américain du terme) des cités HLM françaises ou encore celle de l'américanisation des conduites et des conditions de vie de leurs populations. Ses analyses - très informées concernant les quartiers américains noirs - rendent compte des processus socio-historiques, structureaux et

hand it is able to take into account several elements of a behaviour occurring in poor neighbourhoods, while on the other hand, like the previous one, it entails the risk of extreme simplification, being too general and all-encompassing a conceptualization.

The 'new cultural' approaches to the study of poverty consider culture as an element providing the means for action. Unlike the usage in the 'old' approach (Lewis, 1959), the connotation of the term culture has changed significantly. Today the idea of culture simply as values or ideals is mainly rejected to give way place to other conceptions of culture, such as 'toolkit' or "repertoire" (Swidler 1986, 2001; Lamont and Small 2008) or more in general culture is defined as "complex rule-like structures that constitute resources that can be put to strategic use" (DiMaggio 1997, p. 265). It is described as a vocabulary that people can mobilize to make sense of their practices and conducts (Lamont 1992; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) or skills allowing the subject to do something (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977,1990; Swidler2008).

These conceptualizations seem to be more useful, as we will see applying them to our empirical analysis of education, school processes and neighbourhood social relations

However, following the example of Small (2004),we will also adopt what he calls a pragmatic approach, seeking to understand, in the case of the phenomenon observed, which of these conceptualizations fits better.

Returning to the second open issue, it concerns the relationship existing between structure and culture:

"Most structuralist scholars who have agreed that culture matters in the inner city, still argue that structural conditions are the ultimate cause of whatever cultural patterns are observed (e.g., Sampson and Wilson 1995). An important example is the oppositional culture thesis, which posits that when certain minorities perceive an inability to overcome structural poverty, they react by developing cultural attitudes and values in opposition to those of the mainstream. If the mainstream values education and hard work, these minorities will denigrate schooling and unglamorous work, rejecting them as paths to upward mobility - Massey and Danton 1993 -" Small 2004, p. 10).

This is also what we will in part observe in our empirical chapters.

Therefore, following this theoretical perspective, the essential explanation is to be sought in structure, which should be at the basis of any negative outcome occurring in poor neighbourhoods.

To conclude on this issue, it appears that, in any case, an approach completely focused on structure neglects the possible interaction between, for example, culture (which may also play a role) and structure. For this reason, recognising an important role to be attributed to culture through, for

politiques qui ont fabriqué la marginalité et la pauvreté sociales et territoriales des populations noires. ... (S. Faure <http://www.liens-socio.org/Parias-urbains-Ghetto-banlieues,1331>)

instance, values, narratives and frames (Swidler 1986) may possibly help to overcome a purely structural view, which is also simplistic as the opposite approach. This is for instance the effort we tried to make in our research.

2.3 Neighbourhood poverty and individuals as agents

An important aspect when dealing with poor neighbourhoods is related to agency⁴ and its role. In fact, even if we confirm that neighbourhood effects exist and act through specific mechanisms, we should at the same time recognize the role and responsibility of the individual.

As we have seen, sociology has taken great care in its approach to all aspects of agency and responsibility, since the risk most feared by scholars is of 'blaming the victim' and attributing over-responsibility for situations in which the constraints are particularly strong.

Therefore, from a theoretical but also political perspective there are two diametrically opposite viewpoints – one promoted by individualists and conservatives, asserting that everybody is ultimately responsible of his/her situation, the other, represented for example by liberal structuralist scholars as Mead (1992), accused, on the contrary, of not making the person responsible of his/her actions.

As Wilson underlines in the specific case of the US, although the observation could to some extent also be extended to the European context:

“...the debate over the problems of *ghetto underclass* has been dominated in recent years by conservative spokespersons as the views of liberals have gradually become more diffused and ambiguous. Liberals have traditionally emphasized how the plight of disadvantaged groups can be related to the problems of the broader society, including problems of discrimination and social-class subordination. They have also emphasized the need for progressive social change, particularly through governmental programs, to open the opportunity structure. Conservatives, in contrast, have traditionally stressed the importance of different group values and competitive resources in accounting for the experiences of the disadvantaged; if reference is made to the larger society, it is in terms of the assumed adverse effects of various government programs on individual or group behaviour and initiative...” (Wilson 2002 p.261-262).

⁴ In social sciences, agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. By contrast, "Structure" refers to those factors (such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, customs, etc) which seem to limit the individual by means of a pre-organized perception from the social structure itself that vastly determines and influences the opportunities that individuals have.

As appears quite evident, there are important sociological issues behind the problem of agency. The first concerns, for example, the problem mentioned already of the structure which to some extent drives people to a specific status and situations. However, at the same time this clashes with the evidence that people in the same neighbourhood may experience different and even contrasting situations and outcomes, sometimes, as we will also note in our empirical analysis, in the same family. Therefore, despite the same access to resources or similar deprivations, children may present different outcomes regarding, for example, education, work and other aspects.

For all these reasons, we may well ask, if neighbourhood poverty causes some outcomes (which seem unanimously accepted, as we will see in the rest of the chapter) why are not all individuals affected in the same way?

In this perspective, as recognized by scholars such as Small (2004), attempts to understand why actors present different outputs are challenging and for this reason rare in social sciences.

However, it seems to be decisive, because it takes into account all the mechanisms and elements which may contribute in case (x) and not in case (y) to, for example, the reproduction of poverty and social disadvantage.

Once we have identified the differing elements, which of course are not always easy to trace and measure - especially in the case of individual capabilities and will - we can at least try to understand what the other variables involved may be.

“The scarcity of research on this question probably accounts for much of the waning influence of structural theories in the public imagination for the popularity of arguments that cultural values, laziness, or public assistance policies are able to blame for social isolation and its impact. Most research on neighbourhood poverty ignores that many individuals do not respond to structural conditions as predicted by the literature, relating these people, in statistical terms, to the error term. To the extent we wish to open the black box, we cannot ignore that many people in poor neighbourhoods do the opposite of what they theoretically would be expected to do” (Small 2004, p. 11-12).

Therefore, as we will observe in the details of neighbourhood effect studies, an important aspect relates not only to differences between neighbourhoods but also within neighbourhoods. In order to understand how it can exert an influence on the different people involved, through which mechanisms and why, it needs close investigation.

The second issue, which is very much connected to the first one, relates to the role covered by *choice* in determining this difference. We may put the question thus: is personal choice able to account for potential differences among individuals?

Trying to move from theory to practice, it is interesting to see how, in our empirical research, many of the people interviewed, including those more affected by poverty and social disadvantage, often used the paradigm of free choice to account for their own and other people's situations or the efforts to emerge from it. However, things seem to be more complex in a sociological perspective, since there are also consequences from the point of view of ethics.

As suggested by some scholars (Snow and Benford 1992; Goodwin, Jasper and Poletta 2001), choice could be interpreted through motivation. Using the framework of narrative theory, which we previously considered in relation to culture, it could be argued that individuals understand their lives as narratives, and their actions would be seen more a consequence of these narratives than of a real rational choices.

To conclude this section, in the framework of the complex relationship existing between structure and agency, the fact of considering choice as motivation might tell us something about the agency of the people living and acting in the neighbourhoods we study. However, it is necessary to bear in mind the risk of underestimating or overestimating agency in relation to structure, and vice versa.

2.4 Neighbourhood effects: a short introduction

Going deeper into the details of neighbourhood effects, we should first of all say that neighbourhood effects are community influences on individual, social or economic outcomes, which can be present in every context and field: labour market, childhood or adolescence outcomes, criminal behaviour and other phenomena.

The general assumption of the neighbourhood effects theory is that neighbourhoods and the forms they take have a direct influence on the life and behaviour of residents. They are able to structure opportunities and capabilities. For instance, areas with low economic and/or social status and low social capital seem to have a great impact on the life, in particular, of children and adolescents.

Neighbourhood effect research includes, but is not limited to, models of endogenous preference effects, peer effects, and compositional effects. They concern, as we have seen, influences on individual behaviour or outcomes due to the characteristics of an individual's residence and neighbours (Dietz, 2002).

Neighbourhood effects research, as we will see in the rest of the chapter, in particular in the US and UK, has traditionally focused on poverty and social exclusion (UK), seeking to demonstrate how living in a neighbourhood with high poverty concentration could have important consequences for its inhabitants. The concept of poverty used here is somewhat multidimensional and could refer to

the wider concept of social disadvantage, the most used definition of which in social sciences was given by Townsend in his work on Poverty in the UK (Townsend 1979, Pratschke 2007). Instead of focusing on income alone, through this multidimensional concept we apply a broad definition of resource exclusion, at both the individual (Townsend 1979) and aggregate level (Salmond and Crampton 2002).

For some time now the effects of neighbourhood poverty have been neglected. It was mainly subsequent to the publication of the above-mentioned study conducted by Julius Wilson in the US that the relevance of this perspective emerged (Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002).

Wilson made a direct hypothesis that living in a poor neighbourhood had negative influence on an individual's life chances and opportunities, independently of the personal economic level and family background. In particular, Wilson (1987) observed that the absence of local models, the weakness of social institutions and lack in the labour market can have important outcomes on the future of resident children. In this connection let us not forget that other important neighbourhood studies with an interest in poverty subsequently focused specifically on childhood and adolescence⁵, both in the US and in Europe (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000; Iannotta and Ross, 2002; Brannstrom, 2004; Brannstrom, 2008; Urban, 2009).

2.5 Neighbourhood effects studies: since when and where?

Study of the existence and measurement of the effects that place has on many socio-economic phenomena is quite recent, except for a few American studies concentrating on the proper "social mix" of a neighbourhood (Gans 1961; Sarkissian 1976). It started massively during the 90's, notably in the Anglo-Saxon countries, and in particular the US and Great Britain.

In the US we can identify at least two generations of neighbourhood-effects studies, those conducted before the 1990s and those conducted subsequently. An important step has been represented by the work of Jencks & Mayer in 1990. These authors traced out a somewhat pessimistic picture of the status of neighbourhood effects research, mainly because the sources in

⁵ A common starting point in the interdisciplinary neighbourhood effects research is, in fact, that variation in the behaviour of children and adolescents, at the individual level, is considered to be a function of both individual and neighbourhood characteristics. Neighbourhood seems to have a different influence at each age. As Darling and Steinberg (1997) affirm, the strongest influence exerted by the neighbourhood occurs during adolescence, which is considered to be the period in an individual's life most sensitive to the influence of external factors, such as place of residence and social capital. Of course, this influence is also determined by the time and duration of neighbourhood membership in a certain area (Ellen and Turner, 1997).

the US relied on Census data, which are in fact considered appropriate to have an idea of the statistical composition but not of the dynamic process.

However, as Sampson and colleagues (2002), among the most prominent American sociologists experienced in neighbourhood-effects, have pointed out:

“The good news is that the decade since their review (Jencks & Mayer 1990) marked a period of major advances in neighbourhood-level research, as researchers began to explore new methods and ideas for understanding what makes places more or less healthy, particularly for young people. A large number of studies were also launched in a short period, so many that the study of neighbourhood effects, for better or worse, has become something of a cottage industry in the social sciences. After spurts in the 1960s and 1970s followed by a decline, the mid 1990s to the year 2000 saw more than a doubling of neighbourhood studies to the level of hundred papers per year. The bad news is that this recent spurt in quantity has not been equally matched in quality (...)”

(Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley, p. 443, 2002).

In the United Kingdom emphasis on these studies has been made in the social policies of the “New Labour” government led by Tony Blair and its attention to the local context and neighbourhood. Neighbourhood in British social research is considered to be in a sort of ascendancy. New studies and data have been available for a few years. The major importance of neighbourhood as a unit of analysis is also witnessed by the fact that the Office for National Statistics decided to establish a Neighbourhood Statistics Service. As we have seen, in recent years the neighbourhood issue has enjoyed considerable attention, not only at the academic level but also in political debate, and this is also a factor that has enhanced studies and researches commissioned by local and national decision-makers.

A number of Local Strategic Partnerships have been implemented to develop integrated local strategies for neighbourhood renewal, supported by a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. More in general, in Great Britain there has been an increase in Area Based Initiatives (ABIs), Action Zones for health, employment, education and area-targeted programmes (Lupton, 2003).

Another country where interest in neighbourhood effects seems to have emerged in the last few years, on the evidence of some recent studies have shown, is Sweden (Andersson, 2001; Brännström, 2004; Brännström, 2006; Urban 2009).

By contrast, in other countries such as Italy this particular area of study does not seem to be a very blossoming field in disciplines such as sociology and economics. Some examples can, however, be seen mostly in epidemic studies (Marinacci, Spadea, Biggeri, Demaria, Caiazzo, Costa, 2004; Michelozzi, Perucci, Forestiere et al. 1999; Biggeri, Marchi, Dreassi 1999; Costa, Spadea, Marinacci, 2002).

The debate on neighbourhood effects – their existence and on the weight of their influence – is to a certain extent controversial in the social sciences, in particular because of the policy implications, as attested by a number of important studies.

The above-mentioned review written by Jencks and Mayer (1990) has proved important for research on neighbourhood effects. Subsequent to this, other scholars, such as Haveman and Wolfe (1995) in the US, offered significant contributions to these kinds of studies. Brooks-Gunn et al. analysed many sociological studies, presenting interesting findings, while Brock and Durlauf went deeper into the econometric elements of social interactions, including neighbourhood effects.

2.6 Classification of neighbourhood effects

Neighbourhood effects can be classified in different ways and according to various criteria.

As Dietz (2002) notes, the first distinction can be made on the basis of the geographic scope of the effect. Neighbourhood effects can be studied from at least two perspectives. The first is analysis of neighbourhood effects within neighbourhoods, while the other option is to observe effects among neighbourhoods. The latter has so far come under less scrutiny in research. The focus has always been on within-neighbourhood effects, as if to assume no interaction between neighbourhoods. On the contrary, as qualitative studies make more evident, neighbourhoods are not isolated but come under reciprocal influence. The problem with neighbourhood effect research is that all too often neighbourhoods with similar internal characteristics but dissimilar neighbouring aspects are still considered equivalent.

Several authors (Lupton 2003, Friedrichs, Galster, Musterd 2002) have recognised that quantitative neighbourhood effect studies tend to suffer problems of definition, because they are seldom formed through precise theoretical considerations. As they argue, the only criteria inspiring these definitions very often seem to be data constraints, forcing the use of available data sets. Returning to the best known within-neighbourhood effects, we should mention the famous typology identified by Manski (1993, 2000), distinguishing endogenous effects, correlated effects and exogenous effects.

Endogenous neighbourhood effects (also known as peer effects) occur within a neighbourhood, when an individual's behaviour has a direct influence on other individuals in the neighbourhood.

In this case social multipliers are at work – feedback mechanisms through which an individual can influence the whole aggregate. This type of effect is very much referred to in research on

dependency and drug use, where the actions of one or a few adolescents can have a wider influence on other young people in the neighbourhood.

The second type of effect described by Manski is a correlated effect. The concept underlying this definition is that neighbourhood effects occur because individuals in the same neighbourhood tend to have similar characteristics and behaviours. This is clearly a consequence of a prior sorting process.

Studies on the impact of poverty and disadvantage concentration within the neighbourhood typically entail the search for correlated effects. One of the most important researches in this field is the seminal work by Wilson (1987), mentioned above, which offered the greatest contribution to the theory of the Underclass. Unlike the case of endogenous effects, in this case there is no determination of causation.

The distinction between causal and non-causal neighbourhood effects is necessary because they have different implications for modelling, estimation, and policy formulation.

As Dietz (2002) suggests, an example can be seen in the relationship between drug consumption and poverty. If drug consumption is linked to low income, a concentration of poverty, as attested in public housing areas, also leads to a concentration of drug activity. This drug use concentration is a non-causal correlated effect, because the drug consumption is not directly determined by neighbourhood exposure.

The third classification of neighbourhood-effects made by Manski is the contextual or exogenous effect. This effect derives its theoretical foundation from the theory of spillovers and public externalities. In this framework, the characteristics of nearby neighbourhoods impact each other. This typology refers to the “among-neighbourhood” effects described above. In fact, neighbourhoods are not treated independently but considered in relationship with other correlated and close areas. Estimations for these effects are possible by applying econometric techniques.

2.7 Neighbourhood effects among disciplines

Study of neighbourhood effects is by its very nature interdisciplinary. The various disciplines, such as sociology, economics, geography, and other social sciences, have their own methodology, research tools and peculiar concepts. Very often similar problems and questions are differently tackled in the areas of study. This could be positive for the richness of approaches, but one of the problems of neighbourhood effects studies is that disciplines rarely talk to each other, and scant

contamination and exchange take place. Thus important findings arrived at, for instance, in epidemiology, are not always taken into consideration by economists or sociologists and vice versa. The researchers taking the greatest interest in neighbourhood effects are quantitative sociologists and economists (Lupton 2003). Their research interests lie in both the deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods. As we have seen, an important field of research concerned the impact of neighbourhoods on children's opportunities, finding significant but limited neighbourhood effects (Ellen and Turner 1997, Shonkoff and Philips 2000, Buck 2001).

Some specific studies, mostly conducted in the US, have addressed the issue of health inequalities among residents of different neighbourhoods, analysing the conjunction of individual and place effects.

In particular, we may mention the study by Duncan et al. (1999) entitled "Smoking and deprivation: are there neighbourhood effects?"; the work of Sampson (2003) investigating the general neighbourhood context of well-being, and the more specific studies by Morenoff et al. (2008) on hypertension and Dragano et al. (2007) who conducted analysis in Germany of the impact of neighbourhood socioeconomic status on cardiovascular risk factors.

The importance of the neighbourhood effect approach is attested by the attempt to bring together two different perspectives, one focusing on individuals, typical of quantitative social sciences, the other focusing on communities and places, typical of community and area-based studies – a dualism that many scholars have traditionally recognized and tried to overcome (Coleman, 1986).

The cooperation and reciprocal contribution of quantitative and qualitative studies in the field of neighbourhood effects can be twofold: the evidence on neighbourhood effects may increase thanks to qualitative studies, while qualitative studies can identify mechanisms to be tested by quantitative researchers (Lupton, 2003).

The task of sociology in neighbourhood effect research is to discover those mechanisms through which the effects of place arise and act on individuals.

Jencks and Mayer (1990) classified the various different types neighbourhood effect theories.

Contagion theories, investigating the peer influences that facilitate the spread of social ills and negative behaviours, have been applied in many studies, including: Case and Katz (1991), Evans et al. (1992), and Corcoran et al. (1992). More in detail, epidemic theories are a particular type of contagion theory. Epidemic models may describe the spread or change of a neighbourhood effect and can also be used to describe the way in which a neighbourhood effect manifests itself. The second model, which we also applied to our empirical analysis, is collective socialization. This model is associated with the spread of positive behaviour due to the interaction with individuals acting as a constructive model.

Role model studies had sociological importance especially in relation to childhood and the influence models have on young people (both children and adolescents). Collective socialization research has analysed in depth the absence of positive models in neighbourhoods.

Then we have competition theory according to which, unlike the second one, the presence of socio-economic success can have a negative impact on the rest of the community. Traditionally neighbourhoods have not been the focus for this type of model, which have concentrated more on peer groups, such as classes.

The fourth theory, known by the name of relative deprivation, also claims that successful examples of individuals have a negative impact on the rest of the neighbours. In fact, there would be a kind of resentment and frustration leading to even more deprivation.

Neighbourhood effects appear to have been analysed less extensively in economics than in sociology and epidemiology. However, we may see as exceptions scholars such as Benabou (1996), Durlauf (1996), Vilarubia (2006), together with a few others.

The first important thing to note is that economic models investigating neighbourhood effects generally concentrate on growth. These researchers are interested in the relationship between the geographic stratification of income groups and socioeconomic outcomes. At the basis of these models lies human capital accumulation and, the subjects involved in this process number at least three: family, community, and system-wide determinants.

The individual's wage, for instance determined, is by a general amount of human capital around him and by his own individual level. Individual human capital accumulation takes place within a local context, which is why neighbourhoods play a great role. Benabou and Durlauf specify that family origins and community quality, which is an index of community human capital, are complements in the human capital accumulation process. Benabou also demonstrates that the integration of communities at the level of education and income can have effects on growth, while Durlauf similarly shows that sorting can have negative consequences and bring about increasing inequalities.

Since individuals inside a community share the same level of public goods provision, the direction seems to be towards homogenization. In fact, the families seem to reach, step by step, much the same human capital level. These studies also demonstrate that in the long term the mixing of inhabitants and households promotes growth. Similarly, empirical studies on neighbourhood effects have examined individuals' outcomes, such as human capital accumulation, in respect of community characteristics. The important question regarding growth and neighbourhood effects is whether segregation can lead to lower wages and consequently poverty. Something which we also tried to investigate in our research.

One of the neighbourhood-effect models used mostly by economists examines endogenous effects, a type of peer effect. An early study applying a peer effect model was conducted by Akerlof (1980) examining the decision of people to pursue a pattern of behaviour that is not expedient for themselves but follows community norms. He applies this model influencing the actions of individuals. The two possibilities expected in the model are: a) individuals choose an action that violates their own code, suffering as a consequence a welfare loss b) individuals choose an action that is non-conforming to aggregate community behaviour, also suffering a welfare loss.

As the model shows, people's behaviour in the neighbourhood is dictated by the interplay of these two forces. However, unlike certain sociological approaches, this model of social interactions does not rely on a shared community belief system.

A particular phenomenon observed by Akerlof and connected with neighbourhood effects is population sorting, which can be studied over time, using for example, panel data regressions. One of the main results is that if sorting occurs over time and space, neighbourhoods of poor quality may remain undesirable. Thus this model marks a decisive point in progress along these lines: sorting, as opposed to endogenous effects, can contribute to the persistence of social problems.

Neighbourhood formation, the way households are assigned to a specific area, is determined by economic and social processes. When economists examine sociological concepts they consider neighbourhood formation as an endogenous process. In addition, it is worth recalling that the way households distribute within the city has important socioeconomic consequences.

Another source of neighbourhood effects studies is the local interaction literature of game theory (Ellison, 1993). Local interaction models have been used to examine the learning processes of individuals when actions have consequences in a precise area.

Although the local interaction model and the neighbourhood effect approach are different things, the phenomena they may be applied to investigate can be similar. Local interaction models provide an additional method to differentiate types of neighbourhood effects. Ellison demonstrates that games where players interact with each other tend to be determined by historical forces. Historical forces in a neighbourhood effect context coincide with the historical legacies of neighbourhoods, including reputation effects, environmental factors or local public good provisions (Ellison 1993; Dietz 2002).

Ellison applied her models to peer groups such as children and in particular school classes, where increased school performance through parental involvement of one child in a peer group can lead to better performance on the part of the other children in the group and vice versa. An important aspect is that the neighbourhood size matters. In fact, if it is small, practices and mechanisms are learned and interiorized more quickly.

Other models entail that a certain presence of willing individuals may increase the welfare of their neighbours, while the local interaction framework sees a process of learning with no fixed amount of good and bad citizens.

Eshel et al. (1998) also introduced a form of imitation dynamics, where individuals examine the outcomes of their neighbours (those having more advantages as feedback) to determine their own behaviour, whether altruistic or selfish. This is the framework of a game theory where individuals, through observation of the others' behaviour and the results they achieve, decide on each particular occasion what kind of behaviour to adopt.

Although abstract, this model can work as background for examining neighbourhood definitions and notions of collective socialization and social contagion theories.

Neighbourhood structure, that is the characterization of social interaction, can influence social outcomes. Thus when approaching neighbourhoods for our purpose it is necessary to consider the relationships of the individuals in it, which can be a source of fundamental information. The local interaction literature points out, for example, that the group size and the relations of the group members to religious institutions are of a primary importance. As we will note in the chapter aimed at analysing the relationship between young people and their neighbourhood, the group size is particularly important, especially concerning the external regard and discrimination. While the belonging of individuals to religious institutions can also work as "intermediation effect" between individuals, in particular the youth and the neighbourhood. It can mitigate, to a certain extent, the neighbourhood effect. Other inputs are provided by Dieckmann (1999), who studied the effects of individual mobility, an issue which is fundamental for neighbourhood effect studies. Through mobility individuals are able to choose their neighbourhood following a personal strategy, with an efficiency in social outcomes.

A final, actually quite remarkable, observation concerning neighbourhood effects is that, even if judgements may be debatable and precise measurement is difficult, mainly due to a *bias* between households and neighbourhood characteristics, it should be recognized, at least from the economic perspective, that neighbourhood effects impact on property values and more in general on the housing market (Dietz and Haurin 2002; Haurin et al. 2002).

The situation of housing and the housing market in a specific area may in fact have important consequences on the choices and mobility of individuals and, indeed, on the entire neighbourhood structure.

2.8 How do we investigate neighbourhood effects? A methodology

As Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) and Sampson *et al.* (2002) point out, there are basically two methodological approaches to measure neighbourhood effects:

- Neighbourhood Case Study: individuals' behaviours, trajectories and social relationships are examined through archival records, survey and/or ethnographic methods in neighbourhoods with peculiar characteristics, usually poverty, social disadvantage and segregation (Van Beckhoven & Van Kempen 2003; Friedrichs & Blasius 2003)
- Statistical Analysis of Non-Experimental, Longitudinal Databases: in these studies individuals are observed over time in different residential contexts, and multivariate statistical techniques are used to discover correlations between the contexts and behaviours or outcomes for these individuals. In doing so, background and other individual characteristics are carefully verified (Musterd *et al.* 2003, Kearns & Parkes 2003).

As we have seen, in neighbourhood effect research it is necessary and functional to supersede to some extent the sharp distinction between quantitative and qualitative studies. This does not necessarily imply the use of both approaches but at least the acknowledgement of their importance. In fact, both approaches present positive and negative aspects (Duncan *et al.*, 1997) and also have the common objective to solve the problem of selection biases between the neighbourhood pure effect and household characteristics.

As some scholars have noted (Sampson *et al.* 2002; Dietz 2002), neither of the two approaches has been able to yield a precise and general answer to the problem, without solving the issue of the erroneously measured association between neighbourhood and individual outcomes, but also causation which may be absent.

American researchers seem to have made greater efforts in search of solutions than their European counterparts, and have come up with some valid points:

- 1) Instrumental variables can be substituted for the direct measurements of neighbourhood found in non-experimental, longitudinal databases. Galster proposes recognising the simultaneity of neighbourhood and other choices affecting outcomes.
- 2) Siblings can be studied over time so that fixed effects associated with the same parental characteristics can be differenced out, leaving the independent impacts of residential change more visible.
- 3) If the outcomes in question involve non-linear responses to neighbourhood characteristics, there are means of identifying unambiguously the independent neighbourhood effect (Brock & Durlauf, 2001).

4) Social experiments can be carried out when the allocation of subjects to neighbourhoods is made through random assignment experimental procedures, as the American program Moving To Opportunity (MTO) demonstrated.

In our empirical investigation we opted for ethnographic research, referring to both open-ended , in-depth interviews and participant observation conducted through face to face interaction with young people, their families, organizations and institutions of the neighbourhood. We made this decision mainly for two important reasons: first of all because the ethnographic approach of neighbourhood effects provide a direct access to the condition of poor neighbourhoods and residents (Small 2010). Doing this, we have been able to seek to identify some of the mechanisms producing an observed effect or account for the absence of an expected relationship. More than that, this methodology of investigating neighbourhood effects give access to how residents of poor neighbourhoods take important decisions about their situation: all elements which are impossible to be captured through quantitative methods. However, despite being aware of the importance of integration between a qualitative and quantitative approach, we have not been able to do that, due to an objective lack of specific data at a neighbourhood level.

Going deeper in the object of our analysis, together with the general first question on the existence of neighbourhood effects: does neighbourhood poverty affect life chances? another more fundamental point is to find out how neighbourhood effects are transmitted and perpetuated. This will be the central objective of our analysis.

In an important review, Ellen and Turner (1997) identified six precise mechanisms by means of which neighbourhood characteristics can influence the individual outcomes of its inhabitants:

- Quality of local services
- Socialization process through the adults
- Peer influence
- Social networks
- Exposure to violence and criminality
- Geographic isolation in relation to the jobs available (spatial mismatch)

Looking into the analysis in greater detail we can see concretely what these mechanisms are and how they act (Friedrichs, 1998; Gephardt, 1997; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson *et al.*, 2002):

- Neighbourhood resources: reputation of place, presence of informal organisations including religious institutions, job networks, recreation, health and other public services.

- Role and Model learning through social ties and interrelationships: nature of interpersonal networks, peer groups, correlated effects...
- Socialisation and collective efficacy: commonality of norms and sense of control.
- Resident perceptions of deviance and self-representation of the neighbourhood.

The first mechanism has to do with the structural characteristics and resources of the place, which are not necessarily linked to those of the individuals living in the neighbourhood. However, it should be recognized that living in an area where local public services are inadequate can determine, for example, development, with consequences also related to work.

The spatial mismatch theory mentioned above is based on the idea that job accessibility is scarce – an important aspect contributing to the exclusion of some residents.

With regard to the issue of the reputation of a place, which may have enormous consequences on its inhabitants, it is usually determined from outside. In fact, stigmatization is the most frequent external judgement based on its composition. This stigmatization has the effect of aggravating the situation yet more. For instance, the more a neighbourhood is stigmatized as having a high unemployment rate, the more difficult it will be for its inhabitants to find a job.

The second dimension of importance to fully understand neighbourhood effects is the relational part. It is necessary to understand how social relations are, to understand the pattern social relations take and the way they function. Development of relations is not simply limited to socialisation but involves the wider sphere of opportunities and options (Andersson, 2001). Social ties and interrelationships are extremely important because people, especially children and adolescents, learn relational elements on the basis of the models available in the neighbourhood (Thornberry *et al.*, 1994).

The other dimension, socialisation, has to do with the interaction between people in the neighbourhood. The basic idea is that neighbours influence each other through interaction and contacts, adopting similar behaviour and sometimes the same life style and values through social contagion. As Friedrichs & Blasius (2003) explained, this is the same mechanism through which, in a poor neighbourhood, even people who do not commit crimes, seem to accept or at least are tolerant towards deviant and criminal behaviours. The residents' perception of the neighbourhood is central in this type of studies and has much to do with the so called sense of insecurity, used (and abused) in the political debate, both in Europe and in the US. This symbolic dimension of the neighbourhood and stigmatization of it, which can be a factor of exclusion, is in fact quite decisive. As Mc All *et al.* (2001) show that in the case of Montreal the negative image of the residence may reinforce the feeling of disqualification of the inhabitants and, moreover, the bad neighbourhood reputation can also play a part in discrimination for access to employment (Atkinson *et al.* Kintrea,

2001; Forrest and Kearns, 2001), and also relates to education, and relations with institutional authorities such as the police, as in the particular case of the young people in our research.

In the empirical part of our research, in fact we will take in-to account all these mechanisms, analysing them in detail, observing how they act and influence young people's outcomes and development. We will do this in particular concerning school, education, life and social relations taking place in the neighbourhood.

2.9 Neighbourhood effects: who is most concerned?

In particular it is important to focus on the target. Actually, the people who may suffer neighbourhood effects most are those individuals whose lives are very much limited to the resident neighbourhood: children, adolescents, old people and lone mothers excluded from the labour market. One of the hypotheses of the neighbourhood effects theory is that a person with a social network limited to a disadvantaged neighbourhood, will suffer neighbourhood effects more on account of the fact of not having more geographically extended social relations. At the same time, this assertion could be challenged since, as recent studies (Forrest and Kearns, 2001) have shown, the representations according to which the social relations of poor households are confined to the resident area is not always true. However, this is an hypothesis we will test in our empirical research in relation to young people.

While acknowledging all these elements, we should at the same time recognize the existence of incongruence in these approach. As Ellen and Turner (1997) remarked, some of the effects attributed to the neighbourhood actually have more to do with family characteristics (income, education, employment, family structure).

This *bias* between the real effect of the neighbourhood and the role of the family is probably the biggest problem concerning neighbourhood effects studies. The confusion may prove a problem when, for example, policies focusing on de-concentration of poverty are based on the hypothesis of a pure neighbourhood effect, independent of family characteristics.

In fact, if we confuse the household characteristics with a real neighbourhood effect, the negative consequence of policies based on such results will be to make poverty less visible without effectively ameliorating individual situations.

This difficulty persists not only in qualitative but also in quantitative studies, although some statistical studies have tried to distinguish these two aspects, allowing for slightly more precise measurement of the NE (Sampson 2002, Dietz 2003).

Galster and Zobel (1998) pass a very pessimistic judgment on NE studies. According to these authors, the studies do not allow to establish the certain existence of a real neighbourhood effect. The problem, they argue, concerns the structural factor having the greatest influence: is it neighbourhood poverty, itself or one of its related elements (family structure, professional composition, unemployment rate..)?

However, in accordance with the literature we believe that the real and useful question should not be whether the neighbourhood effect exists or not but to define in which particular contexts and for which individuals it is significant.

For example, Crane (1991) shows that there are some thresholds to neighbourhood effects. To do so he uses a contagion model, to illustrate how social problems expand like diseases, implying the existence of critical levels: after a certain point the diffusion of the problem, which had deviously followed a linear model, accelerates sharply. This means that neighbourhood effect is much more significant in difficult neighbourhoods, whose characteristics are over a certain threshold and for a particular target of population, as previously noted. This might account for some gaps and dissimilarities between the results of different studies.

For these reasons, the precise nature of structural elements influencing individual outcomes remains uncertain (Hogan et Kitawaga, 1985; Crane, 1991; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Clampet-Lunquist, 1998) as also the problem concerning the exact spatial scale to which the NE may be supposed to act (Overman, 2002).

In addition, as Buck (2001) underlines, since individual characteristics can be the result of an accumulation of neighbourhood effects, there could also be a time effect. Neighbourhood effect can be weak in the short term but become stronger in the long term.

However, we believe that apart from certain contradictory results, a number of important elements can be considered:

- 1) Neighbourhood effects act differently depending on the social categories concerned: age, sex and the situation of the family (adolescents, lone mothers, old people)
- 2) Neighbourhood effects are not at the same level everywhere. They become significant just in particular contexts and over a certain threshold of degradation of the neighbourhood quality.

2.10 Problems and challenges

Despite all the progress that neighbourhood effect studies have made in the past ten-fifteen years (Dietz, 2002; Friedrichs et. al 2003), studying these issues we still have to face considerable methodological problems and challenges.

The main obstacles still lie in the differential selection of individuals into communities, the indirect pathways of neighbourhood effects, measurement error, and the simultaneity bias which should answer the question as to what is causing what.

Given that these problems have not mean completely solved, unfortunately no truly definitive answer can be reached on the role played by the neighbourhood context (Duncan & Raudenbush 1999), which leaves the findings somewhat uncertain.

As we have seen, one neighbourhood may be very different from another and present peculiarities, elements and mechanisms which cannot be neglected or treated as simple variables.

The big problem that we will tackle here is selection bias. The main issue to be understood is whether area differences concerning any outcomes (crime, education, health...) are the results of neighbourhood factors or are due to the differential selection of individuals.

An example in this direction may be offered by the above-mentioned MTO – The Moving to Opportunity programme, experimented by the Department of Housing in five big American cities: Boston, Baltimore, New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles, representing a concrete advance in neighbourhood studies. Residents applying for housing vouchers were randomly given either standard vouchers to be used anywhere (control group) or vouchers to be used only in non poor neighbourhoods (experimental group). This programme started from a previous one, the Gautreaux programme tested in Chicago, showing improved outcomes for both children and adults (Rosenbaum 1995). The MTO was designed to find out whether moving families from poor neighbourhoods in the inner-city to richer and low-poverty rates areas could improve their opportunities, as was evidenced by the Gautreaux programme. Unlike the latter programme, the MTO programme used random criteria to assign eligible applicants to three different groups. Two groups received vouchers, while the third received no form of treatment. The idea behind this random assignment was to separate the role of neighbourhood from the selection bias.

The analysis concerned the outcomes of families who received the treatment and moved away from their neighbourhood. Subsequent to this, there is also an analysis called Intent to-Treat (ITT), which compares the average outcomes of the two treatment groups (those receiving vouchers) and the other group. The objective is to estimate the net effect of being offered the treatment, regardless of whether the family decided to accept the vouchers and move (Katz et al. 2001).

The first evidence of this experimental literature is the positive outcome for those families that moved to low-poverty areas in relation to different elements such as health, children's behaviour and education, as well as general well-being (Katz et al. 2001; Ludwig et al. 2001; Rosenbaum & Harris 2001). Although this experiment had more significance for policy other than for sociology, it has proved important for a better understanding of some implied mechanisms (Katz et al. 2001)

However, despite the acknowledged importance of these experiments their limitations must also be recognized (Sampson et al. 2002; Musterd et al. 2009).

Selection bias has, for instance, still to be considered in relation to the differential take-up rates and dropout from the programme. In addition, the random assignment of housing vouchers does not address the causal processes of the role of the neighbourhood and is far from making completely clear why place matters.

Indeed, when the subjects move from one neighbourhood to another, many variables contextually change, making it difficult to discern the change in the level of poverty (in the neighbourhood) from other changes in social processes, affecting the single individual and his/her interactions (Katz et al. 2001). Taking in-to account this major problem of *selection bias* in neighbourhood effects studies, it could be solved through a better understanding of the mutual selection decisions, structural contexts and social interactions (Durlauf 2001). In our empirical analysis we will therefore not simply focus on the mechanisms concerning the neighbourhood and its effects but also those related to the individual and more than that: family and its effects.

The second problem concerns the overall control and the indirect pathways of neighbourhood effects. In quantitative multilevel neighbourhood research it is common to estimate a direct effect model, controlling individual, family, peer, and school variables, alongside current neighbourhood characteristics of residence. However, it is estimated that this procedure confounds the importance of long-term community influences and the mediating developmental pathways of children's characteristics, such as patterns of learning from peers, family socialization and education, and so all those important mechanisms underlying the different neighbourhood effects.

As some authors point out (Axinn & Yabiku 2001), what is needed is a more comprehensive view of enduring contextual influences, accounting for multiple developmental influences along the life course.

Another problem in neighbourhood effects studies has to do with the research design and, in particular, with the fact that analyses are usually limited to the place of residence of the individuals. The problem is that many events in which the individual is involved occur out of the place of residence. This point also relates to a certain extent to the more general discussion we presented earlier concerning the difference between "within" and "among" neighbourhood effects studies. In

particular, this could be problematic for neighbourhood research aiming at clarification of contextual effects on individual differences. This is why, in the empirical analyses of our research we will deeply investigate all practices of our interviews, taking place both inside and outside of the neighbourhood.

As has been extensively observed in the studies and literature mentioned, estimation and measurement of neighbourhood effects are no easy task and the results may remain debatable.

Nevertheless, most scholars (Dietz et al. 2002; Sampson et al. 2002; Friedrichs et al. 2003; Lupton 2003) have recognized evidence of some connections between certain socio-economic characteristics and the spatial differentiation of a neighbourhood.

What emerges clearly is that in general, neighbourhood-level mechanisms can be identified through surveys, ethnographic research (as it is our case) and archival approaches. Paying particular attention to the conceptual frame and to the selection of variables to keep under control in order not to overestimate or underestimate neighbourhood effects: in our empirical analysis we will mainly focus to the identification of all the mechanisms at the basis of neighbourhood effects.

Saying this, another important aspect to point out is that mechanisms related to other neighbourhoods emerge and prompt new approaches of 'among' neighbourhood effects (Topa, 2001). This is why in our research we should at the same time note all processes and dynamics taking place inside and outside the neighbourhood.

To conclude, motivating the theoretical frame proposed, which is meant to take into account also certain cultural and social relational aspects, we can once again cite the opinion of Robert Sampson and colleagues:

“Although much effort has been put into understanding the structural backdrop to neighbourhood social organization, we need a deeper focus on cultural, normative, and collective-action perspectives that attach meaning to how residents frame their commitment to places. Another limitation of neighbourhood effects research has been its lack of attention to measuring peer networks and the connection of neighbourhoods and school processes” (Sampson et al. 2002 pp.473-474). These are all aspects which we will be looking into more closely in the following chapters.

3. The neighbourhood: a resource but also a limitation

This chapter is divided in two parts. In the first we propose a definition of neighbourhood, focusing on both the physical (neighbourhood as a space) and relational dimensions. In this first part we will also look at the main characteristics of the Italian *periferie* and French *banlieues*, including an outline of the level and peculiarity of socio-urban interventions in both countries.

In the second part attention will be drawn to the specific target of our research, namely the way young people experience the neighbourhood. In doing so, we aim to highlight all the mechanisms through which life in the neighbourhood and the specific forms of social relations taking place there can influence their trajectories and experiences.

3.1 Neighbourhoods: an initial definition

In defining the neighbourhood we are compelled to give two – albeit interconnected – definitions. The first concerns its spatial dimension, as a physical entity consisting of buildings, boundaries and limits, while the second is a more conceptual definition regarding the individuals and their relations. As we have seen in various contexts within this research, precise conceptualization is extremely important although it is sometimes lacking in neighbourhood studies (Lupton, 2003).

Returning to the spatial definition, it is of central importance to define the neighbourhood and its borders, in order to choose a precise territorial unit. However, as Galster (2001) recognized, even when a space has been spatially identified, this does not mean that no spatial ambiguity persists. Galster's consideration, for instance, has something in common with Suttles' (1972) idea of a multilevel spatial view of the neighbourhood. At the basis he placed the "block face", the area closest to homes, while the second level, categorized as the "defended neighbourhood", is defined in opposition to another space.

In fact, in some cases conflict may arise over the allocation of a specific area by different populations. Furthermore neighbourhoods are not static and their spatial boundaries can also change. The third level, the so called 'community of limited liability' can be defined as the area of the local government seats (city hall, etc.) and has limited, voluntary social participation.

The last geographical scale of neighbourhood, the 'expanded community of limited liability' is seen as a whole sector of the city.

In much the same direction, other studies conducted by Birch (1979) shared some of the outcomes of Suttles' model. In particular, this scholar affirms that residents have a perception of four spatial

levels of neighbourhood, seen as clusters of neighbourhood attributes, which vary on the same scale across somehow congruent spaces (Galster, 2001).

Considering the neighbourhood more broadly, we could conceptually use the definition proposed by Lancaster (1966), i.e. as a bundle of spatially based attributes associated with clusters of residences, sometimes in conjunction with other land uses (Galster, 2001 p. 2112).

In this application, the spatially based attributes comprising neighbourhood consist of different characteristics (Galster, 2001) such as:

- Structural characteristics of the residential and non-residential buildings
- Infrastructural characteristics
- Demographic characteristics of the resident population
- Class status characteristics of the resident population
- Public service characteristics
- Environmental characteristics
- Proximity characteristics to services and facilities
- Political characteristics
- Social-interactive characteristics
- Sentimental characteristics

It is to be noted that all these attributes are present in almost all neighbourhoods. Therefore, what differentiates one neighbourhood from another one is the quantity and quality of these elements. These characteristics of the neighbourhood are spatially based, but any neighbourhood starts to be characterized immediately after the space has been demarcated. Therefore, saying that neighbourhood's attributes are spatially based does not mean that they are totally dependent on the space.

Next to spatial issues, neighbourhoods are in fact also determined by the people living or acting there, and social relations therefore play a fundamental role. This connection between the neighbourhood as a physical space and individuals is essential in neighbourhood studies, especially when dealing with concepts such as social disadvantage, exclusion and poverty.

This dimension has such relevance that some scholars also perceive the neighbourhood as a '*Black Box*' (Germain, 2005): something in transition, whose nature, effects and role for policies are sometimes difficult to define.

“Come è noto, da tempo è stato messo in dubbio che esista – nonostante la perdurante forza del riferimento – una dimensione autonoma e distinta rispetto ai legami interpersonali da un lato e al legame sociale nel suo insieme dall'altro. Ciononostante, il quartiere sembra oggi conoscere una

nuova fortuna, mantiene la sua storica incidenza sulla identità personale e sperimenta un revival grazie ai complessi processi di rinnovo urbano. Al momento, teniamo ferma una definizione preliminare (..) che intende i quartieri come l'esito dell'incrocio tra pratiche sociali locali che hanno in comune l'orientamento alla convivenza di gruppi e popolazioni diverse" (Cremaschi 2007, p.1)

Another important aspect of the neighbourhood is as commodity. Like other commodities, the neighbourhood can also be consumed. Therefore, we can also identify different neighbourhood users, which relates to the concept of city users (Martinotti, 1993). These consumers are households, businesses, property owners and local governments.

Households consume neighbourhoods. They reside there and live in the neighbourhood's public and private space (home). The businesses and economy occupy a place in the neighbourhood, which thus benefits from them through revenues, to be 'exchanged' with provision of services/goods. The last two important actors to be described are property owners and local governments. The first group profits from rents from the buildings and properties while local government receives taxes from the neighbourhood, which should/could ideally be internally redistributed. Conflicts may arise when different actors share the same area. Therefore, there are potential conflicts between residents - young people versus adults, new residents versus traditional residents, immigrants versus nationals - between businesses and residents, for instance due to the use and allocation of a specific area, between businesses and local governments or between the local government and residents. This happens for example, when the local government decides to establish certain structures which are necessary for the whole city but could have negative effects in particular on the life and health of local inhabitants (for example, installation of a refuse dump).

As will emerge from our analysis, all relational aspects are decisive when studying neighbourhoods and the impact they have on people's lives and opportunities.

This conception of the neighbourhood as a commodity is very much connected to the social relational dimension. In fact, living in a neighbourhood does not simply imply residence but also a sense of belonging. The interconnection between belonging and possession of the neighbourhood is determined by local elements which can have various different outcomes.

3.2 Neighbourhood, community(ies) and networks

As we saw above, there are two main references in definition of the neighbourhood. The first concerns the physical dimension of the settlement as a concentration of individuals, while the second is more historical and sociological, based on the idea of community.

As acknowledged by several scholars (Tosi 2001; Cremaschi 1994), it is through modern urban studies that we observe emergence of the concept of neighbourhood and its increasing relevance in the urban dimension.

The neighbourhood has been traditionally associated with the idea of community and the working class. In the sociological, urban but also political perspective, neighbourhoods have coincided with the working class community (Cremaschi 2007; Topalov 2003). These industrial neighbourhoods were perceived as characterized by intense social relations, with precise boundaries identifying the limits - all elements that have been investigated in depth in the sociological tradition, and in particular the school of Chicago. The cohesion of these neighbourhoods, based on the community and social class awareness, has been historically very important. However, it has been too often taken for granted without paying attention to the concrete processes in act.

As underlined by Ellen and Turner (1997), these representations have not always corresponded to social reality. These authors argued that neither the social class cohesion nor the local dimension have been able to guarantee social homogeneity and collective action. In fact, sometimes nationality or religion may prove stronger elements than identification with a social class and, at the same time, the local dimension seems to be weaker than other levels. Therefore, an important transformation concerns the nature of the neighbourhood:

“Non si coglie allora l’aspetto problematico che deriva dalla sovrapposizione di reti sociali diverse, caratteristica che è stata riconosciuta da tempo come specifica alla dimensione locale rispetto alla pretesa omogeneità del quartiere tradizionale. Dal riferimento alle reti – e non ad una comunità – si ricavano due elementi critici: non solo il carattere relativo della valutazione delle *issues*, dipendente appunto dalle diverse posizioni nella rete; ma soprattutto il carattere negoziale e strategico che deriva dalla sovrapposizione tra reti diverse. (Cremaschi, 2007 p.2).

And again: “Per partire da qualcosa di diverso dall’elenco delle funzioni prestate localmente, occorre introdurre una prima distanza dalla nozione di quartiere in termini di set di valori fisici e sociali; e ripensarlo in modo opposto come l’esito negoziato e costruito di set di relazioni definite contestualmente”.

Therefore, in this perspective the neighbourhood is a place where different social relations take place. In this perspective the concept of agency but even more that of 'habitat of meaning' may assume importance. As argued by Hannerz (1996):

"There has been a resurgence of interest in agency, no doubt partly as a pendulum swing a way from a previous strong emphasis on structure, system and social determinism; Partly, I think, also because these ideas have been so firmly, if not always entirely visibly, set in the framework of the nation-state. In anthropology, for sometime now, the absence of any explicit notion of agency has been one of the points of criticism in arguments about the trouble with 'culturalism', and in and out of that particular debate, there have now for some time been calls to bring human beings back in. In doing so, however, we must not lose sight of the diversity of actors and organizational contexts involved in managing contemporary complex culture. We cannot occupy ourselves only with the small-scale handling of meanings and symbols by individuals, or small groups, and assume that wider cultural entities come about simply through an aggregation of their activities (..)

One of the recent writers on concept of agency has been the Polish-English sociologist Zygmunt Baumann (1992: 190-191), generally one of the most insightful and interesting commentator of the relationship between theory and the emergent realities of contemporary life. Bauman suggests that a notion of agency should be combined not with system but with a flexible sense of habitat; a habitat in which agency operates and which it also produces, one where it finds its resources and goals as well as its limitations. Adapting Bauman's point of view, I think a notion of 'Habitats of meaning' may serve us well in cultural analysis. The relativist streak in cultural analysis has frequently led us to such turns of phrase as 'Worlds of meaning', but this again suggests too much autonomy and boundedness. Habits can expand and contract. As they can overlap entirely, partially or just possibly not at all, they can be identified with either individuals or collectives. But in the latter case, it is the analysis of cultural process in social relationships, rather than axiomatic assertion, that has to convince us that a habit of meaning is really shared". (Hannerz, 1996 p. 22-23).

In this perspective, the neighbourhood as a local space is the result of the interaction among various habitats which may also in some cases create potential conflicts.

For this reason, the existence of various habitats is connected to the concept of 'living capabilities' (Cremaschi 1994; 2007).

These capabilities are not individual characteristics but more relational elements. In fact, living in a group or local community is a practice that individuals learn by doing. Therefore, the neighbourhood could be considered as the outcome of habitats and practices.

Looking at all these relations and interactions, another decisive and interconnected concept is that of proximity. As stated by Lefeuve (2005):

“La proximité est une notion floue, que l’analyse sociologique, de quelque manière qu’elle l’aborde, s’efforce toujours de dénaturer. On le constatera une fois de plus, au travers des études rassemblées dans cet ouvrage : la proximité, pour un sociologue, n’est pas une donnée purement physique, elle est toujours à la fois matérielle et idéelle, subjective et socialement construite. Cela signifie d’une part qu’elle échappe partiellement à l’objectivation, d’autre part qu’elle peut être appréhendée sous différents aspects, éventuellement disjoints: comme une perception (une sensation immédiate), comme une représentation (une construction symbolique), ou comme une catégorie pratique. Ces différentes dimensions de la proximité ne coïncident pas nécessairement. En effet, la proximité est une construction, dans laquelle l’imaginaire prend sa part. Il permet à l’individu de « fabriquer » de la distance. Moyennant quoi, il semble que la notion proximité ne puisse être envisagée isolément, mais doive toujours être replacée dans un couple d’opposition : proximité/distance « extérieure » vs proximité/distance « intérieure ». C’est ce que suggère Simmel: « Une autre cause [des modifications que peut subir une relation lorsque ses éléments passent de l’éloignement à la contiguïté physique] se rencontre dans l’affirmation nécessaire de la distance *intérieure* quand la distance extérieure fait défaut » (1999, p. 645). Dans cette voie, J.F. Augoyard, qui distingue rapport à l’espace représenté et perception de l’espace (ou espace vécu), met en évidence le pouvoir créatif du sujet. Celui-ci peut s’approcher mentalement de ce qui est physiquement lointain ou faire abstraction de ce qu’il perçoit comme proche. La sensation de proximité, parce qu’elle met en jeu le corps, suscite des émotions, mais l’individu s’adapte : l’intellectualité, les comportements de mise à distance sont parmi les formes que peut prendre cette adaptation. La proximité spatiale ne peut donc pas avoir d’effet social direct. Cela n’empêche pas de s’interroger sur la part qui lui revient dans la construction de toute relation. Ce qui implique d’extraire la dimension spatiale et de l’envisager de façon non métaphorique. Il s’agit sans doute d’un enjeu sociologique important mais négligé, qui incite à considérer l’espace autrement que comme le support de processus a-spatiaux et à mesurer l’importance du corps, et celle d’objets matériels, dans l’étude des relations”. (Lefeuvre 2005 p.2 of the draft version).

To conclude, we can describe the neighbourhood as a combination of local common habitats and the outcome of meanings and relational processes.

Neighbourhoods seem to be somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand they exert a sort of influence on social relations, while on the other hand they do not completely determine them: “(*I quartieri*) si costituiscono per sovrapposizione di reti sociali ma subiscono gli effetti di organizzazione verticale dei settori funzionali del mercato e dello stato; stabilizzano ritmi, routine e codici, ma dipendono da pratiche fluide ed anarchiche; si svolgono nello spazio fisico ma ne ridefiniscono continuamente la

materialità. Questa ambiguità sembra, più che un limite, un'opportunità per costruire descrizioni profonde e accurate del mutamento dei quartieri”(Cremaschi, 2007 p.6).

3.3 Social relations and urban change

Urban and social research investigating the contemporary city has focused in the last few decades particularly on the changes and transformations affecting the cities and neighbourhoods, and in particular from the point of view of social relations and local societies. According to these theories, the traditional model of the city and its neighbourhoods have experienced a forced reshaping, both in economic, political and social terms. As argued by Arnaldo Bagnasco (2003), who introduced the concept of “*Società Fuori Squadra*”, there has been an important change concerning in general States, societies and in particular cities and urban areas:

“Più che a città, gli aggregati locali tipici della fase industriale, le città industriali, assomigliano, quando si presentano in forma più pura, a grandi fabbriche. La loro struttura sociale è semplificata da un'organizzazione del lavoro schematica, che richiede soprattutto operai con capacità povere e standardizzate. Il conflitto sociale che ne deriva tende qui a essere radicale, incapace di mediazioni, non negoziale: con riferimento alla politica e alla cultura si può dire che la grande città industriale è l'esatto contrario della polis. Le cose cambiano con la fine della società industriale e la comparsa di una nuova economia trainata dalla produzione di beni immateriali. Nuova economia è in senso stretto il settore delle tecnologie dell'informazione e della comunicazione. In un senso più allargato, significa anche l'applicazione diffusa di tali tecnologie all'insieme della produzione di beni e servizi. (..) Il *recentrage* dell'organizzazione sociale tentato dalle città ha dunque determinazioni forti. Favorite da indebolimento e confusione di poteri politici superiori, le città trovano altre spinte decisive alla loro più completa strutturazione, come unità sociali, nelle nuove forme dell'economia. Di nuovo protagoniste, sono peraltro anche più esposte alla concorrenza fra loro, e ai rischi che ne derivano. Inoltre, il ridimensionamento delle funzioni organizzative degli stati scarica anche problemi in periferia, rendendo più difficili strategie di compensazione territoriale. La tendenza della nuova economia deregolata alla formazione di disuguaglianze sociali si manifesta anche ovunque in forme e problemi spaziali: lo stato delle grandi metropoli del sottosviluppo, che non sembra migliorato dalla globalizzazione, la loro persistente incapacità di efficaci *recentrages* in un'epoca che maggiormente lo richiede, rappresenta poi in modo esasperato l'altra faccia del ritorno delle città” (p.16).

Even if all these phenomena seem to take place in almost every context, they seem to be more visible in big international, cosmopolitan cities, which have also been defined as global cities (Sassen, 1991). According to this approach, the city loses its main historical function and ceases to play a decisive role in social integration. As suggested by some leading authors (Castells, Sassen and Soja), post-industrial cities and neighbourhoods can lose their ability to construct citizenship and more in general undergo redefinition of their social identity and roles.

In general, these observations may be true, even if some of these studies have been criticized for over-emphasising a sort of urban crisis rhetoric.

Beauregard (2003) for example levels hard criticism at a part of urban studies and sociology involved with the city.

“In many ways, these authors are critical of their cities. They recognize the perniciousness of income disparities, the maltreatment of immigrants, and the crime that harms residents. Their writings also deplore the stultifying effects of gated communities, fortress commercial architecture, and privatized security systems on public spaces and democratic practices. Certainly, these are indicators of a critical stance. In fact, contemporary urban theorists are less likely than their pre-1970s counterparts to shield readers from moral disapproval of injustice, exploitation, and marginalization. Such a critical stance, however, is not the same as being self-critical, that is, critical concerning the form and rhetorical construction of one’s arguments. Traditionally, self criticism in the social sciences has rested on the prohibition against losing objectivity, that is, against abandoning some semblance of critical distance. Involvement and detachment are central tenets: “involved in the sense of empathizing with or entering into the human situation being examined; detached in the sense of being able to discount emotion-laden responses [that] get in the way of clear perception” (Smith, 1991, p. 159). Even C. Wright Mills, one of the most critical and politically engaged of the post-war sociologists, embraced objectivity. His goal was not to be “value-free” or uncover the essential truth of social life; Mills was not a positivist. Rather, he counselled a critical engagement: “I claim to be objective; I do not claim to be detached” (Beauregard 2003 p.193).

As underlined by this author, the city and its neighbourhoods seem to remain mid-way between two paradigms, which may be true and false and the same time. The first is a representation of the city as response to a growing interest towards it, an approach that has also transformed the city into a fad, so to say, used in specific ways by urban planners, businesses and policy makers, but also theorists. For these reasons, this approach, like certain theories connected to the concept of competitiveness among cities, is often accused of adopting a neo-liberal perspective.

By contrast, the other opposite vision of the city and neighbourhoods represents them, in particular with regard to the most peripheral areas, simply as places of poverty, relegation and segregation, characterized by a serious lack of social cohesion and social relations.

In our research, although we recognize the presence of these phenomena in both neighbourhoods of Quarto Oggiaro and Haut Montreuil and, indeed, chose them also because of such characteristics, we reject this extreme conceptualization. As we will underline with the empirical analysis in this chapter, these neighbourhoods cannot be confined to such representations. In fact, despite the many social problems affecting the specific target of our study, namely young people, we cannot neglect the existence of intense social relations, which may in various cases have both negative and positive effects.

This is why, as already noted in the theoretical chapter, we should pay attention to some major obstacles when dealing with the city and neighbourhoods. The main one is in fact the risk of considering 'neighbourhood effects' only from the negative point of view. Of course, as we aimed to do in our whole research, we can point up the existence of precise mechanisms reinforcing and reproducing social inequality, poverty and disadvantage due to a spatial concentration of social difficulties (Wilson, 1987). Indeed, the fact of being entrapped in 'their' neighbourhoods might drive inhabitants, in particular young people, towards attitudes and behaviours of self-segregation, making them part of so-called '*ghetto culture*', to be taken in-to consideration, only if we see it not as a culture of isolation but simply as the product of isolation, otherwise we risk falling back on the attitude that we defined as '*blaming the victim*' (see the theoretical chapter).

Although this vision is to a certain extent true, we cannot limit our conception of the neighbourhood to these aspects. Otherwise, we would fail to take into account the wider social reality represented by these neighbourhoods. In fact, these phenomena of entrapment do not concern all the people within the neighbourhoods but a minority – even if we recognize a certain importance they have in the neighbourhood balance.

In addition, there is also a concrete risk of favouring a reiteration of stigmatized images and perceptions of these neighbourhoods. Thus, even if we attribute an important role to the neighbourhood in determining some of the negative outputs affecting its inhabitants, and especially the young, we should not neglect or underestimate also the existence of a positive role played by the neighbourhood, in particular concerning social relations.

In many cases indeed, as we will also see with our empirical research, the neighbourhood and its social relations can be a resource, supporting its inhabitants in financial and/or psychological terms but also in the construction of identity and citizenship, in particular, in France, in the case of young people of immigrant origin.

To conclude, even if we recognize the existence of important transformation processes affecting urban areas and more in general the whole society and its relations, we should not assume that they are so rapid as to change completely, in the space of a couple of decades, all the social forms and relations consolidated over the years in the industrial city.

In fact, as is true of the general process of post industrialization, we cannot assume that these transformations have an immediate and total effect. “(..) va riconosciuta una certa ‘lentezza’ alle forme di socialità e a quelle urbane, che non si lasciano facilmente scomporre e riarticolare nonostante l’incedere dei cambiamenti epocali (Cremaschi 2007, p.9).

Moreover, presenting peripheral neighbourhoods as places without any social cohesion and relations would also contrast with the evidence of the recent sociological literature. Both in Italy and France, the poorest inhabitants seem to be those who more than others develop intense proximity relations in their resident neighbourhood. However, what needs to be considered is not simply the presence or absence of social relations but also their typology and degree of differentiation. In fact, unemployment, job instability and economic poverty seem to be elements able to reduce the diversity of social relations. As argued among others by two French authors, Lagrange (2001) and Kokoreff (2007), we can speak of a withdrawal to the neighbourhood for poor households and individuals, a phenomenon that Lagrange calls ‘*repli sociable*’ and Kokoreff defines ‘*suraffiliation territoriale*’. Even if this does not represent a negative element in itself, it can be perceived as a limitation, since in this way, friendships and social relations can also coincide with neighbour relations. In this way, individuals from poor households and possibly also living next to other poor households seem to have fewer opportunities for social diversification and as a consequence also have less substantial and widespread social capital. In addition, a problem could also concern the issue of peer effects and role models, as in the relationship between neighbourhood and work.

As argued by Cyprien Avenel: “Cette forme de sociabilité, proche de celle qui a pu être observée dans le secteur le plus bas du logement social, se caractérise par son ambivalence : elle est vécue positivement comme une stratégie d’adaptation à une situation de marginalisation économique et de ségrégation spatiale, mais elle est également conflictuel car le réseau plus prégnant du voisinage, marqué par des échanges de services plus soutenus, engendre un sentiment de dépendance, s’accompagnant de désaccords plus importants » (Avenel, 2006 p.45)

In our study, we will also observe this ambivalence of young people in their relations with the neighbourhood, which seems to represent at the same time both a resource and a limit, and determines in both our local contexts - despite the specific and structural differences between the French *Banlieues* and the Italian *Periferie* - a feeling of both strong attachment and rejection.

3.4 Periferie and Banlieues

This short section does not pretend to define all the differences and similarities existing between the French *Banlieues* and Italian *Periferie*. This would be beyond the scope of this one section and should, rather, emerge throughout the whole study. However, we believe it would be a mistake to use these terms as a single social object.

Periferie and *Banlieues* connote a concept which is similar and different at the same time. Both *Periferie* and *Banlieues* are used for suburbs and peripheral urban areas, whose population is generally composed of the working class and more and more often also immigrant populations; something which is particularly true in the case of France, but is also becoming an issue for Italy. Nevertheless, it is important to note the existence of profound differences concerning, for example, the history, the structures and social characteristics, as already observed in the introductory chapter. In fact, social characteristics and populations are elements exerting a particular influence on the way neighbourhoods are structured.

This is not to claim that Italian neighbourhoods are better, have better quality housing projects or provide more and better quality services for their inhabitants – sometimes the opposite is true. However, the configuration of Italian neighbourhoods seems to be different. In fact, in Italy phenomena of poverty and social disadvantage are generally more diffuse and less concentrated in specific areas and among very precise social classes. This does not mean that Italian suburbs exhibit no characteristics of social homogeneity, segregation and concentration of disadvantage, as some areas of our neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro show.

As stated in the introduction, Italian neighbourhoods rather than completely segregated areas present phenomena of micro segregation (Zaycick 2003), a configuration which is not always less complicated or easier to handle, since it also poses important social problems.

Another important difference between Italian and French neighbourhoods concerns immigration, due to the more recent process involving Italian cities. In the French case this phenomenon has already posed problems regarding the social and political participation of immigrant origin citizens, who find integration in the French republican model difficult, an issue observed extensively in the whole research affecting young people of immigrant origin.

More in general, as pointed out in the first lines of this section, a fact to be taken into account is that today both *Periferie* and *Banlieues* are complex objects, difficult to identify because of their heterogeneous characteristics.

In fact, due to the post industrial processes both Italian and French suburbs are different to and more internally diversified than, for example, the working class neighborhoods of the 50's and 60's.

Nowadays peripheral areas are containers, so to speak of much more complex phenomena and populations and the social relations taking place there are more complex and less structured than those of the industrial city. For instance, the difficulties faced by left wing parties¹ in these neighborhoods, both in Italy and France are examples of a '*changed world*': a transformation affecting the concept and nature of the working class - all issues extensively reported in the sociological and political science literature - and a social reconfiguration of these neighbourhoods.

Especially in the case of France, these areas were traditionally very close to the left-wing parties, in particular the communist party, and were classified under the name of '*Banlieues rouges*'- red neighborhoods. Our French context, the town of Montreuil, is a typical example of the social and political change affecting the so-called *Banlieues Parisienne*: here, the communist party which had been in power almost uninterruptedly since the Second World War, lost the 2007 elections, yielding power to the green party.

However, as many political phenomena have generally shown, we should look at this fact as an important issue but not a definitive element, or too structural an element.

Alongside the transformation of the social character of peripheral neighborhoods, it is important to observe also what *Periferie* and *Banlieues* used to represent and what, on the contrary, they represent today.

As stated by Cremaschi: "Allora la periferia era il referente di un processo costruttivo della casa moderna, dove si costruivano anche gli abitanti, si inurbavano contadini, e si dava loro accesso e istruzione al lavoro di fabbrica. L'espansione delle città e l'inurbazione delle campagne costruivano la periferia come l'opposto del 'centro', luogo del potere e della sicurezza, combinando in uno spazio sociale distinto da questo modalità peculiari sia sociali che fisiche. Le periferie di allora erano lo strumento per la modernizzazione della società, e in qualche misura si rispecchiavano in politiche gerarchiche calate dall'alto; come tali, costituivano una risposta unitaria al problema di estensione della cittadinanza all'interno del modello urbano -industriale dell'epoca." (Cremaschi 2007).

On the contrary, nowadays especially in France, but increasingly often also in the case of Italian cities, there is a marked mediatization of peripheral neighbourhoods and their problems. Neighbourhoods, especially in the French case, seem to become the embodiment of social problems and sometimes they almost drive the social research and political agenda.

"Nel momento in cui i media sollevano a gran voce i temi della sicurezza urbana, agitano lo spettro dei quartieri-ghetto e dipingono le periferie come il ricettacolo di tutti i cancri sociali del paese, la ricerca sociale è in un certo senso forzata a correre a verificare, ma l'operazione corre sempre il

¹ See Olivier Masclet (2005): *la gauche et les cités*.

rischio di finire per adottare e più o meno coscientemente avallare e legittimare tutta una serie di retoriche e parole d'ordine di stampo politico-mediatico" (Mubi Brighenti 2010 p. 511).

The Italian public debate on the *Periferie*, even if, as we have seen, it shows increasing relevance, seems to be less central than in France. This is in part due to a different role and degree of urban local policies, but also to a different focus. In fact, in Italy most of the discussion on the neighbourhoods and the city focuses on security and to a lesser extent on a particular social target and problem. On the contrary, talking about French *Banlieues* implies focusing on a specific target - young people, and in particular those of immigrant origins - representing a problem, due to their integration in the French republican model of society, a model that they have to a great degree assimilated despite apparently refusing it at the same time.

"Il s'agissait de prendre en compte la nouvelle donne des problèmes sociaux posés dans les banlieues ouvrières déshéritées, sans pour autant dévier des cadres normatifs du modèle d'intégration républicain et aller jusqu'à reconnaître l'existence de "minorités". Aujourd'hui, on n'en est plus là. Les catégories du discours social (des élus, des journalistes, des professionnels...) tantôt en disent trop, tantôt n'en disent pas assez. On est au mieux dans l'ambivalence, l'oscillation, le balancement entre catastrophisme et dénégaration, désenchantement et ré-enchantement. Il n'est plus question de villes ouvrières mais de quartiers 'populaires', de quartiers en difficulté mais de 'zones urbaines sensibles', de cités d'habitat social mais de "zones de non-droit" - tout comme les jeunes de la "galère" ont été supplantés par les "sauvageons" puis les "racailles". Un tel déplacement des représentations est significatif de l'incapacité à nommer ces mondes sociaux qui sont pourtant au cœur de l'action publique et du débat politique depuis plus de vingt-cinq ans" (Kokoreff, 2007 p. 86-87).

As observed above, the fact of being focused on a well-defined target and on fundamental social problems, such as the social and working integration of young people living these neighbourhoods, does not mean that the whole public debate shows no forms of ambiguity and always takes a straightforward approach to the problems.

In fact, as Kokoreff continues to argue: "L'ambivalence des représentations comme des phénomènes eux-mêmes n'y invite pas. On le voit à propos des diverses formes de violences collectives. D'un côté, le catastrophisme ambiant a conduit à développer un tableau très sombre du monde des cités en mettant l'accent sur les logiques des groupes extrémistes, qu'elles soient celles de l'intégrisme, du terrorisme ou des mafias. De l'autre, comme en écho, on a assisté au développement d'une certaine forme d'angélisme qui, sous couvert de proposer un diagnostic plus complexe de la situation dans les quartiers, en est venue à passer sous silence un durcissement des

relations sociales dans les cités. D'où le procès en illégitimité intenté aux chercheurs soupçonnés de faire de la sociologie une 'culture de l'excuse'" (Kokoreff, 2007 p. 89).

In general, in France the political, academic and public debate seems to be more developed than in Italy. As we will see below this difference should primarily be attributed to the longer and more consolidated French tradition of socio-urban policies.

From a sociological and academic perspective, as far as the neighbourhood and its correlated social phenomena are concerned, France represents important reference for Italy, although this sometimes also implies excessively hazardous and easy comparisons and parallelisms.

The risk is in fact to take for granted some similar characteristics and transpose them to the Italian case, without verifying whether a certain phenomenon is exactly the same and understanding whether a similar configuration occurs for the same reason.

In the Italian urban and sociological literature, we noticed that too often all typical French paradigms and concepts are applied to the Italian case, probably without paying sufficient attention to their real meaning.

A clear example, in our opinion, is offered by the concept of '*quartiers sensibles*' and '*zones urbaines sensibles*'. Even some decidedly interesting Italian researches and works (Magatti 2007) have used this concept which, in our opinion, as has emerged in part of the literature, are typical of the French situation.

"Gli abitanti dei quartieri sensibili sono sottoposti a forti tensioni: il processo di specializzazione funzionale, mentre costringe ogni area a trovare una nuova destinazione se vuole rimanere connessa alla realtà urbana e ai suoi sviluppi, provoca una simile pressione anche all'interno dei quartieri stessi che, in una crescente frammentazione e disomogeneizzazione dei destini, vedono emergere alcuni spazi più densi - quasi delle isole caratterizzate da una propria autonomia e razionalità - mentre l'esterno appare sempre più sfibrato, disintegrato e svuotato di senso" (Magatti 2007, p. 215).

Moreover, some of these are mainly administrative and political concepts having no real sociological relevance (Oberti 2007, Kokoreff 2007). They are terms originating from the so-called *politique de la ville* and are also very often neglected or not directly used by French scholars themselves:

"Depuis l'amorce de la politique de la ville, la question qui se posait était au fond la suivante: comment nommer sans stigmatiser ? Une longue liste de catégories politico administratives était venue répondre à cette exigence à grand renfort d'euphémismes (..) Il n'est plus question de villes ouvrières mais de quartiers 'populaires', de quartiers en difficulté mais de 'zones urbaines sensibles', de cités d'habitat social mais de "zones de non-droit" - tout comme les jeunes de la

'galère' ont été supplantés par les "sauvageons" puis les 'racailles' (..) Faut-il alors parler de "quartiers de la politique de la ville" ? Ce serait mettre l'accent sur la construction politique et institutionnelle de ces "quartiers défavorisés" requalifiés "zones urbaines sensibles", au risque d'en majorer – comme souvent – les effets sur les logiques d'acteurs et les identités collectives. Est-ce alors le cumul des handicaps qui caractériserait ces territoires tout à la fois paupérisés, stigmatisés, ségrégués et 'racisés' ? Mais cette définition statistique présente, à son tour, un double inconvénient : celui de méconnaître la diversité et la complexité des situations locales, mais aussi celui de rester prisonnier d'une vision misérabiliste des quartiers, définis en termes d'anomie, de manques ou de carences. Face à ces problèmes de catégorisation sociologique, parler de "quartiers pauvres" est un choix méthodologique qui permet de marquer une rupture avec les catégories molles, en mettant l'accent sur un ensemble de caractéristiques socialement disqualifiantes (bas niveau économique, chômage et précarité, absence de capital culturel et social, habitat dégradé). Mais, à nouveau, cette catégorie pose problème". (Kokoreff 2007, p.88).

This means that although the comparison between France and Italy may prove very interesting because of similar processes occurring in the two countries, in their cities and neighbourhoods, particular care must be taken not to underestimate the differences, even though some mechanisms and political functioning may be difficult to identify.

3.5 Urban and Local Policies in Italy and France

Unlike France, Italy shows a somewhat restricted field of socio-urban policies. This is first of all due to the fact that, as already underlined in this chapter, the problems of segregation and concentration of poverty and social disadvantage are less of an issue than in France. There is in fact a difference in the concrete spatial configuration of the city but also in the media, and in political and academic debate. In particular, the lack of urban policies is seen in particular in relation to housing and the relevant interventions in this area. Housing projects are less developed and less structured in the Italian urban territory, with marked regional differentiation between the North and the South.

"(..) In Italia, nonostante i numerosi interventi legislativi in materia di edilizia popolare e residenziale, è tradizionalmente mancata una politica urbana in senso proprio. Una serie di strumenti ad ambizione più organica, quali ad esempio i programmi integrati di intervento, i programmi di riqualificazione urbana, i programmi di recupero urbano e i contratti di quartiere, sono stati sperimentati solo nel corso dell'ultimo decennio, ispirandosi a strumenti funzionalmente

analoghi predisposti in Francia e Gran Bretagna, sebbene con modalità differenti”(Mubi Brighenti, 2010 p. 512).

More in general, to be underlined in the case of Italy is the considerable institutional fragmentation (Bifulco, 2008) which, however, even France is not totally free from, and a less developed framework of local social policies (Saraceno 1994; Mingione 1997), although some developments took place at the beginning of the last decade.

“In un sistema storicamente contraddistinto dalla prevalenza di trasferimenti monetari, poco generosi ed erogati spesso discrezionalmente, questo comporta in particolare lo sviluppo di servizi a sostegno delle responsabilità familiari. Il secondo asse è la redistribuzione delle responsabilità politico-amministrative fra stato, regioni e comuni. Il cambiamento perseguito dai riformatori è orientato a una prospettiva di sussidiarietà verticale e intende creare un mix fra la regolazione centrale e l’autogoverno locale. In questo quadro assume i suoi caratteri peculiari il modello della programmazione negoziata o partecipata delineato dalla riforma. Questo modello identifica nelle organizzazioni del terzo settore i soggetti titolati a compartecipare alla progettazione e alla produzione di servizi sociali, vincolando comunque il soggetto pubblico a specifiche responsabilità rispetto all’imparzialità, alla qualità e alla completezza degli interventi. (...)

Quanto al rapporto fra livelli di governo, gli elementi di tensione, innescati da vicende esterne alla legge quadro, sono in questo caso particolarmente acuti. La riforma del titolo V della Costituzione approvata nel 2001 ha rafforzato in modo considerevole il ruolo delle regioni attribuendo loro poteri legislativi in alcune materie, fra cui quelle socio-assistenziali. Di conseguenza, le regioni possono scegliere in modo autonomo se implementare la legge 328 o adottare disposizioni differenti. Il decentramento in questo caso è perciò fortemente associato al rischio di un aumento delle disparità territoriali. Questo quadro manifesta nell’insieme molti aspetti di continuità con la tradizione istituzionale, prima ricordata, di frammentazione e scarsità di *stateness*” (Bifulco, 2008).

In this scenario, an example of local and territorial policies can be provided by the so called ‘contratti di quartiere’. These Area Based Initiatives – a term recently developed in the United Kingdom (Lupton 2003) – were introduced in 1998, aiming at the requalification of housing projects neighbourhoods.

Unlike France, Italy does not have a specific institution or Ministry in charge of all these policies and they are managed by the Ministry of Transports and Infrastructures, being classified as ‘*Programmi Urbani Complessi*’ (Bifulco, 2008). In part, these initiatives are based on the condition of social disadvantage, which is one of the criteria to be followed for implementation, but they are not specifically aimed at tackling specific social problems, aiming, rather, to enhance social

participation. On the other hand, they seem to respond to a logic of activation and competition among the neighbourhoods and areas (Bricocoli 2005; 2007).

As we will see later on, unlike the French *Contrats Urbains de Cohesion Sociale*, these tools in Italy are more based on public-private partnerships and seem to be less regulated by the State and local political institutions. This is mainly due to a change in the programme, made in at least two phases. The current phase concerns more the regional level, sharing together with the central government, more financial powers. In addition regions can define all the criteria for admission and policies evaluation. The transfer of powers from municipalities to the regional level, also enlarged the area of intervention, which is not anymore limited to social housing neighbourhoods but 'difficult' neighbourhoods more in general. Focusing also more on the socio-economic objectives and empowering the role of citizens in the definition of these neighbourhood contracts (Bifulco, 2008).

One of the main general differences between France and Italy concerns, as we have seen, the role of the State, which is also clear when tackling the issues of urban and local policies.

In France, the starting point for local and territorial policies was the programme *Habitat et vie sociale* of 1977 – one of the first initiatives aimed at intervention in and requalification of peripheral neighbourhoods, from both the social and spatial point of view. However, the real beginning of the so-called *politique de la ville* took place in 1981, with the creation of the *Commission Nationale pour le Développement Social des quartiers*, as a political response to the events occurring in Lyon the same year.

As underlined by Dubet (1995), this initiative has succeeded in placing at the same level social and urban issues which had traditionally been addressed separately.

More in general, one of the main objectives of the *politique de la ville* is also to integrate several institutional actors for the implementation of actions in the field of urban and social requalification, economic and employment development, education (with the implementation of ZEP – Zones Education Prioritaires) and security. For this purpose the actions are coordinated by eleven Ministries, showing at the least an attempt at coordination among different institutional levels, at both the national and local level: "Le modalità di intervento adottate in questa direzione vedono nel tempo un ricorso maggiore a strutture di concertazione inter-istituzionale di tipo contrattuale (in particolare i *contrats de ville*) e l'abbandono del riferimento esclusivo all'area circoscritta dei quartieri in difficoltà a favore sia della città sia della più ampia area dell'agglomerazione" (Bifulco, 2008 p.72).

Even if, as we have argued, this set of policies succeeded in bringing together the urban and social dimension, a sort of unbalance has been registered by experts as from 2003, with the introduction of the so-called Loi Borloos, emphasizing the role of urban reconstruction and requalification of the city while sometimes neglecting or underestimating the issues of social integration and participation (Donzelot 2006).

In general, even if this policy set seems to be more consistent and better structured than in Italy, some problems of incongruence still appears as decisive limits to the implementation of socio-urban local policies in France.

First of all, as argued by some French scholars (De Maillard 2004), the budget for these policies does not suffice to address the challenges and social problems in the cities and neighbourhoods. Even if the *politique de la ville* has received great emphasis in the media and political debate, it still appears as a second level policy, in particular as far as the budget is concerned.

“Quando sommiamo tutti i contributi si arriva più o meno a 4 miliardi di euro che non è per niente trascurabile ma abbiamo 751 quartieri sensibili che corrispondono a 4,7 milioni di abitanti quindi più o meno di 1000 euro a persona. Dunque non è una politica che guarda ad altre politiche sociali che sono meno importanti del reddito minimo d’inserzione in Francia. Quindi, questi sono altri elementi che ci chiariscono come questa sia una politica con un budget debole” (De Maillard 2007). A second critical point, which we have already raised, has been underlined by Jacques Donzelot (2006) and concerns the essence of this policy, being more oriented towards the territories and public policies and less targeted towards the people and their specific social problems.

Then, as argued by Patrick Galès (1995) in not very recent but still interesting article dealing with comparison between French and British cities, the role of different institutional actors is not always clear and, in addition, the role of the private sector also remains ill-defined and can give rise to certain contradictions. “En utilisant ce terme on insiste sur les phénomènes de transfert, d’imitation, de bricolage de action publique, d’impuissance publique, de privatisation de l’ action publique et de l’importance des mécanismes de coordination et de contrôle”. (Le Galès 1995, p.60). This is why the so called *politique de la ville* can have different characteristics at the same time. It is contextually global, fragmented and bureaucratic: global, because it is based on a global diagnosis of the neighbourhood and local context.

However, at the same time contemplating the different actions, we observe on the contrary a fragmentation of initiatives in public service provision, social interventions, preventive actions, economic and cultural policies. This aspect, which could have been positive given its multiple areas of intervention, becomes problematic because it excessively fragments and weakens policy action.

To conclude, even if it is an innovative policy, able to activate important partnerships and knowledge sharing, it is also highly bureaucratic. In fact, any activation of specific policies at the neighbourhood level also implies many administrative procedures and requires a lot of bureaucratic documentation, from the local to the central level institution and back – a transmission process which can also prove very long depending on the policy concerned, generally having negative consequences on the activation and involvement of local institutions, neighbourhoods and their citizens.

3.6 Young people and the neighbourhood

Both in France and Italy working class neighbourhoods have become an issue in the debate on poverty and social exclusion. However, as pointed out in the previous sections, the public debate, politics and the media also shows certain differences.

The French sociologist Chamboredon (1970, 1971), analyzing social local relations structuring and organizing collective life, considers young people - with their social differences - as being central elements in class relations occurring at the local level.

“Ainsi, par l’effet des distorsions démographiques, qui sont à imputer aux conditions sociales de l’assignation à résidence dans ce type de localité, les jeunes des classes populaires sont mis sur le devant de la scène et exposés à la vindicte des classes moyennes” (Lagrée, 1995 p. 328).

As the events of November 2005 have shown, a peculiarity of the French situation is this strong characterization and identification between peripheral neighbourhoods and young people.

In fact, in working class neighbourhoods, the relevance of the “Problem Jeunes” is concrete but at the same time also a socio-political construction.

In this way, young people are considered to be the object of micro and macro social dynamics, passing for example, from inequality to the actual discriminations deliberately put in their way, such as the barriers they come up against in accessing the labour market or the strategies implemented by middle class households through educational choices: a phenomenon known under the name of “schooling”.

In France, talking about these neighbourhoods immediately means tackling the problems which affect young people and in particular those of immigrant origins. This may also apply to some Italian neighbourhoods, such as the one under study here, i.e. Quarto Oggiaro - mainly due to the role criminality plays with the young people and the fascination it exerts upon them - but it seems

generally to be less true than in France, although the problem of youth unemployment, for example, is as important an issue in Italy as in France.

This relationship between young people and their neighbourhood is of a twofold nature. On one hand, it is a matter of a deep sense of belonging to the place where they grew up but also a sort of re-appropriation of a place which they want to defend from stigmatization and observations from outside².

On the other hand, their notable presence and visibility in the neighbourhood could also be the consequence of an 'entrapment' for two reasons. First of all, the neighbourhood can represent a place protecting them from discrimination, but also the only place where they can stay out of home. In fact, to go out of the neighbourhood, for example to the city centre, etc., people generally need money and resources such as a car or bus/train tickets.

For all these reasons, in the next section we will observe how the feeling and relationship of young people towards their neighbourhood can be ambivalent in both the contexts of our study.

“Ce rapport engendre une situation paradoxale et est donc bien souvent, de ce fait, ambigu. Le quartier constitue un point d’ancrage essentiel de l’identité de ces jeunes: objet de protection et d’une sociabilité intensive, il est aussi le lieu d’un enfermement. Il présente une double face, tout à la fois aimé depuis toujours et objet de ressentiments. Les adolescents adoptent simultanément les deux postures et oscillent en permanence, de l’une à l’autre, en fonction des circonstances, des lieux et de l’interlocuteur. Tout dépend du regard extérieur. Enfin, on s’approprie cette cité de manière fort différente selon son âge, son sexe, son profil et son parcours” (Avenel 2006 p.124).

3.7 What neighbourhood effects on young people?

As we noted in the theoretical chapter, scholars referring to neighbourhood effect studies identified some mechanisms through which the neighbourhood influences individual outcomes and experiences.

In the following section we will look into these elements and mechanisms, observing how they act on the specific target of our study – young people living in the neighbourhoods of the Haut Montreuil and Quarto Oggiaro.

² In general, although I found people generally ready to talk about their neighbourhood, the first question they asked me, especially in France, concerned the way I wanted to write about their neighbourhoods, which most of them in Montreuil called the village. They wanted to be sure that the intention was not to denigrate and stigmatize the neighbourhood and its inhabitants.

The first mechanism identified by scholars (Ellen and Turner 1997; Sampson 2002) concerns the resources of the neighbourhood: the presence of formal or informal organisations, job networks, recreation, health and other public services but also, more in general, the neighbourhood reputation, which can play a role in individual trajectories and experiences. The second mechanism regards role and model learning through social ties and interrelationships: the nature of interpersonal networks, peer groups, correlated effects. As we will see in the rest of the section, role models and peer effects are decisive mechanisms in particular for young people and adolescents, and act first of all through the school but also through social relations and social capital in the neighbourhood.

It is in fact necessary to understand the forms social relations take and the way they function. Development of relations is not simply limited to socialisation but affects the wider sphere of opportunities and options (Andersson, 2001). Social ties and interrelationships are extremely important not only since people, especially children and adolescents, learn relational elements also through the models available in the neighbourhood (Thornberry *et al.*, 1994) but also because the level and quality of local social relations influence the individuals' amount of social capital, which in both our contexts is a useful source when choosing education, as we noted in two other chapters of this research, or when searching for a job.

The third element, to some extent connected to peer effects and role models concerns specifically socialisation and collective efficacy³: it consists in the commonality of norms, the sense of control and respect of social norms. In this perspective socialisation also refers to the interaction between different people in the neighbourhood. The basic idea is that neighbours, through interaction and contacts, influence each other, adopting similar behaviour and sometimes the same life style and values through social contagion. In particular this seems to be true in the case of children and adolescents.

As Friedrichs and Blasius (2003) explained, this is the same mechanism through which in a poor neighbourhood, even people not involved in any criminal activity seem to accept or at least appear tolerant towards deviant and criminal behaviours. Residents' perception of the neighbourhood is central in this type of studies and has much to do with the so-called sense of insecurity, used (and abused) in political debate, both in Europe and in the US. This symbolic dimension of the neighborhood and its stigmatization can be a decisive factor of exclusion.

³ "The notion of "collective efficacy" combines insights from a variety of sources: ethnographic (see, e.g., Elijah Anderson, 1990, on the significance of "old heads" for social control in inner-city neighbourhoods), historical (Jackson Toby's, 1957, examination of ethnic differences as they relate to promoting a "stake in conformity" as a means of effective social control), and more recent ecological and institutional research by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974; Janowitz, 1978), and Bursik (1988) and especially Coleman's theory of "social capital" (Coleman, 1988, 1990), and the seminal work of Sampson and his colleagues" (Short 2002, p. 114).

The last mechanism, related to the first through neighbourhood reputation, is the residents' perception of deviance and self-representation of the neighbourhood. The way people perceive them and their neighbourhood has decisive consequences on external perceptions.

In fact, as Mc All et al. (2001) have shown in the case of Montreal, the negative image of the residence can reinforce the feeling of disqualification of the inhabitants and in addition a bad neighborhood reputation can also contribute to discrimination in access to employment (Atkinson et Kintrea, 2001; Forrest and Kearns, 2001), education, and in the relationships with institutional authorities such as the police etc., as is the case in our research, between young people and the police, in particular in France.

More in general, young people in these neighbourhoods combined feelings of exclusion and discrimination and as a reaction they can implement self-defensive attitudes and behaviours, such as 'occupation' of certain places in the neighbourhoods like the entrances of buildings, a 'problem' which is particularly felt in the French neighbourhood, or going out in large groups.

In fact, the group dimension can reinforce their self-esteem and their feeling of belonging but at the same time it has them perceived by other people (middleclass residents for example) as too 'visible', noisy and in some cases even dangerous.

“Peut être que quand je suis par exemple tout seul à Paris ils font pas attention à moi mais si je suis avec plusieurs pots et surtout des renoirs⁴ alors c'est un peu différent. Ils peuvent se retourner.. j'aime pas me faire remarquer et donc quand je sors on est pas 40 mais maximum 4 ou 5. Je suis pas comme certaines personnes qui crient tout seul” (Matthieu 19 years old)

Stigmatization is usually an external judgement and in general has the effect of aggravating the situation: the more a neighbourhood is stigmatized due to various factors such as a great number of poor or immigrant households, high unemployment rate, the more difficult it is for its inhabitants to find a job and be integrated in the rest of society.

As we have seen, the first mechanism refers to the structural characteristics and resources of the place, which are not necessarily linked to those of the individuals living the neighbourhood but to the place itself. In the two chapters dedicated to school and education at the local level, we argued that a decisive mechanism concerning the structural characteristics of the neighbourhood is to be seen in education. In those two chapters we analysed in detail all the mechanisms through which education can act. In this perspective, school seems to be that mechanism, which best explains these dynamics. In fact, schools and education have traditionally been recognized as elements through which neighbourhood effects can be transmitted (Jencks and Mayer 1990; Sykes and Musterd 2010). In

⁴ The slang word for black people.

the theoretical framework of neighbourhood effect mechanisms, school works as an institutional mechanism (Sampson *et al.*, 2002) contributing to place-based effects.

“The notion of an institutional mechanism of a neighbourhood effect refers to the fact that neighbourhoods vary in terms of the quality, availability and access to institutions and services, such as libraries, childcare facilities, health services, schools and educational programmes, and this variation can bring about advantages or disadvantages for individuals. Some neighbourhoods, for example, have poor access to certain institutions, have inferior public service provision and may be stigmatised by external governmental, institutional or market actors (Galster and Santiago, 2006). For instance, youth living in areas not well served by certain types of educational programmes, or where particular school courses or options are lacking - for example, advanced tracks, special language options -, may be at a disadvantage relative to their peers with better access to these resources” (Sykes and Musterd 2010 p.1309). However, in this chapter we will not return to the specific issues of school and education at the local level.

Returning to the general resources of the neighbourhood, we observed in both contexts a lack of structures and provisions dedicated to young people’s recreation and free time.

In particular, this lack of opportunities is a problem for young people from working class and social disadvantaged families, whose parents cannot afford the same extra activities practised by middleclass young people, such as sports, language courses, etc. This, as we will see later on, is a factor determining a considerable degree of segregation: invisibility of middle class young people in these neighbourhoods, which contrasts sharply with the extreme visibility of working-class young people.

The issue of leisure activities is not a secondary element but a fairly central one in peripheral neighbourhoods, especially where criminality is a serious problem. In fact, the absence of involvement in local activities and initiatives can contribute to increasing young people’s exposure in the neighbourhood, making them also more open to criminal groups recruiting for illegal activities such as drug dealing, etc. This seems to be true of both neighbourhoods but in particular of Quarto Oggiaro, where the level of criminality is higher and where the ‘organizations’ have well-defined and organized structure (Mafia).

With regard to neighbourhood facilities, a critical age limit in both the two contexts seems to be around 16 years old. In fact, in both the Italian and French neighbourhood leisure facilities are generally limited to the 10-16 target.

For example, the *Services Municipales Jeunesse* indicate 16 as the average age limit to take part in the activities proposed and, more in general, as educators and professionals have underlined, at this age young people usually stop attending such places, preferring more independent activities such as

football, basketball or simply hanging around in the street, doing what they call in French argot 'trainer la bas'.

Something similar seems to happen in Quarto Oggiaro, where the CTS - Centro Territoriale Sociale – a service provided by the municipality with the elderly as main target – also offers specific activities, such as hip hop courses, for young people.

As is the case of *Services Municipales Jeunesse*, these activities in Quarto Oggiaro rarely see the participation of people over 17.

Another important institution offering leisure activities and recreation to young people in Italy is the Parish, and in particular the *oratorio*, which has an important pedagogical task in Italy.

Due to the traditional role of the Church this is a fairly characteristic Italian phenomenon, determined also by the traditionally weaker role played by the State, compared for example to France⁵, which is on the contrary characterized by a higher level of secularity and has developed some specific initiatives for young people, and in particular the 10-16-year-old target, like the above-mentioned *Services Municipales Jeunesse*, created by Leo Lagrange, Secretary of State for sport and leisure under the Socialist Blum government in the thirties.

The decisive role of Catholic associations⁶ in the neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro, as in the other neighbourhood in Italy, is still witnessed by 'Zenobia', a project organized in partnership by the five parishes of the neighbourhood together with the Municipality.

"Le cinque parrocchie ma soprattutto San Nazaro e Celso, S. Lucia e Pentecoste lavorano in rete con la coop. Sociale S. Martino e le due scuole secondarie di primo grado pubbliche statali del quartiere, A. Graf e G.B. Vico, sul progetto di prevenzione secondaria per preadolescenti, 11-14 anni, 'Zenobia'. Inoltre si collabora sull'associazione Educatori di strada⁷ a Quarto Oggiaro e l'Associazione Quarto Oggiaro Vivibile per l'educativa di strada sulla fascia adolescenti 15-19"

⁶ It is worth to notice that also in France the tradition of the Catholic working class movement was important and developed during the fifties and sixties also in peripheral communist neighbourhoods such as the Haut Montreuil. For example the JOC – Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne and the ACO – Action Chrétienne Ouvrière was very important for the working class and trade union movement. The role of the *prêtre ouvrier* (priest-worker) has been an issue in France as in Italy. However, nowadays, especially in these neighbourhoods with a largely Muslim population, the role of the church has decreased considerably and changed radically. As we understood, for instance, from a conversation with Jacques, a priest in one of the two Catholic churches of the neighbourhood, the current Catholic community is more and more restricted, composed in many cases by the elderly. In addition, as he clearly told us, the church has no financial resources to 'compete' with associations and the Municipality in the supply of leisure for young people and initiatives such as Summer holidays and vacations. "On avait organisé des vacances pour les enfants l'été, mais après on a arrêté parce que la concurrence avec l'offre des associations dans le quartier ou la municipalité était trop forte et donc les familles ont arrêté d'envoyer les enfants. Nous on pouvait seulement organiser des séjours à la campagne quand la municipalité organise des vacances à la mer en France comme à l'étranger".

⁷ Note that such associations also exist in the French neighbourhood, like the already mentioned Rues et cités. However, unlike the Italian organisations, even if they are not officially public institutions, French associations are often entirely financed by the State, municipality or department through the *Inspection générale des affaires sociales* and not only for projects, as is on the contrary the case in Italy through the so called *Partenariato Sociale*.

anni. Poi, gli oratori delle cinque parrocchie del quartiere hanno progetti comuni come l'oratorio estivo lavorando in collaborazione con il Consiglio di Zona 8 del comune di Milano e con un progetto pilota su Quarto Oggiaro voluto dalla provincia di Milano per gli anni 2006, 2007, 2008 e 2009 (ora in fase di verifica) che consiste nell'avere un educatore professionale presente in ogni oratorio per circa 38 ore settimanali" (Don Mario, priest of the Church San Nazaro).

However, as is the case with the municipal *CTS* in Italy and *Services Municipales Jeunesse* in France, young people, unless particularly involved in religious activities, generally stop attending *oratorio* around 16 or 17 years old.

This happens mainly for two reasons. First of all because it becomes increasingly difficult for these associations to offer a targeted service, which should after all be more a task for the public institutions than for charity associations. Secondly, and more importantly, because some of these young people reject some of the rules underlying the so-called "*patto di crescita*", such as the prohibitions on smoking, blaspheming and using drugs, rules that some young people, due to a difficult socialization process inside the family may not subscribe. So much, for example, we have already observed in the case of school and education, where one of the main problems concerns respect of discipline and school values, sometimes in contrast with those they learn and observe at home.

"Qui mi sono sentito accolto. Mi sento a mio agio qui anche se ci vengo non per la religione ma per gli amici. Diciamo che come tutti qua la domenica vado in chiesa ma ci vengo soprattutto per gli amici. Ho iniziato a venirci due anni fa, a 14 anni, perché giocavo a calcio qui nella squadra locale che è anche quella dell'oratorio. In questi ultimi anni ho conosciuto tutti, mi hanno veramente accolto a braccia aperte, non gli interessava da dove venivo perché diciamo che le persone di là, di Pascarella dove vivo io sono un po' messe da parte, escluse. Perché fanno vedere che sono un po' mafiosette, invece io mi sono fatto conoscere per come sono e ho creato un bel rapporto con loro. Fino a 14 anni uscivo poco nel quartiere, stavo più che altro nel cortile perché anche io mi fidavo poco. Se uscivo era per andare dalla mia ragazza a bollate (Christian 16 years old).

However, next to the personal decision of taking part or not to some activities, it is a matter of fact that apart from some temporary events such as Rap Festivals organized in Quarto Oggiaro by the association *Spazio Baluardo* and in Montreuil by the *Café la Peche*, a concert bar owned and managed by the municipality, the opportunities for young people are in general quite scarce in both neighbourhoods.

Of course, both in Quarto Oggiaro and the Haut Montreuil, places like bars and cinemas are not far to seek. Quarto Oggiaro has, for instance, a newly built *UCI Cinema* and something similar is

situated inside the *Rosny 2*, a shopping mall very much frequented by the young people of our neighbourhoods. However, the real problem clearly is that these private entertainments usually require more resources than those available to these young people.

“A questi ragazzi il quartiere non offre niente e quindi la gente che ha giri strani fa offerte e questi accettano, perché comunque non c’è assolutamente niente per i giovani. Sì, c’è da dire che possono spostarsi subito fuori da Quarto, dove ci sono cinema e centri commerciali però siamo sempre lì, tutto gira intorno ai soldi. Questi ragazzi non hanno disponibilità economica, magari vengono già da famiglie problematiche e quindi cosa fanno? Vanno a cercarsi il denaro facile”. (Adriana, 42-year-old mother of two boys)

In general, the absence of specific activities and initiatives, instead of driving them towards other areas of the city, leads on the contrary to retreat and falling back on the neighbourhood, entrapping them in a situation of isolation.

Thus this entrapment is not only determined by a spatial mismatch, due to mobility issues and transport conditions, but mainly to the opportunities and financial resources young people have, especially if unemployed or students from poor families. The cost of public transportation, for instance, was mentioned during some of our interviews as an element restricting their mobility or leading them into malpractices.

In a word, it brings them closer to the area of illegality:

“Quand je vais à Paris je fraude, je paie pas mon billet. C’est déjà arrivé que m’arrête. Des fois je cours des fois ils me trappent. Si j’ai pas ma carte d’identité je donne un faux nom. Mes parents le savent mais on peut pas acheter un Pass Navigo, ça coute cher. On le fait tous ensemble” (Souhil 16 years old).

Going out of the neighbourhood thus implies standard costs for fares but, even more, the economic resources necessary for some activities. This is one of the reasons why many of these young people ‘prefer’ to stay or have no real option other than staying in the neighbourhood or places in close proximity, getting used to a lifestyle which is more limited than dynamic and adopting a restricted mentality greatly dependent on the neighbourhood.

“On va pas tout le temps dehors on reste aussi ici dans le quartier. On va par exemple à Paris une ou deux fois par mois. Mais souvent on a pas besoin de dépenser beaucoup. On reste entre pot ici et quand ici ça galère, s’il y a rien à faire ou si on s’ennui, on va à Paris : Trocadero, sur les Champs. J’ai pas un su.. (LAUGH). Je travaille pas comme je vais au Lycée. Je reçois de l’argent de poche de ma mère: une vingtaine d’euro par semaine et ça me suffit. Je suis quelqu’un qui a la valeur de l’argent .. j’utilise pas l’argent bêtement.. Je bois pas par exemple. Si non il y a mes amis

qui paient pour moi, comme ils sont plus grands. On est tous solidaire entre nous. Quelqu'un travaille en formation, dans le bâtiment, électricien, plombiers et donc ils gagnent bien leur vie".

(Louis Haitian origins, 17 years old)

As emerges from this narration, mobility out of the neighbourhood is somewhat limited and may in a few cases extend to the entire territory of Montreuil, smaller than that of Milan, where on the contrary the mobility is generally restricted to neighbouring areas, sharing some similar characteristics with Quarto Oggiaro (Bovisa, Affori, Comasina, etc.).

In general, however, when young people do not practise any specific activity but simply stay with their group, chatting or playing football in the street, they "naturally" choose their neighbourhood and in particular the area of their blocks (*cit *). This seems to be true in both Milan and Montreuil and may be due to the above-mentioned mobility restraint, but it can also be determined by a strong feeling of belonging to the neighbourhood. In fact, neighbourhood identity, as we will see in the following sections dealing with the concepts of groups and *gangs* (*banda* in Italian and *bande* in French) is very much developed in these local contexts, and also determines a sort of territorial control exercised by these young groups – control which is wide and not simply characterized in criminal sense.

However, as Yves told us, even when they go out of the neighbourhood, young people usually choose very standard places, regrouping all the boys and girls from the same working-class and 'difficult' areas.

This phenomenon seems to be true also of some Milanese areas, such as the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, San Babila and Parco Sempione, where there is a nearby number 57 bus stop and Cadorna train station, connecting Quarto Oggiaro to the city centre.

However, it seems to loom larger in Paris, with *Les Halles*, *Trocader* and the *Champs Elis e* for example, where weekend in particular see great numbers especially of young people coming in from peripheral neighbourhoods on the *RER* (a train connecting all the peripheral areas with Paris city centre) or underground. They are clearly recognizable, stay in quite large groups, generally of eight to ten people, and are often of immigrant origin, mainly from Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa.

All these elements are significant, demonstrating that even when young people go out of the neighbourhood they remain in any case "segregated" amongst themselves, without much contact with other typologies of young people from which, both in Milano and – to a larger extent - in Paris, they clearly differentiate themselves.

For example, young people living in more central areas are usually called *fighetti* or *san carlini* in Milano, without too many negative connotations, while in Paris, they are generally defined

fraicheurs, which can most probably be seen as a response to the more widespread categorization of *racailles*, used to identify negatively young people living in working-class neighbourhoods.

As we have seen, this lack of infrastructures and opportunities contributes to aggravating segregation. In fact, it is generally the people lacking opportunities that remain in the neighbourhood.

Growing up in a homogeneous context can have some positive but also numerous negative aspects. On one hand, it reinforces the sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, and aspect we will analyse more closely in a later section in this chapter, while on the other hand, this belonging can also prove critical, especially for people from a disadvantaged household. An excessively homogenous environment, especially if characterized by social disadvantage, can reinforce the barriers between what is in and what is out, creating, as we have seen, a culture of isolation which to some extent also reinforces exclusion.

An example can be seen in the style and way of dressing. In both our neighbourhoods we noted a fairly stereotyped way of dressing and ostentatious display of brands, which, especially in the case of young men, contributes to enhancing personal status in the neighbourhood. If this behaviour, as expression of identity, is exaggerated by young people it can also become a limit, as a reason for and clear sign of discrimination.

“Le problème est que souvent ils se présentent pour un interview en casquette et jogging et ils changent pas leur façon de parler, qui est trop informel pour le travail et à fois les gens qui sont pas d’ici ne comprennent rien. Surtout, plusieurs fois ces Jeunes ont fait un BEP hôtellerie donc doivent faire un travail de contact avec le public et ça pose des problèmes. A fois ils même ne pensent pas qui ça puisse être inconvenable. Surtout au début quand ils sont très Jeune: ils sont naïve, ils disent on est comme ça et ils doivent nous accepter comme ça. Mais clairement c’est pas le cas et en faits généralement ils sont exclus. Nous, on lui apprennent le juste comportement dans les différent situations et nous, comme aussi le Pole emploi et autre bureau municipales faisons beaucoup de formation. On fait un travail sur le cv mais sur tout sur l’interview et le comportement perdant l’interview est après quand ils sont embauchés (Club Face⁸ Montreuil)

⁸ Face, which has no organized equivalent in Italy, is an association of firms and enterprises having the objective of integrating in the labour market young people living in the so called ZUS – Zones Urbaines Sensibles.

Unlike Italy, France has gone a long way in public and political debate on the integration of these young people. Various French economists/exponents of French business and industry underline that all these measures simply have the objective of maintaining social peace, especially subsequent to the 2005 movements, because in the economy merit should be the main criteria inspiring any economic choice. So much, for example, was argued by an important manager of a big Airline company we happened to meet during an informal dinner in Vincennes: “Hier par exemple, en faisant le check in à l’aéroport Charles De Gaulle, j’attende un instant avant de me diriger vers le comptoir la fille, clairement de

The relationship between segregation, role models and behaviors is a central issue. In fact, isolation contributes to the creation of the so-called ghetto culture or culture of isolation, which can generate behaviors, values and attitudes not always compatible with the rest of society.

This problem seems to exist to some extent, also in the case of Quarto Oggiaro and more in general in Milan, albeit much less debated and also perceived as less important.

This difference between the Italian and French context could depend once again on the fact that in France, the so-called *problème jeunes de banlieue* is racially and ethnically characterized. Secondly, because, as noted in the previous section, young people generally represent less of an issue in Italian political and public debate than in France. Italy has seen no incidents quite like the French urban riots of 1981 and 2005 and probably will not in the future⁹ (Cremaschi, 2007).

In both contexts it is, then, worth noting a lack of interaction between these young people from a certain social and family background and others from wealthier backgrounds.

In the Haut Montreuil, for example, there is a great distance between middleclass adolescents and young people living in the private houses around the *cités*, the so called *Pavillon*.

Sometimes this distance seems to be even greater than the distance between adults from different backgrounds, where for example political opinions may determine an attitude which is apparently more open.

As we were told by an old resident of the neighbourhood, one of the founders of the association Ensemble Notre Quartier, having the objective of putting into contact all the different populations of the neighbourhood: “*Malheureusement, encore ils sont comme l’eau et l’huile. Il sont proche mais se mélange pas*”. This is also what emerges from many ethnographic observations we made at public events in Montreuil, such as the end of year party at the Lycée Jean Jaures or the neighbourhood party, attended by none of the middleclass young people of the neighbourhood.

“*Je reste pas trop dans le quartier, parce que je fais du tennis deux ou trois fois par semaine, après je suis beaucoup avec mes amis de l’école qui habitent ailleurs. Quand avec des amis on décide de rester dans le quartier, on va par exemple à Paul Signac où il y a une piste de skateboard et un terrain de foot mais normalement on reste entre nous sur la piste*” (Luc 16 years old, son of a film director).

banlieue, m’as dit cou cou monsieur, réveiller vous. Ça peut être bien une blague, mais quand un client paye un billet business class ça lui fait chier.

⁹ See the section in this chapter dedicated to the difference between Italian *periferie* and French *banlieues*.

The distance of young people of working-class origin seems to be even greater outside the neighbourhood, as is the case, for example, with young people from Paris or other more residential areas, such as Vincennes, at the borders of Montreuil.

In general, this gap seems to be more visible in the French than in the Italian context, probably due to the ethnic and racial attributes of the majority of the people living in the French *banlieues*.

“Il n’y a pas trop de relations avec les enfants de bobos et il doivent aussi être plutôt discret, ils risquent de s’embrouiller et d’être raquettes. Si par exemple sur le bus il arrive pas à répondre du même ton, il va se faire défoncer, raquetter. On peut s’habiller mais le problème est la façon de parler. En plus il n’y a pas le même langage, parce-que avec le langage le bobo va lui montrer qu’ils sont pas du même niveau, et ça crée des tensions. Le langage est la première chose que pose de la distance. Avant il y a les vêtements mais la langue et encore plus important (Nassim, 19 years old).

Similar cases are to be seen in Quarto Oggiaro, although we could argue that, more than in the Haut Montreuil, what makes the difference here is not simply the distinction between working and middle class (generally lower middle class households) or between immigrants and locals. What also matters, and even more, is the attitude towards criminality, as we see in the chapter dedicated to the family and its structures. This relation between the family of origin and criminality, which does not necessarily imply taking part in criminal activities but may consist in sharing a certain attitude and mentality, strongly influences young people’s way of experiencing the neighborhood.

The families in one way or another closer to this criminal mentality or living on the fringe of illegality (squatting, connivance with crime) usually experience the neighborhood without or with fewer filters, possibly because they do not feel they have to protect their children from this danger, which seems to be one of the most feared by parents in Quarto Oggiaro. On the contrary, all the other families, including some poor and disadvantaged households, seek to implement certain exit strategies with appreciably different results, depending also on the resources available.

As we observed in two chapters of this work, in both the Italian and French neighborhoods the most important strategy on which they focus seems to be school and education. Together with school, a great deal of importance is also attributed to the neighborhood in general, to the way young people experience it, to what they do and in particular to the relationships they have and develop there.

“Io abito da quando sono nata a Quarto Oggiaro e anche la mia famiglia viene da qui. I miei nonni materni hanno sempre vissuto in via Orsini, una zona abbastanza tranquilla, dove adesso viviamo io mia madre e mia nonna. I miei nonni paterni invece, che sono calabresi mentre quelli materni milanesi, vivono in Pascarella che è una zona pesante. Il quartiere non mi piace. Infatti ho cominciato solo da poco per via di una mia amica ad uscire qui. Prima conoscevo solo 3 persone.

Comunque, anche se ora ci sto un po' di più, frequento solo alcune zone e ad esempio evito completamente Pascarella per la gente che c'è. Le scuole le ho fatte sempre fuori, per stare vicino al lavoro di mio padre che era impiegato in Inps a piazza Napoli. Quindi per fortuna mi hanno fatto uscire, perché altrimenti probabilmente sarei diventata anche io una tamarra. Secondo me se una persona rimane a Quarto Oggiaro e non ha altre vie d'uscita al 90% diventa un tamarro. Intendo dire cioè che qui hanno la mentalità del quartiere ed è un limite: di testa, di comportamento, di tutto. Anche perché qui non c'è niente da fare. Poi è come un paesino, tutti sanno tutto di tutti, a me non piace. Ti limita troppo in tutti i sensi” (Vanessa 22 years old, university student).

This segregation, which, as we have seen, may also be to some extent caused by the scarcity of facilities and opportunities for young people, limits interactions with the rest of the city and society, but also with other typologies of groups living in the neighbourhood.

In fact, due to their better opportunities and availability of resources, middleclass children and adolescents are more able to find them outside, avoiding the neighbourhood or at least a certain degree and modality, namely that which causes ‘entrapment’.

A positive ‘contamination’ can be decisive in the learning and socialization process through peer effects and role models, spreading some behaviours and attitudes which are more universally accepted by the whole society. For example, the dress code when applying for a job, language and way of speaking, etc.

“Avec toi la je parle différent. Si par exemple je parle dans mon école de commerce, comme je parle dans le quartier, je suis mort. Et c'est vrai aussi le contraire. Ça me pose aussi des problèmes parce-que quand on parle on se rend pas compte, les mots viennent naturellement mais ça peut aussi t'exclure” (Nassim, 19 years old).

Through a wider network of social relations and references people would be able to avert an excessively intrusive influence of the so-called “ghetto culture” (Lapoutre, 1997), which, as we saw in the theoretical part of the research, should be taken in-to account only if we do not consider them as a culture of isolation but simply as the product of isolation.

With regard to the issue of infrastructures and opportunities for young people in the neighbourhoods, it is once again important to recognise that the situations of ‘entrapment’ are always particularly negative, especially for the development and upbringing of young people.

In fact, they can limit personal development to certain models, references and experiences, which may prove even more dangerous in those contexts characterized by social disadvantage and high levels of criminality.

“Insieme ai colleghi abbiamo cambiato approccio, puntando di più sulla conoscenza, sulla cultura, sulla bellezza. Programmi in cui si va una settimana in montagna per creare gruppo, oppure

andare in Duomo, Pinacoteca. Purtroppo la scuola è un continuo smantellamento, ma siamo riusciti anche a far fare agli studenti i documenti per andare all'estero, per farli viaggiare, farli sentire cittadini europei, conoscere altre culture. La prima volta che han preso un aereo erano emozioni forti sia per loro che per noi. Altri colleghi hanno organizzato gite a Berlino, Strasburgo, secondo me l'importante è fargli avere i documenti farli viaggiare, avere una cultura europea. I ragazzi si son sempre comportati bene. Il nostro programma è: far conoscere il territorio il primo anno, poi uscire, andare per esempio Bolzano, Trieste, Firenze, Roma. Poi al terzo anno proponiamo un' uscita all'estero. È un successo per noi vedere ragazzi che prima non avevano nessun interesse per l'arte, arrivare al terzo anno ed entrare in un museo all'estero interessandosi e avere un comportamento abbastanza corretto. Alcuni a 16 diciassette anni ad esempio non sono mai entrati dentro il Duomo di Milano che dista nemmeno mezz'ora”(Teacher, Istituto Professionale Greppi).

As this teacher underlines, it is decisive for young people of such neighbourhoods to have experience of different social contexts and realities, in order to avoid negative entrapment in the mechanisms and, indeed, in the mentality of the neighbourhood, which can be decidedly limiting.

In fact, one of the main problems caused by this entrapment in the local context is that perceptions, knowledge and experiences are poor and limited to a specific area.

Programmes and activities like those described by this teacher, promoting external experiences to avoid entrapment, are implemented in Milan also by some private associations such as the *oratori*. Moreover, with the project *Estate Vacanza*, the Municipality of Milan offers holidays and vacations for children and adolescents of 4-14 years old in one of the four holiday properties owned by the Municipality. However, unlike the case of Montreuil, due also to the different number of inhabitants, in Milan this supply is less substantial and structured, with no particular focus on poor working-class neighbourhoods. By contrast, Montreuil, alongside the initiatives proposed by private associations (Solidarité France Migrant, Rue et Cités) also has a specific programme forming part of the wider national framework *politique de la ville*, organizing and financing – based on the household revenue – holidays and vacations for children and young people up to 17 years old. This seems to be fairly well structured programme, being focused on targeted households and proposing holidays both in France and abroad. For example for 2011 the offer included Italy, Spain, Greece and Sweden. In addition, with regard to the above-mentioned 17-25 target, which seems to be generally neglected by these kinds of policies, the Municipality of Montreuil, with the programme *Sac à dos*, finances young people submitting a travel programme which follows certain educational values and objectives. No such initiative is to be seen in the Italian local context.

3.8 Discrimination and borders: in & out

Another element influencing this entrapment condition is discrimination, contributing to young people's permanence in the neighbourhood, perceived as 'safe', a place where they are not exposed or are less exposed to the risk of discrimination. This seems to be particularly true in France, due to the more racial and ethnic characterization of young people in working-class neighbourhoods, while it is probably less of an issue in Quarto Oggiaro.

Discrimination combines two important mechanisms which we have identified: the neighbourhood's external reputation and the residents' perception of deviance and self-representation of the neighbourhood – two mechanisms which are closely interconnected and can influence each other.

In the French case young people show an ambivalent opinion on discrimination. When talking about this issue, at the very beginning they underestimate it, recognizing later on some episodes and facts of discrimination.

“Je crois que il n’y a pas de problème si dans ta tête tu est bien mais ici les gens sont toujours enfermés sur eux, à force de se sentir persécutés. Par les gens et par les medias. Mais après si dans ta tête tu va bien, le quartier c’est un endroit comme un autre. Je ne vois pas trop de discrimination dans le quartier. Pas de dans mais dehors oui. Mais.. en réalité aussi de dans quelques fois.. coté personnes plus âgés. Surtout nous, les noirs. Et après quand on sort à Paris. C’est le groupe et le style vestimentaire que fait peur. Quelqu’un casquetté.. c’est bête de juger..chacun a son style vestimentaire. Ils nous regardent et ça nous fait comprendre qu’on est pas à notre place. On est chez nous seulement dans le quartier” (Louis 17 years old of Haitian origin).

In general, discrimination combines different elements such as: space - the fact of coming from a certain neighbourhood or area as the *département Saint San Denis*, commonly identified with number 93 – social characteristics and racial/ethnic attributes.

“Quand je sors de la cité les gens peuvent me regarder et dire : regarde il vient d’une cité.. Oui ça peut arriver mais ça me gêne pas. Je suis fière d’où je viens, je suis fière que sur ma voiture est marqué 93. Je ne sais pas mais déjà je suis blanc et français pur sush.. un pot à moi est black et ça se voit plus mais après ça dépend aussi de la façon d’habiller, de parler... Dans ce moment j’essaie de me contrôler (LAUGH) mais normalement je parle pas comme ça” (Matthieu 20 years old)

As underlined by Matthieu, what makes a big difference as far as discrimination is concerned, especially outside the neighbourhood, is ethnic origin and race. In fact, the majority of cases of discrimination are reported by young people of immigrant origin, and in particular those of Sub-Saharan African and Maghreb origin.

“On était en vacance à Monaco et une chambre était à 300 euro. Le mec de la réception m’as demandé mon travaille. Après il a envoyé aussi la police. Quand je suis parti le mec avait peur. Moi j’ai lui dit, je te ne tape pas mais je te remercie. En faits j’ai compris qui il n’y a pas liberté, égalité, fraternité. Ça n’existe pas. Je suis pas en égalité avec toi par exemple. Moi j’ai pas de chances aussi si t’as pas rien en plus que moi ou moi plus que toi” (Bouma, 25 years old. Malian origin)

Here, a frequent feeling of resentment towards the nation and its republican ideals clearly emerges. “Le ‘model d’intégration républicaine’ français n’a pas d’équivalent en Europe, ni sur le plan politique ni sur le plan symbolique. Ce dispositif est adossé à toute une série de caractéristiques dont la présentation permet également de mieux saisir les raisons pour lesquelles il est mis à mal par le chômage des jeunes, la précarisation des familles populaires, la ségrégation urbaine et scolaire, et, bien sûr, les discriminations ethno raciales (Lagrange, Oberti 2006 p. 17).

However, this does not mean that these people in France have not absorbed these republican values; on the contrary, children of immigrant origin have to a great extent embraced these ideals through their parents. As Halima, a single mother of Moroccan origin, said :

“Je veux que mes enfants deviennent des bons citoyennes, qu’ils vont à l’école, trouvent un bon travaille et partent dans un pavillon. C’est mon rêve qu’ils arrivent bien et partent d’ici (Halima 52 years old, mother of three children).

However, when they feel excluded, they view these values from a very sceptical perspective.

The impact of discrimination can create a sort of shock for the individual, especially when if very young, and it can even be amplified by the fracture between the in and out of the neighbourhood. The more they experience the neighbourhood as a homogeneous place, a sort of “family” what the French call “*un entre soi*”, the harder will be the encounter with the experience of external discrimination.

We were told a significant story by Kadir, a young man from Tunisia, who moved to France with his parents when he was eight. As he said, discrimination can be experienced in the work place and it can be twofold, on the basis of the ethnic origin but also residence, a difference which is sometimes quite difficult to interpret.

“C’est un peu la peur d’être exclu parce-que on est arabe. Quand on est dans la rue.. ils ont peur et il retient leur sac à main. Comme si on était armés. Pas trop ici mais par exemple à Paris. En plus il nous prennent pour de la racaille de banlieue. Sur le travail une seule fois dans deux ans c’est passé qu’une cliente à dit à mon collègue qui est blanc et plus âgé et donc il faisait pas mec de banlieue : je ne veux pas qu’il rentre chez moi. Et mon collègue m’as dit de rester dans la voiture. Au début j’étais complètement vexé parce que ils veulent généraliser, J’avais la haine. Peut être ils

lui est déjà arrivé quelque chose avec des arabes et ils généralisent. Tu vois ta tête, tu passe bien.. mais à moi ils me disent tout le temps que je suis immigrés que je suis pas chez moi. Moi je le sais que je suis pas chez moi.. Moi je suis pas d'ici, je suis ici pour gagner ma vie avec ma famille et après je rentre chez moi. Je suis lancé dans le travail et après si je trouve un poste chez moi je rentre en Tunisie Pour toi ce n'est pas pareille. Ils nous regardent pas dans la même façon. Et vu qu'à force on est trop rejeté on commence nous aussi à rejeté tous les monde. Mais moi je m'en fous".

As we have seen, a general problem lies in relations with the external world and society.

An example of indirect discrimination arises in the relationship, for example, these boys of peripheral neighbourhoods have with girls living outside the neighbourhood, in particular when they travel to Paris and the city centre. This is mainly due to the behaviour they have assimilated through the most widespread male role models of the neighbourhood, based on machismo and also the sharp gender separation existing in the neighbourhood. For all these reasons they are not used to correct communication with girls, for example, but also more in general with other people.

"Un problème des mecs de banlieues est le rapport avec les filles. Les filles dans les cités perdent leur féminité. Elle est obligée de se renforcé, de devenir costaud. Alors les garçons essaient de se diriger vers les filles que lui paraissent plus féminines, les filles des beaux quartiers, sauf qu'il y a un problème de communication. Par exemple un mec va direct chez une fille et lui dit : T'as pas un 06 ? pour dire tu me donne ton numéro? La fille lui répond ah non désolée.. elle le prend un peu mal. Le mec se sent pas à l'aise et pour cette raison il devient déjà un peu agressive mais il fait pas exprès. Il le fait pour défendre son honneur. C'est un problème de communication. Alors la fille se tourne, elle va l'ignore et le problème c'est là exactement. Le type a envie de communiquer avec elle, il la touche.. Les filles de Montreuil savent un peu comme il faut traiter les mecs des cités. Au contraire les filles de Paris ont pas l'habitude et ils vont réagir dans une manière un peu dure et ça crée des tensions. Le mec accepte pas qu'il puisse être rejeté.. (Nassim19 years old).

In general, reporting all these issues, which are undoubtedly significant, especially for the French case, we do not mean to say that young middleclass people always implement direct forms of discrimination. In fact, we take care to avoid representing these working-class young people as victims. As we have pointed out in various contexts in this study, also applying the concept of agency and responsibility, people are largely responsible for their behaviours and attitudes. However, it should be recognized, that due to segregation the dissemination of positive attitudes through role models may prove difficult and 'deviant' behaviours can also become part of the so-called culture of isolation – a culture which these young people tend to absorb all too well, contributing to greater potential risks of discrimination.

A form of discrimination that we noted quite often, in particular in Montreuil, but to a lesser extent also in Quarto Oggiaro, concerns once again leisure activities and access to them, which is not only limited by the resources available, as we observed, but also by a real discrimination process.

In fact, it is a very common occurrence for entry into discos and clubs to be barred to young people from these neighbourhoods, and in particular the boys. An interesting aspect is that this ‘selection’ has to be made by other people, the so-called *videur* or *butta fuori* – security – often sharing the same origins in terms of ethnicity and residence, and this can constitute an element fracturing the neighbourhood sense of belonging and solidarity.

“Dans les boites de nuits qui sont mixtes – fréquentés par des groupes différentes– mais qui sont aussi rares parce que normalement à Paris les boites sont très sélectives, des conflits se voient souvent. Pour les gens des beaux quartiers, par exemple mes amis de l’école de commerce, les mecs de banlieue sont des dégénérés, il comprennent pas ce qu’ils vivent et pour quoi il sont comme ça. Ils se rend pas compte. Par exemple, eux quand ils vont en boite ils rentrent sans problèmes, les mecs de banlieue, depuis quand ils sortent ils sont stigmatisés : contrôles de police, interdiction dans les boites.. scolarité nulle.. (Nassim, 19 years old)

We estimate that in the case of Milan, this particular discrimination in access to entertainment appears to be less systematic and less based on residential aspects, being more dependent on the behaviour people may show at first sight. It is probably more an issue of instinct and selection than an actual discrimination process, as in Paris. It seems, in fact, to be more about the individual security agent’s perception than about institutionalized perception, as appears to be the case in France.

“A volte può accadere che i butta fuori non facciano entrare alcune persone in discoteca. Soprattutto la gente molto tamarra perché hanno paura che facciano casino e risse” (Ilaria, 22 years old).

However, this does not mean that in Milan phenomena of discrimination are totally absent: in fact, we observed some cases, for example with immigrant young men, and in particular those newly arrived from Maghreb and Egypt. However, as we have seen, in general young people in Italian neighbourhoods seem to be less of an issue in political and public debate.

In daily life discrimination concerning the area of residence – immigration itself represents something different – seems to be weaker in Italy, especially if compared with France. At the same time, this does not mean that there are no consequences, in particular at school (as we observed in two dedicated chapters) and work.

In fact, even if it is a more silent and softer stigmatization, it can also have an influence on people's identity and self-perception, concrete life and opportunities. In fact, as previously noted, an important mechanism concerns residents' perception of deviance and the self-representation of the neighbourhood. The way people perceive themselves and their neighbourhood has in fact decisive consequences on the external perceptions and vice versa. This is why even some apparently small or insignificant forms of discrimination may play a role in the individuals' self perception and identity, especially in the case of young people. This is what Goffman (1983) calls integration of the stigma.

“I miei amici hanno paura di venire a Quarto Oggiaro e quindi non ci vengono mai. Quando usciamo la sera loro mi accompagnano fino a Piazza Firenze e poi devo prendere un taxi e a volte anche i tassisti mi prendono in giro, dicendo ad esempio: entriamo nel Brox, devo preparare i documenti? Tutto passa sotto forma di scherzo ma a volte specialmente all'inizio quando sei molto giovane può essere pesante. Io all'università all'inizio dicevo di essere di Viale Certosa, poi piano piano me ne sono fregata. È come quelli che abitano nell'ex area Purfina. È Quarto Oggiaro in pieno ma dicono di abitare ad Euro Milano per distinguersi dal quartiere” (Vanessa 22 years old).

And again:

“Quando mi capita di fare i colloqui non metto mai che sono di Quarto Oggiaro perché il quartiere ancora non ha una bella fama. Soprattutto per lavori come la commessa, dove hai a che fare con la cassa magari all'inizio fanno attenzione a queste cose...quindi preferisco evitar e dico che abito in Via Varesina” (Jessica, 23 years old).

Together with other more invasive forms of discriminations, such as those described earlier on, similar forms of soft discrimination are also present in Montreuil.

As Justine told us: “Au début c'était un peu énervant parce que mes amis voulaient jamais venir chez moi par exemple pur préparer les examens à la fac. C'était toujours moi à me déplacer et des fois c'est fatigant et après ça m'énervait. En faits je disais pour quoi ? De quoi elles on peur ? Elles vont pas être mangées”.

As pointed out above, in Quarto Oggiaro discrimination often concerns young immigrant people, and in particular newcomers who moved into the neighbourhood with some family members, cousins, uncles or even alone. These young people, as pointed out in the introductory chapter, represent a quite different and peculiar population. We could say that in a way they are subject to certain discrimination processes, inside and outside the neighbourhood, and in particular, as they report, from adults and old people of the lower social classes, groups probably less used to the 'new phenomenon' of immigration and fear losing their social status in the neighbourhood, which is already precarious.

“Già tra di voi italiani avete del razzismo tra il nord e il sud, pensa con degli immigrati, peggio ancora. Quindi non è che mi aspetto di essere aspettato con tappeto. Ad esempio uno del sud che vive qua da dodici anni e più viene chiamato terrone, questo qua appena vede uno straniero fa quello che hanno fatto a lui. Tra i giovani no, stranieri e italiani sono più tranquilli, invece i vecchi ti guardano un po' male, a me basta che non mi rompono e sto tranquillo. Ti guardano con paura e questa è la cosa più fastidiosa, cioè sono normale sono come te: ho due gambe due braccia. Una volta sono salito su un autobus e mi sono trovato ad essere l'unico straniero sono stato davvero sfortunato e un vecchietto ha cominciato a parlare male di me con un suo amico. Lui pensava che io non sapevo l'italiano e lui ha cominciato a parlare italiano e dialetto insieme e io ho cominciato a guardarlo una volta una seconda una terza e poi gliel'ho detto: ma senta cosa gli ho fatto io per parlare male di me? A parte che poi io capisco il siciliano quindi ti capisco. Poi lui si è vergognato ed è stato zitto per fortuna. Un'altra volta ero al Lidl stavo facendo la spesa come tutti e c'era un vecchio davanti a me in cassa e mi guarda e comincia a toccarsi le tasche. Io mi sono girato e ho fatto finta di niente, dopo un po' però l'ho guardato e gli ho detto: senti una cosa io non rubo a te, io sto lavorando ho più soldi di te, ho aperto il portafogli avevo 500 euro e gli ho detto tieni se vuoi te li do io i soldi a te che sei un poveraccio (Ahmed, 23 years old from Egypt).

Some of the stories we were told show a certain similarity in both countries and local contexts. However, even if in both cases we received information about the problem with the decisive mechanism of integration, the main difference is that in most cases in France the young people who reported experiences of discrimination are French citizens, with French nationality, an aspect which is not simply a detail but a basic problem that French society has to address.

Of course, we certainly do not mean to say that the Italian case is less discriminatory because these people are not nationals, but it clearly represents a different problem: integration of immigrants versus integration of nationals, both important challenges.

However, as observed in the chapter dedicated to the family, Northern Italian cities had a similar problem in the past with the integration of nationals from Southern Italy,¹⁰ which proved a difficult and painful process, and in some cases still an issue today. As underlined by Pugliese (2006), those conditions have been progressively overcome, although some discriminations, stereotypes but also physical conditions, have persisted. A concrete example in both a positive and negative sense is to be seen in the characterization of our neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro, with a large proportion of people recently arrived from the South (ten or twenty years ago) in the most difficult areas, such as Via Pascarella.

¹⁰ In Paris, a similar phenomenon occurred at the beginning of the 20th century and continued until the fifties and sixties with people coming from the countryside (Auvergne, Normandy, etc..).

“In altri contesti, come ad esempio quello Milanese, il processo fu più articolato. In una città non legata all’esistenza di una sola fabbrica i canali di inserimento e le stesse relazioni sociali con la popolazione locale sono diversi. È meno forte il dualismo tra antichi residenti e nuovi arrivati¹¹. I problemi di integrazione sono stati comunque notevoli dappertutto. In questo processo, comunque alcune strutture di socializzazione hanno svolto un ruolo importante nel favorire l’integrazione. In primo luogo la scolarizzazione di massa, al Sud come al Nord, ha radicalmente accorciato le distanze culturali¹² e permesso anche un certo grado di mobilità sociale. Inoltre alcune strutture associative, come ad esempio i sindacati, hanno svolto un ruolo decisivo nel permettere la creazione di momenti di unità e di reciproca conoscenza e di mobilitazione di interessi comuni (Pugliese 2006, p. 56).

This has been a process of integration inside the broader Milanese society that largely managed to transform the city and its socio-economic structure. We believe that this massive process of immigration drove and determined city development from the economic but also infrastructural point of view. For example, some neighbourhoods such as Quarto Oggiaro were built to give accommodation to Southern immigrants, while, for example, the first line of the underground was built to connect traditionally working-class areas – largely populated also by Southern immigrants - with the rest of the city.

The shadows remaining on this internal immigration process appear to be very well described by the words of Ahmed, a young man from Egypt. Concluding this section, it is a rather droll story but it also tells us how immigrants can perceive our country and the concrete and sometimes objectively strong opinion they have of the Italian society. As he shows, foreign immigrants do not perceive Italy as the best of all possible worlds but they try to cope with it and with the problems they come up against:

“Ho scoperto il razzismo che avete qui a Milano, ancora adesso incontro gente di Milano che insulta quelli del sud. Anche in cantiere c’è un milanese che stava parlando e c’erano anche gente del sud di Napoli queste cose qua e ha detto: minchia sono l’unico italiano qui. E io mi guardo in giro e dico scusami ma sono tutti italiani qui sono io l’unico straniero e lui dice: eh no eh, loro sono del sud e io gli ho detto: ma cosa vuol dire sempre italiani sono. Poi ci siamo messi a morsicare un po’ ma poi ho pensato: se la pensi così cosa devo fare..” (Ahmed, 23 years old from Egypt).

¹¹ Something which can be probably apply today in the case of European and extra-European immigrants.

¹² It should once again be underlined that this migration concerned Italians, even taking into account all the possible regional differences. On the contrary today’s immigration but also the less recent French immigration from former colonies (Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria) or from Tom and Dom is significantly different, first of all because they were not French, had a different skin colour, a different language and remained with a post-colonial mentality: *des colonises*.

3.9 Peer groups or gangs?

The specific relationship with and attachment to the neighbourhood expressed by a *gang* does not necessarily imply criminality or deviance. Quite often the concept of *gang* (*bande* in French and *banda* in Italian) can be easily misunderstood, also due to difficulties in conceptualization.

Analysing this concept, it is to be noted that most of the studies dealing with this sociological topic have identified some common characteristics: gangs usually have social housing areas as main territorial reference since they tend to recruit in disadvantaged contexts. Secondly, there is the aspect of composition, presenting a predominantly male majority.

The phenomena of aggregation and groups are constant elements of adolescence and youth, but it is important to make a distinction between peer groups in general and gangs.

In fact, not all peer groups form a gang, which in fact has a certain structure and hierarchy – formal or informal; a relationship of ‘mutual segregation’ between young people and adults, which Lascoumes (1974) calls ‘*ségrégation réciproque*’ (Avenel 2006).

In the perspective of segregation based on the criterion of age, due significance is to be attributed to language as an important tool, very often used for practices of distinction, ‘*pratiques de distinction*’ (Bourdieu 1979). In our neighbourhood of the Haut Montreuil, for example, young people use a sort of local language, which is not a real dialect but it is considered more as a street code. In this specific case, it is called *Montreuillois* and was born from the contamination between French and the language spoken by gypsies. Actually, Montreuil is one of the oldest gipsy settlements in France, existing since the end of the eighteenth century. This language becomes then a sort of code to be used and disseminated by the young people: “*Mon père a grandi avec des gitans, qui étaient à coté de sa maison ici dans le quartier à Paul Signac, dans la rue Danton. Alors j’ai appris comme ça à le parler et je l’ai appris aussi à mes copains. Nous, on parle comme ça entre nous, et la police ou les autres (les parents, les voisins) ils comprennent pas. Après moi par exemple je parle comme ça sans me rendre compte. Par exemple je viens de te dire rodave, je ne sais pas si tu a compris. Ça veut dire voir*” (Matthieu, 19 ans).

A real ‘youth’ language is not present in the neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro, but their way of speaking is affected to some extent by the local context. They develop a particular tone, accent and vocabulary influenced by the Southern dialects their parents and family quite often use at home¹³.

¹³ In Italy this aspect is less the an issue than in France, where language is considered a fundamental obstacle for example concerning the integration in the labour market and it is the object of many interventions managed for example by *Pole Emploi*. An example of the evidence of this particular way of speaking is also the creation of a radio programme, very popular among young people, where its main character “Massimo di Quarto” makes jokes and humorously threatens people and listeners with his phone calls.

Returning to the specificity of the concept of *gang*, in the context of the American ghetto, most sociological analyses account for the emergence of gangs as a response to a process of social disorganization on the one hand, and a sense of stigma on the other.

Some scholars of the School of Chicago (Trasher 1927) have pointed up, for instance, the link between the growth of the modern city, urban changes and segregation – all elements which, following this theoretical perspective, are deemed to transform the neighbourhoods into areas of social disorganization (for a critical approach to this theory, see the theoretical chapter of this study).

According to Trasher (1927), these were areas where youth gangs could easily be formed, and found their role in the gaps in the social order. Even if, as we argued at the beginning of this section, crime is not a necessary condition for the existence of a *gang*, it is a matter of fact that it has a certain prestige and can provide economic and social status, as we observed also in the specific case of our neighbourhoods, and in particular in Quarto Oggiaro.

Another element characterizing the *gang* is an environment in conflict. Conflicts also determine borders between the in and out and opposition with other groups for a sort of territorial control. This is, for example, what can happen between the *gangs* of different neighbourhoods in both Montreuil and Milano. Trasher (1927) also reports difficult relations and conflict between the *gang* and some institutions such as the police, which is true of both neighbourhoods but seems to be more of an issue in France, where, as we have seen, the young people in these areas are more the object of public debate on security and social problems.

Similar characteristics concerning the composition of peer groups, which in some cases can also be characterized as *gangs*, are present both in Milan and Montreuil. However, a major difference seems to lie in the degree and modalities through which people recognize themselves as part of a gang. In France, for example, the general tendency we registered was to deny the category of *bande*, to which young people generally attribute a negative meaning.

On the contrary, this is not the case in Quarto Oggiaro, where the dimension of *gang* is strongly asserted at all ages and not only by early adolescents as happens in Montreuil, where some adolescents have the habit, for example, to shave in their hair the acronym OCB standing for *Organisation Criminelle Boissière*. Something similar but over a longer age range is also to be seen in Quarto Oggiaro.

This difference between the French and the Italian context probably depends on the different role and strength of criminality, which seems to be greater in Milano Quarto Oggiaro. At the same time this lesser visibility and recognition people attribute to the *gang* is determined by the already considerable stigmatization experienced by young people in these neighbourhoods in France.

Therefore, since they already experience a high level of discrimination, they more or less reject any direct reference to criminality, even when they concretely take part in or recognise the existence of these illegal acts. In fact, knowledge of all this situation, including the use of the concept of *gang*, which is somehow – mistakenly – considered always to imply criminality, may contribute to their discrimination and to the stigmatization of their neighbourhood.

“Le quartier est amélioré. Avant c’était plus chaude. Il avait plus de difficulté il était plus difficile à sortir e par rapport aux jeunes, il y avait plus de regroupement de jeunes. Et ça tu le vois comme négative ? Personnellement le regroupement je le trouve négative mais ça nuise à l’image du quartier. Maintenant c’est bien mais maintenant on est plus jeunes avant ils était plus âgé. Moi je trouve qu’une bande ça sert a rien¹⁴. Moi et mes amis par exemple on est pas un groupe, chacun fait sa vie. Je suis pas trop pour le groupe. C’est mieux être seul si non ça fait des histoires. C’est pas intéressant je trouve. Les jeunes qui sont en groupe sont plus discriminés. C’est sur, ça dépend du comportements. En général les gens ont une mauvaise image des jeunes et elle est justifié comme elle est pas justifié. On a une image négative, parce ce que on fait du bruit on se comporte pas toujours bien” (Louise, 17 years, of Haitian origin).

In Milan, on the contrary, the group dimension, often characterized as a *gang*, is prominent, as also is reference to criminal and illegal imagery.

During a conversation we had with a group of eight boys and two girls (‘engaged’ with two of them) emphatic reference to the *gang* emerged, considered as an important dimension for living and moving in and out of the neighbourhood.

These young people, especially the boys – the two girls were more silent and probably shy, even if it is not always the case in Quarto Oggiaro, since girls¹⁵ can also be very aggressive as reported by some interviews and in particular by a police official – made clear reference to their *gang*, defining themselves as *banda* with a leader being clearly recognizable: a twenty-year-old young man who also told us about his experience in the prison for minors *Collegio Penitenziario Beccaria*¹⁶.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that Louis spontaneously used the word ‘bande’ before the interviewer did so.

¹⁵ “A volte le ragazze sono addirittura più cattive dei ragazzi. Perché fanno più gruppetti rispetto ai ragazzi. Tipo bande. Per esempio loro si vestono in modo largo e io a volte quando devo andare da mia nonna e passo davanti all’edicola dove ci sono loro, mi becco un sacco di insulti perché magari ho messo i mocassini. Anche se non siamo mai uscite assieme per nome ci conosciamo. Alcune erano compagne delle elementari, naturalmente di famiglie con almeno il padre in carcere. Altre ragazze passi e ti insultano, e non puoi guardarle male perché se no ti picchiano. Io infatti sto zitta e vado via. Però ho visto capitare che si picchiavano. Una volta ho visto che c'erano 2 ragazze di Bonola di 15 anni che stavano aspettando l’autobus, ad un certo punto arriva una banda di queste ragazze che avranno avuto 19 o 20 anni. Quelle di Bonola hanno guardato male queste di Quarto e una di queste ragazze è finita all’ospedale con una costola rotta” (Laura 18 years old).

¹⁶ As reported in Vitale and Torri (2010), Don Gino Rigoldi, the priest of this institute, claims that many of these young people reside in Quarto Oggiaro.

Of course, during this interview I also had the feeling that the group dimension could have induced them to emphasize and exaggerate their stories. However, some of them were also confirmed by other people and interviews, included police officials.

In any case, it is true that sometimes in these neighbourhoods, especially in Quarto Oggiaro, due to the factors we already mentioned, there might be a mythology of crime, which becomes a sort of 'status symbol' for young people.

“Secondo me non sono persone normali e infatti la maggior parte dei giovani di Pascarella ha almeno un parente stretto, spesso il padre, in carcere.. Poi qui fanno tutti i grandi ma sanno agire solo in gruppo, non ho mai visto una persona picchiarsi con un'altra da soli. Loro arrivano già a gruppi di 10/15 persone e vanno contro poche persone. Io ho sempre pensato che loro da soli non sanno affrontare i problemi, però l'identità di gruppo li rende forti. Una volta due miei amici di Concilio Vaticano, che è sempre a Quarto ma è una zona molto più tranquilla di Pascarella, stavano accompagnando a casa una loro amica, ex ragazza di uno di Pascarella. Questo li ha visti e la sera dopo si è presentato davanti all'oratorio con altre 20 persone e li hanno massacrati di botte, anche con bottiglie di birra spaccate e coltelli” (Jessica, 22 years old)

As this girl told us, the group or, better, the *gang* is a very important dimension in Quarto Oggiaro and contributes to the creation of the neighbourhood identity, that of the 'typical' and sometimes stereotyped Quarto Oggiaro youth, although it is once again important to recall that young people in the neighbourhood do not all share the same behaviours, attitudes, values and of course do not all have the same trajectories and experiences.

In this identification process, the *gang* can be considered as a response to a situation of social disadvantage, which however contributes to the reproduction of social exclusion from the wider society, quite often driving them towards criminal careers and trajectories, a very common phenomenon, in particular in Quarto Oggiaro.

This strong identity, which can also be considered, as we have seen, a response to social disadvantage, contributes once again to a situation of entrapment of young people, creating - when they are with the gang inside the neighbourhood or, better, near the few blocks they usually frequent and that they consider to be 'their territory' - strong barriers between those who belong and those who do not belong to the neighbourhood.

This distance between those belonging and not belonging to the neighbourhood is great in both local contexts in Milan and Montreuil but in Quarto Oggiaro it seems to take a more violent form, even though, as we have seen, the level of segregation in Quarto Oggiaro is apparently lower than in the French context.

“E poi se vedono gente che non è di zona la insultano, il mio ex ragazzo per esempio quando veniva qua si beccava un sacco di insulti solo perché veniva da fuori e si permetteva non solo di passare, perché su quello di solito non dicono nulla e ci mancherebbe, ma di stare nel quartiere, di passare le serate sulle panchine vicino alla scuola Graf. Nella zona che loro considerano quasi di proprietà. C'è questa mentalità che se un quartiere quaranta anni fa era considerato che ‘faceva brutto’ lo deve essere ancora adesso, perché rende figli. E quindi i ragazzi si comportano di conseguenza. La gente per loro deve avere paura quando dici che sei di Quarto Oggiaro, pensa che quando vado a ballare e dico che sono di Quarto Oggiaro mi dicono sempre: non è che i tuoi amici mi picchiano? Ed è bruttissimo. Io non me ne vanto per niente. Non è che lo nascondo, perché comunque io abito qua, però mi piace fare vedere che non sono come loro, che io non li seguo e che per me le bande non sono niente, solo un gruppo di deboli che così si sente forte (Jessica 22 years old).

This analysis indicates that the *gang* implies the possibility for young people in these neighbourhoods to construct other modes of belonging. In fact, youth *gangs* aim at micro-solidarity and have their rules in force where global society is no longer able to provide opportunities for credible integration (Avenel, 2006).

To conclude, some elements such as the structural and social condition of the neighbourhood – educational failure, family structures and migrant experiences – are common but with different levels, in the Haut Montreuil and in Quarto Oggiaro, all elements contributing to the creation of specific forms of sociality and grouping.

Then, once again there is the different role of criminality in the two contexts and, in the particular perspective of this section, the different relationship existing in the French and Italian neighbourhoods between the *gang* and criminality.

“(..) le lien entre bande et délinquance est paradoxal. Alors que les deux termes sont systématiquement associés, la place de la délinquance, dans la plupart des travaux, n’est pas considérée comme centrale. La délinquance peut être une expression des bandes, mais elle n’en constitue pas le fondement. Il faut distinguer la notion de ‘gang’, qui renvoie à des petits groupes centrés sur la délinquance violente, et les bandes d’adolescents engagés dans une « délinquance amateur et mal organisée » (M. Esterlé-Hedibel, 1997). En fait, la difficulté à préciser le lien entre bande et délinquance est renforcée par le caractère non homogène et diversifié des bandes elles-mêmes. (..) Quelles que soient les difficultés, bien réelles, à cerner le phénomène, il apparaît que les ‘bandes’ des cités françaises ne forment pas des groupes organisés, dominés par l’autorité charismatique d’un leader, une dénomination spécifique et un conflit déclaré avec d’autres groupes.

Elles surgissent de façon aléatoire et ponctuelle lors des « embrouilles » ou de l'opposition à la police" (Avenel, 2006 p. 128).

In accordance with the literature, in our analysis we also registered that criminality in the French context acts at a lower level, without being, for example, involved with big organizations like the Mafia or Camorra, which are on the contrary very much active in Quarto Oggiaro, recruiting a lot of young people.

In the Haut Montreuil the so-called 'business' consists in buying and selling objects such as shoes, watches and mobile phones, which have probably been stolen, in particular by robbing shops or other people– what they call *raqueter*, usually at the expenses of other young people outside the neighbourhood.

“ Comme je travaille pas, pour gagner ma vie je fais des petites choses, tranquille. Rien de grave des petits trucs” (Yassin, 16 years old).

And again :

“Je peux me débrouiller en faisant des affaires..Bien je veut pas trop rentrer dans les détails..mais des petites chose. La police est venue plusieurs fois me contrôler maisa jamais trouvé un problème. (LAUGH) Des petites choses on dit comme ça.. ” (Matthieu, 19 years old).

3.10 The neighbourhood between feelings of attraction and rejection

These neighbourhoods, with their peculiar characteristics, can have a twofold significance for young people from poor and disadvantaged households. They can create a strong feeling of belonging and attachment but, as we have seen, they can also at the same time become places of stigma and segregation.

The neighbourhood is generally perceived in both contexts of our study as a place of common experiences, friendship, relations and solidarity, especially at younger ages.

In the Haut Montreuil, when we asked what the neighbourhood represented for individuals, a very common answer was: family, a dimension which was somewhat less emphasized in Quarto Oggiaro.

“Nous on est comme des frères, par exemple mes amis ils paient pour moi quand j'ai pas d'argent et ils me prêtent aussi toujours leur motos. Ça c'est normal entre pot, entre amis très proche” (Louis, 17 years old).

And again...

“Le quartier c’est mon univers. Il y a mes amis.. Ils habitent ici à la Boissière. Ils sont un peu comme moi mais il sont pas tous au chômage comme moi. Le point commun est qu’on est nés et grandi dans le quartier. Le parcours scolaire aussi c’est un peut le même. Mais pas tous. Il y a des amis qu’ils ont réussit. Qui ont leur bac.. qui continue les etudes” (Matthieu 19 years old). Very often young people are aware of this particular sociability and are also able to understand the reasons why it is developed and the conditions through which it takes place. As has been well explained by Matthieu, young people sometimes realize that their life is affected, in both a positive and negative way, by the experience of the neighbourhood.

“Vivre ici dans le quartier je crois c’est un autre univers. Quand je vais à Paris c’est différent.. Je crois que si j aurai vécu dans un univers avec des gens comme moi (blancs) je serais différent . La je suis beaucoup ouvert, ouvert d’esprit. Je suis sociable et j’ai l’habitude de me rapporter à plusieurs cultures: africaine, arabe...” (Matthieu, 19 years old).

As we observed, this solidarity and feeling of belonging seem to be, to some extent, much more evident in the Haut Montreuil than in Quarto Oggiaro. This could in effect be a response to the marked degree of segregation, stigmatization and it could also be due to the more emphatic ethno-racial characterization of young people in this neighbourhood. In fact, this solidarity is sometimes also a reaction and response to the issue of discrimination and stigma. *“Qui siamo uniti ma abbiamo una sola regola che è quella del mondo: farsi i cazzi propri. È una regola di tutti i posti. Bisogna farsi i cazzi propri, io sono stato cresciuto così. Il quartiere non ti appesantisce, qui ognuno lascia vivere, a me non interessa quello che fa la gente non sono io a giudicare. Mio padre mi ha insegnato che l’onore è la prima cosa, l’onore è dare rispetto se vuoi rispetto, l’onore è non venderti e l’onore è dire le cose in faccia e anche farsi gli affari propri è l’onore. Ci possono essere settemila pentiti che dicono combattiamo la mafia, ma la mafia non viene eliminata, anzi è peggio così ci vanno di mezzo anche gli innocenti. Finché una cosa non urta te cosa te ne frega? Bisogna farsi gli affari propri. Così si va d’accordo con gli altri e gli altri ti rispettano* (Francesco, 19 years old).

The general feeling we had is that social relations among young people in Quarto Oggiaro are present but generally less intense than in the Haut Montreuil. In the French context, we were more aware of strong sociability and relations, while in Quarto Oggiaro we noted in our interviews a greater individualization, also among the early adolescents, while their counterparts in the Haut Montreuil tend more to stress the role of neighbourhood sociability and relations.

“Se hai i soldi vali, se hai una bella famiglia o se la tua famiglia conta, allora vali, se sei bello le ragazze di contano di più, se giochi bene a calcio... Però capita spesso che molti ti chiamino solo per usarti. Nei rapporti c’è sempre un fine. Una mentalità che ti porta ad avere un vantaggio sulle

altre persone. Così tutti, però qua è difficile legare in amicizia, ci sono dei gruppi che ti fanno fare delle prove. Hanno delle regole. Ti dicono quello che devi fare se no vieni escluso. Questo avveniva prima e adesso le nuove generazioni però cercano di imitarli. Fanno i bulli per sentirsi più grandi e per essere accettati. La gente in realtà però è buona, ma non se ne rende conto. Vuole solo arrivare al top e usano tutti i mezzi” (Aidan, 15 years old. Student at scuola media. Albanian origins).

This may be an extreme case but more in general it evidences a different degree of attachment to the neighbourhood and among its residents.

Therefore, in particular in the French context, the emotional charge of the territory where people live and grow up determines in general, a positive view and perception of the neighbourhood, a unique place where intense sociability and valid social relations obtain.

This is not to say that in Quarto Oggiaro there is a total lack of attachment to the neighbourhood, but it is probably less important than in Montreuil. In particular, this attachment to the neighbourhood emerges when young people defend it against stigmatization:

“Il primo giorno di scuola delle superiori mi chiedono di dove sei? Rispondo Quarto Oggiaro e mi dicono: è vero che ogni due per tre ti rubano le scarpe? ma no, cioè dicevano queste cose e io rimanevo scioccata. Ho vissuto tanti anni nel quartiere abitando proprio al limite con Via Pascarella e ci sono sempre stata bene, io conosco gente criminale ma conosco anche persone normalissime, ma credo che in tutti quartieri sia così. Ci sono tante persone oneste che vogliono migliorare il quartiere, che si impegnano..” (Noemi 20, years old).

As we noted, the sense of belonging to the neighbourhood can be reinforced if young people are part of a gang.

In this way, they develop a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood which is, however, something different from a real feeling of attachment. It is more the outcome of group dynamics than a real attachment to the neighbourhood, perceived as own roots and origins.

“Quando fai branco con i ragazzini e vai fuori, questa percezione che ti stai portando addosso è una responsabilità ed è importante che tutti lo sappiano che sei di quarto e che mantenga alto l’onore. Che poi nel tempo ho cercato di convogliare altrove il fatto, cioè dargli uno sbocco positivo, ad esempio che questa associazione che abbiamo fondato e far sì che questo sia un’esperienza. La prima vuol dire far vedere di essere cresciuto in un quartiere difficile che fin da subito, visto che da quando ho 8 anni e ho vissuto senza papà, ti metteva davanti in relazione con il degrado, al marciapiede, alla strada” (Andrea, 25 years old).

In our analysis we observed something that at first sight might appear a paradox: young immigrants arriving in the neighbourhood alone or joining a friend or a family member, seem to develop, more than the others, a real sense of belonging and attachment to the neighbourhood.

This is probably due to the absence of their family. In fact, they do not simply experience the community dimension intensively but the whole neighbourhood also becomes a decisive area of sociability.

“Sono arrivato qui a Quarto Oggiaro perché non avevo altre scelte, non sapevo niente, non parlavo la lingua non conoscevo la città e qui c’era un mio cugino che abitava qui ma adesso si è trasferito a Bruzzano. All’inizio ci sono andato anche io un paio di mesi, ma non mi piaceva come zona.

Esci di casa alle otto di sera e non trovi nessuno. Qui a Quarto c’è sempre un botto di gente e poi c’è il bar, il baluardo etc.. andiamo anche all’oratorio a giocare a ping pong anche se siamo musulmani (LAUGH). Mi piace vivere qui e Quarto Oggiaro lo sento come se fosse il mio quartiere, non assomiglia all’Egitto ma lo sento come se fosse il mio paese. Se arriva qualcuno e dice che fa del male a Quarto Oggiaro io lo ammazzerei. È da 6 anni che sono qua, è come se fosse il mio paese” (Ali 25, years old).

More in general, attachment to the neighbourhood determines the visibility of young people and their important role there, which seems to be more decisive in France than in Italy. In the Haut Montreuil, as more in general in France, young people, especially boys from households of immigrant origin, are more involved in the city’s facilities and are also generally more active in the life of the neighbourhood, even though this does not usually happen in a structured, organized way – taking part, for example, in associations or political groups, but it is more spontaneous and self-organized. While making some ethnographic observations in Montreuil, we witnessed a significant episode at the ‘*Antenne de Secteur Jules Verne*’, a municipal office branches of which are to be found in every neighborhood/sector of Montreuil.

The day of a World Championship football match, a group of young men of around 25 came to the office asking for a room with a television or screen, in order to watch the football match. The attitude of these young men was not very conciliatory and diplomatic. It was more an AUT AUT: “either you give us the keys to the rooms or we break down the doors and simply get in..”.

This is just an example showing how in France young people perceive themselves as the real interlocutors and stakeholders of public institutions in the neighbourhood, at times in an excessively informal way. As we have seen, they are much involved in the public spaces of the neighborhood and in some cases transform these places, such as the entrances to social housing projects (*‘le bas des immeubles’*), into a sort of private space.

This difference between the Haut Montreuil and Quarto Oggiaro can partly be due to the different policies and social characteristics, such as the immigration process and its history, but also to the historical and recent phenomena of protests involving the French *banlieues*.

As we have argued throughout this chapter, the attitude towards the neighbourhood is ambivalent. It is considered an important reference point and a resource for the individual, but it also represents a sharp breaking point outlining a discontinuity between the in and out.

In this part, we will focus mainly on the French context of the Haut Montreuil, since we found there a stronger attachment to the neighbourhood. In fact, taking into account this stronger attachment, the strategies and attempts to take a distance between themselves and the neighbourhood are much more evident in the Haut Montreuil than in Milan Quarto Oggiaro.

In Quarto Oggiaro and in the Haut Montreuil, as we have argued at length in this chapter and in the chapters on school and education, there are important strategies implemented by households - in particular middleclass households - in order to avoid the neighbourhood.

However, as noted above, even when the neighbourhood is intensively experienced, it does not create the same strong attachment as in the case of the Haut Montreuil. Therefore, as a consequence, all subsequent strategies to take a distance between from the neighbourhood duly proceed but are less of an issue because the 'original' attachment is generally weak.

In the case of a 'deviant' attitude towards the neighbourhood, passing for example through the experience of the *gang*, the spatial role of the neighbourhood is less emphasized. What counts more seems to be the group or, better, the *gang* dynamics, which becomes extremely binding and from which the individual cannot easily escape (see dedicated section above).

In general, we registered some differences in the attitude towards the neighbourhood and the opinions about it, regarding mainly the variable of age and gender¹⁷.

¹⁷ As already argued, in the Haut Montreuil the presence of girls in the public spaces of the neighborhood is less visible. In fact, young men seem to be the most visible target and as a consequence they are also those experiencing greater stigmatization and discrimination, in the neighbourhood but in particular outside it. Contrary to the French case, this gender difference in visibility, does not represent an issue in Milano Quarto Oggiaro, where gender segregation is not a decisive element influencing the sociability and relationships in the neighbourhood.

Some behaviours and practices such as the concentration: 'regroupement' and 'stationnement en bas des immeubles' are behaviours typical of young men, making them more visible in the perception of other inhabitants, adults and public institutions. On the contrary, the presence or, rather, the absence of girls is considered not only as the possibility or impossibility to stay out but it is also an issue of visibility/invisibility. A permission which is accorded by the family (and changes depending on the family structure, background and origin) but also in an indirect way by the neighborhood's boys in the group of peers, who may punish this over exposition, through sanctions such the questioning of their femininity and status of women (Clair, 2008). Therefore, in a way this absence also becomes a rational choice.

With regard to age, we noticed that the attitude towards the neighbourhood and its sociability, especially in the French context, is more emphasized in the early adolescence. Very young people perceive the neighbourhood more than others as a very intimate place, a sort of family.

However, growing up in the neighbourhood remains a positive experience only for those who can 'escape' from it and do not experience a feeling of entrapment. The wish to get out of the neighbourhood maintaining the contacts and its strong relationships, sociability and solidarity is quite often expressed by young people.

«Je le regrette pas de vivre ici, le problème est qui' il y a un sentiment d'oppression.. mais pour moi ça va. Personnellement Je quitterais le quartier mais j'aimerais retourner souvent. Je me sens au même temps attaché mais je me sens aussi très différent. Pour moi il y a plus de choses positives que des défauts.. Si un jour je vais habiter ailleurs, je viendrais volontiers mais ça serait plus pour les gens que pour le lieu en soi. Les amis, les rencontres, c'est pour les gens qui j'aime ce quartier ici. A Montreuil franchement ce que j'aime est la sociabilité des gens.. Il y a aussi un coté dure.. Il ya des cité qui sont bien et des autres où les gens se trouvent dans des conditions assez durs. Moi aussi j'ai eu des difficulté.. c'est un moment que je suis au chômage, j'ai travaillé au paravents ..» (Charles, 25 years old).

In general, after the age of 18, people in the Haut Montreuil express the wish to leave, maintaining all the contacts in the neighbourhood. They would usually like to move to the more central neighbourhoods of Paris or Southern France, which is to a certain extent a contradiction, if we consider their experiences of discrimination and stigmatization.

The option of Southern France was frequently favoured among the people we interviewed, probably for a number of reasons. First of all, Southern France represents a region of luxury and relaxation which these young people can ideally contrast with the poverty and disadvantage they often experience in the neighbourhood. Secondly, unlike Paris, Southern France represents a greater geographic discontinuity with the neighbourhood, which after a certain age could be considered as a 'cage', limiting their opportunities and development.

«Oui j'aimerais voir autres choses, voir d'autre horizons. Moi j'en envie de partir de découvrir des nouveaux horizons. Si j'aurais fait des bons études j'aurais pu partir par exemple à Paris. Quelque chose de tranquille. Aussi dans le sud. Mais en tout cas mon but est de partir d'ici » (Matthieu, 19 years old).

“Ils soulignent souvent un moment clef, 'le cap de la vingtaine' selon leurs propres mots, celui qui marque un essai d'autonomisation vis-à-vis du groupe des « copains d'en bas », qui se traduit, tout à la fois, par une prise de distance et le maintien de liens plus ou moins étroits. Les jeunes vivent une contradiction essentielle entre ces deux dimensions. L'allongement de la jeunesse est évidemment

renforcé par le chômage chronique qui retarde le départ du foyer parental et l'entrée dans le monde du travail et la conjugalité (O. Galland, 1991), ici, plus que partout ailleurs" (Avenel 2006, p. 143). It is to be noted that the attitude of these young people is in general not completely passive; in fact, they tend to implement certain decisive strategies and attempts in order to escape from a possible situation of entrapment. Of course, this does not mean that they always manage to achieve this objective; in fact, these strategies are often based on employment and integration in the labour market, which unfortunately remains a particularly critical issue for young people in these neighbourhoods. However, they generally acknowledge the importance of this integration and except for a few cases, they do not perceive the group/gang as the only important dimension. This situation can be difficult and contradictions can often arise. These are indeed moments of ambivalence and uncertainty.

On the one hand the individual tries to be autonomous and independent from the group of peers, also establishing other contacts with the external world. The neighbourhood is perceived as a place of very strong and intense social relations and, at the same time also as a context providing scant opportunities or future prospects.

« Les gens dans mon école de commerce à Paris sont de la bourgeoisie et ils se prennent.. et moi je suis un mec de ter ter. Je suis pas un mec du ghetto mais pour eux je suis un mec de banlieue. Je ne sais pas.. je fais tous pour m'intégrer.. bien non tout mais je mets pas de jogging où la casquette à l'inverse.. Au lycée je l'ai fait mais pas maintenant, j'ai arrêté avant le bac en terminale. A moment donné je me suis dit il faut que j'arrête.. je voulais évoluer. Si j'étais trop attaché au quartier je pouvais pas m'élever.. Je voulais m'attacher mais je savais qu'il fallait pas » (Nassim, 19 years old).

This attachment also creates to a certain extent a feeling of entrapment, which usually emerges creating a degree of conflict due to the different values, behaviours and references ruling in the two contexts, the neighbourhood and the external world.

«J'ai deux groupes. Je sors aussi avec les gens de l'équipe de rugby de la cité mais par contre je mélange jamais les deux groupes. C'est pas possible, je peux pas mélanger les deux choses.. sont des univers totalement différents. L'après midi je vois mes pots du Morion, on jeux ensemble. Si je fais rencontrer mes amis du Morion avec les autres de l'école après je suis mort. Ces gens me parlent plus si je mène des gens comme ça.. mes amis du Morion. C'est juste qu'ils peuvent pas être ensemble, sont les deux ethnies opposées... je ne sais pas comme dire. C'est pas possible, je ne sais pas. Soit les gens des beaux quartiers, soit mes amis du Morion» (Nassim, 19 years old).

It is worth noting that when referring to people external to the neighbourhood, Hakim usually avoids use of the word 'amis' – friends, calling them simply : 'les gens des beaux quartiers' – people of the nice neighbourhoods.

This is probably due to the lack of shared experiences, as it is on the contrary the case of old friendships in the neighbourhood, representing an important priority in the values of these young people in the Haut Montreuil.

«Avec les gens de l'école il y a un monde que nous sépare. C'est surtout le fait qu'ils font leur vacances à l'île de ré, ils restent entre eux, ils ont tous leurs voitures : Mini Cooper et moi je dois le Bus de Nuit et faire une heure et demie de voyage pour rentrer. Leur parents lui paient leur école, leur appartement à Paris. Ils vont en boîte tous les soirs.. après quand ils me disent, viens avec nous.. Je dit non je peux pas, j'ai pas d'argent... » (Nassim, 19 years old).

More in general, it is worth noting that such experiences of distancing from the neighbourhood are not only observed among young people pursuing their studies at university or the *Grands Ecoles*, but more generally among all the people seeking integration in the labour market and society in the broader sense.

«Le quartier était plus important quand j'étais au collège, je trainais en bas, j'ai passé mon temps avec des amis, on fumait des joints.. mais plus on grandi, plus on a muri, je traîne pas plus ici. J'évite toujours le quartier.. mes pots me connaissent, de temps en temps je viens manger un sandwich chez Salem mais c'est tout. Ils me voient rarement ici, parce que je bosse.. C'est plutôt un dortoir. Avec mes pots on se posent ailleurs. On reste dans un pavillon, tranquille. Ça sert à rien rester dehors » (Kadir 18 years old).

On the contrary, attachment to the neighbourhood generally remains stronger if the individual lacks integration in the labour market and has experienced educational failure.

The nature of the educational trajectory and the early professional career is indeed fundamental in shaping the relationship towards the neighbourhood. School failure is a highly discriminating variable for individual and collective practices (Avenel 2006). In fact, people going ahead with their educational careers or having access to the labour market can take advantage of their status and relationships beyond the neighbourhood's borders. By contrast, inactive or unemployed young people usually tend to retreat in the direction of the neighbourhood and therefore it could also become a sort of trap for them.

4. The role and mechanisms of education

4.1 Introduction

Clearly, when studying trajectories and experiences of young people one of the most important variables is of course school attainment and education.

It is a matter of fact that school has a role in the development of individuals' future careers and lives. As many studies have underlined, there is a relationship, even if not linear but mediated by the characteristics of the original household, between the individual's level of education and employment. Therefore, as an extensive literature also recognises, education plays an important role in driving up towards social mobility (Blau and Duncan 1967; Featherman and Hauser 1978; Erikson and Golthorpe 1992; Cobalti and Schizzerotto; Breen 2004).

However, this point has been very much debated in sociology of education and is still not unanimously accepted as self-evident. Neo-Marxist scholars have, for instance, stated that educational credentials do not have any influence on individuals' professional and social career but are only part of neo-liberal strategies trying to hide the weight of family privileges behind the surface meritocracy (Schizzerotto and Barone 2005).

In the same direction we also find the theory proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1970), going under the name of "cultural deprivation". According to the two prominent French sociologists, school first of all represents a tool for social reproduction of the inequalities existing in a society. Other authors argue that neither levels of education nor social origins have an influence on occupational and social mobility, which are determined more by chance, such as the fact of entering the labour market in a particular positive or negative moment or living in a specific area, characterized by the presence of firms and enterprises requiring particular qualifications, and various other contingences (Jencks 1972; 1979).

In conclusion, it is extremely important to reaffirm that the level of redistribution and efficiency in the progress and transmission of knowledge may also depend on processes of social selection, associated with the quality of group interaction within the educational institution and in the surrounding territory (Checchi and Zollino, 2001).

In our perspective, aimed at analysing all mechanisms and processes contributing to the reproduction of phenomena such as poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage, we should observe education in its twofold dimension, at both the national and local level.

My aim is to investigate the dynamics of education and its ways of functioning. In order to do so, we are interested in studying all its related phenomena, at both the macro-institutional and local level. Therefore, in this chapter, after a general literature review on the relationship between social conditions and educational success, we will first of all focus our attention on institutional characteristics, macro mechanisms and processes influencing school and educational attainments in the two national contexts.

As we will see, although a general increase in the educational level has been registered in both Italy and France in the last thirty years, equal opportunities of access are still wanting. In these sections we will try to see how this phenomenon is structured and which are the elements contributing to this reproduction of social stratification in the two different contexts, seeking to register differences and similarities.

In a following chapter we will concentrate on the local pattern of school and its dynamics at the micro level in general and more specifically in the two neighbourhoods considered in our research: Quarto Oggiaro in Milan and the Haut Montreuil in the Paris area.

Tackling the issue of social inequalities, the territorial perspective takes on particular important relevance since this is the level at which these social phenomena occur, and this is of course true also in the case of education. In fact, schools are situated in specific areas and places influencing, as we will see, their performance and determining an interaction between different actors with locally specified characteristics. For example, there may, as is evident in the French case but also in part in our Milanese context, be local interactions or, on the contrary, absence of interaction between families of the middle and low social classes. Such is the case, for instance, of the more affluent households, which implement strategies to avoid schools attended mainly by working class or immigrant children, with a series of consequences on the quality and performance of education.

In this respect, there is a close tie between residential and educational segregation. In fact, as some scholars both in France and Italy have pointed out (Oberti 2006; Vitale and Torri 2010), although territorial and educational segregation have long been studied as separate issues in two sociological disciplines, urban and educational sociology, today the fact is increasingly recognized that school is “embedded” in a specific territory and therefore cannot be considered by itself, without considering its surrounding territory and population.

A review of the literature

4.2 Education as a transmission mechanism

Many scholars have tried to account for the lack of education among people with disadvantaged family backgrounds. Much of the debate has focused on understanding if family income matters in itself or whether other factors of disadvantage are to be taken into account. Mayer (1997), for instance, argues that it is not just income that has a direct influence on children's opportunities, but more in general all the factors behind the parents' low income. Other scholars have also accounted for this reduced participation in education with the constraint of family credit, with different rates of time preference amongst people with various family backgrounds and with different attitudes towards educational investment: the so-called *rational choice* of the households.

In this part of the chapter we will discuss the relationship between social disadvantage and education.

In particular the objective here is to observe whether, and if so how social, disadvantage affects the learning experience of students from households with few economic resources. In doing so we will bring the focus to bear on each stage of the individuals' life-course.

While education is an important element to escape from social disadvantage — leading to better job prospects and generally reducing the prevalence of income poverty in adult age - educational failure can aggravate such disadvantage. At the same time, educational experience remains closely connected with social disadvantage.

If on one hand education is able to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage, it can also reinforce them.

The empirical evidence from studies conducted by social scientists makes it clear that education plays quite a significant role in influencing people's economic and social conditions. In cross-country comparisons of education and economic growth, formal schooling plays an important role in enhancing economic growth (Barro, 1997, Barro and Lee, 1993, and Krueger and Lindahl, 2001). Education has been shown to raise labour market earnings and employment probabilities significantly (Card, 1999), as well as impacting upon health (Currie, 1995), crime (Lochner and Moretti, 2004) and a range of other social capital outcomes (Hammond and Feinstein, 2004). However, to avoid a purely meritocratic approach we must bear in mind the ample evidence showing, first, how disadvantage affects learning experiences, and secondly how learning

experiences affect outcomes in adulthood. It is in fact the combination of these two links that may aggravate the conditions of young people from disadvantaged families. As pointed out above, education is linked to various dimensions of social disadvantage throughout the individual's life span, and we will consequently consider various stages in the life and education of individuals: pre-primary education, compulsory schooling, post-compulsory education and adult lifelong learning processes.

With regard to the first level of education, as much of the literature recognises, there are clear signs of gaps in cognitive and non-cognitive skills, appearing even before children go to school. An extensive research literature looks into many of the links between early child development and social disadvantage. In response to this situation, active policies have been introduced in some countries, such as the *Head Start* in the United States or *Sure Start* in the United Kingdom, to level the playing field at or near school entry age for children from less privileged backgrounds origin. Much of the work done by economists and social scientists relates the early age test scores¹ of children with their family background, underlining important correlations. Some studies compare a 'treatment' group (those involved in the programmes) with a 'control' group (not in the programmes) to evaluate the impact of this kind of experiment. As evidenced by this literature, test score gaps emerge across children from different family backgrounds at early ages. For instance, a research conducted by Meyers *et al.* (2004) reports significant disparities at pre-school level between children from backgrounds of high and low parental education. In particular, with regard to the policy experiments mentioned above, these researches show how early childhood education programmes are, in the United States, for example, able to reduce test score gaps between ethnic minority children and whites (Currie, 2001); an element showing once again the inconsistency of all theories based on genetic explanation of educational performance. More specifically, from the policy perspective these findings are decisive since they attest to the importance of inequality in cognitive and non-cognitive skills starting from early age. Thus, the fact that early age skills are recognized to be key drivers of economic and social success or failure leads some scholars to conclude that, at the policy level, early childhood interventions can play an important role.

However, this is far from being a deterministic assumption since, in order to observe the outcomes that education has with individuals, it is necessary to observe the entire life course. In fact, debate also extends to the time effect of interventions, since the gains from early interventions persist or tend to decay if not supplemented with further measures.

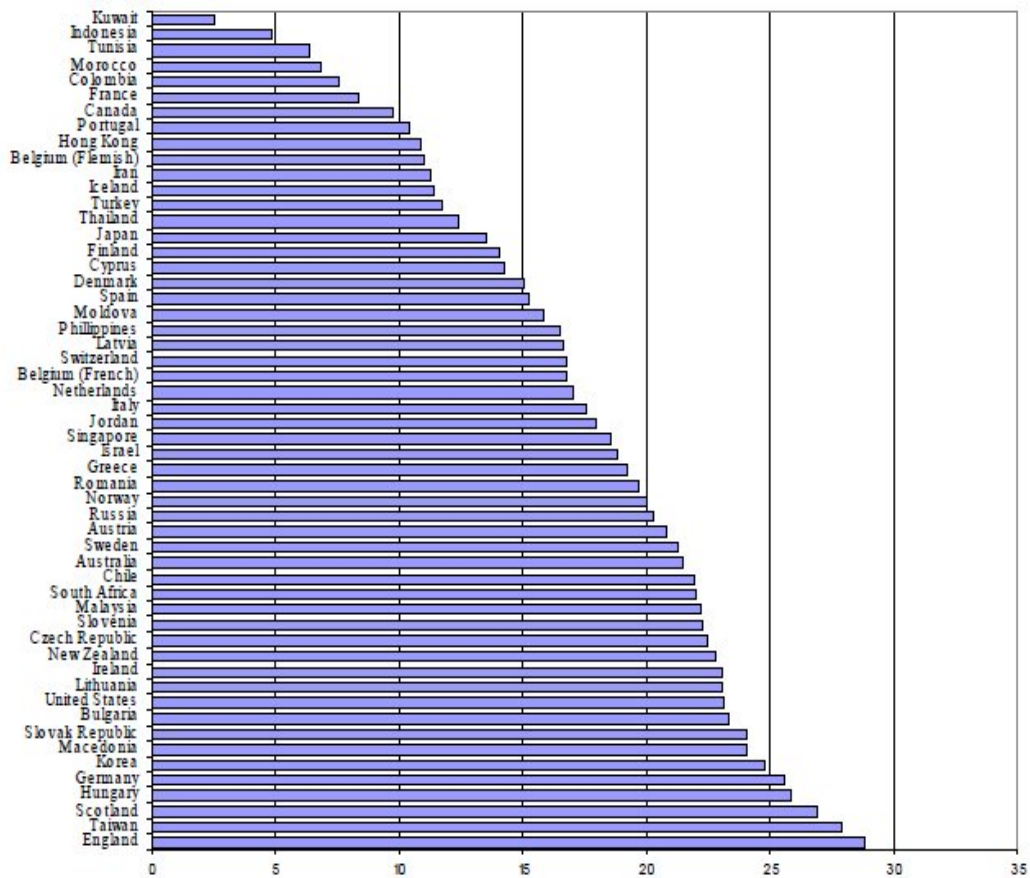
¹ Even if test scores may in some cases be sometimes controversial, we believe that these researches have shown important evidence in this direction.

Most of researches seem to confirm a reproduction of educational results during the years: test scores, for instance, show that the initial gaps continue to develop and widen in the school years.

In social and economic research, as well in policy debate, the links between educational experience and degrees of childhood disadvantage, in particular linked to the household characteristics, have been widely recognized. Empirical research on education and social disadvantage has often linked observable degrees of educational achievement to various aspects of disadvantage: parental education and income; parental attitudes and, as we will see later on in this chapter, structural characteristics, which are not directly connected to the family, such as neighbourhood characteristics. In general, for compulsory education, there is evidence at the macro level (Currie, 1995; Gregg and Machin, 2001) that educational achievement is significantly lower for children with disadvantaged backgrounds, who have higher chances of school dropout, lower qualification attainment and lower test scores at different stages of their educational career. More in general, the evidence seems to confirm that children from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds have worse results in terms of educational attainment through the school years or in terms of educational levels achieved by the end of compulsory education. Although most of these results apply mainly to one country, in particular the United States, with some of the data sources on international test scores of school-age children international comparisons can be made, showing how the relation between student achievement and family background is always significant (Machin, 2006). In this graph we observe in particular the case of France and Italy, where the estimated effect of family background seems to be higher.

Estimated effects of family background of students' test scores across countries²

Source: Scheutz, Ursprung and Woessman (2005)



Some fairly recent studies have focused, for instance, on non-cognitive skills such as social abilities, motivation and attitudes compatible with school commitment and duties. In particular, these studies focus on the way non-cognitive skills influence educational and life opportunities (Carneiro and Heckman, 2003, Heckman and Rubinstein, 2001, Heckman and Vtylail, 2001),

² Family background effects are based on reported measures of the number of books at home; test scores are average maths and science scores from TIMSS. The family background effects are estimated from statistical regressions explaining standardised test scores based on the number of books at home. As standardised test scores have an international standard deviation of 100, these effects can be interpreted as percentages of an international standard deviation by which test achievement increases if the number of books is raised by one category. The authors validate these estimates with reference also to other family background measures from the 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey (PIRLS) (Machin, 2006).

recognizing their decisive role in educational outcomes.

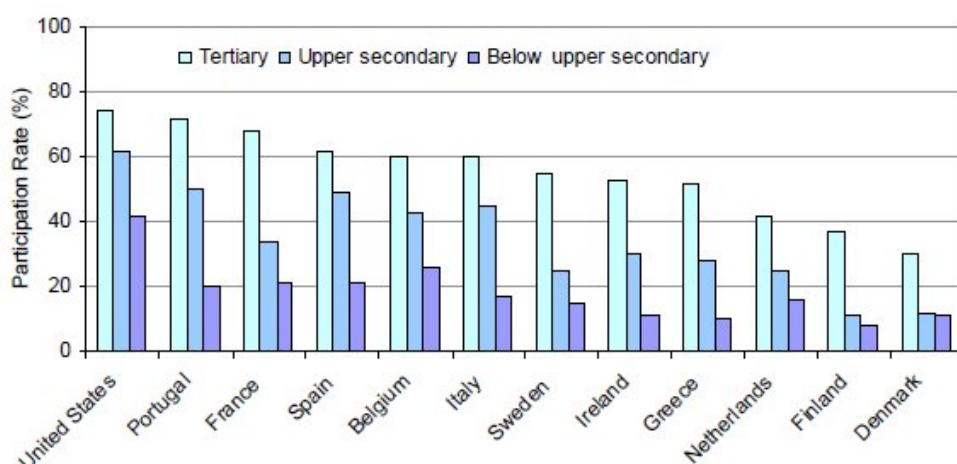
As we have seen, a very important relationship between social disadvantage and education forms in the first stages of the school career. Compulsory education at early school age is, in fact, a period of life in which the individual is very much dependent on the household and is therefore conditioned by its characteristics. However, as we will see later on, this important link between social disadvantage and education seems to persist at every stage of the educational career: during post-compulsory school, adult education and lifelong learning.

In fact, in the case of post-compulsory education it is evident that inequalities linked to family background persist and even increase in further stages of the educational career (Feinstein, 2004). The chances of avoiding school dropout are very much connected to family background and social disadvantage, and may also determine employment and future working situation.

Quite recently, some specific studies (Blanden and Gregg, 2004, for the United Kingdom; and Black and Sufi, 2002, for the United States) on higher education have demonstrated how social disadvantage reduces the possibilities for students from poor and disadvantaged families to participate in higher education. In fact, while in general we see an increase in participation, also for children of the lower and middle classes (see Barone and Schizzerotto 2009 for the case of Italy), it is important to recognize that an important role is still played by origins in determining participation at high school and university level.

This is also evidenced with the data presented in this second figure showing differences in participation in tertiary education by parents' level of education, to be considered a proxy, even if probably too indirect, of social status and economic situation.

Youth (18-24 year olds) participating in tertiary education by educational attainment of their parents, 1994-95. Source: EURYDICE (1997)



Another aspect of the relationship between tertiary education and disadvantage regards the classification and typologies of schools. In fact, as we will see in the case of Italy and France, at both the national and local level what matters is not only the fact of attending high school but also the characteristics of the school attended, in terms of both typology - Liceo /istituto tecnico, Lycée/Ecole Professionnelle and, specifically, for the case of France, Université/Grand Ecole - and location.

Attending a school offering lower economic and social benefits determines poorer chances of studying at “elite” universities (Chevalier and Conlon, 2003) and also greater chances of studying for vocational and professional qualifications rather than academic qualifications (Conlon, 2002).

When tackling the relationship between education and social disadvantage, it is also important to consider the impact that the experience of social disadvantage in childhood can have on opportunities in adult life (Bynner and Feinstein, 2004). These studies demonstrate that education is an important factor in accounting for skill deficiencies. In fact, it emerged from analysis of the characteristics of a group of low skilled adults that most of them did not complete schooling after compulsory school and often came from poor and disadvantaged families³.

In the framework of our research, adopting the perspective of intergenerational trajectories, it is interesting to see the great implications social disadvantage has, since social disadvantage can run

³ In our opinion, despite the fact that these studies were mainly conducted in the Anglo-Saxon context, their results can be considered valid for other contexts such as in Italy and France, as we will to some extent demonstrate with the empirical analysis.

across generations, families and communities. Therefore, lack of skills has consequences not only on the individual him/herself but, naturally, especially if it applies to the reference person in the household (breadwinner), on the whole family and in particular on the children's educational performance.

In addition, as we will see in the following pages, the presence and concentration of this household typology can also have a more general influence on the surrounding community and in particular on the educational choices of other families living in the neighbourhood.

4.3 Beyond the family: the role of place in education

Many studies, first and foremost in the United States, have analysed the relationship between education and social environment, the latter applying not only to, the household but also the wider context where individuals live and act, and specifically, the neighbourhood of residence where the school as an institution and a physical place is "embedded".

In the United States these issues have been tackled in the framework of social policies aiming at fighting inequality, poverty and segregation, with a primary objective, namely equal opportunities in education for all social categories.

These researches and different approaches started from the famous report delivered by Coleman in the mid-sixties, underlining the role of behaviour models transferred through the peer group, and therefore not limited to the household, in determining educational attainments and results.

Of course, as we will see in the rest of the chapter, this does not mean that other dimensions, such as the quality and experience of teachers, the number of pupils per class, funding and educational policies do not count. Numerous studies have investigated these hypotheses with detailed and precise measurements of educational attainment and the factors exerting an influence on it.

Here, we will try to resume their main assumptions and findings. With regard to the former, although some studies (Henderson, 1978) have sought to demonstrate the insignificance of conventional inputs for school and educational success, such as the role of teachers, it has been shown that these inputs actually have considerable relevance. For instance, some scholars offer empirical evidence of the fact that the teachers' quality and preparation play a role in the educational performance of children showing more disadvantaged characteristics (Hanushek, 1986). In our research, we will take into consideration these variables when tackling, for instance, the structural characteristics of some schools in neighbourhoods presenting negative aspects, such as a

very fast turnover of teachers or, as emerges from the French literature (Oberti, 2007), quite a low average in the age and experience of teachers working in peripheral schools.

However, in the light of the majority of studies, these conventional inputs seem to have been less decisive than other characteristics, such as those related to the family of origin (Robertson-Symon, 1996). In fact, as observed through the literature references and as seems to emerge from our empirical research and interviews, the characteristics of the family have a great influence on the pupils' performance in education. The family background concerns all aspects, ranging for instance from the size – the number of minors might indeed force the household to divide its available resources, in terms of both time and money, among more children – to the educational level, occupational status and profession of the parents.

Thirdly, an important role seems to be played by school class and groups. Recognized in the literature, in fact, is the existence of a significant relationship between positive educational performance on the part of an individual and the fact that he or she is “embedded” in a social environment promoting education and its values, such as commitment to the educational process, recognition of the role and status of teachers, etc.

What is known as the peer group effect has been pointed out by, among others Arnott and Rowse (1987), referring to the effect of the ability distribution of the peers on an individual's academic performance. In general, limited attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which peer effects work. The most common perspective is that peers, like families, are sources of motivation, aspirations and direct interactions in learning. In particular, peers may affect the classroom process, stimulating debate through questions and answers, helping the teacher to upgrade the level of discussion, or, on the contrary, showing disturbing or uncooperative behaviour, which limits the learning process and makes it more difficult.

The importance of relational models developed at a local and neighbourhood level has found renewed interest in the last decade through the development of a neighbourhood level approach, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon context. Since then, interest in social interactions, neighbourhood effects, and social dynamics happening at the local level seems to have waxed strong.

A relatively recent literature has emerged, studying the generation of persistent inequality among a population due to neighbourhood effects of various kinds and having as a consequence lower quality levels in education for specific groups and populations.

In relation to education, these neighbourhood effects consist mainly of three typologies: investment, role-model and peer-group influences.

Investment refers to local public good provision and occurs when the poor (sometimes also corresponding to the immigrant population) are segregated in a specific area, characterized for

instance by the presence of social housing projects but also by scant financial resources and funding for local education, having in general as a consequence supply of lower quality education for the children living in these neighbourhoods.

The second typology concerns the role-model effect, indicating how the behaviour of an individual in a group is influenced by the characteristics and behaviour of older members, and in particular the adults of that group (Wilson, 1987).

The third typology is defined as peer group effect and is usually measured with the percentage of pupils or students coming from disadvantaged families. Peer group influences, which can have positive or negative outcomes, consist in contemporaneous influences and can be reciprocal. As is generally true of neighbourhood effects, also the level of peer effects appears to be stronger for specific populations. For instance, students from families of the lower social classes with low incomes seem to gain more from a “high quality” composition of their class. However, the converse is also true: in fact, those students from disadvantaged households are also more vulnerable than others in a “low quality” class composition.

The peer group composition of schools may be debatable but it is undeniably important from the point of view of parents as well as policymakers at the local and state level. Peer effects have loomed large, especially in the Anglo-Saxon context, in a number of policy debates (ability tracking, anti-poverty programmes and school desegregation, etc.) and at the same time have also gained a certain currency in common sense and everyday life.

It is in fact in this frame that we can interpret, as we will observe later on in this chapter, all those strategies deliberately implemented by middle class families, in order to avoid “bad neighbourhood schools”.

Therefore, in comparison with the limited impact of conventional inputs, it seems that institutional elements underlying the processes of educational segregation are important in producing or failing to produce equal results from public educational policies. This hypothesis also seems to be confirmed by the empirical evidence of the decreasing results in the average quality of social relations, showing more efficiency, as a consequence of the socio-economic differentiation of school class composition (Henderson 1978; Robertson-Symon 1996; Zimmer-Toma 2000).

Another aspect of the peer group effect is the relationship existing between the class composition, with its role of intergenerational transmission of positive values, and the structure of the external community. In fact, school class composition also appears to be influenced by the surrounding community structure. In the case of the private schools, for instance, especially those inspired by religious values, the fact of being “embedded” in a community characterized by dense and close

relations seems to determine a selection of behavioural models and rules in accordance with positive educational results⁴ (Coleman et al., 1982).

The relationship existing between the educational output and many of the variables considered, presents some methodological problems such as the distortion due to the level of aggregation and difficulties in the measurement of teacher quality, which is quite a complicated variable to control. Another problem lies in the absence of some variables which are important but difficult to measure from a statistical point of view, such as the natural abilities of each student.

As observed above, an important role also seems to be played by the quality of social interaction and behavioural models occurring at the school class level. However, from the methodological perspective we can consider some problems similar to those already discussed in the second chapter, concerning neighbourhood effects in general: the so-called methodological bias. In particular, it is difficult to separate completely the weight and influence of familiar characteristics, which may be hidden and not clearly observable even if they continue to play a role: for instance, the fact that school choices are made by families in order to guarantee their children the best learning conditions. However, as emerges from the empirical analysis, we still believe that these effects have a certain impact even if, as is generally true in the case of neighbourhood effects, they are very difficult to measure and estimate in their pure effect.

4.4 The institutional structure and organization

Together with the household and social environment in which the educational process takes place, there is a very important variable to take into consideration: the institutional frame and organization, which has a decisive role in the structuring of educational processes.

In general, we can identify two major functions that schools and educational systems have to exercise: a role in the socialization process and selection to allocate social positions and status.

However, every national system implements these objectives following a particular structure and organization of education. In general we can say that all the organizations are structured on three main points: the degree of stratification, standardization and centralization.

⁴ Measurement of the educational output has proved somewhat controversial in the sociological literature. Sometimes it is the productivity remunerated on the labour market that is taken into consideration (Card-Krueger 1995, Betts 1995) or some indices related to individual or aggregate school experience.

As has been recognized in part of the literature, one of the most significant characterizations concerns the degree of stratification (Muller and Shavit 1998; Kerckhoff 2001) related to both the vertical and the hierarchical internal differentiation. Respecting criteria such as the intellectual prestige and reputation in order to advance in the educational career.

From the analytical point of view we can consider some elements determining the degree of stratification of a certain educational system (Schizzerotto and Barone 2006):

- a) presence or absence of career differentiation at secondary level education
- b) the stage of secondary education at which this differentiation starts. The earlier it starts the greater will be the stratification
- c) the extent of the differences existing between the various curricula and specializations (academic versus vocational and professional education)
- d) intra mobility within the educational system: free movement from one curriculum to another and in particular from vocational to academic education.

As we will see in the specific cases of Italy and France, each country is positioned on an axis ranging going from maximum to minimum stratification. There will be a maximum degree of stratification if the system is greatly differentiated between its academic and professional characterization; if this differentiation starts at the very beginning of lower secondary school, as happens for example in Germany; if programmes and contents are very much differentiated between academic and vocational education; if transition from professional to academic education is particularly restricted and difficult.

From the institutional perspective, most of the literature agrees in attributing, following the criteria described above, the most highly standardized model to Germany and, by contrast, the least standardized one to the US.

At this point, we will focus on the two countries of particular interest for this research: Italy and France, both presenting a medium level of stratification.

The Italian educational system presents differentiation only starting from high school, which is divided into three main categories: professional, technical and academic (*Liceo*), the latter having various curricula.

Even if the degree of curricula differentiation is not very high (unlike the situation in Germany) and every type of high school allows for access to university; some faculties may set a very difficult selection test, for which a good cultural preparation is required: an adequate level could be attained with academic education such as that of the "*Liceo Classico*".

However, we can generally state that in Italy neither the secondary nor the tertiary level of education is greatly stratified.

In France, on the contrary, there is a considerable difference in the stratification level between secondary and tertiary education. In the case of lower secondary education, 1975 saw an important reform that created one only cycle of the so called “Collège”, making education apparently⁵ more “comprehensive” and more equal.

At high school level, even if there is a differentiation as in Italy, between *Ecole professionnelle* and *Lycée*, and at the same time, between Baccalauréat Professionnelle (*Bac Pro*) and Baccalauréat Général (*Bac G*) having three different curricula⁶, the final result is the same title of Baccalauréat, *Le Bac*. As we will see in the details of our empirical analysis, most data show that there is a clear social selection for different types of school. Therefore, most students from disadvantaged families of the lower social classes will more often be “directed” towards Professional schools or *Bac Professionnel*, or in the most successful cases towards a *Bac Economique et sociale*, instead of a *Bac Scientifique* or *Littéraire*.

Although all educational credentials give access to “mainstream” university, the type of high school and its location, as we will see later on, might have a great influence on the future academic career.

In fact, the French tertiary system is much more stratified and differentiated than the Italian system. There is a marked hierarchy between different academic careers, in particular between Universities and “Grands Ecoles”. They differ in the level of selection, in the quality of the preparation provided and most of all, in terms of the prestige characterizing the “Grands Ecoles”, in the working opportunities that these two different institutions can offer. As we have seen, selection in these “Grands Ecoles” is very strict, and economic and social capital therefore offer quite useful support to achieve the objective of entering these schools. These tests have such importance in the framework of French Tertiary education that some schools preparing students for the test, the so-called “Ecoles Préparatoires”, have been created and officially inserted in the Institutional Education System.

As is fairly evident, not all this selection is based exclusively on merit and skills. In view of the extremely high investment required of students and their families, it proves mainly a social selection or, as Bourdieu and Passeron put it, a reproductive tool of social inequalities (1970).

The existence of highly selective schools is not of course a problem in itself, but it becomes critical if their prestige transforms other universities into “second level universities”, recruiting all those students that failed to get places in the *Grands Ecole* or did not even have the opportunity to try. Therefore, in the French tertiary system there are at least two levels of stratification: a

⁵ For a detailed description of this important reform that strongly changed the French Educational System, making it less stratified, please see Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2009.

⁶ The série scientifique (S) is concerned with the natural sciences, physical sciences and mathematics, the série économique et sociale (ES) with economics, social sciences and mathematics, and the série littéraire (L) with French, literature and history.

differentiation between the *Grands Ecoles* and Universities and between the peripheral and the more elitist universities, which quite often corresponds, in particular in the case of Paris and Iles de France, to a territorial dualism between centre and suburbs.

Having tackled the important issue of the stratification characterizing educational systems, we will now consider the level of selection.

The Italian school system was traditionally characterized by quite a high level of selection performed by failing or rejecting students, particularly concentrated at high school and university level. However, this selection seems to have decreased over the years.

In Italy, too, these selection processes appear to be socially structured and involve in most cases students and pupils from family backgrounds in the lower social classes, more often showing situations of social disadvantage. Due to some characteristics such as irregular educational careers, less economic and social capital, students from the lower social classes usually opt for professional education and more rarely attend universities than their fellow students from higher social backgrounds. Otherwise, should they choose university, they “prefer” less prestigious and less selective specialization, usually avoiding those faculties such as medicine or engineering requiring a very heavy investment in terms of risk, time, resources and possibly social capital, which is quite important to continue with that professional career (Pisati 2002, Barone, Luijkx, Schizzerotto 2010). The Italian school system shows quite a low degree of selection, limited differentiations in the curricula of the various high school typologies and a weak relationship between education and professional demand on the part of the labour market. However, even if this relationship between school and labour market is quite weak in Italy, high school seems to operate a sort of pre-orientation in the labour market. Nevertheless, at the same time it is to be noted that a certain type of education is not always associated with a specific job or position in the labour market. Therefore, we can say that the relationship between education and employment is relatively weak due to certain specific problems having to do with the efficiency of the Italian educational system, at both the academic and vocational level (Schizzerotto, Cobalti 1998), but also due to scant transparency in the recruitment processes within the labour market, where social backgrounds and social capital still play a decisive role, as we will see in the chapter dedicated to the labour markets.

As far as France is concerned, we can extend to that country some of the observations referring to Italy.

For example there is a weak relationship between education and professional qualification, even though in the last fifteen years some important initiatives have been introduced to facilitate professional transition after high school (Goux and Maurin 1998). However, as we will see in the following sections, in particular in peripheral neighbourhoods, such as those concerning our

research, we find the greatest difficulties in transition from education to labour market for young men and women, and in particular for those of immigrant origin.

Compared to Italy, France has always invested more and better in the professional qualification of degree-holders, even if the differentiation discussed above still applies, between students who attended a *Grand Ecole*, a good university or a university with a poor reputation.

To conclude, from a general institutional perspective, we could say that the French school system appears to be more efficient than the Italian system. “ (...) nel caso della Francia le inefficienze sul piano formative della socializzazione scolastica risultano decisamente meno acute di quelle presenti nel nostro paese”

(Schizzerotto, Barone; 2006 p. 69). However, as we will see in detail later on in the empirical part of our research, this does not mean that the French educational system is always better than the Italian one, since in fact, efficiency does not always coincide with equality.

As well as the level of stratification, institutional structures of educational systems are different also for the level of standardization of the public services provided and for their degree of centralization.

In general, we can define a school system as highly standardized if certain elements are the same throughout the country and for educational levels, for example:

- a) educational programmes
- b) similar procedures and evaluation criteria
- c) homogenous level of teacher qualification
- d) similar support in terms of finances and structures

At the same time, the level of centralization/decentralization is a matter of the distribution of institutional functions and roles among the different governmental levels: schools, the regional and provincial level, the national government through the Minister of Education.

Clearly, the level of both standardization and centralization refer to the ways in which the different systems perform their institutional roles. Standardization is in principle a way to assure equality in the treatment and learning processes of students, while differentiation or de-standardization facilitates the capability of school systems to adapt to specific needs coming from different socio-territorial contexts within the country. The level of centralization relates to the historical process and institutional tradition through which the educational system has been structured. As far as France and Italy are concerned, traditionally they both have a centralized system, also due to the

different roles played on one hand by the State and on the other by the church and religion (Schizzerotto and Barone 2006; Ventura 1997).

This centralization of the French and Italian school systems was also recognized in an OECD study (1998) underlining how both systems are characterized in this direction. This is all in part still true, even if both countries have since the end of the nineties gone through major reforms of their educational systems aiming at a greater decentralization.

However, although social reality and practice often runs beyond the institutional models, at least from a purely institutional perspective, we can still affirm that in both systems the national level, through the Ministry of Education, performs the most important functions, controlling all other levels through regional (*Académies* in France and *Uffici scolastici* in Italy) and provincial bodies (*Départments* in France and *Centri per i servizi amministrativi* in Italy), while the final decisional level regarding specific educational choices, such as the number of hours for each school subject, directly concerns schools and their administrators (*Directeurs d'établissements* and *Dirigenti scolastici*).

In both countries, even if the local institutions may co-finance schools in their territory, the main decisions are up to the Ministry of Education, such as: major financial investments, recruitment of teachers, and other organizational aspects regulating, for instance, the minimum or maximum number of students in a class.

However, it is once again important to remember that in concrete, as some scholars (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006 p.216) observe with regard to the case of France, organisation may vary at ground level:

« La plus part des analyses globales du fonctionnement de l'école en France se fondent, explicitement sur le postulat d'un Etat centrale doté d'une forte cohérence interne, d'une grande légitimité et d'une importante capacité d'action. Pourtant ces caractéristiques doivent être réévaluées à l'aune de la mondialisation qui suscite l'émergence de normes et de formes d'action publique dont la production échappe aux acteurs nationaux et du rôle de nouvelles instances supranationales comme l'Union Européenne qui cadrent beaucoup plus fortement que par le passé les orientations des politiques nationales, y compris dans le domaine de l'éducation, comme on l'observe déjà au niveau de l'enseignement supérieur. Elles doivent aussi tenir compte d'un processus de décentralisation favorisant un foisonnement d'initiative locales qui débordent largement le cadre réglementaire actuel et dont les effets sur des questions cruciales comme l'accroissement ou de la réduction des inégalités ont à peine été évalués. On observe en fait le passage d'une régulation centralisée à des multi-régulations, qui se déclinent de façon diverse selon les contextes locaux et nationaux ».

To conclude, the global quality of the educational supply, which influences the balance between equality and inequality of opportunities, does not simply depend on a centralized or decentralized reference point but mainly on the structures the system takes on at the national and local level, following specific rules and mechanisms.

Education in the urban space

4.5 Segregation and Education

The relationship between segregation and inequality is quite a complex phenomenon because it is to be seen at various spatial levels and concerns different institutions and social practices.

An important aspect in general associated with segregation is the problem of the services and resources available at the local level.

The structural characteristics of a neighbourhood in terms of the presence or absence of specific services and infrastructures such as schools are elements contributing to the quality and reputation of an area.

As some scholars have shown, opportunities of access to material and symbolic goods offered by the city are unequal (Pinçon-Charlot, Préteceille - 1986 - on the relation between urban segregation, social class and collective equipments in Ile de France).

However, let us remember that, in particular in the case of school and education, a simple consideration of the number of resources and the status and quality of the premises is not enough. In fact, we should always take into consideration the quality of social relations and practices obtaining there.

As some scholars have recently acknowledged (Oberti, 2007), school is the element accounting more than others for the relationship between segregation and social inequalities.

This is particularly true in the case of France, where school is at the centre of social inequalities and more in general of social relations. Around school and education, as we will see, there are many strategies and much interplay deliberately implemented by middle class families in order to obtain the most prestigious educational credentials.

« Les classements et les verdicts scolaires y trouvent une traduction sociale particulièrement forte qui rejaillit sur le prestige social des individus et leur possibilité d'accès aux meilleurs positions.

Objet de toutes les critiques, elle continue d'être l'institution par excellence à travers la quelle le devenir social des individus est pensé, voir fantasmé» (Oberti 2007, p. 36).

As pointed out at the end of this passage, very often the real weight and influence of education on an individuals' chances and opportunities in life seem even to be overestimated, leading to a sort of obsession which contributes to aggravating social inequalities.

In this specific context, attempts to access those schools having the best reputation and avoid the others considered less prestigious, due also to the characteristics of their population, seem to increase educational segregation and, in a more indirect way, also urban segregation in general.

As observed by Serge Paugam:

«Le système scolaire actuel comporte, en effet, de nombreuses filières savamment hiérarchisées, les meilleurs permettent à l'élite l'accès aux grandes écoles et aux postes les plus recherchés, les moins valorisées offrent des formations et occupations inadaptées au marché de l'emploi et ne pouvant conduire qu'au chômage. A ce mécanisme de ségrégation interne s'ajoutent les pratiques diverses et souvent subtiles des classes supérieures ou moyennes pour éviter les établissements à trop forte concentration d'enfants des catégories populaire ou immigrées, dans lesquels les filières et les options sont souvent peu attractives et les conditions d'apprentissage parfois médiocres» (Paugam 1995, p. 568).

In Italy the issue of segregation is less debated than in France. This difference then is first of all structural and depends on dissimilar level and articulation of this phenomenon.

As some scholars recognize (Zajczyk, Borlini, Memo, Mugnano 2005), Italian cities are less homogeneous than other contexts, including French cities, from the social and ethnic⁷ point of view. The presence of low income families and immigrants is more evenly spread around the city, even if there may be micro-concentrations of social disadvantage, as is the case of *via Pascarella* in our neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro in Milan. However, it is to be noted that this difference is not purely quantitative but also qualitative.

We could say that the impact of urban segregation seems to be less strong than in France but, nevertheless its consequences on school and education are not irrelevant. Even if in Italy we generally find a less tense attitude towards school and educational success, due to certain institutional differences and the more relevant role played by social capital, educational segregation seems to be an increasingly relevant phenomenon. Nevertheless, only a few Italian researches (Memo and Borlini 2009; Vitale and Torre 2009) have focused on the relation between urban

⁷ As already noted in the introductory chapter, the phenomenon of immigration is quite recent in Italy and shows dimensions and characteristics differing from those in France.

segregation and education. In particular, the few studies tackling the problem of segregation in Italian contexts focus mainly on immigration, considering school as a social space where the effects of integration processes are more evident.

The relationship between immigration and segregation is extremely important, because the phenomenon of over-representation of one or more ethnic groups may turn into actual segregation processes (Memo and Borlini 2009), as the experience in some countries such as France has shown in relation to the integration at school of second- and third-generation immigrants, in most cases French citizens.

However, it is important not to limit our consideration on educational segregation to immigration. In fact, in particular in the case of Italy, where immigration differs in dimensions from the situation in France, the problems of educational segregation can concern not only immigrant origin students but more in general the whole local population. In this case, as we will see for Quarto Oggiaro, it is extremely interesting to observe local educational dynamics: the similarities and differences in educational experience between immigrant and Italian students who, despite the differences due to nationality and migrant experience, live in the same neighbourhood and present similar socio-economic characteristics.

Returning, now, to schooling strategies, as underlined on the above-mentioned research (Memo and Borlini 2009) in the Italian and Milanese case, despite the absence of regulation like the French “*Carte Scolaire*”, there are certain characteristics giving a different pattern to schooling.

For instance, young couples tend to live close to their parents’ homes in order to receive future assistance, for example in taking children to and fetching them from school. In addition, the high rate of housing ownership makes it less simple for households to move for educational choices and preferences. As already pointed out, this relationship with school is generally less tense in Italy, where the varying status of schools does not seem to be strongly institutionalized, as is the case in France. Precise information on the quality and standards of schools is not available and here schools are more informally judged on the basis of comments and opinions exchanged among parents.

Despite all these structural differences, from the few studies available and on the basis of our empirical research, as we will see later on, these kinds of parental strategies are in any case well established and play quite a significant role in local contexts, in particular, after lower secondary school. This is a finding that goes in the same direction as the international evidence (Butler and Robinson 2003), which underlines how for primary school, schooling strategies are less often implemented, since parents generally adopt a more strategic approach towards education only after the first school cycle.

To conclude this preliminary discussion on the relationship between education and segregation, what we will try to do with empirical analysis is to clarify better the underlying mechanisms and dynamics in the two different contexts. In doing so we will bear in mind that social relations, including those at school as a physical place and around school as an institution, are hierarchically structured in a social and urban space.

4.6 Policies and status of educational segregation in France and Italy

France

When tackling the relationship between segregation and education in France, one of the first and most important concepts to deal with is the “*carte scolaire*”, an institutional tool established in 1963 with the aim of providing all children with equal access to school according to their abilities.

Originally the «*carte scolaire*» was a national policy aiming at rationalizing the different institutes at the local level. As far as secondary education is concerned, the main objective was response to the needs of the national economy. At the same time the effect has also been regulation of school flows and their classification in different sectors (Charlot, 1994). In order to avoid disparities between different schools, this policy created a sort of rule associating students with their place of residence through “*sectorisation*”.

In specific contexts, this tool is therefore able to determine the structure of attendance of each school, from the social point of view, on the basis of the resident population.

This element of the “*sectorisation*” which was originally just one aspect of the “*carte scolaire*” assumed great importance, becoming to a certain extent the main focus of this policy.

In the academic and political debate, the “*carte scolaire*” has been much discussed and analysed from many perspectives. Some scholars have shown how this policy also created negative outcomes such as the schooling strategies implemented deliberately by middle class families and a great concurrence among different schools, all elements aggravating educational segregation.

Moving on from these assumptions, as from the nineties the Ministry of Education tried to re-focus the “*carte scolaire*” on the paradigm of “*mixité sociale*”. Recent studies recognize that its administration has proved debatable, also producing results opposite to those intended (Laforgue, 2005).

In general, we may define two main positions: those willing to abolish “*carte scolaire*” and pushing for a free choice for families and stronger competitiveness among schools to attract students, and

those who are on the contrary convinced of the increasingly serious territorial inequalities in urban contexts.

A relatively recent study conducted by the *Rectorat de Paris* (2005) has helped identify some typical mechanisms of “*sectorisation*” and the choices and strategies implemented by families.

The eight percent of the households living in a neighbourhood classified as “*urbain défavorisé*” are able to bypass the “*carte scolaire*”, sending their children to a lower secondary school situated in a good neighbourhood classified as “*urbain favorisé*”.

This study identified several criteria and mechanisms through which the schooling strategies take place. The first concerns the image of the school, seeking to extend the educational supply by diversifying classes and proposing different curricula (*section Latiniste, Cham*⁸, *Européenne*). However, as we will see with our empirical analysis at the local level, educational segregation does not simply concern the relationship between different schools but can also concern classes in the same institute due to the existence of specialized classes, creating as a consequence a social stratification on the basis of social capital and background.

The second element has to do with the safety and security of students (Baconnier, Marguerite, Geoffroy 2008) while the third concerns the stability and turnover of teachers.

In short, according to this research, these are all criteria that families look to when choosing a school. Indeed, should these requirements not be completely satisfied they may implement practices of “*évitement scolaire*”.

Recently, in order to respond to this phenomenon of schooling, which seems to be very widespread in particular in Paris and its surroundings, the national government has tried to redefine the “*carte scolaire*”, promoting the above-mentioned objective of social mix.

As from 2007 parents can send their children to schools out of their own sector, if the institute is able to accept students other than those assigned on the basis of the residence. However, some priority criteria are set and concern: students with disabilities; students with scholarships based on merit; students responding to certain social criteria; children who need serious medical care delivered close to the school requested; students requiring a particular educational programme; students whose brothers and sister attend the same school; and students living close to the sector border.

In the opinion of the Ministry:

« Les résultats de cette première étape d'assouplissement de la carte scolaire sont très encourageants. Les taux de satisfaction des demandes des familles ont progressé en s'établissant respectivement à 77 % et 67 %, en hausse de 10 et 6 points par rapport à l'année précédente. Plus de

⁸ A specific curriculum at lower secondary school, proposing art and music alongside the regular school subjects.

13 500 demandes d'inscription supplémentaires hors secteur ont été formulées par les familles, dont environ un tiers à l'entrée de la classe de sixième et deux tiers pour la classe de seconde » (Communication en conseil des ministres, 25/7/2007; Baconnier, Marguerite, Geoffroy 2008).

From the emphasis of this statement, it seems that the national authorities are not so much concerned with the real problem of educational segregation as with increasing educational options and freedom for families.

Norberto Bottani (2007), an expert on European educational systems, explains this from an electoral point of view, judging these measures as political strategies to gain credit among middle class households, probably a strategic political target for the right-wing government.

However, on the evidence of references in the literature, most scholars agree that not all students will be able to benefit from deregulation (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006).

In fact, the gap between lower and upper social class students could remain the same, if not even greater. For instance, a previous study conducted in Lille by Bartho and Monfroy (2004) already registered a fairly marked social division and polarization among different lower secondary schools in the city, following a sort of social hierarchy, associated with educational choices and perceptions of households. Moreover, these authors note the importance of always bearing in mind urban dynamics, which are interconnected with educational policies and administration of schools.

Similarly, Oberti (2007), with the research conducted in Hauts-de-Seine, shows how in the same context there may be co-existence of excellent schools with others more typical of a “*banlieue populaire*”.

It is worth noting that schooling and family strategies towards education are not the same in every context. In fact, as shown by Oberti, they can vary at the local level from one context to another, even if these places are spatially close, as is the case of Rueil and Nanterre – a fact reminding us once again of the existence of different urban dynamics.

In particular, he notes how some schools in working class neighbourhoods may concentrate a number of students with a similar disadvantaged profile and also shows how the educational supply can bring about a hierarchy among schools, also affirming:

« Ces données questionnent aussi directement la capacité de la carte scolaire à agir sur la mixité sociale dans les collèges. Présentés comme un dispositif de lutte contre la ségrégation scolaire, ces résultats mettent en évidence son faible impact sur les pratiques des classes moyennes et surtout supérieures, qui subissent le moins les contraintes spatiales. Les classes populaires voient au contraire leur assignation spatiale (liée, dans les quartiers les plus dégradés, à une forte stigmatisation) renforcée par une assignation scolaire qui fonctionne de façon beaucoup plus efficace à leur égard. Effet paradoxal d'une mesure visant à lutter contre les inégalités sociales à

l'école (la mixité étant censée atténuer les différences sociales et scolaires entre établissements), et qui s'applique précisément de façon profondément inégalitaire en faveur des classes les plus favorisées » (Oberti 2007 p.21).

In the same direction Korsu (2004) analyses some mechanisms of competitiveness among schools, such as the development of policies and programmes to attract students showing good educational results and good social backgrounds. Clearly, in this perspective the function of schools becomes something more than the simple transmission of skills and knowledge, being more a complex and stratified system.

To conclude this analysis, on the evidence of the literature it emerges that most scholars agree on judging this tool as quite inadequate in fighting educational segregation. At the same time, simple changes such as those proposed by the government cannot serve as a solution for educational inequalities (Baconier, Marguerite, Geoffroy 2008).

For example, Lagrange and Oberti (2006) believe that a redefinition of the «carte scolaire» should be more connected with urban policies in general, in order to perform direct actions on the resident population in accordance with other policies such as housing. A similar multidimensional approach is on the other hand called for by those scholars working on residential and housing policies, such as Donzelot (2004), who considers it important to involve not only some residential aspects but also other elements of the urban space, such as schools and education.

In this perspective the challenges of segregation in general, and in particular in education, consist in the direct involvement and constant update of the actors: households, but also institutional actors such as schools (teachers and management) and politicians, both at a national and local level.

Italy

For all the differences discussed in the previous section, the relevance of segregation and even more the attitude towards it seems to be very different in Italy. In the specific case of education, school admission does not seem to represent an issue at all – neither for households nor for school administrations. The so-called “*Bacini di utenza*” corresponding to the French “*sectorisation*” were dismantled during the nineties, without provoking much debate at the political and academic level. In general, it seems that these issues the equality and education concerning students, the role of households and schools as institutions, including all the territorial extensions, assume scant relevance. Nevertheless, as we have already noted and will observe with the empirical analysis, school segregation exists as a social fact and seems to be quite a considerable phenomenon in our case study neighbourhood in Milan as in various others (Memo and Borlini 2009).

The first difference between France and Italy lies in the terms. In fact, as noted by Bottani (2007): «In Italia, in genere, quando si parla di libertà di scelta della scuola si intende tutt'altra cosa, ossia la libertà di scegliere tra scuola statale e scuola parificata. Anche in questo caso, in Italia, il discorso pedagogico è del tutto peculiare perché attribuisce un significato lessicale speciale ad un termine comunemente utilizzato a livello internazionale con un altro significato. Capita dunque che in Italia, quando si parla di libertà di scelta della scuola ci si riferisca a qualcosa di diverso da quello che si pensa fuori dall'Italia».

In Italy, free school choice – the possibility of households to choose a certain school for their children, without being addressed to a specific institute according to the residence – was introduced during the nineties, when the Ministry of Education abolished the “*bacini di utenza*”, a measure later completed with the law on school autonomy (*Riorganizzazione della rete scolastica, formazione delle classi e determinazione degli organici del personale della scuola*) applied in 1998 through the ministerial decree 331 and without creating much debate.

The decree simply stops mentioning the presence of “*bacini di utenza*”. «La data della fine dei cosiddetti bacini di utenza (ma questa definizione non è mai entrata in uso nel nostro paese: non esiste nessuna legge che ne parli, salvo i cosiddetti "circoli" didattici che implicavano un certa rigidità nelle iscrizioni) può essere idealmente fissata nel 1999 con l'emanazione del regolamento sull'autonomia (DPR 275), con il quale venne definito il famoso POF, cioè il "piano dell'offerta formativa". Con esso le scuole possono "offrire" il loro prodotto educativo a tutti i potenziali destinatari senza alcun vincolo geografico, salvo la disponibilità di aule, che dipende dall'ente locale, Provincia o Comune. (..) Quello che sta succedendo è inverosimile ma non se ne può parlare (tanto meno c'è qualcuno che lo studia), perché qui - nelle scuole - hanno tutti la coscienza sporca: sono contro il mercato e le liberalizzazioni, ma gli istituti (soprattutto le scuole secondarie superiori) si fanno una guerra senza quartiere. Le "armi" utilizzate sono le cosiddette sperimentazioni, che ormai non si contano più. Ovviamente, le vittime di questa liberalizzazione all'italiana sono i cittadini che non hanno nessuna difesa contro le contraffazioni e le truffe» (Drago, reported in Bottani 2007).

This means that, even if less evidently than in France, similar dynamics may occur in Italy as well, in particular at the micro level. However, the confusion reigning in the institutional functioning of schools makes it more difficult to point up this phenomenon, which is almost totally ignored since the academic production has never worked on this issue, except the studies⁹ already mentioned. To conclude, this difference between France and Italy could once again be explained by the

⁹ Alongside the research of Memo and Borlini (2009) we could also mention Martini and Rondanini: Un rischio di separazione etnica strisciante?. In: USR-IRRE-Regione Emilia-Romagna, Una scuola alla prova, Rapporto regionale 2005 sul sistema d'istruzione e formazione, Cap.6: Tanti colori nella cartella, pp. 161-166.

different weight individuals and institutional actors attribute to education. In general, even if less efficient, the Italian educational seems to be more equal. However, as will be observed, micro mechanisms of segregation and structuring of inequalities are not totally external to the system.

Annex to chapter 4

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FRENCH EDUCATION SYSTEM (Source : www.education.gouv.fr/)

In France there are five levels of education:

Pre-primary (école maternelle)
Primary/Elementary (école primaire)
Lower Secondary (le collège)
Upper Secondary (le lycée)
Post-Secondary

Pre-primary education: ages 2-6

Primary education (Education primaire)

Compulsory beginning at age 6
Five years in length
2 cycles:
Le cycle des apprentissages fondamentaux (Basic Learning Cycle)
2 years in length
Focus on Math, Reading, Writing, other basic skills
Le cycle des approfondissements (Advanced Cycle)
3 years in length
Focus: Maths, French Language, Social sciences, Sciences, and Foreign Language

No credential is awarded upon completion of elementary school
Brevet Informatique et Internet-Level 1
Computer and internet certificate
Not required to move on to lower secondary school

Lower secondary education (Collège)

4 years in length, 3 cycles
Le cycle d'adaptation (adjustment cycle) 1 year
Sixième (6th year)
French, math, modern foreign language, history-geography-civics, science technology, arts, physical education
Le cycle central 2 years
Cinquième (5th year) and Quatrième (4th year)
Same subjects as in 6th year and Latin or regional language elective
Le cycle d'orientation 1 year
Troisième (3rd year)
Preparation for upper secondary school and choice of stream

Upon completion of the 3rd year (*troisième*) students are awarded le Diplome national du brevet (DNB) based on national exams and grades earned in the 4th year (*quatrième*) and 3rd year (*troisième*)

Upper Secondary School (Le Lycée)

Le lycée d'enseignement general awards the baccalaureat de l'enseignement du second degre

Le lycée technologique awards the baccalaureat technologique

All bac programmes are 3 years in length. Common curriculum in year 1, with students streamed in the final 2 years

Seconde (1st year)

Première (2nd year)

Terminal (final year)

Streams for Bac général

Scientifique –Bac S (Math, physics-chemistry, life & earth sciences, engineering sciences)

Littéraire – Bac L (Modern languages, classics –Latin or Greek, arts)

Economique et social –le Bac ES (Society & economics, math, languages)

Streams for le Bac Technologique

STT: Tertiary Sciences and Technologies

STI: Industrial Sciences & Technologies

STL: Lab Sciences and Technology

SMS: Medical & Social Sciences

STPA: Agricultural Production Sciences and Technology

STAE: Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and Technology

TMD: Music & Dance Techniques

H: Hotel/Restaurant Management

Vocational education at the secondary level:

CAP: Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle

BEP: Brevet d'études professionnelles

BP: Brevet professionnel

BM: Brevet de maitrise

BTM: Brevet Technique des Metiers

Bac Pro: Baccalaureat professionnel

Brevet des Metiers d'Art

All programmes offered at the lycée professionnel.

CAP (Certificat d'aptitude professionnel)

Prepares students for specialized employment in commercial, industrial and service sectors

2-year programme following lower secondary school (3rd year or troisième)

Includes general, technical and professional coursework

Leads to workforce entry, further study in the specialization, in a BEP, BM, Bac pro, BT, BTM,

BMA programme

BEP Brevet d'études professionnelles

2-year programme based on completion of lower secondary school 3rd year (troisième)

Comprises 50% general studies (sciences, math, French, history, geography, physical education) and 50% technical and professional studies. Foreign language required.

- Brevet Professionnel (BP) 2-year post CAP/BEP completed through apprenticeship or continuing education
- Brevet de Maitrise (BM) 2-year continuing education advancement of technical or management knowledge. Requires CAP/BEP plus 3 years of work experience for admission.
- Brevet Technique des Métiers (BTM) 2-year post CAP/BEP continuing ed or apprenticeship.
- Brevet des Metiers d'Art (BMA) 2-year programme for CAP/BEP holders
- Bac Pro (Baccalaureat professionnel)

1 year after CAP/BEP

Programme includes general studies, professional studies and training in industry.

Holders of the Bac Pro can continue in a Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS) programme or enter the workforce

Higher Education

Universités

Instituts universitaires de technologie (IUT)

Instituts universitaires de formation des maitres (IUFM)

Section de techniciens supérieurs (STS)

Classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles (CPGE)

Ecoles d'ingénieurs

Ecoles de commerce, vente, gestion, compatibilité

Others

Short programmes

BTS (Brevet de technicien supérieur)

2 year programmes include internship and continuing education

Leads to employment in upper level technician positions or further education at an IUP, engineering school or university (second year of DEUG)

DUT (Diplome universitaire de technologie)

2 year programmes , include internship and continuing education

Leads to employment , IUP , engineering school or entrance to 2nd year of DEUG

The IUP's (*Instituts universitaires professionnalisés*)

3-year programmes requiring at least 1 year of post-bac study for admission

Students with the BTS, DEUG or DUT can be admitted to 2nd year

Diplomas awarded:

End of 1st year: DEUG

End of 2nd year: Licence

End of 3rd year: Maitrise

Upon completion of the IUP program, students enter the workforce or continue their education in a DRT (Diplôme de recherche technologique) or DESS (Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées) programme depending on their field of study.

DRT programmes are 18 months of applied research in industry or in a university lab setting.

DESS programmes are 1 year in length and include theoretical coursework case studies, and internship

University Credentials

DEUG (Diplôme d'études universitaires générales)

-2 year post-bac program

Licence -1 year post-DEUG programme

Maitrise -1 year post-Licence programme

Magistere 3 year post-DEUG programme

DEA or DESS 1 year post-maitrise

Doctorat 2-4 years post-DEA

New Degree Scheme

Licence-Master-Doctorat sequence

Licence 6 semesters after Bac

Licence Générale

Licence Professionnelle

Master 4 semesters after the Licence

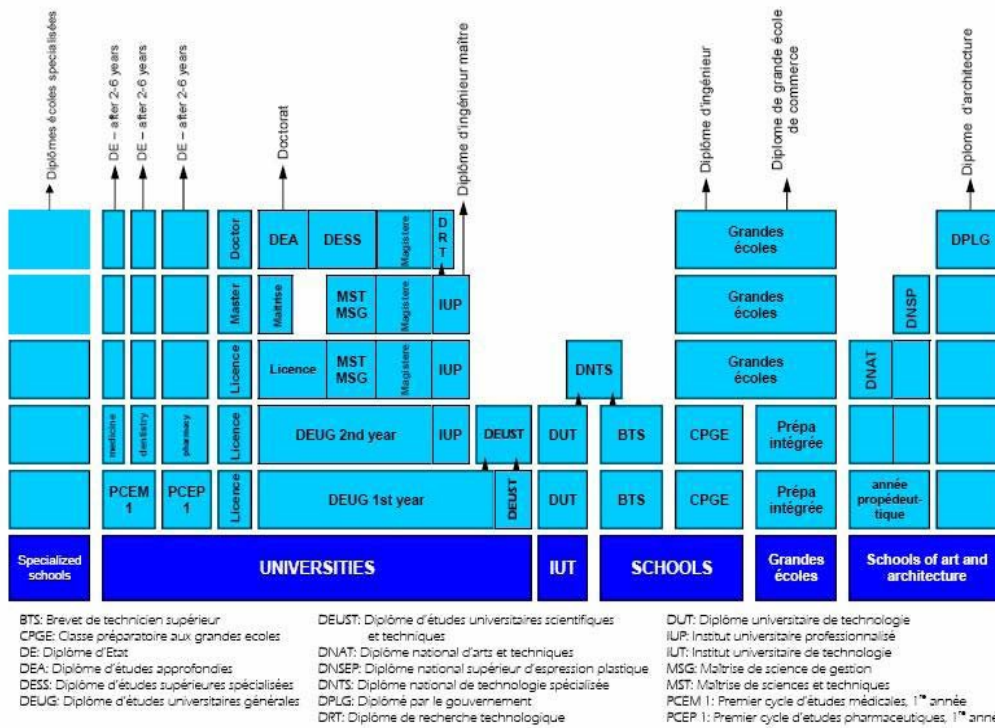
Master Recherche (leads to Doctorat)

Master Professionnel (leads to employment)

Doctorat 6 semesters after the Master

Requires research and thesis

After the BAC – post-Baccalauréat options in France



Adapted from *Après le Bac*, ONISEP France

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ITALIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (Source: Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione)

In Italy there are five levels of education:

Pre-primary (scuola materna)
Primary/Elementary (scuola elementare)
Lower Secondary (scuola media)
Upper Secondary (scuola superiore)
Higher Education (Università e politecnico)

Childcare in Italy

Small children can be looked after in a variety of ways: by childminders and in playgroups or day nurseries. These facilities are sometimes run by the *comune* and frequently by private organisations.

Kindergarten/Pre-school (Scuola Materna)

For ages three to five, the *scuola materna* provides optional education for children and every child is entitled to a place. It is not obligatory for a child to attend preschool but most parents enrol their children in a *scuola materna*. Preschool in Italy is free except in private schools.

Primary School (Scuola Primaria/Elementare)

School in Italy is compulsory from the age of six onwards. Recent changes in legislation mean that children may start *scuola primaria* from the age of five and a half onwards (this is to bring Italian schools in line with European schools regarding school leaving ages). All children who will be six years old by 31 December following the start of the school year can register for primary school.

At primary school children learn to read and write and study mathematics, geography, Italian, English, science, music, computer studies, religion (optional) and social studies. Primary school lasts five years. Classes have between 10 and 25 pupils each. Until recently pupils had to pass an exam at the end of year five before they could progress to secondary school, but this is no longer the case.

Lower secondary school

Attendance at lower secondary school (*scuola media*) is mandatory for all children between the ages of 11 and 14. A national curriculum is followed, as mandated by the Ministry of Public Education (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, MPI). Students are required to attend 30 hours of classes per week, though some schools may offer additional classes if there is demand (up to 40 hours). These afternoon classes, which are usually financed from the school budget, may include computer classes, foreign language, sports, music lessons (though instruments are purchased by parents) and chess clubs.

Every term, each student receives a teacher's report outlining their aptitude, behaviour and achievement. At the end of the third year, pupils sit a standard examination consisting of written papers in Italian, as well as exams in mathematics, science and a foreign language. An oral exam is

also administered in all subjects except religion. Successful students are awarded their lower secondary school diploma (*diploma di licenza media*) and move on to upper secondary school.

Upper secondary school

There are two categories of upper secondary school: the *liceo*, which is more academic in nature, and an *istituto*, which is essentially a vocational school.

There are generally places available for all students at upper secondary schools. This is, for example, a difference from the French system, where there are just a certain number of places available every year.

University is available to all students if they have completed five years of secondary school and received an upper secondary school diploma. It is possible for students who have attended vocational schools to attend university. If a student attended a four-year secondary school programme, an additional year of schooling is necessary to qualify for university.

In order to receive the upper secondary school diploma (*diploma di maturità*), students must take and pass written and oral exams.

Different Upper Secondary Schools

Various types of high school (*liceo*) that students can attend which specialize in different subjects:

Classical High School (*Liceo Classico*)

This lasts for five years and prepares the student for university level studies. Latin, Greek and Italian literature form an important part of the curriculum. During the last three years philosophy and history of art are also studied.

Scientific High School (*Liceo Scientifico*)

Lasts for five years with emphasis on physics, chemistry and natural sciences. The student also continues to study Latin and one modern language

Fine Arts High School (*Liceo Artistico*)

Studies can last four to five years and prepare for university studies in painting, sculpture or architecture

Teacher Training School (*Istituto Magistrale*)

Studies last for five years and prepare future primary school teachers. There is also a three-year training course for nursery school teachers, but this diploma does not entitle students to go on to enrol at a university.

Artistic Schools (*Istituto d'Arte*)

Studies last three years and prepare for work within an artistic field and leading to an arts qualification (*diploma di Maestro d'Arte*)

Technical Institutes (*Istituti Tecnici*)

Studies last five years and prepare for both university studies and for a vocation. The majority of students are in technical schools that prepare students for work in a technical or administrative capacity in agriculture, industry or commerce.

Professional Institutes (*Istituti Professionali*)

These studies lead, in three or five years, to vocational qualification.

Higher Education

Higher education in Italy falls into three distinct categories: university education, higher-level artistic and musical training, higher-level technical training and various other higher education opportunities.

The entire sector, but especially the university education category, underwent **radical renewal at the end of the 1990s**, motivated both by choices of national significance and by the desire to bring the system into line with the European model outlined by the Bologna Process, which Italy has helped to promote from the outset.

In line with this model, Italian university education is today based on three main cycles of study, which are as follows:

First Cycle (Primo Ciclo)

- Bachelor programme (Corso di Laurea - three years)
- Single-cycle Degree (Corso di Laurea Magistrale a Ciclo Unico - five or six years)

Second Cycle (Secondo Ciclo)

- Master programme (Corso di Laurea Magistrale - two years)
- 1st Level vocational master (Master Universitario di Primo Livello)

Third Cycle (Terzo Ciclo)

- Doctorate (Dottorato di Ricerca)
- Specialisation School (Scuola di Specializzazione)
- 2nd Level vocational master (Master Universitario di Secondo Livello)

Bachelor programme (Laurea)

The 1st level degree course gives the student an appropriate command of general scientific methods and principles, even when the programme is oriented toward the acquisition of specific professional

knowledge, and provides a solid base for those who wish to continue their studies with a 2nd level degree or a 1st level master.

To be admitted to a 1st level degree course, students must have a secondary school diploma or a suitable equivalent foreign qualification.

The 1st level degree course **lasts three years**.

To obtain the qualification (1st level degree) it is necessary to accumulate 180 credits (60 for each year of the course).

Single cycle degree (Laurea Magistrale a ciclo unico)

Single-cycle degree courses do not draw a distinction between the initial three-year period of study and the subsequent two-year period of specialisation; the entire study cycle is structured over a **single period of five or six years**, at the end of which it **confers a 2nd level degree** (laurea magistrale).

The single-cycle degree provides the student with advanced education and training for professions in specific fields regulated by European directives that require a high level of qualification (medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy and architecture) and for access to legal professions.

To be admitted to a single-cycle degree course students must have a secondary school diploma.

To obtain the qualification (single-cycle degree) it is necessary to accumulate 300 credits, in the case of five-year courses, and 360 credits, in the case of six-year courses (60 for each year of the course).

Master programme (Laurea magistrale)

The 2nd level degree, also known as a specialised degree, provides the student with advanced education and training for professions in specific fields that require a high level of qualification.

To be admitted to a 2nd level degree course, students must have a 1st level degree or a suitable equivalent foreign qualification.

The course **lasts two years**.

To obtain the qualification (2nd level degree) it is necessary to accumulate 120 credits (60 for each year of the course).

Vocational master

The aim of a master course is to reinforce, broaden and hone the skills and expertise of graduates and postgraduates, utilising and expanding upon previous training to meet the demands of the professional world. There are both **1st and 2nd level vocational master courses**.

To be admitted to a 1st level master course, which is part of the second cycle of university studies, students must have a 1st level degree.

To be admitted to the 2nd level master course, which is part of the third cycle of university studies, students must have a 2nd level degree.

A vocational master course generally lasts from six months to one year (500 didactic and experiential hours).

To obtain the qualification (1st or 2nd level master) it is necessary to accumulate 60 credits.

There are a limited number of places available for vocational master courses. To be admitted students must pass the selection examinations.

Dottorato di ricerca

Provides the expertise necessary for high-level research activities in universities, public institutions and private associations.

To be admitted to a doctoral programme students must hold a 2nd level degree. Candidates must also pass the selection examination, as only a limited number of places are available.

A doctoral degree is awarded after a period of study lasting three to four years and presenting a final elaboration.

5. School dynamics in local contexts: the case of the haut Montreuil and Quarto Oggiaro

5.1 From the macro institutional to the micro level

Moving on from the macro to the micro level we have to analyse the relationship between individuals and social structures, observing the particular strategies implemented by the actors involved.

In our perspective, we will recognize the primary role played by the structure, albeit without neglecting the importance and relevance of the actor.

In fact, Bordieu himself recognized a change in his perspective. In *La Reproduction* (1970) the “*habitus*” appeared as strictly determined by objective constraints, while later on, in *Le sens pratique* (1980), he recognized that, despite the existence of a limiting structure, the strategies of actors could also play an important part (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2009).

As Bordieu explicitly says, comparing the actor to a good player (*Bon Jouer*), the individual is half way between the rules framing his action and the freedom of his choice. Translating this concept, we can say that in this theoretical frame the context of action gains a relevance. Specific capabilities and resources of the individuals emerge and can therefore be applied.

At the same time, the other main theoretical reference, the so called rational theory or “*théories de l’acteur*” does not forget to frame the individual action in a defined structure of constraints, with the understanding that the actor cannot be totally free in his behaviour.

However, despite some important theoretical convergences, the conclusions of these two approaches to school and education are quite different. The theories of reproduction, such as those of Bordieu and Passeron, focus on social inequalities in educational attainment and school success. Here, the function and functioning of education are contemporaneously considered. They state that the main function of education is not mere transmission of knowledge and skills, but on the contrary, the real aim seems to that of giving sanctions, which are apparently independent of and external to social inequalities. Thus these theories make a distinction between the official function of education, which is not implemented and the latent one, which consists in providing legitimization for social inequalities.

On the contrary, the other theoretical reference represented, for instance, by Boudon, underestimates the role and relevance of education, considering school and academic certificates just as a first step towards professional insertion and therefore as an element playing only a limited role.

An example could be seen in the differences attested in educational performance between boys and girls. Even if women usually have better school results, as shown by many international data, this does not correspond to better socio-professional positions (Duru-Bellat 2004; Checchi, Fiorio, Leonardi 2006), which clearly shows how social inequalities are not limited to education but are within a wider and more complex framework. Starting from this point, some scholars (Moore, 1996) hypothesise overestimation of the role of education in determining social status and position. According to Boudon, social stratification, through an intermediation of the actor, whose strategies always move in a social framework, seems to be the main cause of unequal educational and social opportunities.

Within this perspective, the two main theoretical references, represented respectively by Bourdieu and Boudon, maintaining all their significant differences, could find a convergence. In fact, both express pessimism about the role of school and education in reducing the impact of social inequalities (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006).

These two classical approaches are concerned with the relationship between education and social inequalities but nevertheless, neither of them showed any interest in providing a deep analysis of internal school dynamics.

We, on the contrary, like various other scholars in recent times, mean to investigate in detail, in this part of our research dedicated to education, the mechanisms by which social inequalities are produced and reproduced at school level.

In particular, from the macro and micro perspective, we intend to analyse: access of pupils and students to particular schools; their subsequent population and the interactions inside the peer group, which, as we have seen, could have an influence on educational attainment; the role of the teachers, in part implemented through evaluation and marks; family strategies concerning school choice and the practical results that these choices may have on class composition and interaction. All these aspects will be analysed from both the institutional (as for instance the case of regulation versus free school selection) and micro perspective, paying particular attention to their local manifestations. In particular, the relevant issues to be analyzed are the interconnections between the multiple rationales of the system and the specific practices and behaviours of the actors involved.

« Le défi, pour la sociologie de l'éducation (défi classique pour la sociologie, cf Collins, 1981) est de cumuler les apports respectifs des approches, des plus 'macro' aux plus 'micro', de faire le lien entre les interactions individuelles et les régularités statistiques qui constituent les divers niveaux de la réalité scolaire (et sociale), ce qui exige d'explorer les processus intermédiaires » (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2009 p. 215).

In order to do so, it is important to use specific concepts. In the particular case of education, as with various aspects, such as the labour market, family, neighbourhood and social relations of young people living in two institutional and local contexts, we will focus on the concepts of experience and trajectory. As Dubet and Martucelli (1996) point out, the concept of 'school experience' (*expérience scolaire*) is very much related with the social situation of young people and the pressures to which they are subject, forcing them to face realities that might have been unknown to them. This is true, for example of young people from lower social class backgrounds, who have to cope with the rules and values of school, very often in contrast with the most common values of these types of households.

Returning to the relationship we dealt with at the very beginning of this section concerning social structures and individual strategies, we do not mean that this population is completely excluded. Indeed, we recognized that they implement particular strategies and behaviours to respond to constraints and objective difficulties they come up against, with results that are at least uncertain.

In the perspective of the direct experience of young people at school, as also in the case of some other approaches focusing more, for example, on parental strategies, there is a constant relation between the individual action and the structure within which this action is framed.

It is therefore extremely important to study this interaction with different levels of analysis. However, as has been observed by some scholars (Isambert-Jamati 1990), even if specific behaviours are observed at the micro local level, we should necessarily take into consideration wider sociological reference, not simply local but more universal.

These two perspectives, the macro and micro level, should be unified, since the latter represents a particular manifestation of macro phenomena. In fact, observation of the same phenomenon can lead to different interpretations depending on the level of analysis, the different role of determinants in various contexts and level of constraints or freedom for the actors involved.

This is why this chapter dealing with the role of education, in keeping with our general line of research, presents a double level of analysis: the macro institutional and the local level and manifestation of the phenomena observed.

For this reason, the following sections will aim at showing how the interaction between actors, policies, institutions and structural constraints occurs at the local level and which specific mechanisms are implemented in the reproduction of social inequalities affecting school and education.

Each individual develops his/her subjectivity on the basis of perceptions and social interactions (between peers, teachers and students, etc.) taking form in a specific context and place, which offers different opportunities of access to educational, cultural and social resources.

Thus it emerges clearly how educational experience, like some other types of experience (working, family and relational), can prove more difficult or easy depending on the family background, residence and type of school.

5.2 School between aspirations and constraints

As already noted, school acts on a double level: the institutional level, and a more communitarian dimension involving the family together with other local actors (Henriot and Van Zanten 1991). What is important in our perspective is the interaction existing between school as an institution and families, in particular those with low economic and social capital.

Some significant differences from the previous situation have now emerged concerning the degree of complexity and conflict obtaining at school as an institutional and physical place. Before extension of the democratization process, higher education involved only a minority of the working class – a sort of elite representing those who managed to “sort it out”, having gone through a process of upward mobility.

This group, possibly because it was only a minority and more homogeneous from the ethnic point of view (especially in the case of Italy, while in France it also concerned second generations of citizens of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Maghreb origin), was more easily integrated. They apparently absorbed better the values, rules, behaviours, language, way of speaking and dress in use at school. In a few words, they seemed to be more aligned with the values promoted by school. As we have seen, these students represented an elite and were, in a sense, chosen by the educational system through a kind of selection, which was in part based on educational results but also on their adaptation to these social values promoted by schools and teachers. Next, as shown by Jackson and Marsden (1962) in the British context, an important role was also played by these lower social class households implementing specific strategies such as: exemption from housework, purchase of books and encyclopaedias in order to stimulate their children intellectually and guarantee them some tools and support, use of local relations and social capital, and use of professional, personal and associative networks.

Today, school integration seems to be more complicated, although education is more extended in terms of volume. However, this does not mean that most households no longer implement such strategies at a micro level and are totally uninterested in the educational careers of their children. Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind that the lack of integration and educational failure is not

entirely a matter of household responsibilities, as some may argue,¹ but also of specific institutional mechanisms combined with local and territorial factors, such as the schooling practices deliberately implemented by middle class families.

Of course, what counts are also the personal characteristics, the real interest and motivation of the individuals involved, which are elements very often neglected, also because somewhat difficult to estimate and taken into account.

As we found with our empirical research conducted through in-depth interviews with young people and their families, parents often try to oppose their children's wishes and impose an education, and even when they are out of the educational system they try to respect the role of institutions, which means that they perceive their importance and are not totally alien to them.

“Quand ma fille n’a pas voulu continuer au lycée elle avait 16 ans. Elle avait le droit de partir mais je suis quand même allée à l’académie à expliquer pour quoi elle, une fille de 16 ans allait pas où lycée.. Comme j’ai dit elle pouvait partir mais quoi même ils se posent des questions et moi je voulais les informer. L’école avec elle c’était un conflit tous les jours, pour des longues période elle n’est pas allée et alors à un certain moment je me suis dit, bien on arrê tout et on fait notre propre école. C’était décision était contre tout les monde que disait qu’on était folles.. son père par exemple. On avait réfléchi ce que faire... On avait pensé d’étudier dans une école à Londres pour étrangers chez sa tante à Londres. J’ai même conseiller à l’académie qu’elle fasse un compte rendu des activités mais elle l’a jamais fait. C’était pour lui donner une structure, un cadre de règles mais déjà elle aime pas écrire. (Jeanne a fifty five years old divorced single mother living in Montreuil).

The same commitment, even in quite difficult economic situations can also be observed in Milano Quarto Oggiaro:

“Mia figlia faceva il turistico, è stata bocciata al quarto anno, avrebbe voluto fare due anni in uno ma io ero in una situazione precaria con il lavoro, perché dopo la mia azienda ha deciso di trasferirsi. Mi sono data da fare perché non volevo farle perdere un anno ma non è facile insomma. Adesso poi sono in questa piccola azienda ma non ci posso rimanere. Mia figlia adesso ha smesso per un anno la scuola, lavora per mettersi via dei soldi e tornare a scuola. A me dispiace ma ha scelto lei. Io comunque per le mie figlie nella scuola mi sono sempre data da fare facendo parte

¹ In France, for example, during summer 2010, on the occasion of some violent demonstrations in Saint San Denis, President Sarkozy proposed eliminating in some cases the grants (bourses scolaires) received by households for each child going to school, independently of any merit: a measure which might be considered as going in the direction of over-responsibility for families.

anche per molti anni del comitato dei genitori”. (Luisa a 42-year-old divorced single mother living in Quarto Oggiaro Milano).

Sometimes families make efforts not only at the economic level, concerning, for example, transportation to school, especially considering the characteristics of the area of residence.

“Dopo esser stata bocciata mia figlia ha voluto andare in una scuola serale, nonostante avesse solo 15 anni. Però in quella scuola sono successe delle cose strane. So che non è bello dirlo però lei era l’unica minore ed io andavo a prenderla tutte le sere però è successo ugualmente un brutto episodio. Un suo collega vecchio le ha messo le mani sul culo e lei si è messa a gridare, si è spaventata. Questo aveva più di 60 anni, insomma.. e da quel giorno non è più voluta andare a scuola. Ha pianto perché lei comunque ci teneva ad andare. Io adesso le dico sempre: vai a scuola, ti vado a prendere io, ti porto io. Non è molto d’accordo ma comunque adesso vediamo se la convinco, altrimenti senza diploma non va da nessuna parte. Mica può fare le pulizie tutta la vita”. (Lucia, a fifty years old married woman working as attendant in a public office).

Similarly, in the cité Leo Lagrange, considered to be one of the most degraded places of the Haut Montreuil, Halima from Morocco, a 52-year-old divorced single mother of two girls and a boy, recipient of RSA² - Revenu de Solidarité Active" (revenue of active solidarity) – explains how she is committed to the education of her children and how despite evident lack of economic and social capital, she manages to implement some useful strategies:

« Je m’occupe beaucoup de l’école de mes enfants, même si j’ai pas trop fait d’études et je parle pas parfaitement la langue française. Quand ils étaient plus petits en cas de problème je les envoyais à l’aide aux devoirs organisé par plusieurs associations dans le quartier (...). Pour le choix du lycée on a choisi l’école avec la réussite la plus élevée. Le Jean Jaurès avait le 90 % de réussite et on a choisi celui la. Au collège les deux filles sont allées au Colonel Fabien mais

² Introduced by the High Commissioner for workers' solidarity, Martin Hirsch, the RSA had from the beginning the objective to benefit 3 million people, compared to 1.2 million of its RMI predecessor. The new programme's goal is to assist not only the unemployed but also the "working poor", including those who find a job but have an income lower than if they had remained on unemployment. The standard RMI amount of 454 euro for an unmarried jobless individual will not change. But working individuals earning less than 880 euro a month can receive additional help by applying to the national fund for family allowances (Caisse Nationale d'Allocations Familiales). They will receive additional funds which are reduced as their wages increase. Unlike the RMI, the RSA, which Hirsch says was designed as a "shield" for the poor and those with modest means, will allow an employed individual to combine income and government allowances for an indefinite period.

Farouk qui a 13 ans fréquente le Jean Jaurès aussi, parce-que comme ça il est à côté de ses sœurs et quand je vais les chercher tous les jours, je les cherche tous ensemble ». (Halima)

As stated by many scholars, the existence of effects connected to the neighbourhood of residence and social relations on the basis of parental and family mobilization seems to be true for both immigrant and non-immigrant students, in France as in Italy.

A somewhat old but interesting study conducted in France on a national sample of about a hundred students of Algerian origin who had gone through a successful educational career, shows how the residential mobility of parents matters, together with the characteristics of the place of residence (Santelli, 2001). Many of them managed to avoid the neighbourhood through some strategies implemented by their families, such as the choice of alternative schools outside very segregated neighbourhoods, and residential mobility.

The study also pointed out how the fact of moving to a less homogeneous and more differentiated area of residence brought them into contact, for example, with French people: a fact which favoured the use of the French language and spread among immigrant families some of the values like those predominating at school.

Unlike these situations, both neighbourhoods are quite homogeneous from the socio-economic point of view, even if a certain social mix is not totally lacking. However, even in this situation of “quasi- concentration”, through a positive peer and role model effect neighbours can sometimes be an example for school and work and may be a source of information for those young people coming from households with low social and economic capital, in particular if they do not have older brothers or sisters, whose role for educational attainment is recognised in the international literature.

As Julien told us, his school choice at high school, with a range of different options but limited to “Bac Pro”³, was made on the basis of what a friend of his, living in the same building, chose the previous year:

«J'avais plusieurs choix, comptabilité, vente mais j'ai choisi électro plastique parce-que un pot à moi, qui a après arrêté, avait commencé cette école. Moi après j'ai choisi ça parce que je me suis aussi renseigné et j'ai vu la possibilité d'un bon salaire. (Julien, twenty three years old from Haitian origin. Bac pro electro plastic).

A similar case with, probably, a more positive result concerns Mohammed, a 29-year-old man working as manager in a bank:

³ Baccalauréat Professionnel

«Avec ma famille on a toujours habité dans ce quartier à Montreuil et dans cette maison. Moi, j'ai été le plus âgé de mes frères et sœurs et j'ai été le premier à aller au Lycée. J'ai fait le général. Chez nous avec mes parents on savait pas trop mais j'ai décidé d'aller au Lycée parce qu'il avait quelqu'un dans cette immeuble qui l'a fréquenté. Après il a déménagé mais je crois il a aussi bien réussi. Après pour mes frères et sœurs c'était beaucoup plus simple, parce-que j'ai été la toujours pour les aider. Ma petite sœur par exemple l'année prochain veut étudier médecine ».

Therefore, we could say that the neighbourhood may also work through a peer effect as an influence for school choices and ambitions, spreading among families certain socio-educational practices driving in the direction of educational success. However, the problem lies in the number of these positive models.

With regard to the significant relationship between poverty, aspirations and educational attainment, an interesting approach is offered by those authors proposing reconsideration of the concept of culture in the approach to poverty. These “new cultural” approaches to the study of poverty consider culture as an element providing the means for action. Unlike the “old” approach (Lewis, 1959) with this approach the connotation of the term culture has changed significantly. Today the idea of culture simply as values or ideals is mainly rejected to give way to other conceptions of culture such as “toolkit” or “repertoire” (Swidler 1986, 2001; Lamont and Small 2008) or, more in general, culture is defined as a “complex rule-like structures that constitute resources that can be put to strategic use” (DiMaggio 1997, p. 265). It is described as a vocabulary that people can mobilize to make sense of their practices and conducts (Lamont 1992; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) or skills allowing the subject to do something (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 1990; Swidler 2008). Bourdieu has delved deep in the study of education, culture and their connections, and his work (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977/1990) offers extremely important reference in this field. However, the well-known notion of “cultural capital” is considered more as a resource than a motivation, while it is the concept of “*habitus*” that is more closely related to the model of cultural internalization and may therefore be particularly relevant for focusing on motives (Dumais 2002; Vaisey 2010). In this direction Lizardo (2004, p. 394) defines the “*habitus*” a “cognitive-motivational system shaping perception and choice”.

Bourdieu's use of the term is not always consistent, since he does not define it solely in terms of conceptions of “what is possible” (Dumais 2002, p. 47) but sees it as involving both “motivations” and “subjective aspirations” at the same time (Bourdieu 1990, p. 54). However, since he affirms that the “*habitus*” is shaped by “experiences statistically common to members of the same class” (Bourdieu 1990, p. 60), we can, even if indirectly, assume that the socioeconomic status shapes the

desires and expectations of people.

This model seems therefore to suggest that the poor will have lower socioeconomic aspirations than their richer peers and that these aspirations will have implications for evaluation and action, serving to reproduce their social position (Bourdieu 1984). Similarly, Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) largely supports this idea in an ethnographic work on poor neighbourhoods in New York and Los Angeles, although he rejects the hypothesis that the “subculture of scarcity” in poor neighbourhoods is fixed and inevitably leads to social disorganization and misery.

On the contrary, this author states that living in such neighbourhoods “powerfully reinforces values that make life meaningful within the particular structural conditions of poverty, though at the expense of values found in the larger society that would improve a person’s chances for obtaining and maintaining socioeconomic mobility” (Sanchez-Jankowski p. 348). In stating this, avoiding interpretation of the traditional “culture of poverty” approach, which to some extent tended to “blame the victims”, he recognizes that the aspirations of the poor and socially disadvantaged populations differ from those of the middle classes (Vaisey 2010). Young people coming from the middle-class usually live in a social context driving them to continue education, but most of the poor young people do not, or at least live and grow up in a situation where such transmission occurs less often or with greater costs for them and their families. “If poor youth—unlike their more advantaged peers—cannot simply ‘*go with the flow*’ and end up in college, their educational ideals might matter more for predicting their choices because they need to be motivated enough to overcome the surrounding social inertia. Perhaps more of their own efforts are necessary to get them into a position where going to college becomes a viable option” (Vaisey 2010 p.94).

Thus we see a sort of combination between educational ideals, cultural motives and, of course, structural elements such as concrete deprivation of economic or social capital, without any over responsibility and “blaming of the victim” for educational ideals that, as we have seen, result from different factors and are socially structured. As pointed out by Bourdieu (1990) the *forma mentis* of people is conditioned by *socially patterned experiences*. “The moral and political fear of blaming the poor and sociologists’ overreaction to the limits of earlier models of culture have prevented us from asking whether the cultural models and motives that the poor internalize might have an “exogenous explanatory power” that serves to inhibit socioeconomic success.

If we leave aside unnecessary ideas about “dated” approaches to culture, we might find it unsurprising that those who grow up poor are—*on average*—different from the non poor in how they conceive of education and that these conceptions might—*on average*—motivate them to pursue

life strategies that are locally adaptive but globally disadvantageous (see Sanchez-Jankowski 2008). Obviously, as critics of motivational models of culture have repeatedly emphasized, we will never find a cultural domain in which *all* poor youth differ from *all* non poor youth, nor one in which *all* poor youth converge on an identical way of seeing and evaluating the world. Nevertheless, different central tendencies in motives across groups probably play some role in creating different central tendencies in behaviour across groups. Finding such differences and evaluating their importance is ultimately an empirical concern, not an ideological one". (Vaisey 2010 p.95).

As we found in our interviews both in Milan and in Montreuil, these different aspirations, which we have sought to place in a theoretical framework, are not completely and indisputably accepted as a matter of fact by individuals. Very often they are perceived as "imposed" and not really chosen, and so do not remain without consequence. On the contrary, they have an influence on the development of the person concerned, both as a student and as an individual. They are very often accompanied with a feeling of inadequacy and disqualification which school sometimes risks aggravating in these situations. This emerged clearly during a conversation with one of the teachers of the professional school Istituto Greppi⁴:

«Per dieci anni non abbiamo potuto prendere ragazzi che provenivano direttamente dalla terza media e quindi formarli direttamente. I nostri corsi erano fatti per ricevere ragazzi che fallivano negli istituti tecnici. Abbiamo avuto studenti difficilissimi che già avevano avuto un fallimento scolastico nelle scuole elementari e medie ed in più una squalifica totale dal primo anno di superiori, che incide molto sulla poco stima e coscienza di sé.. Io non capisco come si possa dare un 2 o un 1, come è successo a tantissimi dei miei studenti che venivano da questi istituti e

⁴ A professional school managed by the Municipality of Milan until 2010, when it went through a sort of privatization, being managed by CAPAC. CAPAC Centro Addestramento e Perfezionamento Addetti al Commercio, runs training services aiming at:

- . promoting, developing and completing the technical professional training, at any level, of operators and clerks in the trade and tertiary activities;
 - . promoting, in the training sectors, initiatives suitable to develop professional skills of operators and clerks in the trade and tourism field;
 - . promoting, updating and training the technical and cultural competences of intermediate cadres and managers in the trade field;
 - . performing study, information and documentation activities concerning problems related to trade and tourism, market trends and consumption dynamics;
 - . promoting the diffusion of modern techniques of company organization and management, in the training fields;
- Cooperating with bodies having the same institutional aims, both in Italy and abroad with the purpose to guarantee the development of vocational training in the tertiary sector.

prendevano quotidianamente questi voti. Poi in realtà questa “squalificazione” non riguarda solo lo studente in sé ma lo influenza proprio come persona»

And again:

«Alcuni studenti in questa scuola arrivano davvero squalificati, ma io sono convinto che ci sia qualche dinamica in questa scuola che faccia innamorare di nuovo gli studenti e che riprendano gli studi. Inoltre, ci sono alcune frasi poi che io evito sempre di utilizzare. Per esempio sono contrario alla parola “no”. Sono convinto che sia una parola che blocca. Poi c'è un'altra frase che sentita dagli studenti mi da molto fastidio: “questa scuola è una merda”. Io non mi sento così e neanche loro dovrebbero sentirsi in quel modo perché la scuola la facciamo noi. Quindi è come dire “io sono una merda”. Personalmente sono molto preoccupato perché era da anni che non sentivo questa frase che invece ultimamente sta tornando. Poi molti di loro hanno anche problemi a leggere e scrivere, sono dislessici, disgrafici. Per queste problematiche avevamo anche una collega che era specializzata nell'argomento ma poi è stata trasferita e questo ha inciso molto sui ragazzi».

From this narration, we can also see how local policies and decisions such as funds reductions or privatizations, as for example in the particular case of this school, may affect the educational supply and also determine in one way or another the future development of these students.

«Io nel calcio riesco a metterci la grinta e l'impegno, cosa che non riesco a fare a scuola. Sono nato con il 5 come voto e così continuerò. Secondo me ci sono cose che certi possono fare e certi no. Non dico che sono stupido ma non mi viene» (Aidan 15 years old, Albanian origin. Attend the third year at scuola media Graf).

In Montreuil, Florian a twenty-three-year-old man whose parents are originally from Zaire (today Democratic Republic of Congo) talks about his results and behaviour at school:

«Au collègue j'allais pas très bien. En effets j'ai été un élève assez dissipé.. je faisait amuser la galerie... quand j'étais calme j'y arrivais bien.. C'était un problème d'attention. Dans ma tête je me suis convaincu que j'étais pas bien à l'école... C'était un peu moi, un peu les amis, fréquentations... Mais je crois ce n'était pas vraiment les enseignants mais plutôt mon comportement». (Florien, twenty-two years old, working as animator in a youth centre).

Even if the majority of the people interviewed, both in Milan - Quarto Oggiaro and Montreuil, do not blame teachers altogether for their results or educational failures, some, in particular those still going to school and therefore probably more involved in the educational process, stress their difficult relations with teachers. In addition, these relations may even prove more complicated if

alongside difference in social status and class there is also an ethnic difference between students and teachers, as is quite often the case in Montreuil.

Louis, a 17-year-old student of the general branch (Général) at 'Lycée Jaune Jaurès', of Haitian origin and living with his mother and younger brother, remarked:

« A l'école tout se passe très bien, sauf que voilà, c'est juste que avec les enseignants ... ils sont un peut chiens. Ils se comportent pas pareilles. Il y en a qui sont bien mais d'autres ça se voit qu'ils s'enfument, ils viennent pour faire quoi ? Ils font leur boulot mais ils viennent pas pour nous. Ça donne pas envie de parler avec eux, leur comportement, leur attitude ... ça donne pas envie de aller vers eux. Moi je vais pas à l'école pour être copain avec les prof mais quand même... »
(Louis)

As clearly emerges from this observation, there are two subjects involved *ils* (they) and *nous* (us), apparently in opposition. This characterization, as has often been seen in our interviews, seems to be quite frequent with the distinction between us and them, meaning with the first-person plural all the young people of the neighborhood. However, in Montreuil this can also take on an ethnical characterization, even if it is often used both by immigrants and people of French origin.

Similarly, Karima a 48-year-old single mother born in Algeria but with French citizenship, talking about the school experience of her 19-year-old son observes:

« Mon fils il a un bon niveau à l'école mais comme je suis une femme seule il a eu une grande carence au niveau du père. Ça s'est manifesté beaucoup pendant sa scolarité : un grand perturbateur de classe. Pas agressive et pas violent mais perturbateur. Il voulait faire le clown. Par exemple, c'est une semaine qu'il a était exclu pour deux jours de l'école. Il a répondu au prof mais le problème est plus global, l'école a beaucoup dégradé. Les enseignants aussi n'essaient pas de comprendre les élèves, ils mettent des étiquettes : 'c'est un cas social..' et stop » (Karima)

As often happens, an educational failure or a disciplinary measure can have even worse consequences on the educational results and self-esteem, with consequences in turn on aspirations and motivations.

« La quatrième et troisième au collège Fabien (between 13 and 15 years old) je crois c'est le moment de ma vie que m'a plus marqué. J'ai redoublé ma quatrième et je crois ça m'as plus enfoncé...J'étais dans une classe latiniste mais je ne sais pas comment j'y suis arrivé. J'ai pas choisi et même pas mes parent). J'ai fait latin mais j'étais un des pierres. En quatrième quand j'ai redoublé ils m'ont mis dans une classe très baisse de niveau et ça m'a démotivé. C'est comme si il y

a 5 groups et je suis dans le top et après ils me redescendent dans le dernier. La classe était très mauvaise » (Florien).

In other cases school failure may be perceived, especially if associated with a sense of injustice on the part of the teachers, as one of the causes driving them more towards crime or drug addiction, especially if crime and drug addiction are somewhat widespread in the neighbourhood, as is traditionally the case of Quarto Oggiaro. It is in this perspective that we may consider the discussion we had in Quarto Oggiaro with Andrea, a 24-year-old man who lost his father at the age of eight and has grown up with his mother and sister.

«Dalle medie in poi con la scuola ho avuto un bruttissimo rapporto. Ho fatto le elementari e medie qui nel quartiere e, poi alle superiori sono andato all'ITIS⁵ La Grange in via Litta Modigliani. Però non ho finito. L'ho lasciata il secondo anno per una grossissima delusione che ho ricevuto, nel senso che ero già stato bocciato il primo anno, poi vengo promosso e poi ancora bocciato. Ero convinto di passare con tre debiti, per il rotto della cuffia, invece alcuni professori avevano fatto in modo di farmi bocciare. Sono stato bocciato io e promossa gente che andava molto peggio. Questo mi ha abbattuto totalmente e ho preferito cambiare indirizzo, sono andato in via amoretti al Greppi a fare grafico pubblicitario, sono arrivato lì in seconda ma sono stato due mesi e poi ho detto a mia madre: io vado a lavorare.. Parallelamente quando non andavo a scuola o uscivo da scuola avevo quel contesto di piazza Prealpi e del quartiere, tra scippi e furti» (Andrea 25 years old).

Another element that can seriously affect the educational career of students is expulsion from schools, a measure which seems to be more in use and more institutionalized⁶ in France than in Italy, and in particular in schools where educational failure is higher, such as those in our study neighbourhood. For instance, nearly fifteen of the fifty people with whom we discussed in depth school and educational issues in Montreuil admitted having been expelled permanently from schools, sometimes even more than once.

« Le problème qu'on voit souvent est que quand un jeune a 18 ou 19 ans, sans formation, sans travail et avec grandes difficultés à le trouver est parce que il était rejeté plusieurs fois de l'école: une première, une deuxième et quelques fois aussi trois ou quatre fois. Le temps que la bureaucratie scolaire a réagit à l'exclusion (avec la proposition d'une autre école) laisse passer du

⁵ Istituto Tecnico Industriale Statale

⁶ In accordance with a national law, in France, every school officially has a council of discipline - "conseil de discipline", composed by: school head, employees representatives, users representatives (students and parents). This organ is plenipotentiary and discusses all practical issues concerning school, its rules and applications, including the expulsion of students.

temps et laisse l'élève exclu sans scolarisation. Le fait d'être rejetés par les institutions républicaines lui fait intégrer une mauvaise image de soi-même. Après ils disent : comme ils m'ont rejeté je vais montrer de ce que je suis capables, alors ils cassent une voiture, ils vont faire un vole, faire une bêtise en scooter pour essayer d'attirer le regard d'un adulte. On devient pas délinquants parce que on a les parents au SMIG⁷ ou seulement parce que on a des modèles d'identification dans la famille. Si non, le plus souvent est qu'il était (surtout des garçons) rejeté comme quelqu'un sans compétences. On peut dire ça, aussi si il s'agit un peu de généraliser. Si on a pas la chance de trouver quelqu'un qui ouvre le chemin, qui comprend et fait comprendre au garçon même, ses capacités. Si ça n'arrive pas, est possible alors que il y a une cristallisation de ses comportements qui mènent juste à l'inoccupation.» (Social worker in the association "Rue et cités"⁸).

« Je trouve que l'exclusion des enfants de l'école est un grand problème surtout en banlieue. Ils les envoient dans la rue. Ça serait mieux que comme punition ils les font rester à l'école à nettoyer et non de les jeter dans la rue où il y a des brigands. Ils pensent pas que quand il revient ils peut être encore plus violent et faire d'autres bêtises ». (Karima a 48-year-old single mother living in the cité Leo Lagrange).

To avoid any misunderstanding of the significance and content of these experiences, we must point out that our aim as social scientists is not to provide justifications and excuses for the individual's action but to frame these actions in the wider social context. However, if we do not mean to victimise the subject, at the same time we also try to avoid blaming the victim. In any case, it seems that young people themselves, especially the younger amongst them, without any working experience, are quite aware of their "responsibilities" and of the consequences their actions and behaviours can have; indeed, they may even exaggerate, projecting an image of themselves as rational actors, totally aware of the consequences, which does not always correspond to reality. We may, for example, see cases of overestimation of the chances of finding a job, even though they have not completed their education, quite often getting entrapped in situations of long-term unemployment.

Louis affirms:

⁷ Salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti (SMIG)

⁸ The association aims at child and youth protection (12 – 20 years old), prevention from exclusion, and support for professional integration. Specialized in prevention, educators are constantly present in several districts of Montreuil, Bagnolet Noisy-le-Sec. Their approach and philosophy is to work directly in the streets of the neighborhood and in those places most frequented by this typology of young people.

« Dans ma classe au collège on était tous dans la même manière. Les autres parents faisaient un peut prêt le travail de ma mère. Il n’y avait pas des gens riches mais ça ce n’est pas un problème C’est pas parce-que mes parents on fait tel ou tel métier que je dois faire le même. On peut réussir. Il faut vouloir c’est tout ».

Therefore young people and – even those with social disadvantaged profiles, living in more or less segregated neighbourhoods – tend not to perceive themselves as victims of the system. Similarly , Kadir, an 18-year-old boy born in Tunisia who arrived in France at the age of nine, admits:

Quand ils me faisait chier moi j’ai cassé les couilles. Quand on comprend pas à l’école en français on bavard et on fout le bordel. Quand je suis arrivé au débout, après c’est bon ! Mais en réalité sont pas les profs... le problème est que à l’école on s’ennui, on a rien à foutre ». (Kadir)

This feeling of being “out of place” at school brings us back to the points made above about the relationship between aspirations, education and poverty. Very often these young people, especially those with immigrant origins, come from households that had not fully assimilated the culture and rules of school, perceiving work as the main objective.

«À l’école supérieure j’étais plus sérieux qu’au collège, parce-que j’ai commencé à travaillé aussi... J’avais déjà de l’expérience avec mon père. J’ai eu de la chance que mon père faisait le même travail et donc j’avais déjà travaillé au black les week – end...Quand j’étais au collège j’ai suivie jusqu’en sixième et cinquième mais après en quatrième et troisième je savais déjà ce que je devais faire : l’apprentissage et à l’apprentissage aussi avec 0 de moyenne tu peux rentrer. Maintenant j’ai pas de soucis, comme je sais que dans la plomberie il aura toujours de métier. Pas problème de chômage ». (Kadir)

However, it must be pointed out that even when aspirations are relatively “low”, this does not mean that they are always easy to achieve. For example, unlike Kadir, who easily found a firm for his *alternance* (school/work contract) because of the experience he had acquired working with his father, Matthieu a 19-year-old boy of French origin, living in Montreuil at the cité de l’Amitié says:

« Je voulais faire de la plomberie mais j’ai pas été accepté et donc j’ai laissé tomber. J’étais démoralisé...c’est un grand mot mais j’ai été soulé » (Matthieu 19 years old).

5.3 School class and educational results

Educational experiences can vary greatly. Depending on the school they attended, students are likely to have had different experiences and their educational attainment can vary significantly in quality and performance. Often these disparities are between schools but also between classes in the same school, changing from teacher to teacher, from context to context, etc. As we will see later on in this section, educational careers can be greatly influenced by all these variables.

School institutions generally claim that the distribution of students is casual. However, both in France and Italy there is evidence contradicting this statement. In France, for example, some recent studies have shown that in most schools there are classes which are differentiated on the basis of the students' level and performance, and so there are good and bad classes (Giry-Coissart and Niel 1997; Duru-Bellat and Mingat 1997). In this perspective we can even better frame the schooling strategies of middle class parents, such as those addressed in the previous chapter.

As we have seen, this situation creates a sort of competitiveness between schools in “bad neighbourhoods” and peripheral areas, trying to attract good students and, even more, young people considered “good family students”, in order to keep the class level up to a certain standard, from the educational but also the social point of view.

This is how things go in France but also in Italy, even if the processes in the latter country seem to be less formal and institutionalized, with more hazards.

In general, grouping students of the same level in homogeneous classes has no systematic effect on educational progress, although the ways groups are formed contributes to widening the gaps between the students with the best progress in the best classes and the worst in the worst classes (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006).

This differentiation may come about through different mechanisms (Pallas et al., 1994). First of all teachers, control and decide which should be the contents and how to use them. Proposing the “adequate” level of difficulty for the class, teachers conform to this type of silent principle, dividing students by level. In this way, depending on the target and typology of students, they also adapt their teaching methods. For example, for a class with a weak average level teachers usually attribute more importance to oral exams and generally try to focus more on commitment and motivation than on the concrete result in itself. In this way, the attitudes and behaviours of students are heavily conditioned and the initial differences increase yet more.

«Mi ricordo che alle medie per i compiti delle vacanze la prof. di inglese ci ha lasciato un libro con le soluzioni e ci ha detto: lascio le soluzioni perché tanto lo so che non copiate. Ma dai...non è

possibile...Alle elementari invece l'insegnante faceva i compiti a crocette. Alcuni genitori hanno chiesto un'assemblea per discutere di questo, perché non sapevamo fare un compito vero e la prima a lamentarsi come al solito è stata mia madre» (Jennifer, 17 years old, living in Quarto Oggiaro, Milan. Luisa's daughter).

«In quinta elementare ti faccio un esempio stupido, la verifica era: cappuccetto rosso sta andando dalla...? Cioè questi dovevano andare alle medie con questa preparazione, ma come fanno? E mi dicevano pure: ha ragione signora. La maestra alle elementari continuava a metterle A, anche se sbagliava le H e mia figlia quando la sgridavo, mi diceva: ma la maestra mi dice che sono brava. Lei quindi ha approfittato della situazione. Invece con l'altra figlia è stato diverso aveva buoni insegnanti sia alle medie che alle elementari (...).Le cose importanti della scuola qua non te le insegnano. Perché una professoressa che le dice: ma tu vuoi andare al liceo? Ma guarda che razza di lavoro c'è da fare. Inoltre ho dimenticato di dirti che la sua insegnante alle elementari era una pazza. Poverina è morta in un incendio in un centro sociale ma era una 'punk abbestia'. Qui gli insegnanti normali hanno paura a stare. Naturalmente però non sono tutti così. Ad esempio come ti dicevo l'altra figlia ha avuto ottimi insegnanti sia alle elementari che alle medie». (Luisa)

As far as the pedagogic strategies implemented by teachers in difficult educational contexts are concerned, importance is attributed to their requirements in terms of workload. In fact, if the class is 'difficult' this may in some cases significantly lower the syllabus levels, as well as the preparation and average level of the students.

«Alle medie se noi non facevamo i compiti non ci dicevano niente. I primi tempi ero anche abbastanza brava nel senso che studiavo lo stesso anche se c'erano queste situazioni, solo che poi ovviamente ho iniziato a pensare: ma cosa sono la deficiente io? Oh si lanciavano le sedie in classe e dovevo fare i compiti ...» (Jennifer, 17 years old, Luisa's daughter).

A similar situation was also recorded in Montreuil. However, as we will see in a section dedicated to the relationship between school and education, an important role is also played by the family and how it manages school control and rules.

« Au collègue je me suis amusé mais je regrette un peu d'avoir pas profiter de l'école. J'étais plus tôt perturbateur dans la classe. Je faisait le devoirs seulement quand j'étais obligé à les faire parce que j'étais beaucoup contrôlé par ma mère » (Julien, twenty three years old, of Guadalupe origin. Bac pro electro plastic).

« Au lycée les enseignants m'aidaient pas, ils étaient pas gentils. Ils étaient stricts et sérieux, tandis que depuis mon arrivé... peut être ils s'attendaient quelqu'un de plus sérieuse, pour faire les devoirs, réviser... être super attentive, que moi au contraire je suis rêveuse. Au collège c'était super, pas pour les notes mais c'était bien. J'avais la moyenne un peu prêle, dix ou onze mais j'ai des bons souvenirs. Je faisais pas les devoirs, seulement quand ils étaient facile, quand c'était difficile je les faisais pas. Ça m'énervait parce que c'était inutile. En math je ne voulais pas, c'était ennuié utiliser la calculatrice, en histoire et géographie je ne pouvais pas retenir les dates. Je pense que tout le monde dans la classe, à exception de trois ou quatre intellos étaient comme moi. On était très solidaire dans la classe. On avait seulement un professeur qui nous donnait envie de travailler, on pouvait parler, discuter, elle était géniale. C'est grâce à elle que je voulais aller en générale... les autres profs au contraire... Au lycée par contre j'ai été déçu par les profs... Ils nous donnait un texte incompressible où on devait repérer les mots... c'était trop mécanique. L'autre prof au collège elle nous expliquait les choses comme un jeu » (Claire, seventeen years old. Left school at the age of sixteen).

Another aspect which is very common among the people we interviewed in Montreuil attending Colonel Fabien, Lenain-de-Tillemont or Jean Jaurès is the fact of not having obtained the *Brevet de Collège*: a diploma issued at the end of lower secondary school. In Italy it is compulsory to complete at all stages, while in France students may even have access to high school without the diploma.

Such, for example, is the case of Caroline:

“Prendre finalement un BEP (*Brevet d'Etude Professionnelle*) en sanitaire et sociale.. avec une moyenne correct, pour moi que j'ai eu toujours des problèmes à l'école, inclus la dyslexie, c'était une grande victoire. En plus que au collège j'ai pas même eu mon brevet (Caroline, 23 years old, French mother and Malian father).

As emerged with the literature review in the previous chapter, in these dynamics we can identify a sort of mechanism taking place at school – a significant negative peer effect which parents sometimes recognise only later on, having seen the final result and reviewed the educational career. However, as we have seen through the literature on peer effects and neighbourhood effects more in general, even though we can identify an effect and certain precise mechanisms at work in the school, it is in fact difficult from both the qualitative and quantitative point of view to estimate the pure effect of place and context, without mixing in any element pertaining to the personal characteristics of the individual and the household.

«Anche se non posso dirlo con certezza che sarebbe andata diversamente, però mi pento di averla mandata a scuola a Quarto Oggiaro. Secondo me poteva essere diverso, perché se tu prendi 3 e gli altri prendono 6 ti vergogni, ma se tu prendi 3 e gli altri non lo hanno neanche fatto non ti vergogni. Anzi ti senti brava e non fai niente. Se invece ti confronti con altre persone sei stimolata, io mi ricordo che lei quando mi portava a casa sufficiente mi diceva ma non sei contenta? Gli altri non lo hanno neanche fatto. E poi quando io le dicevo di fare i compiti, lei mi diceva, ma se non frega alla prof perché devi rompermi tu? Mia figlia ha sbagliato poi alle superiori, ma è anche colpa dei professori che non le hanno detto come fare, cioè come faceva senza alcuna base? Io poi le dicevo di studiare lo stesso, ma lei non lo faceva e alle superiori non era già più abituata» (Luisa).

The turnover and the perceived quality of teachers are two other problematic issues in both contexts, even if the teachers' quality can be a subjective variable, depending on individual experience.

«Ils ont peur de la violence mais moi, je l'ai dit aux enseignants de mon fils. Par exemple il y a beaucoup de profs qui ne veulent pas enseigner dans tel ou tel établissement parce qu'ils ont peur de la violence, alors ils remmènent des enseignants très jeunes, avec pas beaucoup d'expérience. Toujours un nouveau prof dans le milieu de l'année avec des conséquences aussi sur le programmes et sur le fait que les étudiants agissent comme perturbateurs. Mais ça s'est un problème générale pas seulement de Montreuil» (Karima a forty-eight-year-old single mother).

«Alle medie di professori di Italiano ad esempio ne ho cambiati sette, uno peggio dell'altro, di matematica quattro in tre anni e di inglese tre. Solo di musica ho avuto sempre la stessa. Ogni insegnante ha il suo metodo ed ogni volta dovevamo ricominciare da capo, capire cosa voleva l'insegnante, quale era il suo metodo e quindi diventa anche pesante. Io ho avuto proprio sfortuna con i professori, in terza media avevo un insegnante di italiano e storia che era brava ma bestemmiava come non so che cosa, e poi diceva ai ragazzi: se avete il cervello così piccolo vuol dire che anche il pisello è piccolo. Un'altra controllava le sue bollette e diceva che non aveva voglia di fare lezione» (Jennifer, seventeen years old. Left school at the age of sixteen).

Another major problem arising in particular in lower level classes lies in perturbation during classes and an average low level of attention, which varies during the day and over the year (Eder and Felmlée, 1983). As a lower secondary school teacher in Quarto Oggiaro recognizes:

« Nella maggior parte di queste classi da aprile in poi è difficile fare lezione, perché l'attenzione cala notevolmente e così risulta molto faticoso portare a termine i programmi e questo naturalmente lo risentono molto quelli che vanno alle superiori perché ci vanno con delle lacune ».

The element of violence and perturbation is another important dimension to bear in mind when analysing the atmosphere obtaining in an educational environment, in particular in peripheral areas. In general, it seems to be more evident in contexts with a particularly socially disadvantaged profile. In order to attempt an explanation of the violent phenomena that may occur at school, we should bear in mind most of the issues and variables we have addressed in this section, and which seem to be more present in peripheral schools, and in particular teacher mobility and turnover, elements sometimes underestimated in the educational process which cannot be simply limited to the didactic⁹, the lack of precise regulations concerning violence and bullying in both Italy and France, educational segregation and the socially homogeneous profile of some schools. In Milano Quarto Oggiaro violence and perturbation seem to be the case in both lower secondary schools, *Graf* and *Giambattista Vico*, and also in the higher secondary school, and in particular the professional institute (*Greppi*), while in Montreuil it is the case particularly of the collège *Lenain-de-Tillemont* and, for a limited number of classes, at *Colonel Fabien*.

« Alle medie ho avuto una brutta classe, avevo un ragazzo del 1990 in classe mia, quindi tre anni più grande, e alle medie si vede tanto la differenza d'età. Anche alle elementari ho avuto un compagno difficile e che distraeva tantissimo. Veniva in classe con la cassetta degli attrezzi, e giocava con i cacciaviti, la madre entrava in classe con la sigaretta e l'insegnante non diceva nulla. In terza elementare invece, un bambino che si chiamava Paolo che arrivava da una famiglia schifosa di via Lopez, ogni fine intervallo si metteva a girare in classe tutto nudo. Aveva dei problemi mentali ed infatti era assistito dall'insegnante di sostegno che aveva credo settantacinque anni quindi non riusciva a stargli troppo dietro e gestirlo» (Jennifer, 17 anni).

A specific form of violence that seems to have grown rife in many schools in peripheral neighbourhoods throughout Europe, and also in both our study neighbourhoods, is bullying¹⁰. The first studies on this phenomenon were conducted in Great Britain and Scandinavian countries

⁹ A problem which seems to emerge more often during interviews with young people in Montreuil than in Milan.

¹⁰ Bullying is a form of abuse. It involves repeated acts over time attempting to create or enforce one person's (or group's) power over another person (or group), thus an "imbalance of power". The "imbalance of power" may be social power and/or physical power. The victim of bullying is sometimes referred to as a target. Bullying types of behavior are often rooted in a would-be bully's inability to empathize with those whom he or she would target.

during the eighties, while in France and in particular in Italy it is a relatively new research topic, which has been mainly approached in terms of psychology, pedagogy and only to a lesser extent of sociology of education. It has emerged from researches underlining that this is a particularly male phenomenon whose cause can be found in both family and school socialization (Peignard et al. 1998). Although it is a general phenomenon, it seems also to have to do with the concentration of students having a particularly disadvantaged profile and experience of educational failure. In particular in France, included our neighbourhood case, students of immigrant origin seem to be over-represented among those showing deviant behaviour. “Cette catégorisation sanctionne en fait des écarts entre les modes de socialisation familiale des élèves et ceux des enseignants issus majoritairement des classes moyennes en même temps que la ‘labilité culturelle’ des immigrés de deuxième génération dont l’ethnicité construite apparaît bien plus dérangeant que l’appartenance à une autre culture (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006 p.87). On the contrary, on the basis of our interviews and accounts by teachers, students, social workers and the police, we may say that in Quarto Oggiaro violence and bullying at school seem to be less characterized in the ethnic sense and closer to the dimension of criminality, which is very much felt in the neighbourhood, and to the processes of socialization within the family and in public spaces in the neighbourhood: streets, parks etc.

However, this does not mean that students of foreign origin are not involved in these phenomena and, even more, with the social representations given, but, compared to the case of France it occurs on a smaller scale, including schools where immigrant students are by no means an exception. Generally speaking, however, in our interviews we came across problems of violence and bullying at school more in Quarto Oggiaro than in Montreuil, even though French political debate, as we observed in the introduction, seems focus more on the so-called “problème jeunes” there.

In Montreuil, for example, the many frequent cases of expulsion from school were mainly due to disturbing behavior or inappropriate responses to the teachers, indirectly connected with violence but not a direct expression of it. In the case of Quarto Oggiaro, this dimension seems to emerge more clearly and also appears evident in young people’s behavior and attitude.

As we observed in the chapter dedicated to the neighborhood as a place structuring young people’s social relations and perceptions, even if it does not always correspond to reality, young people usually try to convey an image of themselves as strong, fearless and powerful, very often falling back on practices, attitudes and behavior typical of criminality, even if they are often not directly involved in criminal activities.

Something of the sort also happens, as we saw in the above-mentioned chapter, in Montreuil, even if in general this phenomenon, in particular at school, does not loom so large.

«Qua in via Pascarella sono pochi quelli che non hanno il padre in carcere. Ho avuto molti compagni di classe qui di questa zona i cui genitori hanno avuto o hanno ancora problemi con la giustizia. Oppure hanno i fratelli più grandi che spacciano, e crescendo li seguono. Le ragazze invece no, però sono più cattive, più aggressive» (Jennifer, 17 years old).

«Alle medie sono stato bocciato due volte e una volta mi hanno espulso perché ho aperto l'estintore contro il preside, però non glielo ho tirato ma solo spruzzato addosso. Quindi poi ho preso il diploma delle medie al serale» (Francesco, 19 years old, living with his older sister's family).

«Il fenomeno del bullismo si collega bene alla dinamica sociale del quartiere e noi da anni per quello che possiamo cerchiamo di combatterlo. Anni fa quando ero più giovane, cercavo anche di far leggere "Mary per sempre" o vedevamo "Ragazzi fuori", legati comunque alla malavita. Poi mi sono accorto che c'era un'identificazione anche negativa di questi filmati, centrati sulla violenza. Insieme ai colleghi abbiamo cambiato approccio, puntando di più sulla conoscenza, sulla cultura, sulla bellezza. Programmi in cui si va una settimana in montagna per creare gruppo, oppure andare in Duomo, Pinacoteca». (Teacher, Istituto Greppi).

A phenomenon which was never mentioned during interviews in Montreuil but could sometimes occur in Quarto Oggiaro consists in violent actions¹¹ or threats against teachers by parents. Of course, it must be said that they represent only a few cases and are by no means the rule. However, we cannot ignore their influence on and role in the educational dynamics between teachers and students and between teachers and households.

To conclude this section, while a low school class level can have a negative influence on the educational outcomes of students, since they do not provide them with the necessary education, at the same time high levels can also entail risk, especially in peripheral and working class areas, where school classes cannot, for obvious reasons, be completely uniform in level, as it may however be the case in a city centre.

In this way, also within high level classes there are mechanisms of sharp differentiation between those, possibly a majority, who are able to follow the demanding educational pace and requirements, and those who lag behind.

¹¹ Some cases have occurred and been reported by the media.

These students very soon cease to pursue the same objectives as their classmates, with two possibilities: either they implement ‘defence’ mechanisms, such as a disturbing behaviour in the class, interfering, as we have extensively noted, with the continuation of educational activities with all the negative consequences for the students. Otherwise, they simply remain excluded, assuming a passive attitude towards the class and education in general, with serious consequences for the pursuit of their educational career.

Of course this is a model and some of the complexity of social realities may escape but, in the light of the literature (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006) and our empirical evidence in both contexts, this view can in general be confirmed. As British research has shown, these risks seem to be lower if level differentiation is simply for specific activities and options, such as a second or third foreign language, Latin, etc.

As already observed in the part dedicated to the educational systems in the two countries, France has institutionalized this level of classes for lower secondary school (collège) with some “*filières spécialisés*” which do not officially exist at the national level in Italy, even though schools can implement specific activities.

In particular, in peripheral schools such as those considered in our analysis, these classes represent a strategy to attract “good students” but, more than the quality of students itself, what counts seems to be the social background. The institutional aim is therefore a social mix at school, but it is not fully achieved since these classes are quite uniform from the point of view of the students’ educational performance and social background.

« Les classes chams¹² par exemple ne se mélangent pas avec les classe à plus grand concentration des jeunes qui viennent des cités. La ségrégation est moins apparent mais existent. Par exemple au Lenan de Tillemont il y a aucune mixité et par contre au Collège Fabien un peu plus mais les classes spéciales peuvent être un monde à part. C’est là que la dimension du micro est intéressante, en observant les dynamique d’échange ou pas entre les élèves. Dans le principe l’école républicaine accueil tous le monde mais pas toujours en pratique » (Social Assistant at a lower secondary school in Montreuil).

These practices also exist in Italy but, as we have seen, they are more ‘spontaneous’, improvised, and less institutionalized. Sometimes school heads bring a sort of pressure to bear on those they consider ‘normal families’ for them to keep their children there, having already attended primary school in the same institute, since the phenomena of schooling more often take place at secondary school level. School heads try to assure these lower middle class families that their children will

¹² Programme d’enseignement des classes à horaires aménagés musicales (cham)

attend the “best classes” from the point of view of educational level and social background, avoiding the classes particularly populated by low income families but more than that: by children whose parents are involved in criminal activities, a problem which is very much felt by households in Quarto Oggiaro.

«Io ho mandato entrambe le mie figlie alla Graf. La seconda perché con la prima mi ero trovata bene ed era in una buona classe con buoni insegnanti. Inoltre, il direttore ci teneva che quelle poche famiglie normali che davano importanza alla scuola rimanessero lì a sostenere la scuola. E per quanto noi ci sforzassimo, soprattutto nella classe della seconda figlia, a scuola non è che ci andiamo noi genitori ma i figlie e ad insegnare devono essere i professori» (Luisa a forty-two-year-old divorced single mother living in Quarto Oggiaro Milano).

5.4 Orientation and school choice

As already noted in the part dedicated to the different institutional educational models in the previous chapter, both the French and the Italian system present a medium level of stratification. Due to the reforms brought in between the end of the sixties (in Italy) and mid seventies (in France), lower secondary school careers have been unified in just one curriculum. However, while in Italy the first differentiation comes in only on starting secondary high school, in France it starts at collège. As noted above, from the first year of collège (sixième) families can ‘choose’ to send their children to classes with particular specializations: Latin, German, Cham,¹³ etc. However, these are only apparently free choices since they are socially structured, as demonstrated by Caillé (1996); for example, 26% of the children of teachers, enjoying of a relatively high social capital useful at school, choose German as a second language, against 8% of workers’ children.

In accordance with the literature we can say that all these options respond to concrete strategies of distinction implemented by middle class families, which are at the same time reproduced by the lower social classes.

Michelle Lamont recognized this as a general tendency in French society, particularly evident in educational dynamics.

“Tandis que les français adeptes de l’exclusion culturelle marquent une très grande distance entre eux et le ‘français moyen’, les américains ont tendance à puiser dans une large gamme des répertoires culturels intégrant des éléments directement issues de la culture commune” (Lamont

¹³ Programme d’enseignement des classes à horaires aménagés musicales (cham)

1995, p.126).

Of course educational choices concerning for example the option of an ancient language or music as in the case of Cham classes, might also correspond to tastes and aptitudes but they clearly represent first of all a choice of orientation and not simply options.

In Italy, by contrast, there are not all these different specializations in the *scuole medie*, or at least they are not official. For instance, some schools, in particular private institutes organize special courses of a second language or Latin for those students willing to pursue academic studies such as *liceo classico*, supplied after official school time and not in the form of special classes as is the case of France.

In general, educational attainment seems to respond to a rationale which is at the same time academic (progress follows good results) and social. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, the international literature and empirical evidence have shown that at one and the same academic level orientation choices differ appreciably depending on the social background.

As in the case of 'special classes', also further orientation processes seem to differ considerably in France and Italy. In France the general rule is that final decision and orientation emerge from an exchange between teachers and the family, being a sort of compromise between aspirations, wishes and the objective academic results. Families know quite well that choices depend on educational results and normally they adapt their option to the concrete results. However, in particular in the case of students showing average academic performance, social background becomes quite a significant variable.

“ Quand la situation est incertaine, les familles de milieu populaire, plus sensibles au risqué d'échec dans les études à venir, se montrent plus prudentes que les familles de milieu aisé, et renoncent à demander les filières générales, plus valorisées, pour se 'rebattre' sur une formation professionnelle (sachant que ceci est moins vrai pour les familles étrangères¹⁴) ; à l'inverse , toujours pour les élèves un peu 'justes', seules les familles de milieu aisé 'osent' demander les orientations les plus valorisées. Or, ces demandes familiales sont fortement prises en compte par les conseils de classes qui, comme les textes les y invitent, ont tendance à les 'suivre' ; de fait, en suivant ainsi les demandes exprimées, mais aussi en ne 'corrigeant' pas à la hausse les demandes de ceux qui sont fortement auto-sélectionnés, les conseils entérinent les biais sociaux incorporés dans ces demandes (Duru-bellat, Van Zanten 2006 p. 45).

¹⁴ This is, for instance, what emerged from an important ethnographic study conducted during the nineties by Stéphane Beaud (2003) and resumed in a book entitled: "80% au bac et après?". This research, which loomed large in the French debate on education, shows how in France, starting from the end of eighties-beginning of the nineties, immigrant origin households over-invested, sometimes independently of results, in educational processes for their children, driving them towards a 'Bac de filière générale'.

It is also recognized that in general teachers and orientation counsellors themselves, keep implicitly in to account the social background as a main variable when ‘proposing’ an orientation which is quite important, since it is required and kept in to consideration when students and their families ask for inscription at school.

To resume, in the case of France, social inequalities which seem to exist already after primary school, even increase at low secondary school following some specific mechanisms. The first one attains acquisitions: educational success seems to vary depending on the social origin. Secondly, the increase of inequality is due to the choice of classes and the orientation process taking the form described.

As far as Italy is concerned, the orientation process is less formal and institutionalised: students receive suggestions from teachers but they are formally free to choose any school. The literature focusing on the Italian system affirms that due to scant differentiation in the levels of competence of schools, the orientation seem to be less focused on educational performance and results of students but other elements such as social background and household characteristics can have a bigger influence.

A study (Checchi and Flabbi, 2006), based on PISA data (OCSE 2000), estimates an important effect of parental education¹⁵ on secondary school choice of students in Italy. For example, the presence of at least one parent having a university degree, increases the opportunity for boys to choose the *Liceo*, rising from 20% to almost 60%. On the contrary, the same characteristic decreases the possibility to attend a technical or professional institute. The percentage of male students attending academic studies is 27.9% while female students in the same school typology account for 48.9%. In addition the authors also notice:

“(..) le donne scelgono in misura decisamente superiore il ramo accademico e l’istruzione dei genitori è meno importante in questa scelta. I risultati sono naturalmente troppo superficiali per trarre conclusioni su questo punto anche perché il differenziale praticamente scompare quando le stime sono ottenute tramite la specificazione estesa. Tuttavia ci sembra indicare un interessante direzione per un approfondimento”.

Concerning this last observation, it might be a quite important element in our neighbourhoods, since both in Quarto Oggiaro and Montreuil we generally observed more difficult educational trajectories and experiences among boys than girls.

In France, as already noted, high school is particularly stratified and differentiated in the levels of competence provided to students. However, as in the case of Italy social background still retains a decisive role. For example, the presence of children of executives (*cadres*) is 33% in *Bacs*

¹⁵ An element which, even if indirectly, informs on the social and class status of the family.

généraux, 14% in *Bacs technologiques* and 11% in *Bacs professionnels*. Social differences are also recorded in the different specializations (*séries*): executives' children represent 54% in *série scientifique*, 43% in *série économique* and *littéraire* and between 27% and 31% in *technologique* (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006; Insee).

Most scholars have recently observed an increasing hierarchy in the different specializations. Thus, if lower social class students opt for a technological field, white collar workers' children will be more concentrated in *série scientifique*, a mechanism which has been defined as '*démocratisation ségrégative*' (Merle, 2000).

Another important aspect concerns gender differences. Girls have generally better results than boys at high school, with an average score diploma obtainment of 75.4% against the 62.9% of boys. However, they less often access the *série scientifique*, today considered the most prestigious specialization.

As also noted above in the case of Italy, in general female school performance seem to be uniform among different social classes, while more differences are seen between social categories for boys. This aspect is relevant to our analysis of the local context, since we generally observed more difficult trajectories and experiences among boys. Probably this also pertains to the local dimension and to the fact that lower social class male students are less easily controlled by their families and are in general more present in public spaces than girls, in particular in Montreuil, with a consequence on school commitment, educational performance and result. However, it is important to say that even if girls usually follow more regular educational paths, they are not exempted from the same mechanisms of future selection, based on local and social rationales, in particular in France, as is the case of the *grand écoles* and universities.

« C'était toujours facile j'ai jamais du vraiment travailler à l'école, sauf en second, à quinze ans, quand j'ai commencé à connecter... je sortais tard le soir... j'étais un peu déconnecté. A l'école je fumais avec mes camarades, l'après midi et le soir avec mes pots... Avant la seconde je suivais en cours, j'étais très attentif. Mais comme j'étais défoncé par le cannabis et les sorties, mes résultats ont foutée et voila... Puis le soir comme je fumais et j'arrivais pas à faire les devoirs. Dans le bulletin j'avais neuf de moyenne et j'ai pas pu faire scientifique mais j'étais obligé a faire économique et sociale. Pour moi S était la filière de l'excellence.. et je me suis pris un coup dans la gueule. Quand on fume on se rend pas compte.. Alors j'ai décidé de changer.. En première j'ai arrêté de fumer régulièrement ». (Nassim, 19 years old).

« Mon fils il a arrêté l'école. Après le collège il a arrêté toute suite le lycée. Déjà au collège on l'avait envoyé à l'internat parce-que il ne voulait pas aller à l'école il était toujours dehors. Il est parti à l'internat et après deux ans il est voulu revenir. Il a commencé le lycée et tout suite arrêté. Il n'aime pas l'école, il est comme ça. Il est le contraire de son frère, lui il a étudié droits à la fac. Il m'as dit je préfère travailler mais j'ai lui dit : alors va à travailler... j'ai peur parce qu'il traîne tout le temps Il y a beaucoup des jeunes qui traînent à droite et à gauche et les parents ne disent rien ».

(Fatima, Yassin's's mother, 17 years old)

Due to the similar social structure to be seen in our neighbourhoods of Montreuil and Milano, we observe that the characteristics of the family and social backgrounds can significantly influence the orientation processes. However, as with all mechanisms taking place at the local level, there are also local variables and dynamics which structure this phenomenon. First of all, an important element concerns the lower secondary school attended since, as has been pointed out at some length, even if there is only one *cursus*, the previous educational experience not only influences the future educational attainment but also the orientation process. For example, as we saw in the section tracing out the situation of schools in the two local contexts, an important aspect lies in the differentiation of lower secondary schools in the neighbourhoods. In Quarto Oggiaro the *scuole medie*, the institute *Gian Battista Vico* and *Antonio Graf* present similar and fairly uniform social characteristics, while the only school varying in the social profile, educational conditions and offer is the private institute *Pastor Angelicus*. In Montreuil the most segregated school seems to be *Lenan de Tillemont* classified as ZEP¹⁶, while the two other schools, *Jean Jaurès* and *Colonel Fabien* are generally less uniform, showing a greater social and ethnic mix, even if with marked internal differentiation among classes. In fact, as we already noted in the previous section, there are different “choix d'options” also entailing an important social selection. However, as recorded in many of our interviews, *Lenan de Tillemont* is the neighbourhood school to which people usually attribute negative characteristics, mainly due to the concentration of a population having social vulnerable characteristics.

«Au collège j'ai fréquenté *Lenan de Tillemont*. Il y a mieux que ce collège à Montreuil et les gens le savent. En général ici c'est bien passé mais ça m'as pas beaucoup aidé... » (Matthieu).

¹⁶ The ZEP: zones d'éducation prioritaires (ZEP) - priority education zones, are in the French system those areas in which are located schools (schools or colleges) receiving additional resources and greater autonomy to respond to the many educational and social difficulties cumulated there. These areas were established in 1981 in order to fight against the increasing school failure and social exclusion.

«Moi, j'ai fréquenté les primaires à la Boissière à l'école publique Nanteuil mais après ma mère m'as envoyé au collège privé Fidelis et après l'Henri matisse qui est un lycée aussi privé. Elle a décidé comme ça parce que le public à Montreuil c'était pas bien et comme j'ai été toujours un bon élève elle m'a donné la chance de m'en sortir... C'est vrai que la bas... au Colonel Fabien j'avais un copain que à l'école primaire avait des bonnes notes mais quand il est arrivé là bas... Donc il était avec moi en CP¹⁷ et on était les deux intellos de la classe mais lui au Colonel Fabien il a redoublé deux fois » (Nassim, 19 years old).

Another girl attending *Lenan de Tillemont* told us about her generally positive experience, but as already pointed out in the chapter, it is important to recognize that the younger they are, the less people seem to be aware of the concrete consequences which a particular education and orientation can have on their future educational career.

«Je fréquent Le nan de Tillemont

Vous êtes combien en classe ?

Vingt.

Combien sur vingt sont d'origine immigré ?

(LAUGH) tous, sauf deux qui sont français français et les autre sont tous d'origine immigré, étrangère

Est-ce que tu aurais préféré une autre école ?

Non c'est bien, c'est pas parfaite mais c'est normale. Le niveau est normale mais ça dépende des classes

La relation avec les profs ?

Oui c'est bien. Des fois quand on comprend pas le cours ils sont disponible a nous expliquer aussi après le cours.

Les enseignants sont tous blancs ?

Oui »

(Chantal, 15 years old, Haitian origins)

And again ...

« J'ai été au Colonel Fabien, il y avait toute la Boissière. Ils nous envoient soi au Fabien soi au Lenan de Tillemont. Au Fabien il y a plus de mélange mais c'était plus tôt le Nan de Tillemont avec

¹⁷ The second year of the second cycle, also called 'cours préparatoire' (CP)

la plus haute concentration des classes défavorisés. Au Colonel Fabien il avait plus de mélange comme il y a aussi beaucoup de bobos¹⁸ au tour. Le Fabien et le Jean Jaurès sont un peu les meilleurs collègues. Heureusement je suis allé au Fabien et pas au Nan de Tillemont, ma mère elle aurait pas accepté. Elle était beaucoup attentif au choses liés à l'école. Moi j'ai redoublé à l'école primaire, j'ai raté une année au CP (primaires) comme je suis arrivé en retard, ma sœur par contre était un an avant de moi et elle a été au Fabien. Pour cette raison ma mère connaissait déjà l'école. En plus j'ai eu de la chance, je suis allé au Fabien parce-que j'habité à la cité de l'Amitié. Si j'aurais habité par exemple à la Place Jules Verne, un peu plus en bas, je serais allé au Lenan de Tillemont » (Julien, 23 years old. BEP in electro plastic but works as security).

As is the case of Sabrina, a twenty-year-old girl of Algerian origin, problems may arise later on during continuation of the educational career:

«Je suis allé au Lenan de Tillemont, là c'est bien passé. J'étais une des meilleures dans la classe mais le problème c'était plus tôt au lycée. Je suis allé en Bac L (Littéraire) mais la première année c'était trop dur. Heureusement je me suis engagé à fond et j'y suis arrivé. (Sabrina 20 years old)

In Quarto Oggiaro we met Noemi, a nineteen-year-old girl with a very similar social profile, whose experience reminded us of the same dynamics:

« Ho fatto le scuola qui alla Graf: l'asilo, le elementari e le medie. Finite le medie non volevo farle in quartiere, perché volevo allontanarmi un po'. Non volevo essere la ragazza di quartiere volevo vivere altre cose. Volevo fare il liceo linguistico che qui a Quarto Oggiaro non c'è. Quindi già questo mi faceva allontanare. D'altra parte mi dispiaceva lasciare alcune persone però ho detto..qui c'è sempre la stessa tipologia di persone e io volevo provare a cambiare. Vedere com'era anche fuori dal quartiere.

Mia madre mi voleva mandare qui vicino, a Bollate, dove andava anche una mia amica, al Primo Levi che nonostante non sia un liceo è comunque linguistico. Io invece mi sono impuntata e sono andata alla Manzoni. Ho fatto sei mesi ma poi sono scappata. Era troppo pesante fare un salto dalla scuola media di Quarto Oggiaro al Manzoni. Le persone mi piacevano tantissimo. Un altro tipo di persone completamente diverse. Però non riuscivo a tenere il ritmo. Io sono sempre stata la più brava della scuola, pubblicavano i miei temi. Dicevano sempre: vai a fare giornalismo!

¹⁸ The term is short for bourgeois and bohemian. We suggest the reader consult an interesting article by Rebecca Voight and published in 2000 on *The New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/14/news/14iht-rbobo.t.html>).

Comunque sono sempre stata bravissima io a scuola. Elementari e medie sempre veramente la più brava, impeccabile. Ma al Liceo è stata una cosa assurda, cioè facevamo delle cose difficilissime. Ma io mi impegnavo perché volevo farlo, tornavo a casa e studiavo dalle tre fino all'una di notte ma prendevo comunque tre o quattro. Quando prendevo sei chiamavo mia madre in lacrime per la felicità. Perché io mi impegnavo ma probabilmente i professori di Quarto non pretendono molto. Non lo so... Poi ho cambiato scuola, sono andata all'istituto tecnico corrispondente in lingue estere ed è stato meglio, anche se però non era un liceo. Poi al quarto anno mi hanno bocciato e non ho finito. Quindi adesso lavorerò un anno per pagarmi la scuola e fare i due anni in uno» (Noemi, 20 years old)

At this point we will go deeper into the processes of orientation and choice of high school, seeing how these selections are made and what are the micro mechanisms and dynamics behind them.

In such particular educational and social contexts, school choice and orientation can be a decisive moment, having strong incidence on students' self perception. Even if the degree of free choice cannot be the same in the French and Italian context – the latter being, as noted, less institutionalized, less regulated and more informal – people can in any case have negative experiences, without experiencing this as a moment of real choice but more as something imposed. In this way they experience a feeling of disqualification, being classified as low quality students to be sent to low quality schools with a certain loss of self-esteem, which can often be the key towards motivation and positive educational results.

Florien, for example, expresses a feeling of self-disqualification when he talks about the choice of secondary school:

«Moi j'étais bien en cuisine et ils voulaient me faire croire que je serais réussi dans le secteur cuisine ».

Mattieu, talking about transition from lower to higher secondary school, says:

« Dans ce moment je cherche du travail. Je ne vais pas à l'école, je me suis arrêté en bac-pro à 18 ans. Au début J'ai fait le lycée général mais je me suis fait avoir... j'ai écouté les profs qui disaient: tu as les moyennes, tu peux aller en bac général. Moi j'étais un bon élève mais je n'aimait pas révisé. J'étais en bas tout le temps. C'est au lycée que j'ai compris et je suis allé en bac pro. Mais là aussi Je ne faisais pas les devoirs et je n'ai jamais reçu de diplôme. Je me suis arrêté à chaque fois. Je suis jamais arrivé jusqu'au but de ce que je faisais. C'est un peu mon problème.

Je suis allé en BEP secrétariat (Brevet d'études professionnelles) mais comme J'avais une bonne moyenne ils m'ont envoyé en comptabilité au Bac Pro mais après 2 mois j'ai tout arrêté. Ça ne me plaisait pas. Je n'aimais pas la comptabilité. J'aurais préféré le bâtiment mais ils m'ont envoyé en secrétariat. Après Je voulais faire de la plomberie mais j'ai pas été accepté et donc j'ai laissé tomber. J'étais démoralisé... Quand j'ai vu que personne me voulait dans les écoles que je voulais, alors c'est là que je me suis démoralisé. Ça m'a Vite soulé » (Matthieu, 19 years old).

In the case of Mattieu we could say that he is one of the typical unsuccessful examples of the democratization process (Beaud 2003) driving towards increase in the number of students obtaining a diploma (*Bac*).

“80 % d'une génération au niveau du bac : cette phrase ministérielle fut emblématique de la démocratisation scolaire voulue dans les années 80/90. Entre 1985 et 1995, le taux de bacheliers dans une génération passe effectivement de 30 à 60 %. Mirage ? Jeu de dupes ? Ou bien réelle promotion pour les jeunes issus de milieux défavorisés?” (Rembert,2003)¹⁹.

As he clearly recognizes, in a quite cynical, bitter but concrete way, the fact of having progressively raised his educational aspirations, because of his potential recognized by teachers, has been negative not only for his educational career but also for his professional and working future. He would have preferred a professional education in the field of construction but after one year at Lycée Général, from a BEP in secretariat (Brevet d'Etude Professionnel) they tried to re-orientate him again in *Bac comptabilité*, without any success, since basically these proposals were against his wishes.

In general, in the French context we see a problem with lower social class students if they have no clear ideas about their future, skills and desires, which is quite often the case, in particular if their family cannot provide real support in terms of orientation and social capital. This is so especially in the case of *école en alternance*²⁰, when they have to find an employer by themselves. All this situation might partially be a responsibility of school which often shows difficulties in the relationship with these students, in considering their abilities and in providing them with positive stimulation.

« L'orientation en France fonctionne comme ça: on te donne une brochure, l'ONISEP²¹ et là sont marqués le choix à faire...mais c'est une brochure que moi par exemple j'arrive pas à comprendre.

¹⁹ <http://www.parutions.com/pages/1-6-424-3884.html>

²⁰ A training system integrating work experience where the person concerned - the apprentice - will work in business and receive for another period an education from specific schools and professional institutions.

²¹ Information Nationale et régionale sur les formations et les métiers (www.onisep.fr).

Il y a pas un système d'échange dans l'orientation. Il ya peu de temps d'échange. Il faut faire trois choix. Si le premier est complet alors on vous envoie au deuxième ou troisième choix. Tout est très rapide et automatique. Très rigide et souvent ça rencontre pas le désir des élèves. Pour l'école de plombier par exemple ça se passe pas sur le niveau à l'école mais sur le moment de l'inscription et il n'y a pas assez de places » (Social worker in the association Rue et Cités)

As we saw in the case of Matthieu, if students have a fair preparation, the general tendency is to set them directly in the direction of the *Bac Général*. This was also the case of Tahiri, an eighteen-year-old boy, who had moved 5 years before, together with his family from Madagascar to France.

« Au début, au collège j'avais des problèmes sur tout pour la langue mais après je me suis rattrapé. J'ai commencé en général mais en suite, comme j'avais des problèmes je suis allé en bac pro environnement mais pas à Montreuil, à Pantin. Ici il n'y avait pas de places et déjà mes notes n'étaient pas super »

Thus, very often both in Montreuil and Milano we observe that most of the students had not made any real choice. Either it is made by teachers and counsellors or casually, on the basis of the places and schools available. This is particularly true in the case of France, where schools, especially those for which there is strong demand, may have limited places available: a structural element which does not favour students whose families have not always been able to bring them up to respect school rules and timetables. In fact, in a way, these codes of behaviour are external to the family's culture and priorities, an element which is particularly evident when students have to look for the compulsory internship, which they very often try to find just couple of days before the official beginning.

« Ici chez nous ils arrivent toujours le dernier jour en demandant un stage. Quand je les vois ici je comprends que c'est leur dernière chance, parce-que ils ne se sont pas dépêchés à l'avance » (In charge of Café la Pêche. Social Centre owned by the Municipality).

« En faits j'ai commencé un BEP en comptabilité mais ça m'intéressait pas... L'ambiance était sympa mais ça ne me convenait pas. Après je voulais savoir comment c'était dans les bâtiment et alors J'ai choisi un CAP (certificat attitude professionnel) en câblage informatique. Au début je voulais faire électronique mais j'ai fait ça, parce-que en électronique il n'y avaient pas de places. Je ne savais pas quoi choisir mais j'ai choisi. Moi, vu que mon niveau en troisième était assez bas j'ai préféré aller directement dans le monde du travail et à la fin j'ai obtenu mon diplôme de CAP

mais j'ai pas beaucoup travaillé dans ce domaine. C'était trop dure».

(Charles, 25 ans chômeur)

« J'avais pas des bons résultats pour faire un lycée général, j'étais trop paresseux. Alors comme il y a que deux écoles comme ça en France ils m'ont conseillé de faire cette école, parce-que ça serait été plus facile de trouver un travail. C'était à l'école Condorcet et on l'appelle Condorgay parce que il y a que des garçons...(LAUGH) Au début je voulais faire plombier. J'avais choisi plombier librement est c'est sûr qui sans bons notes je ne pouvais pas aller en général. Mais je ne suis pas rentré. Il n'y avait pas de postes. J'avais plusieurs choix, comptabilité, vente mais j'ai choisi électro plastique parce-que un pot à moi avait commencé cette école. Mais après il a arrêté l'école. Moi j'ai choisi ça parce que je me suis aussi renseigné et j'ai vu la possibilité d'un bon salaire. J'ai pris mon BEP à 19 ans mais après je n'ai pas continué la filière. Ce métier n'est pas bien pour la santé... alors j'ai fait que des stages » (Julien, 23 years old. BEP in electro plastic but works as a guardian for security in a firm).

The school attended by Julien was also attended by many of the boys living at *Cité de l'Amitié*. Once, talking in a bar with a group of ten young men between seventeen and twenty-five years old, all living in a couple of buildings in the same *cité*, I realized that almost the half of them attended the same school of electro plastic.

However, the same thing seems to happen in many other cases. As Florian explained, there is often the sensation that young people from these neighbourhoods are subjected to a real selection and educational segregation process:

« J'ai fait une matière que j'ai pas choisi : système mécanique automatisé. C'était ou l'école ? A Noisy le sec. En gros cette école était une poubelle, où on mettait tous les gens sans collocation ». (Florien, 22 years old).

When students, with the help and commitment of their families, try to escape these mechanisms, in no case is it as simple. Either they have to attend a private school, which is sometimes the decision also taken by families with a modest economic situation, because they understand the importance of this step; or they try to send their children from the outset to a 'Grand Lycée', a very elite school.

Anne, a sixty-year-old woman, divorced from her husband of Malian origin, had both these experiences with her two daughters, Caroline and Marie.

« J'ai commencé au Jean Jaurès.. après j'ai voulu me réorienter .. mais quand on a déjà fait une seconde générale les portes se ferment un peu. Ils te mandent dans un BEP secrétariat. Donc j'ai

été obligé d'aller dans un lycée privé que faisait le sanitaire et sociale. Avec ma famille on a décidé, on a cherché et on a trouvé un lycée privé a Bagnolet. Secrétariat ça me disait rien.. En plus je suis dyslexique et faire secrétariat c'était un peu bizarre.» (Caroline, 23 years old).

« Avec Marie, après le collège on voulait aller dans un grand Lycée un peu élitaire dans un beau quartier de Paris, une meilleure école et là j'ai senti la discrimination. Je me suis senti rejeté. C'était rien à voir avec la couleur mais plus pour le fait que on venait de Montreuil. Ce jour là je me suis senti complètement déconsidérée, ils m'ont regardé de haut. Elle était pas acceptée, c'était loin de ça. Il y avait déjà les notes qu'ils étaient correct mais pas super et après .. Mais si j'ai été une bonne bourgeoise j'aurais pu forcée la porte mais je suis un peu timide, j'ai pas fait le discours et en plus j'étais simplement une gardienne de Montreuil. Ça m'as marquée.. j'ai même pas parlé en famille mais ça m'as marquée » (Anne, Caroline's mother)

In Quarto Oggiaro we can observe dynamics similar to that described for Montreuil. However, here we found more often that students do not continue their education after *scuole medie*, in particular if they have repeated a class more than once.

«E' abbastanza frequente che alcuni dei nostri studenti finiscano le medie a sedici diciassette anni. In quel caso il percorso scolastico è abbastanza compromesso. Innanzitutto perché è difficile andare a scuola con gente molto più piccola di te ma anche perché alcuni devono farsi carico di aiutare la famiglia e quindi vanno a lavorare o si occupano nelle attività legali o meno del quartiere. Non sempre compatibili con la scuola, anche dal punto di vista degli orari» (Teacher, Scuola Media Graf).

As in the case of Montreuil, also in Quarto Oggiaro there is usually a re-orientation process. However, unlike from the French context, it is not a change from *Liceo/Bac Général* to *Istituto Tecnico/Bac Pro* but everything happens at a lower level. There is usually a re-orientation from *Istituto Tecnico* to *Istituto Professionale*. It is interesting to see that the reason for this difference does not only concern the level of education. Indeed, as noted above, in the Italian educational system there is a lesser differentiation in the levels of competence of different schools than, for example, in France. What seems to count more here is the local rationale. The educational supply and range of options are very much limited to the neighbourhood and therefore quite often these students, their families but also the teachers, do not take into consideration schools outside the neighbourhood or which are not very close, as is the case of the *Istituto Tecnico Lagrange* or *Dudovitch*, both very much attended by students from Quarto Oggiaro.

Therefore, even if there is more freedom in school choice, it seems that these students, especially

those coming from fairly disadvantaged families and so far had their entire education in the neighbourhood do not take advantage of it.

In this perspective, we can say that in the case of school there may be a neighbourhood effect, not only in the educational process, as we have seen, but also in the orientation and school selection.

«Alle superiori sono andato all'Itis, al La Grange in via Litta Modigliani e mi sono trovato malissimo. L'ho lasciata il secondo anno per una grossissima delusione che ho ricevuto, nel senso che ero già stato bocciato il primo anno, poi vengo promosso e vado in seconda. Certo non mi piaceva il genere di insegnamenti che venivano fatti. Ho scelto questa scuola un po' per caso. Mia madre in prima media mi ha regalato un buon computer e mi piaceva smanettare e farci mille cose. Quindi ho pensato di andare a fare informatico, solo che nel biennio è tristissimo, ti insegnano delle cose pallosissime... al secondo anno poi mi hanno ribocciato e sono andato al Greppi. Però anche da lì sono andato via dopo due mesi» (Andrea 25 years old).

«Due anni fa andavo alla La Grange, ho fatto tecnico informatico, che sono 3+ 2. Andavo male e non ero stimolato. Non mi piaceva il ramo. Mi sono iscritto, sono andato un tot di tempo ma poi ho smesso per tre mesi e poi ho ripreso da febbraio ad aprile e poi ho smesso di nuovo e alla fine mi hanno bocciato. Avevo iniziato questa scuola perché i professori delle medie mi avevano consigliato di fare questa specializzazione, perché dicevano che avevo la testa per fare questo e quindi mi sono fidato di loro. Poi ho cambiato scuola e sono andato al professionale. Al Greppi, faccio i tre anni di meccanica. Poi se vado bene posso fare il passaggio all'istituto tecnico Marelli e prendere il diploma di cinque anni». (Christian 16 years old).

However, the negative effects and consequences seem to be more visible to people outside the dynamics of 'entrapment':

«Secondo me fare la scuola a Quarto è la cosa peggiore. Perché rimane la gente che è contenta di essere quel tipo di persona e non vuole migliorare nemmeno dal punto di vista scolastico. O ci vai proprio perché vuoi fare quella cosa lì particolare, però rimani comunque in quell'ambiente, non uscendo mai dal quartiere vedi solamente quel tipo di persone. A Quarto Oggiaro poi ci sono solo determinate scuole e non c'è un liceo. Se uno rimane a Quarto sembra proprio che ti dicano tu sei qui e fai questo» (Noemi, 20 years old).

Therefore, one of the main problems, as we will see at greater length in the chapter dedicated to the neighbourhood as a physical and social place, is a sort of entrapment in the neighbourhood dynamics. An issue that we extensively discussed is the problem of peer effects, in particular in

social homogeneous contexts. However, school should be a means to open students' horizons both in a cultural sense through education, but also from a spatial point of view, and this potential of coming in contact with new experiences, people, perspectives and visions seems to be limited if the whole educational process is confined to a certain space, especially if this place is characterized as disadvantaged. However, as one of the teachers of the Istituto Greppi explained to us, also schools in the neighbourhood can work in this direction, even if with more structural limits and in a more difficult social context:

«Noi cerchiamo di farli uscire dalla sola dimensione del quartiere. Anche da un punto di vista dei programmi scolastici facciamo cose diverse, organizziamo gite in cui si vada ad esempio una settimana in montagna per creare gruppo, oppure andare in Duomo, Pinacoteca. La maggior parte di loro ad esempio non è mai stata dentro il Duomo e vi abitano a mezz'ora di autobus. Purtroppo la scuola è in continuo smantellamento, ma siamo riusciti anche a far fare agli studenti i documenti per andare all'estero, per farli viaggiare, farli sentire cittadini europei, conoscere altre culture. La prima volta che han preso un aereo erano emozioni forti sia per loro che per noi.» (Teacher of the Istituto Greppi).

Having considered orientation and choice at secondary school, we will now look at higher education. Both the French and Italian literature, as observed in the previous chapter, consider the higher education system to be marked still by much inequality (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006; Checchi and Flabbi 2006).

As far as France is concerned, research (Euriat and Thélot, 1995) conducted during the nineties but still considered valid, provided some significant data: in the first university cycle executive's and teachers' children represent 32.5%, but 13.5% in BTS (*Brevet Technicien Supérieur*) and 48.5% in the preparatory classes (*classe préparatoires*) for the *grandes écoles*. Then, depending on the level and prestige of the school, their representation even increases, amounting for example to 81.3% in the four most prestigious institutions in Ecole National d'Administration (ENA), Polytechnique, Hautes Etudes Commerciales, Ecole Normales Supérieures. As emerged from another study (Albouy and Wanecq, 2003), among young people of the 1959-1968 cohort 21% of the children of teachers and professionals entered these school against 1% of working class children.

In short, we can say that these differences apply to two levels: the first is the average good educational result that upper middle class students have reached during their educational career, for all the reasons we investigated, the second to the social selection itself taking place on entering

higher education. As noted also in the micro context of our neighborhood, where higher education students were not so many, working class children do not usually opt for a class préparatoires, unlike their classmates having a same result at Baccalauréat but from upper middle class families²². In this dynamics an important role is played by culture and social capital, since the children of lower class families can have some difficulties in perceiving themselves in those professional and social roles (Duru-Bellat, 1995).

The second element concerns the cost in economic terms but also the concrete risks of the investment in a prolonged period of study, which is often also the case in Italy. For this reason lower social class students attribute decisive importance to the risk of failure, knowing that the access period for the *grandes écoles*, for example, may be very long and without any guarantees. However, unlike the case in Italy, as we observed in the previous chapter, the French higher education system presents a more marked hierarchy among the different specializations and institutions, which is why, going to a second rank university, *université de banlieue*, as it is usually called, or to a less prestigious Ecole de Commerce, is not the same thing for the labour market as having attended, for instance, a Science Po', Polytechnique or Ecole Normale Supérieur. Therefore, as pointed out by Boudon, we can recognize a sort of rationality in the actor able to estimate and judge the situation in which he is acting, even if in any case we should always bear in mind the unequal and constraining situation in which the individual has to act. In addition, as noted by Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten (2006), a more subtle difference between lower and upper class students is to be underlined and pertains to strategies of orientation and social capital: "On note aussi que les choix des étudiants issus des familles les plus instruites révèlent une meilleure information sur les 'bons affaires' en matière d'orientation. Ce sont eux qui les premiers ont commence à délaissier les orientation 'traditionnelles' (Lettre pour les littéraires, Science pour les scientifique), pour 'lancer' des orientations moins conformes aux logiques scolaire (études commerciales pour les scientifique, par exemple), mais fondées en termes de logique économique. Les étudiants en quête de distinction sont de fait contraints de modifier leurs choix dès lors que ces orientations se banalisent et deviennent moins rentables". (Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006, p. 50).

In this perspective we can understand how, as happens in the case of secondary school, there is also differentiation in higher education, which is structured on a social basis, but also, as we saw in the case of peripheral universities (*université de banlieue*), on spatial criteria. Some of the observations made for the French context can be extended to the Italian system,

²² This household typology, as observed through demographic and census data, do not represent a great majority in the neighbourhood.

bearing in mind, however, all the structural differences extensively reported in this work. A survey conducted by Istat (2002) on the orientation of young people who obtained a diploma in 1998 investigated the impact of family background and social origins on orientation and future choices. As observed by Checchi and Flabbi (2006), who analyzed these data in depth, the impact of parents' attitudes is fairly relevant, especially in the case of male students, as already noted in the case of secondary education. For them, the presence of at least one graduate parent increases the chances of choosing university by 50%.

Therefore, confirming that family background has a relevance to choices for secondary educational, we also note that family background retains an influence also after high school, as is evident in the case university.

6. Family experiences and intergenerational trajectories

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will focus mainly on *family trajectories*. In fact, as we stated in the introduction, in the study of poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage, it is very important to observe how the family, together with other factors, such as the external context of the neighbourhood, school and other more personal characteristics can be a decisive element influencing young people's trajectories and experiences.

In fact, as we will see in various contexts in this chapter, the family is a factor which, depending on its characteristics and on the external context, may be both a resource for the individual, supporting him/her in a material and "spiritual" way, but also a limit, acting through the mechanisms to be analysed in this chapter.

Therefore, our hypothesis is that together with the neighbourhood effect (whose mechanisms has been outlined in other chapters) there is also a decisive family effect.

As pointed out in the introduction and theoretical chapter, these mechanisms are sometimes interconnected and difficult to analyse separately: the main problem in neighbourhood effects study is in fact the *bias* between the real neighbourhood effect and the final influence of the family in particular, being decisive through its mechanisms, which are however not always easy to interpret.

Thus we will observe why and how the family has an important role in their reproduction, together with the other decisive elements mentioned, such as the neighbourhood and its potential effects. Our objective is to contextualise *family trajectories* in the entire process of reproduction of poverty and social disadvantage, in order to estimate their significance and role in the whole process and to see how they act and to what different extents in the two contexts of our research.

In doing so, we decided to adopt a generational perspective analysing, together with the individual trajectories and experiences of our young target, also those of their parents and when possible grand-parents. As some scholars have argued (Segalene 2010), observation of two or three generations enables us to provide a more complete framework of the situation and trajectories, which to a certain extent can also be reproduced from generation to generation.

Particular attention will be paid to the dynamic dimension (Hill 1981; Duncan 1984; Walker 1994; Leibfried 1999), observing all most significant biographical events that can lead, at both the individual and family level, towards trajectories of social disadvantage and poverty.

We will observe some of the issues that the sociological literature on generations and cohorts considers important, and in particular, social mobility, one of the most decisive factors when we

analyze family trajectories, being connected to socio-economic aspects such as residence, education, employment and income.

Alongside the transmission role of the family which, if characterized by a difficult socio-economic situation can negatively affect the individual, we also consider the family as a resource for young people. Of course, the advantages derived by individuals will be generally more substantial if the family has more resources available (economically but also in terms of social capital), assuming that coming from a poor or disadvantaged household can have a negative influence on individual outcomes and opportunities.

More in general, as recognized by many scholars (Chauvel 1998, Van de Velde 2008, Rampazi 2010), family solidarity is an important dimension when analysing young people's trajectories, a phenomenon which has generally been important in both countries, especially in the Italian case, where the family has always played a major role in the welfare system, defined as 'welfare familistico' (Ferrera, 1996; Mingione 1997), although it has however increased over the years also in France.

"Whereas in the 1970s in France, family support was quite neutral in its effect on status attainment (average wages, even at age twenty-five, were sufficient to cover the housing costs of standard young families), the economic resources of parents and their generosity are now crucial for young people. Youth with similar earnings and from similar social milieus may have starkly different standards of living depending on whether they receive help from families for childcare, housing, access to a mortgage, and the like" (Chauvel, 2010 p.4).

6.2 The importance of the family and genealogical perspective at the micro level

From a sociological point of view, scholars have developed a specific focus on the family in the study of broader social phenomena. In France, for instance, they have studied workers in family contexts, going into the details of daily experiences and relational aspects without simply dwelling on general issues and problems affecting the households, unlike the Chicago School approach (Bertaux 1997).

According to Bertaux, analysis of the family is important because enables us to go deeper into some aspects such as professional, social and geographic mobility. For this scholar the family represents a major reference point in studying the transmission of values, jobs and habits between generations (Olagnero and Saraceno 1993) since the different individual outcomes also depend on it. In fact, as

we will see, within the family parents pass on to their children certain economic, social and cultural factors and values contributing to determine their future social status.

For all these reasons, in this chapter, as more in general in our research, we have decided to give particular prominence to life stories and narrations of different generations, in order to outline the main mechanisms through which family transmissions act. Because of this methodological choice, the transcripts of interviews will at times, especially in this chapter, turn out to be very long.

Italian sociological literature started some years after French sociology to focus on the family in a biographical genealogical perspective¹.

Excluding some scholars half-way between history, sociology and political activism such as Dolci and Scottarello², mainstream sociology has focused on family stories and biographical events mainly since the eighties. Italian Sociologists have started to pay particular attention to the study of individual experiences and trajectories in the working and family context. In short, all these studies share a common application of methods which were traditionally less developed in the social sciences, such as biographical narratives of individual and family stories. As pointed out by Ferrarotti, history is no longer considered “la nobile sequenza di grandi eventi, battaglie, trattati, matrimoni dinastici e così via, bensì come il risultato cumulativo delle trame e delle reti di relazione in cui entrano necessariamente, giorno dopo giorno, i gruppi umani, le persone destinate a restare sconosciute, ma che costituiscono nel loro insieme sostanza viva, la ‘polpa’ sociologica reale del processo storico” (Ferrarotti 1981).

In this perspective the family represents a fundamental element for analysis of our societies at the micro level, being a linking point between the individual and broader society.

As far as our specific research is concerned, with the generational perspective, seen *stricto sensu* as the family, we can go deeper into many processes of social transformation, including social mobility. As Leccardi argues: “Attraverso il piano analitico generazionale siamo in grado di accostarci allo studio dei processi di mutamento, per quel che riguarda ad esempio le trasformazioni dei corsi di vita e delle identità dando spazio all’intreccio tra storia e cultura” (Leccardi, 2002, p.49). In fact, as underlined by Mannheim, a generational perspective is useful to observe not only generational ties (what unifies different generations) but also those aspects differing between generations that need to be taken into account. In this way, it is possible to observe and register changes, contradictions, fractures, such as the generational imbalance on the labour market. “La chiave di lettura delle generazioni in termini di filiazione/discendenza permette infatti di porre a

¹ The methodological approach of our research is better explained in a dedicated chapter. Here the objective is merely to characterise the importance of a family perspective and how it will be investigated.

² C. Bermani (edited by) Introduzione alla storia orale, Volume I, Storia, conservazione delle fonti e problemi di metodo. Odradek 1999.

confronto i percorsi di definizione dell'identità delle diverse generazioni all'interno della famiglia, mettendone in luce, diversità e somiglianze, punti di frattura e punti di continuità" (Leccardi, 2002 p.57).

By analysing family trajectories and stories we are able to study many dimensions, including those concerning social disadvantage, which would be hard to capture focusing simply on the individual subject. In this way, we can identify and go deeper into the mechanisms of reproduction or discontinuity at work within the family.

The family becomes the perspective and framework through which we can interpret generational relations. As Chiara Saraceno points out, "(la famiglia è) il luogo dove i due sessi si incontrano e convivono, è anche lo spazio storico e simbolico nel quale, e a partire dal quale, si dispiega la divisione del lavoro, degli spazi, delle competenze, dei valori, dei destini personali di uomini e donne" (Saraceno, 1988 , p. 11).

Through the family, we will be able to compare in a genealogical perspective the relationships between generations and not only among members of different cohorts. By studying an entire family genealogy – or at least three cohorts - as we are able to do in some cases, we can highlight how in one and the same family, over the generations, there are certain processes of differentiation or on the contrary transmission of values, habits, abilities/inabilities, and also how residential mobility or immobility of households, very often dependent on wider family dynamics, can have a decisive role in individual trajectories.

When studying the family, a fundamental dimension playing a decisive role is gender. In fact, gender is closely connected to the family and completely shapes its form and internal relations.

However, as demonstrated by Chiara Saraceno, the importance and role of this dimension for households and generations has not always been acknowledged, in particular in the case of Italy.

"I concetti di e l'attenzione per i fenomeni d'età, di coorte e di generazione, sono stati per lo più sviluppati a prescindere dalle dimensioni di genere, anche quando gli esempi empirici erano ovviamente definiti in termini d'esperienze d'uomini o, più raramente, di donne. E quando il concetto di genere ha cominciato a farsi strada nelle scienze sociali ha fatto molto più attenzione alle specificità storiche, di stratificazione sociale, d'appartenenza territoriale che non all'appartenenza d'età e di coorte" (Saraceno 2002, p. 74-75).

In our analysis, too, we noticed that gender cannot be neglected or underestimated when considering families and generations. Family relations are in fact firmly based on gender roles and differentiations and structure the relations inside and outside the family. This seems to be the case in both our neighbourhoods, where for similar reasons - presence of immigrant origin families from

Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa in Montreuil, internal migration from the South of Italy to Milan - traditional gender models can persist within the family, and as a consequence in the neighbourhood. First of all this seems to be true considering the two genders within the family, in the relations between parents (father and mother) and between them and their children. In addition, it also emerges in the case of a typical disadvantaged profile, frequent in both our neighbourhood contexts, namely the case of single mothers.

As we have argued, gender structures relationships inside families. For instance, a problem which is widespread in both the contexts but particularly felt in the case of the Haut Montreuil is the absence of fathers in the upbringing, development and education of children, and aspect which seems to apply in general and not only in the case of single or divorced mothers.

In fact, even when fathers are present, especially those of Sub-Saharan African origin, they do not completely perform all their parental duties. This aspect is not secondary in our analysis. As we will observe in the rest of the chapter, the absence of control, which mothers sometimes fail to exercise over their male children, who do not recognize them as an authority, due probably to specific cultural values developed at home or in the neighbourhood, may affect young people's conduct within the family, at school and in the neighbourhood.

Thus lack of parental control, which is however not always the case in these neighbourhoods, can to a certain extent activate some important neighbourhood effect mechanisms (negative role models, peer effect, etc.).

In this perspective, we can observe how family and neighbourhood effects can interact and are in a way interconnected – a phenomenon which brings about the main problem of neighbourhood effects, namely the above-mentioned *bias* between the neighbourhood and the family.

6.3 Family and intergenerational mobility

As scholars have shown, the family background is one of the most important elements affecting intergenerational mobility.

Blanden and Macmillan (2010) show in the case of the United Kingdom the existence of a close connection between parental income, early unemployment and future earnings.

Based on empirical analysis of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), these scholars show how, for example, in the case of education, the relationship with the family background is particularly decisive, as we also noted in the chapter dedicated to school theories.

A similar opinion has been expressed by, Louis Chauvel in relation to France. In addition, in his study on life chances for the young generations in France he produces evidence showing how they move ever more towards downward social mobility, and underlines marked differences in social mobility opportunities for the various cohorts.

For example, the age targets 30-35 years show social mobility differing from that of the 50-55-year-olds, according to his analysis. The income of the younger in cohorts from 1960 to 2000 show a general downward trend in earnings compared with the older group, for example of 50-59 years old, which increased its earnings.

These elements seem to be confirmed by the perception and experience of people of different generations, in both our neighbourhoods, in France and Italy.

«Je veux pas faire de la rhétorique mais à notre époque, c'était différent. C'est comme si tout était un peu plus simple et linéaire. Moi après l'école je suis parti dans le nord de la France parce qu'il y avait des postes d'enseignants et j'ai commencé à travailler dans une école primaire. Après un an ou deux j'ai eu la possibilité de revenir ici. Mon mari aussi, il vient d'une famille Algérienne. C'est vrai qu'il me dit tout le temps que les Kabyles sont différents des algériens, parce qu'ils sont pas arabes mais berbères et ils tiennent beaucoup à leur identité culturelle et ont une fierté particulière et beaucoup entre eux en France on fait étudier leurs enfants. Mais lui il venait d'une famille qu'aujourd'hui on pourrait définir pauvre. Bref, il a commencé à travailler à quinze ans je crois mais en même temps il a continué ses études. Il est devenu ingénieur à l'université pas aux Arts et Métiers comme au contraire a été le cas de mon père. C'est vrai qu'il a vraiment beaucoup travaillé mais il y avait des conditions assez différent. Il y avait aussi plus de confiance. Aujourd'hui je crois que pour les enfants c'est un peu plus compliqué. Moi j'ai deux enfants. Un est bac plus 5. Il a eu un parcours académique très bon et maintenant il travaille à la Défense et il gagne vraiment bien sa vie. Par contre l'autre, il est sans emploi depuis un moment et il a arrêté les études et maintenant il travaille seulement trois fois par semaine comme animateur. Je crois que ça dépend beaucoup de la personne, par exemple l'ainé a été toujours plus sage à l'école.. mais je suis sûre que pour les nouvelles génération c'est aussi plus compliqué » (Nathalie, 55 years old).

The same ideas were confirmed by Nathalie's mother, which shows how the two previous generations followed a similar trajectory of upward social mobility that has in part probably been interrupted in the case of one of Nathalie's children.

«Mon mari a commencé comme ouvrier dans son entreprise où il a travaillé toute sa vie mais ils l'ont fait beaucoup évoluer. Il était très bien et donc son chef lui a proposé de suivre les cours aux Arts et Métiers. C'étaient des cours pour les ouvriers pour devenir ingénieur d'entreprise » (Anne Marie, 81 years old).

As an old trade-unionist living in the neighbourhood explained to us the functioning of these institutions called *Universités Populaires*, typical of the industrial-fordist period. These were to a certain extent able to create social mobility inside the French society and represented a typical example of the French “*Model Republicain*”.

« Ces cours étaient prévus pour les ouvriers avec le but de les faire évoluer. L'entreprise te reconnaissait comme ingénieur et ça permettait d'avoir un salaire plus élevé mais aussi un statut majeur dans l'entreprise et comme conséquence dans la société, dans le quartier, dans la ville. C'était l'exception, ça veut pas dire que tous les ouvriers pouvaient devenir ingénieurs d'entreprise.. mais quand même ç' avait son poids. Aujourd'hui c'est différent il n'y a pas de vrai apprentissage ni à l'école ni au travail. L'accès est beaucoup plus difficile et tout est bloqué».

A very similar experience of social mobility was also reported by Edwige, a 68-year-old woman who came to France from Guadeloupe.

«Je suis venue en France je crois en 1964. Je suis venue avec mon mari mais après quelques années on a divorcés. Il a un peu disparu donc j'étais une vrai femme seule avec 6 enfants mais j les ai les fait étudier. Mon grand fils est directeur d'un supermarché, tous les enfants travaillent.

J'ai eu des problèmes seulement avec ma fille, quand elle à divorcé avec son mari. Donc je l'ai convaincue à suivre un cours d'aide soignante, elle avait déjà plus de 30 ans et maintenant elle est embauchée a l'hôpital municipal. J'ai poussé beaucoup mais maintenant elle me remercie. Là par exemple elle est en congés maladie pour quelque chose de sérieux et pense si elle avait pas de poste fixe : malade et en plus au chômage.

En plus grâce a mes connaissances à la mairie, parce-que je gère une association et je connais tout le monde ici, ils ont obtenu une belle maison hlm mais en pavillon. Il n'y a trop de ça ici à Montreuil mais moi j'ai réussi pour elle» (Edwige, 68 years old, from Guadeloupe)

A quite fairly negative social mobility seems in any case to emerge yet more clearly from this narration in the rest of the conversation.

« Je suis très inquiète pour le fils de ma fille. Je crois qu' il a aussi un problème psychologique maintenant. La maladie de sa mère, le chômage qu'il vit très mal. Mais il fait rien, il bouge pas. Il est un grand garçon, il faisait du basket mais là il est devenu apathique et il bouge pas.

Moi ça m'énerve beaucoup. Moi je suis quelqu'un qui est venue d'un autre continent pour une meilleure vie et j'ai fait tout le possible pour bouger. C'était pas facile. Comme je suis d'un Territoire d'Outremer j'ai la nationalité française mais c'est pas la même chose. On peut pas oublier la couleur de la peau. Ici à Montreuil il n'y a pas de racisme, aujourd'hui peut être un peu plus, mais quand même. Aussi dans l'associationnisme il y avait quelqu'un qui aimait pas trop ma couleur mais je m'en fous. Tu vois ce que je veux dire? Je suis comme ça. Quand j'ai jeté mon mari hors de la maison, parce-qui il était un homme typique de la Guadeloupe et pour eux il y a que les femmes et l'alcool, j'ai commencé à travailler comme femme de ménage au Cinéma Mélias ici à Montreuil. Après je suis allée nettoyer un hôpital. Là j'avais envie de faire plus et donc grâce à une infirmière qui a compris mon potentiel j'ai fait un cours de soir après le travail, pour devenir aide soignante et après quelques ans aussi une autre école pur devenir infirmière. C'était très dur, je dormais trois heures par nuit et en plus avec les enfants mais à la fin j'ai bien fait et je suis allée à la retraite comme infirmière. Tu vois d'où j'ai commencé. Aujourd'hui je reconnais que c'est plus compliqué que ça»

Moreover, as we have seen, and as underlined by Edwige in her interview, Chauvel observes how intergenerational transfers within families have increased over the years, especially since the seventies. This is something showing some differences between the two contexts, where Italy has traditionally been focused on strong family and intergenerational relationships. (Similar observations can therefore be generally extended to the Italian case. However, some important structural and institutional differences should be considered. In fact, as various scholars have recognized (Schizzerotto 2002), compared to other countries, including France, Italy has traditionally registered a less developed social mobility, in terms of both intergenerational and generational/career mobility.

In most of our interviews in Milan Quarto Oggiaro we registered a degree of job stability for parents', but in particular for grandparents' (people around 70 years old) work experiences and careers. In the Fordist factory individuals had some scope for progress: a worker could, for instance, advance in responsibilities and wages more easily in the same factory. However, unlike the French situation, in Italy we did not register the same level of institutional initiatives aiming at upgrades as in the above-mentioned cases in France.

«Mio padre è in pensione da sette anni e faceva l'operaio all'Alfa Romeo. Ha sempre lavorato nella stessa azienda e quasi sempre con le stesse mansioni. Ha anche fatto qualche trasferta sempre con l'azienda. È stato a Detroit per il collaudo della 164 ma diciamo un percorso molto stabile. Ci sono stati momenti a rischio, come cassa integrazione ed altro però diciamo tutto abbastanza lineare mica come me» (Gianni, 36 years old).

These stable trajectories of parents contrast to some extent with the instability characterizing those of their children; as in the case of Gianni, a 36-year-old man from a family originally from Southern Italy.

To resume, he started with educational failure, passed from one job to another, and experienced long periods of unemployment and discontinuity

«Il mio percorso è iniziato dopo la terza media, ho cominciato con un corso professionale presso questo ente scuola edile milanese in piazzale Lotto. Il corso è durato 1 anno. Dopo questo corso mi hanno inserito in un'azienda edile ed ho fatto solo un anno. Da apprendista ero passato ad operaio dopodiché ho riscontrato dei problemi lavorativi e famigliari in contemporanea. Poi ho anche scoperto di essere allergico ad alcuni prodotti con cui lavoravo e ho mollato» (Gianni, 36 years old).

As is very often the case, young people start their working careers in cooperatives and other companies which do not provide the same guarantees offered, for instance, by public administration or big industrial groups.

«Ho iniziato a frequentare le cooperative per fare le pulizie. Sono stato un po' fermo poi dopo uno, due anni ho trovato ancora. Di cooperative ne ho cambiate diverse. Posso dire che la mia continuità è stata... beh su questo punto faccio fatica, perché le difficoltà andavano sempre in contemporanea, ho lavorato sempre in modo discontinuo. Il periodo più lungo che ho lavorato è stato un anno. In regola con i libri e quindi ho avuto un po' l'illusione di una sicurezza e anche di andare via da una situazione famigliare. Era una fabbrica che lavorava sulle presse ed era una situazione stabile. Ma ho smesso l'anno scorso. Era una piccola azienda a conduzione famigliare. Dopodiché è arrivata la crisi e quindi non mi hanno rinnovato il contratto. Tra l'altro non ho preso nemmeno la disoccupazione perché mi manca una settimana lavorativa. Per avere la disoccupazione devi avere cinquantadue settimane lavorative e io ne ho fatte solo cinquantuno» (Gianni, 36 years old).

As observed in Gianni's case, very often difficult working careers start with a difficult educational career.

In the case of Italy, Chiara Saraceno notes the evident instance strong and gendered impact that education has on unbalances and inequality in the labour market.

As shown by quantitative empirical studies (Machin 2004, OECD 2008), the rate of unemployment among young people, whether well-educated or not, is higher in Italy than in the UK, Germany and France. However, Saraceno (2004) nevertheless argues that education seems to have a positive impact, for example, on employment and income. As we also underlined in the two chapters concerning school, this author recognizes that the most important element accounting for school inequalities and career attainment is not simply the parents' income itself but even more their education, and in particular the mothers' education. She insists on the decisive role of family resources and in particular of women in the transition into adulthood and in the life chances of young people.

This seems to be true also in our neighbourhood, where, due to a persistence of traditional models, mothers seem to be more involved in the upbringing and education of children. Thus, a high level of education on the part of the mothers can make the difference.

For instance, as already discussed, this can be the case at school and not only for practical issues, such as helping and assisting children with homework but also in the relationship with teachers and school as institutional actor.

All this situation can be even worse in the case of illness, and especially mental health, a problem we came across quite often in both our neighbourhoods, but in particular in Quarto Oggiaro.

In this case illness generates a sort of destabilization of the entire household, which in these neighbourhoods still tends to present very traditional characteristics and gender roles.

Therefore, as Gianni's story underlines, employment is once again a necessary but not the only condition to avoid social disadvantage. The role of the mother seems to be extremely important also in a family structure very much based on the *male breadwinner* model.

«La mia situazione è che a 16 anni dovevo assolutamente andare a lavorare, avrei potuto continuare gli studi ma lo avrei fatto in una situazione di disagio. Infatti, c'è anche il problema che essendoci mia mamma malata avevamo un aiuto economico statale molto scarso. In più non c'erano persone competenti che ci aiutavano. Io mi sono trovato anche in situazioni dove non potevo andare a lavorare e dovevo stare ad aiutare i miei».

And again...

«Comunque diciamo che questa situazione credo abbia inciso su tante cose, la scuola, il lavoro e sulla mia vita più in generale. Influisce anche con i vicini di casa, del giudizio anche degli amici,

delle idee che hanno certe persone riguardo a certe malattie, specialmente quelle di nervi, le problematiche possono essere che vieni discriminato e escluso. Sul fatto economico poi ci sono molte cose che fanno un calderone. Quindi ti trovi in situazioni che scappi di casa perché i tuoi litigano, poi i vicini di casa sentono urla e quindi i ragazzi del cortile ti prendono in giro (..)

Ad esempio non avendo l'esperienza di lavare le cose oppure di cucinarmi la schiscetta andavo a lavorare a mani vuote, senza pranzo. Oppure con i vestiti sporchi, maleodoranti. Quindi, subentravano questi problemi anche di dire: no oggi non vado a lavorare perché sennò faccio una figura di merda con i colleghi. Non sembra ma sono cose che hanno influenzato prima a scuola e poi al lavoro. Poi uno diciamo che si aspetta un aiuto dalle famiglie dei tuoi genitori, però purtroppo ogni famiglia ha le proprie situazioni problematiche quindi ha difficoltà ad avvicinarsi ai problemi degli altri, però in un certo senso avviene la discriminazione per chi ha problemi maggiori, in questo caso per la malattia mentale». (Gianni 36, years old)

From a more general social mobility perspective, in regard to school but also work and other factors, an important role is to be attributed to social capital, for which the family, especially at the beginning of the educational and working career, is one of the main sources.

Social capital is in fact a decisive determinant in individuals' development and it is very much connected with social background.

Many studies have recognized its importance. The most significant are those by Coleman (1988, 1990, 2003) and Putnam (1993, 2000) introducing this concept, but also other contributions in European sociology are worth taking into account (Trigilia 2002, Sabatini 2004, Holland 2004).

In our research, as we better observed in the chapter dedicated to the broad neighbourhood dimension, including also relations and social structures, we focused on the role of social capital.

However, in this chapter, concentrating on family and intergenerational trajectories, it is worth briefly considering social capital given its close correlation with the family.

On the evidence of our in-depth interviews with three different generations we were able to investigate micro social mechanisms, some of which concerning in particular social capital and the family.

Similarly, in a fairly recent study, Holland (2004) discusses *bonding* or *bridging social capital*. The author underlines how “bonding could contribute to a solid social base but also to difficulties in getting out from environments that bring a ‘pre-determined’ life course. Bonding could however also provide a social base from which to bridge out to new networks. Bridging social capital mean

to be able to mobilise social resources using connections to different kinds of social networks and the social capital of them” (Wellchi³ 2004).

In this study the author shows how upper class young people can count on more differentiated networks, spanning over various groups with different ages, professions, etc. – all factors that contribute to the expansion of social networks. On the contrary, young people of working-class but also middleclass origins seem to have generally lesser or sometimes even negative social capital.

In this way, we see how the family can be once again a decisive variable when considering social mobility.

This is also confirmed by the empirical evidence of our interviews with the majority of young people of the working class and living in two neighbourhoods characterized by a fairly clear socio-economic structure.

Our empirical evidence tells us that having made initial differentiation between working-class, middleclass and upper-class individuals, further differentiation has to be made among working-class individuals with or without any resources of social capital.

Of course the amount of social capital of these people may be in general quite scarce and may in particular be of “low quality”. However, counting or not counting on it for some aspects seems to make a difference.

For example, as we observed in the chapter dealing with school, having access to some information about school records, performance and class populations can be of decisive importance for an individual’s educational career.

Going, now, into more detail, the French school system requires a compulsory internship to complete education. This aspect, apparently not particularly significant, represents on the contrary a concrete problem and sometimes an obstacle for many students in our neighbourhood, and in particular for people lacking any form of social capital.

We must specify that in both our local contexts, at this ‘low’ level, social capital may also be independent of the family’s socio-economic status. But of course, more often the two elements tend to be connected.

«Moi je fais une formation en alternance de plombier. Mon père aussi il est plombier mais moi je l’ai choisi. J’ai commencé pendant les vacances à suivre mon père et donc j’ai bien aimé tout de suite. Donc, après j’ai pas eu de problème à trouver un patron en alternance parceque c’était

³ *The wellbeing of children: the impact of challenging family forms, working conditions of parents, social policies and legislative measures.*

mieux pour eux avoir quelqu'un déjà capable de travailler. En plus après si je veux un vrai poste mon père il peut parler avec son patron» (Kadir, 18 years, Tunisian origins)

On the contrary, remaining in the same professional sector, Matthieu, a 19-year-old man of French origin told us:

«Je voulais faire de la plomberie mais j'ai pas été accepté et donc j'ai laissé tomber. J'étais démoralisé.. c'est un grand mot mais j'ai été saoulé».

With regards to Matthieu's comment, it is worth noting that the word *saoulé* occurs very often. This explains the real perception of these young people, who feel very often they have been cheated. In fact *saoulé* literally means having been short-changed. First of all, they say this with regard to the teachers, but more over they feel disappointed by the Republican ideals and promises. In fact school has traditionally been the most important instrument for citizens' integration in France.

Same experiences have been registered both in the Haut Montreuil and in Milano Quarto Oggiaro concerning jobs. Even if in general and from the institutional point of view, Italy is considered to be more based on social capital as a criterion for recruitment, we noticed that this dual representation of France as the kingdom of institutionalised process and Italy as the heaven of informality does not completely correspond to reality. Especially in our two local contexts.

«Ça fait un an que je travaille pas mais finalement j'attends d'être appelé par la RATP, la société de transport public. En fait c'est là que travaillent mon père et mon grand frère. Je suis trop content parceque ça m'a saoulé déjà un an de chômage». (Hackim, 21 years old)

And again..

«Adesso sto lavorando al bar del ragazzo di mia sorella, ma è solo un lavoretto mentre aspetto che mi chiami Bartolini, un'azienda di logistica. Ho fatto il colloquio e mi hanno presa perché conosco le lingue e loro hanno bisogno di un assistenza ai clienti internazionale. Mi hanno assunta anche se per ora non ho ancora la maturità.. Ho avuto il contatto tramite mio zio. Lui è un fornitore, lavora con loro e si occupa di affari esteri, più o meno nell'ambito di cui mi dovrei occupare io».

On the contrary, things may prove more complicated in both contexts if the person cannot count at all on any form of social capital and resources, which of course does not mean simply the fact of being hired but also provision of information (how to do something, knowing that a firm or even a small supermarket in the neighbourhood is looking for staff).

In both contexts we registered skeptical attitudes towards institutions such as centres for employment. This is something showing that probably young people usually rely more on direct contacts and social capital and this also happens in the French context, which is generally supposed to be more formal and institutionalized

« Je suis inscrit au Pole emploi de la Croix de Chaveaux. Après ils prennent leur temps et ils nous fout la bas. Il y a plein de mecs de ma cité la bas. Il y a un éducateur pour discuter. Il m'a dit qui m'avait trouvé un stage mais après.. il m'a dit d'attendre, j'ai attendu pour trois mois et ça m'a saoulé. J'ai arrêté, j'avais un rendez-vous chaque semaine mais ça m'a saoulé. Maintenant je suis au chômage depuis 7 mois. J'ai fait de petits boulots mais rien de spécial : plagiste, babysitting et d'autres chose pour dépanner. C'était quelqu'un dans la famille »(Matthieu 19 years old)

Similarly, Gianni says:

« Diciamo che da qualche anno sono iscritto alla camera del lavoro di Viale Jenner. Si occupa di trovare lavoro a persone disoccupate. Io ho l'iscrizione ma non do la mia partecipazione, perché ci sono dei bandi dove hai la possibilità di andare a vedere gli uffici e le aziende che richiedono lavoratori, ma io non me la sento di andare ad interessarmi. Oggi io mi trovo a vivere la giornata e quindi mi arrangio a trovare dei lavoretti, dove ci sono persone che hanno bisogno di me. Faccio dei lavoretti come imbiancatura, piuttosto che dei lavori artistici, agli altri possono sembrare delle briciole invece io mi accontento così e poi per fortuna sto ancora dai miei...anche se c'è molto conflitto con mio padre. Lui ha un'altra mentalità. Ha ancora l'idea del posto di lavoro per la vita» (Gianni 36 years old).

Sometimes very young people in both neighbourhoods may find negative example concerning the employment trajectories and experiences of their elder brothers or friends, which could be an element influencing educational results and commitment.

«Mio fratello ha finito le superiori e adesso è a casa disoccupato. Ha fatto l'alberghiero al Lagrange. Ha fatto i cinque anni, tre più due ma lo stesso non trova. In più si è diplomato già tre anni fa senza mai essere bocciato. Un po' questa cosa mi demoralizza.. andare avanti a studiare se

poi non si trova lavoro...Mia madre ha provato a chiedere all'hotel dove lavora lei ma niente. Ha fatto dei piccoli lavori, dei colloqui però niente. Eppure lui manda dappertutto il curriculum ma nulla. A volte va in giro a cercare lavoro, a volte sta a casa...» (Christian 16 years old).

Of course, do not intend to take a too mechanical approach, saying that lack of social capital automatically condemns people to unemployment or frustrates any possible educational or professional career. In fact, there can be considerable differences in all the individual stories, but the objective here and more in general in the whole research is to outline the main mechanisms at work. As emerges from this empirical evidence, we believe that even a small amount of social capital may prove significant in both local contexts in taking a *good path*, '*per prendere la buona strada*' as a social worker in Quarto Oggairo told us. This seems to make a difference in single trajectories, especially concerning employment.

To conclude this introductory section on intergenerational transmissions, which we can consider take as a sort of framework and guideline for the whole chapter; another fundamental factor we should analyse are family structures and their evolutions.

In fact, we should pay particular attention to the different forms and influences that a mix of tradition/innovation can have on the family in both our national and local contexts

This is why in the next section we will present some of the most common households typologies associated with potential risk of social disadvantage, in particular for minors and young people.

With regard to this aspect, an important part of the studies on intergenerational transmission has to do with family change over time in contemporary society. As has been underlined by other recent studies involving different national contexts, we can also criticize (see the conclusions to this chapter) the assumptions on a drastic change in the role of family.

Of course, this institution has changed a lot, at least in the last two decades, in both French and Italian society. This seems to be increasingly provoked by global transformations in the labour market, in the economy, migrations, values etc.

However, as we will observe in the rest of this chapter, it is difficult to claim that the family has lost its role. In both our local contexts, despite all structural and institutional differences, we observed that, together with other variables, like the characteristics and structure of the neighbourhood, the family remains significant and plays a double role.

It affects social mobility through intergenerational patterns and in connection to this function it also represents a resource or a lack of resources for its members, and in particular young people.

Reviewing recent studies dealing with family change, Jamieson (2005) reflects on intergenerational transmission and observes how the family is adapting to more general transformations. In this work

she concludes that the strength of the family and its capacity to react to social transformations cannot be taken for granted. Nevertheless, family relationships seem to ensure a continuity over time, mobilising resource and still acts as strong mediating factors behind social mobility (Jamieson 2005).

6.4 Household typologies and vulnerable profiles through generations

Through some data available, to be used as a general frame, we will first of all consider the main household typologies in the two neighbourhoods, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. Then, we will also try to understand through our interviews how some of them may specifically influence individuals' trajectories (in the case of young people). The main objective is to identify the most important mechanisms through which the family may affect or influence an individual's outcome. In part, in another chapter we observed how this works with school and education but here the perspective will be wider, also addressing other aspects.

In the annex to the chapter, we provided the most significant data, among those available⁴, concerning family typology, where we note among other things the rates of single-parent families, one of the most significant and most vulnerable profiles in both neighbourhoods. Together with this, other significant variables concern the number of children; the percentage of married and unmarried couples; and the profession of the family reference person for France. While for Italy, on the other hand, we simply presented the percentage of work typologies concerning the population and not families.

For practical reasons, we decided not to go into the details of the data presented but we preferred to provide these data as a reference to help the reader better understanding the statistical consistency of these phenomena.

However, we can briefly say that some characteristics show a certain similarity in both neighbourhoods, such as the number of numerous families. With regard to the already mentioned variable of single-parent households, it is particularly significant in both neighbourhoods: 22% in the Haut Montreuil and the 14.5 (5% for minors and 9.5% for those aged 18 or over) in Quarto Oggiaro.

In the case of Montreuil, these data may come close to those of other peripheral areas in France and in the *Banlieues Parisiennes*, where this phenomena is quite traditional and certainly represents less

⁴ The attempt was to give the most homogeneous data possible but since they are two different data typologies: administrative data for Italy (we considered Census data 2001 to be too old) and Census data 2006 for France, it has not always been possible to present the same content and form.

of an exception than in Italy. On the contrary, the almost 15% of Milan Quarto Oggiaro can be considered quite a high rate compared to the average percentage in the rest of Milan (8%).

Another datum which is to a certain extent connected to single-parent households concerns the number of legitimate and natural newborn children in Quarto Oggiaro. Unfortunately, we could not find a comparable indicator for the Haut Montreuil. These data seem to be quite significant. They show how out of the entire number of newborn children in the neighbourhood in 2009, only 51.5% were legitimate children and 48.5 % were natural children. To a certain extent, this element shows that a considerable proportion of households (especially younger couples, where the woman is of childbearing age) have children out of marriage.

As we registered through our interviews, in a qualitative perspective, one of the causes could also be the high rates of partners living separately for different reasons, one possibly being imprisonment, which is a fairly widespread phenomenon in the neighbourhood.

6.5 Single-parent families

As we have seen, single-parent families are quite a significant phenomenon, which seems to be frequent both in Montreuil and in Quarto Oggiaro. However, as much of the literature has underlined and as also emerges from our data, this is a fairly well consolidated phenomenon in France, while it is more recent but increasing in Italy (Benassi, 2005).

« Je suis venue en France d'Algérie dans les années 80' avec quelqu'un. Il avait ses papiers mais comme il a travaillé dans le bâtiment, il a fait des erreurs au travail et pour n'aller pas en prison il est retourné en Algérie et moi je suis restée. J'ai été enceinte et mon fils a grandi avec moi. C'était pas facile mais à la fin...on y est arrivé (..) »

En Algérie j'ai été professeur de sport. Quand je suis venue ici je n'avais pas de papiers mais après quatre cinq ans je me suis régularisée. Mon fils est français parce-que moi je suis née avant 1962 (Indépendance de l'Algérie) mais j'ai du faire beaucoup de démarches. J'ai du démontrer que mon fils était né ici etc.. J'ai travaillé avant un peu par tout, après j'ai été au chômage mais maintenant j'ai des problèmes de santé. Je reçois l'aide de l'Etat » (Karima, 48 years old).

In general, although in the French context single-mother households are a widespread phenomenon, possibly even more than in the Milanese neighbourhood, we could say that material deprivation and economic difficulties seem to be greater in Milan.

One reason could be the institutional difference and welfare state, as we reported in the introductory chapter, which seems to be ‘stronger’ and more protective in France, where there are national and local social policy schemes such as the RSA (former RMI) able to support people better and in particular single-mother households with *bourses d’étude*, *allocations familiales*, etc.

Such, for example, is the case of Halima, a 52-year-old woman from Morocco, living with her three children, two daughters of sixteen and eighteen years old and a boy aged fourteen.

«Avant c’était mon mari qui travaillait et après j’ai commencé aussi, mais avec les enfants c’était pas facile. Maintenant je travaille pas, Je suis en RMI (now RSA). Je voudrais chercher un travail mais ça fait seulement vingt jours que je suis sortie de l’hôpital. Avec le RMI et d’autres aides d’Etat on est juste juste, il faut pas qu’on passe la limite mais on y arrive et on fait aussi des vacances chez nous au Maroc tous les ans et on demande jamais rien à personne de la famille. Après il y a aussi les allocations familiales, Il y a les bourses pour tous les étudiants.. et en plus ma fille a reçu une bourse de mérite. Grâce à dieu il y a tout ça, si non comment on pourrait vivre? Mon mari ne nous passe d’argent. Pas du tout. Il a des problèmes aussi, il était à l’hôpital mais depuis longtemps on a pas de nouvelles ».

By contrast, in Quarto Oggiaro some families may receive assistance such as “*assegni familiari*” in the case of minor children, but they are less substantial, less continuous, and people often come up against bureaucratic difficulties and limitations.

So much emerged , for instance, during Andrea’s interview:

«Dopo il 92, con la morte di mio padre la nostra situazione era molto tragica, mia madre faceva due lavori e magari andavamo in giro con i vestiti del mercato ma a casa mangiavamo sempre roba di prima scelta, non si è mai permessa di comprare la carne al discount, ma sempre al supermercato nonostante costasse tanto. Però questa cosa l’aveva messa in condizione di non pagare alcune cose riguardanti la casa e si indebitò. Mio nonno dovette intervenire e mise mano ai risparmi di famiglia per andare a pagare un grosso debito dovuto al fatto che non pagava l’affitto della casa popolare. Io avevo nove dieci anni ed ero però coscientissimo di quel che accadeva. Io tutti i mesi vedevo sul calendario la scritta sfratto e la mattina in cui c’era lo sfratto mia madre ci accompagnava a scuola e non poteva di certo essere una buona giornata. Mia madre riusciva a mettere in mezzo i sindacati delle case popolari che conoscevano la nostra situazione e riusciva a rimandare sempre, però era un rimandare ma poi dopo un po’ vedevi sul calendario sfratto.

Mia madre di giorno lavorava in una cooperativa e di sera lavorava in una impresa di pulizie, quindi non c'era mai. È da lì che ho avuto la sensazione di frustrazione rabbia che nel giro di pochi anni mi ha portato in quelle situazioni diciamo di delinquenza. Io uscivo da scuola e andavo a casa dei mie nonni e venivano gli assistenti sociali in casa perché per un po' di tempo dopo la morte di mio padre siamo stati seguiti da delle dame di cortesia. Delle signore anziane che non avevano avuto né figli né nipoti e che tramite la chiesa aiutavano le persone. Famiglie benestante che passavano dei soldi alla mia famiglia e ci aiutavano ad andare in colonia estiva e subito dopo gli assistenti sociali che venivano in casa e ci seguivano, ma io non li sopportavo perché non erano in grado secondo me di gestire un caso come il nostro.

E poi va beh gli assegni familiari a volte arrivavano a volte no (quelli dell'inps statali) e anche lì mia madre ha dovuto fare delle peripezia per prenderli sempre per il fatto che i miei non erano sposati e da lì nasce il mio risentimento per la giustizia.» (Andrea, 25 years old).

Alongside the possible economic difficulties experienced by a single-parent household there is also an issue concerning the process of socialization and relational aspects (affections and feelings).

While wishing to avoid facile psychologism we must point out that most of the young people - mainly men - with difficult trajectories, who experienced for instance educational failure, chronic unemployment, drug abuse, criminality etc., live in many cases in families whose structure is often broken down, the father figure possibly lacking for various reasons: divorce, prison (mainly in Quarto Oggiaro), or death.

More in general, the absence of a male reference figure like the father may have considerable consequences in particular contexts, such as those of our study, where machismo, violence and sheer physical strength may be applied to bring pressure on other people, a situation which seems to be more evident in Quarto Oggiaro than in the Haut Montreuil⁵. This is, for instance, what Andrea told us:

«Quasi subito dopo la morte di mio padre, quando avevo otto nove anni, notai un atteggiamento che avevano certe persone nei miei confronti, io ero il più alto dei miei amici anche se ero il più piccolo e per questo che quando arrivavano i rimproveri di quelli del cortile affianco o addirittura le botte, io ero sempre il prescelto soltanto per la mia stazza e quindi quando cercavo un po' di conforto ma non lo avevo, capitava che scendeva mia madre per discutere con quelli che mi avevano picchiato perché ovviamente non poteva venire nessun altro, non avendo nemmeno un

⁵ All these aspects will be tackled in depth in the chapter dedicated to the neighborhood, social relations and its outcomes on the individuals (young people).

fratello maggiore. Invece i miei amici portavano i padri e il fatto che io portassi mia madre veniva visto come una prova di debolezza. Qui comunque c'è ancora molto machismo. Quindi io mi rifugiavo molto nelle figure dei miei cugini maggiori e sono loro che mi hanno fatto conoscere quelli di piazza Prealpi, con cui ho poi fatto alcune cavolate. Loro addirittura hanno un trascorso anche più burrascoso e ancora oggi fanno fuori e dentro dai carceri». (Andrea 25 years old).

Similarly, talking about her 22-year-old son, Giovanna says:

«Evidentemente il padre doveva essere sicuramente più di polso ma è sempre fuori per lavoro ed è fuori tutta la settimana. Lui adesso si prende anche la briga di fare la figura del padre, ora un pochino meno, però diceva cavolate del tipo che non sappiamo educare i figli.. che io sono incapace ma sempre risalendo alla mentalità che ha appreso in quell'ambiente di via Pascarella che frequentava lui .. quella mentalità un po' maschilista, di controllo su sua sorella. La sorella invece gli ha detto: quando ti metti a posto tu, quando smetterai di drogarti allora potrai venirmi a dire qualcosa tu a me. La sorella si dimostra molto più matura del fratello. Va a scuola ed è brava ... » (Giovanna, 42 years old).

As Giovanna told us, sometimes young people in these neighbourhoods (especially the young men) may develop and acquire a mentality which can to some extent differ from the values transmitted by their families.

An example that we found in both our neighbourhoods in Italy and France concerns gender relations and roles. As we will see more in detail in the chapter dedicated to the neighbourhood dimension and its social relations, in these social contexts there may be quite traditional gender roles and a visible gender division within households, and as a consequence also in the neighbourhood. Behaviours which can influence the young population in general and not only, as one might think, children of immigrant origin or, as in the case of Quarto Oggiaro, those whose family comes from Southern Italy and may preserve very traditional models.

6.6 Families of immigrant origin: are they all the same?

With regard to Concerning the relationship between neighbourhood and family structure, it can be even more complicated in the case of households of immigrant origin.

As we have seen in the chapter dedicated to the neighbourhood, the specific configuration of the French *banlieues* groups, in most cases even more than in the Italian case, families with similar ethnical and social origins.

Nathalie Kakpo notes that: « Grandissant dans des quartiers dans lesquels la concentration des familles maghrébines et africaines s'accroît, il n'est pas surprenant que se développe une sous-culture de classe d'âge qui débouche parfois sur des comportements déviants ou des confrontations avec la police. On ne doit pas pour autant associer systématiquement sous le terme de 'jeunes de cités', les garçons d'origine subsaharienne et maghrébine. Par-delà les expériences communes de ces garçons, les différences tiennent aux structures familiales, aux modes de socialisation, aux rapports à l'école, aux institutions socioculturelles, au quartier » (Kakpo, 2006 p.86).

As argued by the author, when tackling the issue of the neighborhood, the way people relate to it and experience it – since people do not simply live in a place but also 'live' the place - we cannot neglect family structures.

We have already seen that the family is in a general a decisive variable when considering the experiences and trajectories of individuals within a specific context. This seems to be particularly true in the case of people of immigrant origin.

Immigrant family structures and their internal relations may in fact be even more complicated because of concrete difficulties due to the migrant condition. Even after many years there may still be persisting economic poverty, language problems, lack of social relations, which is however quite seldom due to communitarian resources⁶. Moreover, there may also be important cultural aspects regarding the family structure and its organization, sometimes stigmatized or misunderstood by the rest of society (Lagrange 2010).

As Lagrange underlines, the characteristics of immigrant families can be various and differ widely according to the ethnic origins.

However, Lagrange offers two mainstream interpretations of public discourses on immigrant families' structure and organization. The first tendency he underlines is the perception of working class peripheral neighborhoods as areas of family disorganization and abuse, and forced

⁶ In fact, in our research we generally noticed that although French political debate (sometimes followed by academic theory) refuses the so called 'dérive communautaire', in the name of a 'modèle de solidarité républicaine', among immigrant individuals and families, in particular for the Malien community in Montreuil but also for families from Maghreb, there is quite well-developed mutual help and solidarity

redefinition of solidarity due to an extremely supportive welfare state. In the specific case of the immigrant family structure, this first political discourse argues a crisis of the paternal authority, and a retrocession of the family from its educational responsibilities and duties, while the second mainstream opinion underlines the risk of “*dérives communautaristes*” perceiving a danger for the republican and social values on which the French Republic has been based for centuries.

« Ces quartiers seraient peu à peu gagnés par des mœurs et des traditions venues d’ailleurs et jugées incompatibles avec les principes fondamentaux des sociétés occidentales.

Ma conviction est que les dérives des quartiers d’immigration ont des ressorts qui, au-delà des difficultés socio-économiques, puisent dans un excès d’autorité ainsi que dans un déficit d’autonomie des femmes et des adolescents. Comme on le verra, ce n’est pas tant un délitement du lien social entretenu par un phénomène de « désaffiliation » qui fait problème, qu’une forme de ‘suraffiliation’ des individus à des liens locaux et à diverses formes d’emprises familiales. Qu’on le veuille ou non, ces difficultés ont aussi à voir avec des questions culturelles. Est-ce à dire qu’il faudrait embrasser la seconde interprétation ? Je ne le pense pas non plus. La thèse du retour à la tradition s’avère également défailante, car elle tend à essentialiser la culture d’origine : conçue comme un monolithe de représentations et de croyances en exil, celle-ci se voit alors doter de traits et d’orientations invariables qui dicteraient aux individus leurs conduites et leurs choix et les rendraient inaccessibles au pacte républicain. Or, s’il y a bel et bien aujourd’hui, dans les quartiers d’immigration, un problème culturel, celui-ci résulte moins d’un irrédentisme des cultures d’origine, que des normes et des valeurs nées de leur confrontation avec les sociétés d’accueil.

Ce sont les conditions de l’expérience migratoire, cette rencontre complexe et souvent douloureuse, tissée de conflits et de frustrations, qui engendre une grande partie des difficultés dont je vais parler dans les pages qui suivent »» (Lagrange 2010, p.9).

With regard to Italy, as we have seen immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon, which has developed massively over two or at the most three decades. This does not mean that there had been no immigration formerly: the first arrivals took place in the seventies but had relatively limited effect and visibility.

“I primi arrivi in Italia di lavoratori provenienti dal Terzo Mondo datano gli inizi degli anni Settanta e si tratta di flussi molto particolari con composizione etnica, lavorativa e di genere profondamente diversa. Il primo di questi flussi è costituito dai lavoratori tunisini impegnati in agricoltura e nella pesca in alcune aree della Sicilia (il porto peschereccio di Mazara del Vallo e alcune aree di agricoltura intensiva soprattutto nel trapanese). L’altro ha invece provenienze molto varie e distanti fra di loro (paesi cattolici dell’America Latina e dell’Asia o ex colonie italiane) ed è costituito in

prevalenza da donne impegnate nel lavoro domestico. In quegli anni l'interesse per la questione è molto modesto. L'attenzione è rivolta principalmente al fenomeno dell'immigrazione di ritorno, cioè del rientro degli emigranti italiani dai paesi europei. È con la pubblicazione dei dati del XII Censimento generale della popolazione del 1981 (Istat 1987) che si prende pienamente coscienza di questo fenomeno: l'Italia si scopre 'paese di immigrazione' (Pugliese 2006, p.71).

For all these reasons, before the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, immigration was mainly an internal process from Southern to Northern Italy. However, although an internal phenomenon this process has not been easy or without consequences.

Signs of this immigration remained in Italian society and may still be discerned at both local and national level.

First of all, it is not irrelevant that in Italy, the so-called *Questione Meridionale* is still open and unsolved. But more than this, it is even stranger, at least for foreigner observers, to see that one of the main political parties in Italy, playing a decisive role in the current government, bases its political consensus on a permanent conflict between the North and the South of the country, which over the years but still quite recently has gradually turned into a more general Italian versus non-Italian contraposition.

Secondly, the consequences of this internal immigration are still visible in many cities of Northern Italy such as Turin and Milan. In particular, the configuration of our study neighborhood of Quarto Oggiaro, which is still inhabited by a large majority of Southern immigrants and their descendants (up to the third and fourth generation, as is quite often the case of people from Maghreb in the Haut Montreuil) is a typical example and a consequence of this immigration. In fact, it seems to be a phenomenon and process which is far from finished but active and still working today.

“Negli anni del miracolo l'immigrazione, ancora più disordinata di quella recente, partiva soprattutto dalle zone dell'osso del meridione: quelle dell'interno dell'Appennino, dell'agricoltura di sopravvivenza, e in misura non certo minore dalle 'città contadine', soprattutto pugliesi, dove il sovrappopolamento in rapporto alle possibilità produttive spingeva a un esodo sempre più massiccio...Artefici del miracolo, i contadini del Sud dovettero accettare il loro intensivo sfruttamento in condizioni di lavoro spaventevoli. Sono gli anni delle 'cooperative' di lavoro, forme di subappalto gangsteristico della mano d'opera immigrata;..gli anni del 'non si affitta ai meridionali'; gli anni della divisione tra operai e immigrati”⁷ (Fofi 1975, p. 301-302)

As underlined by Pugliese (2006), those conditions have been progressively overcome although certain discriminations, stereotypes but also physical conditions, have persisted. A concrete

⁷ Fofi refers in this passage to the city of Turin but the statement is quite general and can be extended to other cases like that of Milan.

example can be seen, with both positive and negative implications, in the characterization of our neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro.

“In altri contesti, come ad esempio quello Milanese, il processo fu più articolato. In una città non legata all’esistenza di una sola fabbrica i canali di inserimento e le stesse relazioni sociali con la popolazione locale sono diversi. È meno forte il dualismo tra antichi residenti e nuovi arrivati⁸. I problemi di integrazione sono stati comunque notevoli dappertutto. In questo processo, comunque alcune strutture di socializzazione hanno svolto un ruolo importante nel favorire l’integrazione. In primo luogo la scolarizzazione di massa, al Sud come al Nord, ha radicalmente accorciato le distanze culturali⁹ e permesso anche un certo grado di mobilità sociale. Inoltre alcune strutture associative, come ad esempio i sindacati, hanno svolto un ruolo decisivo nel permettere la creazione di momenti di unità e di reciproca conoscenza e di mobilitazione di interessi comuni (*those of the working class*) (Pugliese 2006, p. 56).

It was a process of integration within the broader context of Milanese society, which in part eventually transformed the city in its socio-economic structure. We believe that this massive process of immigration drove and determined city development from an economic but also infrastructural point of view. For example, some neighbourhoods such as Quarto Oggiaro were built to accommodate Southern immigrants, while the first underground was built to connect traditional working class areas – populated also by Southern immigrants - with the rest of the city.

At the same time, this integration seems to be only in part realized or at least shows certain shortcomings in our neighbourhood. .

Take the account offered by Ahmed, a young man from Egypt. This narration has its humorous aspects but it also shows how immigrants can perceive our country. . As evidenced by Ahmed, these immigrants do not perceive Italy as the best of all possible worlds, but they try to cope with it and with the problems they experience here:

“Ho scoperto il razzismo che avete qui a Milano, ancora adesso incontro gente di Milano che insulta quelli del sud. Anche in cantiere c’è un milanese che stava parlando e c’erano anche gente del sud di Napoli queste cose qua e ha detto: minchia sono l’unico italiano qui. E io mi guardo in giro e dico scusami ma sono tutti italiani qui sono io l’unico straniero e lui dice: eh no è loro sono del sud e io ho detto: ma cosa vuol dire sempre italiani sono. Poi ci siamo messi a morsicare un po’ ma poi ho pensato se la pensi così cosa devo fare.. Già tra di voi italiani avete del razzismo tra

⁸ Something which can be probably remain valid today in the case of European and extra European immigrants.

⁹ It should once again be underlined that this migration concerned Italians, even taking into account all the possible regional differences. On the contrary today’s immigration but also the less recent French immigration from former colonies (Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria) or from Tom and Dom is consistently different, first of all because they were not French, had a different skin colour, a different language and remained in a post colonial mentality: *des colonises*.

il nord e il sud, pensa con degli emigrati, peggio ancora. Quindi non è che mi aspetto di essere aspettato con tappeto” (Ahmed, 23 years old from Egypt)..

Returning to the external migration processes, Italy became a destination for migrants as from the eighties (Bonifazi, 1997). However, as is often the case, at the beginning immigration mainly involved single individuals and not families, with all the consequences of transnational family kinships and consequent family reunification.

“Il second fatto nuovo riguarda l’elevato numero di donne che emigrano in seguito ad una rottura matrimoniale, o colgono l’opportunità di trasferirsi all’estero in cerca di lavoro per sottrarsi ad una relazione logorata o non più accettata. In questo caso il processo di ricongiungimento ha come destinatari i figli, spesso già cresciuti, giacché con un solo reddito è più difficile soddisfare le condizioni formali richieste, ma anche perché una madre sola ha più difficoltà a seguire dei figli piccoli. Pure da questo versante scaturiscono situazioni problematiche, sia per l’arrivo in età adolescenziale, sia per la difficoltà di supervisione educativa, sia per la presenza di nuovi partner - e talvolta di altri figli –(Ambrosini, 2010 p.13).

Only very recently we have seen the phenomenon of so-called ‘familiarization’ of migrations (Conti, 2005), leading to a more numerous higher presence of children and minors.

In particular, as is often the case, this significantly changes the configuration of the whole migrant process.

In fact, once the individuals move their families to the ‘new country’, the immigration project then becomes increasingly stable. Such, for example, is the case of households from Maghreb in France.

Being a recent process, immigration has become an issue only over the last few years in Italy.

Much has been discussed in the last fifteen years, although public debate on integration is less developed and consolidated than in France. Of course this does not mean that Italian politics fails to focus on this issue; on the contrary, it seems to be one of main issues in political debate. In contrast with debate in France, in Italy general discussion is still at an earlier stage: do we want them or not? Should we “kick” them out or not? Or even better, quoting the dialect expression used at the end of March 2011 by the Minister for reforms, Umberto Bossi: ‘*Foera di ball*’¹⁰.

Somewhat more has been tackled on this issue in the sciences. Following the international example (Kritz and Zlontnick 1992 among others), Italian sociology started to focus on the family. As noted by Conti (2005):

¹⁰ An expression that we quote not for sheer sensation, which is more typical of journalism than sociology, but simply because the political debate can show how the issue is still at an early or, better, immature stage. Of course this expression referred mainly to the newcomers as a consequence of the political changes in North Africa. However, we firmly believe that the importance of this phenomenon needs something more than propaganda. In the meanwhile phenomena evolve, touching the lives of people, whether immigrant or not, in the cities, neighbourhoods, flats, etc.

“L’approccio sistema allo studio delle migrazioni, sviluppatosi negli anni Novanta, ha permesso di rilevare l’importanza che ha la famiglia nel ruolo di network tra un paese e l’altro. Lo studio del legame tra migranti e famiglia permette di interpretare l’emigrazione non come il risultato di una decisione individuale basata su elementi economici o politici, ma come il prodotto sociale di molteplici fattori. La famiglia rappresenta il luogo di mediazione tra gli individui e il più ampio contesto economico-sociale, l’anello di congiunzione tra elementi strutturali e migrazione (..) La famiglia non solo rappresenta, quindi una rete che si tende tra due paesi: essa, se presente nel territorio di immigrazione, può modificare e influenzare in maniera determinante il percorso migratorio” (Conti 2005, 246-247).

The family is therefore a central point for understanding the phenomenon of immigration and the trajectories of its members. Immigrants do not live in a world totally apart, but generally attend the same schools as Italians, live in the same neighbourhoods and increasingly also speak the same language.

If the family is an important variable, at the same time the contrary, its absence, is also significant. As we saw in the specific case of young immigrants, both in Quarto Oggiaro and Montreuil, facing an immigration process alone can expose the individual to major risks such as deprivation and poverty, especially if they lack legal permission to stay in the country..

“Qui della mia famiglia c’è solo questo cugino, il figlio di mia zia e di mio zio. Io non avevo confidenza con nessuno quindi era come se fossi da solo. Lui mi aiutava solo a livello materiale perché sono suo cugino ma se avesse potuto dire di no non lo avrebbe fatto, infatti adesso è un anno e mezzo che non lo sento più. Cioè mettiamo in chiaro, mi ha aiutato ma poi i soldi che ha anticipato per il mio affitto li ho ridati io e certi lavori che dovevo fare io siccome non parlavo bene l’italiano ha preso il lavoro al posto mio e mi ha anche fregato. Però non mi sono neanche arrabbiato, ho lasciato perdere, basta che si allontana da me che è meglio così. Quindi ho costruito tutto qui nel quartiere che è diventata un po’ la mia famiglia, alcuni paesani e poi i ragazzi dell’associazione Baluardo. Per me questi amici veri sono quelli che hai nel cuore proprio e questi sono limitati, amici a cui puoi dire tutto anche quando stai male e questi saranno quattro o cinque e sono del quartiere. Quarto Oggiaro lo sento come se fosse il mio quartiere non assomiglia all’Egitto ma lo sento come se fosse il mio paese, se arriva qualcuno e dice che fa del male a Quarto Oggiaro io lo ammazzerei. È da 6 anni che sono qua, è come se fosse il mio paese. Non voglio esagerare ma è un po’ la mia famiglia. Mi piace molto, poi questo parco è una meraviglia ..” (Ahmed 23 years old, from Egypt)

Although we recognize that experiences like those of Ahmed are very common in Quarto Oggiaro, at same time the increasingly relevant phenomenon of immigrant households seems to be sometimes neglected.

In Italy it seems hard to get out of the habit of considering immigration as a phenomenon concerning only the individual. However, it would be worse than a mistake to fail to consider immigrant families, their experiences, their stories and trajectories. In fact, as we argue generally in the whole research, the family is a decisive determinant of individual experiences and trajectories. The family is therefore a very significant element and variable to take into account for immigrants and young people of immigrant origin.

Similarly, in the particular case of young people of immigrant origin, it is interesting to see a dual – but sometimes forced - coexistence of traditional family values with others more typical of the contemporary societies where they live, namely France or Italy.

As pointed out by Lagrange, this process, which mainly concerns identity, is not a smooth one.

“Ce sont les conditions de l’expérience migratoire, cette rencontre complexe et souvent douloureuse, tissée de conflits et de frustrations, qui engendre une grande partie des difficultés dont je vais parler dans les pages qui suivent” (Lagrange 2010, p. 9).

Quite often there can be a sharp rift between parents and children due to the different values to which young people are exposed during their socialization process in other institutions outside the family, mainly school and the neighborhood. .

« Surtout dans des familles d’Afrique subsaharienne, le père n’a pas de rôle dans l’éducation. Par exemple c’est la mère qui s’occupe de l’école, de la maison et de la cuisine. Les mères travaillent beaucoup et ont aussi des boulots (surtout femmes de ménages etc..) très loin du lieu de résidence. Le père est souvent plus âgé que la mère est donc il est souvent à la retraite. Le père même si il est à la maison il est pas investi dans l’éducation. Souvent il y a aussi le cas des pères avec plus d’une femme et qui vivent avec une des ses épouses et pas avec les autres épouses et leurs enfants. Ça arrive surtout aux maliens » (Social worker of the association ‘Rue et Cité’).

Similarly, for the Italian case Seppilli (2004) notes :

“La cultura originaria degli immigrati si presenta inevitabilmente indebolita, resa fragile e aperta sia per effetto dello sradicamento dei suoi ‘portatori’ del vecchio contesto sia per effetto dei meccanismi della loro integrazione in un contesto nuovo e diverso, comunque difficile e talora ostile: con il risultato che si va formando, fra gli immigrati, un patrimonio culturale misto,

sincretico, caratterizzato da un equilibrio dinamico fra le due culture – quella originaria e quella del contesto di immigrazione – in cui il loro reciproco peso e le relative aree tematiche di competenza, nonché la stessa velocità con cui il sincretismo si sviluppa, dipendono dalla qualità dell’andamento delle condizioni oggettive e soggettive nelle quali il processo di integrazione si va via via realizzando” (Seppilli 2004 p. 37).

This reconfiguration of the family cultural reference may be a sort of compromise, which should not be considered easy and cannot be taken for granted, since it is very often the product of a conflict: a process where the relationship and negotiations between parents and children are fundamental.

As previously pointed out, we must always bear in mind that not all immigrant families share the same structure – including the number of children - and habits. This seems to be true in both the Italian and French context.

As Kakpo argues for the French case: « Les comportements des parents immigrés du Maghreb, présents en France depuis bien plus longtemps que les pères et mères d’origine subsaharienne, se sont accommodés, ils sont davantage familiarisés avec les institutions françaises. Cela conduit à nuancer l’idée des tensions au sein des familles maghrébines mais aussi la crise de la figure paternelle. La déstabilisation des modèles familiaux, visible dans les familles subsahariennes ne concerne pas avec autant d’acuité celles d’origine maghrébine » (Kakpo 2006, p. 91).

For example, with regard to the two main ethnic groups present in our French neighborhood, families from Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa, it is important to note that they are likely to implement very different strategies, behaviors and also that their family structures differ greatly. Households from Mali,¹¹ for instance, generally have more family members, especially young children. At the same time, they can be quite more complex and different families may also share the same apartment, in particular during the first period of the migration process. In fact, among people from Mali or other countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, there are strong community relations and very extensive mutual help, starting in the *foyers*¹².

« Moi j’ai la nationalité française parce-que je suis né ici. Mon père a travaillé à la mairie de Montreuil pour nettoyer mais là il est retourné au pays avec toute la famille. Je suis ici à Montreuil

¹¹ It is important to recall once again that the Mali community is very much present in the whole of Montreuil, often called “La Petite Bamako”, including of course our neighbourhoods with a concentration of public housing projects. Montreuil is the city with the biggest concentration of Malian population in Europe and possibly in the world, after Mali of course.

¹² These are residences for immigrants, generally owned by the state or municipality but managed directly by immigrants and ethnic communities in a self-organized way. In Montreuil there are too big centres, one located directly in the Haut Montreuil in the neighbourhood *La Boissière*, another on the border between *La Boissière* and *Centre Ville*.

avec mon oncle, il a pas de famille. Je suis chez lui mais pas dans un appartement mais au foyer. Il y a une seule chambre. Il y a des difficultés, je suis pas trop à l'aise, j'ai pas d'endroit pour aller avec ma copine mais c'est bien. Finalement je suis avec quelqu'un de la famille et je suis content. Ici j'ai aussi des cousins, on est vraiment beaucoup. On s'aide entre nous. On donne aussi des conseils, des indications, des suggestions pour le travail. Mon cousin par exemple travaille avec mes documents dans un bâtiment. Si j'ai des problèmes économiques, quand j'ai pas de sous, je peux demander à mon cousin et lui il peut faire la même chose. Mais à mon oncle je lui demande jamais rien. Je suis un adulte et je suis même capable de penser à moi...et après à son âge, il a quand même 46 ans » (Bouma, 25 years old).

Another similar case of family relationship, divided between the aspiration to autonomy and family traditions, concerns Florien, a 22-year-old young man from Congolese origin, working as animator for a non-profit association.

« Avant j'étais avec ma famille dans une maison pavillon. Mais après je suis parti parce que un ami m'avait laissé son appartement le temps qu'il a passé à Lyon pour son travail. Après je suis parti au Morion chez mon cousin, il habite avec sa famille. J'habite avec mon cousin, sa femme et ses enfants. C'est un choix, c'est plutôt pour le fait de ne repartir à nouveau. Si je reviens chez mes parents c'est comme repartir à zéro. Et après je suis pas trop difficile... ça me suffit d'avoir un toit et de dormir sur le canapé » (Florien 22, years old original, from The Democratic Republic of the Congo).

From the point of view of family and community solidarity we registered another differentiation between Sub-Saharan African households and those from Maghreb. The former seem to show more community and family solidarity. In fact, it is conjectured that due to the long time spent in France, the connections and relations maintained with the home country and as a consequence with the local community may be progressively lost.

In our research, we noticed, for instance, that people from Mali are to some extent forced to this solidarity. In fact, through constant contact with the village, there is a sort of social control, creating a moral duty for mutual help. This is the same control forcing parents to impose traditional values and rules on their children, re-generating, for instance, the above-mentioned relational problems between parents and their children.

«Oui, moi et mon fils on est pas complètement isolés ici. Ma sœur elle habite aussi à Montreuil axu Morions. On a des relations, on se rencontre mais on s'aide pas trop. Elle travaille mais elle est pauvre aussi, elle n'a pas assez pour m'aider. Elle travaille à temps partiel mais elle est pauvre comme moi. En plus elle est seule et a des difficultés mais son fils il a réussi. Il a fait son BTS et maintenant il va passer à la Fac. A l'occasion on parle, on se donne du soutien mais pas tous le temps. Les gens changent. C'est pas comme en Algérie, ici les gens s'endurcissent, c'est le mode de vie et toutes les difficultés. Même sur la famille proche ici, tu peux pas compter beaucoup. Il y a la dépression, la maladie... » (Karima 48 years old, single mother of 19-year-old son).

This is not to say that other people and families such as those from Maghreb or other countries do not help each other or neglect community social control. However, we may say that ethnic solidarity has probably been to some extent replaced by neighbourhood solidarity, having more of a social than a specifically ethnic characterization.

This is, for instance, what we noticed in our ethnographic observations during the meeting of the association *LEA* - Lieu Ecoute Accueil, an association of neighbours created in the basement of a social housing project at *Leo Lagrange*, where many immigrant women of different ethnic origins, followed by professionals, meet everyday, share their time, experiences and opinions and sometimes also work on common projects. They organize trips and journeys, neighbourhood parties and a summer dinner event called *Repas de quartier*, which takes place every year in each neighbourhood of Montreuil.

These women from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Guadeloupe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other African countries (exception for Malians, who usually prefer national associations and groups) meet in the headquarters of the association but also outside. Sometimes, they have in common the fact of being single mothers and often do things together, such as eating, going together to big supermarkets outside the neighbourhood to buy things at the cheapest prices, etc.

« Mon frère a habité ici en Ile de France mais maintenant il est retourné là-bas. Toute ma famille est au Bled (LAUGH). Mon mari ça fait longtemps qu'on a pas de nouvelles. J'ai des cousins et cousines dans le 92 mais on se voit seulement pour des occasions.

En général en cas de problème j'essaie toujours de m'en sortir toute seule, sinon, si je demande à la famille ils m'aident. Mais normalement je demande rien. Il ya souvent une voisine qui me dépanne si j'ai des problèmes.. j'ai aussi des amis, des voisins des voisines .. on se rencontre tous à LEA à fois on est d'accord, d'autre fois non..mais on parle.. on se rencontre tous là bas.

Pour conclure, j'ai pas beaucoup de gens de la famille ici mais en tout cas je crois je vais finir ma vie ici avec mes enfants»

(Halima 52 years old, from Morocco, single mother of three adolescents, two daughters and a son).

As in the French case, also in Italy immigrant family structures can vary significantly depending on the ethnic group and nationality.

“La problematicità dell’insediamento e delle relazioni fra generazioni del nucleo dipende dalle tipologie familiari, dai caratteri delle comunità di appartenenza, dal capital sociale e dalle credenziali formative dei soggetti coinvolti, dall’apertura nei confronti della società ospite, dal momento dell’arrivo” (Farina, 2005 p. 260)

Another important difference concerns the place of birth of these young people. In the French case, the majority of the people we interviewed, but also from a more general perspective, the majority of immigrant origin youth, was born in France.

On the contrary, in the Italian case, immigration being a recent phenomenon, only the latest generations were born in Italy.

“Almeno potenzialmente i giovani stranieri nati e cresciuti altrove – socializzati in un ambiente molto diverso da quello in cui sono in seguito inseriti – subiscono un cambiamento radicale di contesto e risultano più esclusi degli altri, anche se forse hanno meno conflitti di identità e relazioni meno complesse con la propria famiglia (..) Contrariamente a quanto si verifica fra i giovani italiani, essi assumono più rapidamente ruoli adulti lavorando e agendo come mediatrici o mediatori linguistici e culturali rispetto alla società italiana a beneficio della famiglia e in particolare delle madri (...) Chi è nato in Italia o vi è giunto in tenera età, invece è agevolato nel processo di integrazione anche per lo stimolo che proviene dal sistema scolastico e dalle relazioni con i coetanei italiani ma può incontrare molte difficoltà derivanti dal conflitto fra modelli dentro e fuori la famiglia che possono persino indurre in casi estremi al rifiuto della propria cultura d’origine”.

(Farina, p. 261).

The interviews we had with people of immigrant origin and their families in Milano Quarto Oggiaro were not as many as in the Haut Montreuil, where these people came close to representing the majority.

In any case, the significant difference that should always be borne in mind is that in France most of them are French citizens, born before approval of a law substituting *Ius Solis* with *Ius Sanguinis*.

With regard to the specific case of Quarto Oggiaro, we observed that young immigrants do not experience any more than others in Quarto Oggiaro difficult trajectories specifically connected to their immigrant and family condition.

On the contrary, our impression is that immigrant households are less involved in mechanisms of entrapment in the local dynamics, including for example connections with illegality and criminality.

A me sembra comunque che in generale gli stranieri alla fine ne escano meglio e spesso sono anche più educati. Forse anche perché le famiglie sono meno dentro magari a questa chiusura che da questo quartiere, un po' più lontani da questa zona grigia. In generale molte di loro sono famiglie con culture familiari più solide, che si interessano di più ai figli. Pensa che alle riunioni di classe sono quasi più numerosi i loro genitori, che quelli degli italiani. Hanno quindi anche un maggiore interesse e coinvolgimento verso la scuola. Per questi genitori la scuola è ancora un mezzo di promozione sociale. Quasi di riscatto. Per molti italiani invece no. (Teacher, Istituto Professionale Greppi).

And again:

Questo però non significa che i ragazzi stranieri non hanno alcuna problematica, anzi.. però forse la famiglia è più solida. Anche se poi il contesto di quartiere è sempre lo stesso e quindi anche l'ambiente. Da noi a scuola ad esempio c'è un ragazzo egiziano di diciassette anni. Questo ragazzo è stato adottato dai genitori di un'altra ragazza della scuola e lui è molto problematico. Vive con il papà e ha una vicenda familiare molto complessa, è morta una sorellina ed è stata data la colpa alla mamma per cui è stata allontanata da casa. Adesso vive con suo padre ma non so quanto sia veritiera questa cosa, però lui tiene tantissimo al papà, mentre odia profondamente la madre per via della morte di questa sorella. Ha un percorso scolastico normale. Viene tutte le mattine, non è scolarizzato, come la maggior parte qui dentro ma si avvicina molto (Teacher, Istituto Professionale Greppi).

A specific issue regarding family structure and much debated in French politics¹³ is polygamy. However, we should acknowledge that in our French neighborhood we found no official evidence of such cases. We only heard about some people having, for example, two households, one in

¹³ «Une proposition de loi de la députée UMP de Seine-et-Marne, Chantal Brunel, visant à créer un délit de polygamie. En 2006, la commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme avançait la fourchette de 16 000 à 20 000 familles polygames en France. Avec des "conséquences dramatiques" pour les foyers concernés, accuse la députée dans son exposé des motifs: "multiplicité d'enfants dans de minuscules superficies, contraints d'attendre dans la rue leur tour pour le repas et privés d'éducation; des femmes meurtries; des allocations obtenues de manière frauduleuse..." (http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/une-deputee-ump-veut-creer-un-delit-de-polygamie_932519.html).

France and another in the village, but we never received any confirmation from the people directly involved.

As argued by Michel Kokoreff: « Alors que s'amorçait le reflux des émeutes de novembre 2005, on a assisté à la résurgence d'une polémique sur la polygamie, proscrite par la loi mais pratiquée par des familles originaires d'Afrique de l'Ouest, et qui, selon le ministre délégué à l'Emploi, aurait été 'l'une des causes' des émeutes. Parallèlement le gouvernement a annoncé des mesures visant à durcir la législation sur le regroupement familial, considéré par le ministre de l'Intérieur comme une *nouvelle filière d'immigration*. De leur côté les associations antiracistes (SOS Racisme, le MRAP, La Ligue des droits de l'homme) ont réagi en dénonçant la tentative d'ethniciser la crise des banlieues et de 'détourner l'opinion publique des vrais problèmes'. Cet épisode sans doute oublié mais récurrent dénote le caractère idéologique des représentations et des positions. Car, au fond, que savons nous des familles polygames en France ? Combien de ménages cela concerne-t-il réellement ? A quelles difficultés les épouses mais aussi les fratries sont-elles confrontées ? Comment trouvent-elles leur place dans le monde des cités ? A l'inverse, ces incertitudes ne doivent pas masquer un certain nombre de faits, au risque de tout confondre. Ainsi, Hugues Lagrange a mis en relief la sur-implication dans les inconduites et l'échec scolaire des enfants des grandes familles venues d'Afrique noire, du fait des processus de migration et de socialisation qui les caractérisent (..) On voit donc l'écart qui réside entre la mise en accusation des familles polygames comme cause de la violence, sa fonction idéologique auprès de l'opinion et les faits observés ». (Kokoreff, 2007 p. 94).

However, in general, we can confirm the presence of critical elements concerning, for example, the structures of Sub-Saharan African families.

With our interviews we registered the influence that the number of children and over-crowding at home can exert in driving adolescents (especially males) out to the public spaces in the neighborhood, instead of spending more time at home, doing homework or inviting friends, etc.

As far as young women with immigrant origins are concerned, some major problems seem also to involve cultural aspects and in particular, as we have seen in various contexts, gender roles and traditions, and issue which seems to apply particularly to girls of Sub-Saharan. However, once again it is probably more connected with the duration of the migration process than the country of origin itself.

« Les difficultés des filles sont issues de la différence culturelle, surtout pour les filles d'origine africaine. Il y a beaucoup de maliens et maghrébins mais surtout des maliens. Leurs difficultés viennent du fait qu'ils soutiennent beaucoup la famille dans une pluralité de tâches. Après il y a aussi l'impossibilité de vivre des choses dans une manière naturelle dans la famille et par extension

dans le quartier. Aussi pour le problème de se montrer simplement dans le quartier, hors des lieux comme l'école ou la bibliothèque. Le problème arrive surtout vers 16 ans, avant il y a plus de contact avec les garçons¹⁴. Pour résumer, les problèmes principaux sont le rôle du contrôle de la famille élargie – oncles, tantes, cousins, amis de famille et de la communauté - le rôle du grand frère et plus en général du quartier. Ils ont des difficultés à vivre leurs expérience amoureuse, parce-que leur parents souvent n'acceptent pas leur choix amoureux. Beaucoup de difficultés qui lui donnent au même temps ténacité. L'école par exemple est le moyen par excellence pour sortir, pour échapper de la famille et de ses limitations (...) » (Social worker of the association Rue et Cités).

The latter aspect concerning the role of school as emancipation used to be true also during the eighties for a whole generation of girls originally from Maghreb, and still seems to be the case for young women of Sub-Saharan origin (Beaud, 2006).

«Grace à dieu j'ai pu étudier et prendre mon diplôme et je dois aussi remercier mes parents. J'ai un métier et je gagne bien ma vie. Je travaille dans une garderie d'enfants de la municipalité. Je suis une mère seule, le père de mes enfants est parti quand j'étais enceinte de mon dernier fils et j'avais seulement 20 ans. Mais là je suis bien. J'ai aussi acheté ma maison sur la limite de Montreuil. Le seul problème est la solitude. Quand t'es pas en couple tu peux être très seule. Par exemple hier je me suis énervée avec ma sœur et ma fille : ils ont organisé un repas chez elle, elle a invité ma fille mais pas moi, parce-que je suis pas en couple. Et ma fille..elle a rien dit ». (Safia, 44 years old).

And again :

«Les filles quittent la famille très tôt pour se marier et ils ont pas l'expérience, ils connaissent pas bien le garçon avec lequel elles se marient. Il faut qu'il soit le bon mais souvent c'est le fiasco. Les problématiques des filles adolescentes sont beaucoup liées aux relations amoureuses, elles sont souvent battues, violemment réprimées. Elles ont du mal à s'affranchir.. il y a le regard du voisinage, du grand frère.. Très souvent comme j'ai dit ils prennent des risques, ils se protègent pas des maladies sexuellement transmissibles. Ils font des interruptions volontaires de grossesse.. Par exemple des filles vont à Châtelet, à Gare du nord.. Elles prennent leur train et en allant très loin elles prennent des risques.. ils s'échangent en cours de route. Ils sont dans une forme de violence

¹⁴ This is also what we noticed during our ethnographic observation at the Service Municipal Jeunesse of the neighbourhood Ramenas Leo Lagrange. We found that girls engaged in activities there were quite an exception and in particular never older than fifteen years, while on the contrary the boys thus engaged also reached the age limit of eighteen.

symbolique très forte. Certains ont aussi des comportements qui montrent leur haine : la façon de parler violemment et vulgairement..ou physiquement. Il faut prendre des fois le RER. Ce travail près des filles est prise en charge par les éducatrices, on les aide aussi à choisir le parcours éducatif ». (Social worker of the association *Rue et Cités*)

As we have noted, all the differences between origins are very important and can be decisive also from the point of view of children, integration and educational experience.

This is also the case of another important issue, namely language, an element of great importance in an individual's socialisation process.

In general, in the French neighbourhood language problems seem to be more of an issue for parents and young people of Sub-Saharan African origin than for people from Maghreb, mainly because, as we have seen, immigration from Maghreb is a more traditional and consolidated phenomenon than Sub-Saharan immigration. In fact, families from Maghreb usually combine both languages: the Arabic (or dialect) spoken by parents and French, which seems to be very often used as the only language among children with their brothers and sisters.

«Oui, mes parents maîtrisent bien la langue, tous les deux mais plus ma mère parce que elle est en France depuis quand elle avait 3 ans. Mais aussi mon père, ça fait vingt ans. Ma mère nous parle qu'en français par contre mon père mélange un peu les deux mais il nous parle en arabe surtout quand il s'énerve. Mais avec mon frère et ma sœur je parle toujours en français, seulement quelques mots en Arabe mais par contre on sait le parler parce qu'on va au Bled souvent. On a une maison pas loin de Tosor » (Farouk, 18 years old, Tunisian origins).

However, even in the case of the language spoken at home, which influences children's skills and education, things can change depending on how recent the immigration process is and not simply on the nationality.

« Je suis venu en France en 2004 à 14 ans, avant des 18 ans, si non ça pouvait être difficile après. On est originaires du sud du Maroc. Mon père était déjà ici depuis une dizaine d'années. Je suis venu avec lui et un an après ma mère est venue aussi. J'ai commencé ma première année de lycée au Maroc et après ici. Au début c'était difficile, avant d'être à Jean Jaurès j'ai passé six mois à Robespierre dans une classe d'accueil. J'avais seulement un problème linguistique. C'était mon oncle qui s'occupait de l'école et de parler avec les enseignants parcequ'il est en France depuis longtemps, plus que mon père. Ma mère est venue ici mais elle ne travaille pas et elle parle pas

mais ça tu l'as vu dans l'entretien avec elle. En fait, c'est mieux que vous parlez avec mon oncle si vous voulez » (Fatia, 20 years old, from Morocco).

Sometimes, as we were told by one of the social assistants at a lower secondary school of the Haut Montreuil, these immigrant children of immigrant origin may, for example, quite often come up against problems of dyslexia, as was also underlined by teachers in Quarto Oggiaro but without any particular reference to immigrant students.

During two of our interviews, we registered similar worries concerning language skills.

Both Bouma, a 25-year-old young man born in Montreuil from a Malian family and Florian a 22-year-old boy of Congolese origin expressed, at the very beginning of the conversation, their fear of making grammar and language mistakes during our interviews¹⁵.

In our opinion, this aspect is worth mentioning, considering that both of them had always lived in France and attended school in Montreuil. In particular, Florian also works as an animator/educator for an association dealing with children and adolescents.

To conclude this section, we believe that all these cultural aspects are decisive and cannot be neglected, as underlined by Hugues Lagrange in his very recent book we have already had occasion to mention, entitled “Le Déni des Cultures”. However it is also important to consider some risks and see, for example, how the local authorities and more in general the political and academic debate can contribute to a sort of crystallization and stigmatization when underlining all these critical elements.

As argued by Elise Palomares in an interesting contribution on female Malian social activism:

“ « La définition du problème contribue à institutionnaliser l'existence d'un groupe collectivement marqué du sceau d'une spécificité négative, les 'familles maliennes' et étaye les présupposés des acteurs locaux qui tentent de remédier quotidiennement au problème ainsi posé avec volontarisme ». (Palomares, 2010 p.51).

And again:

“Si les parents sont réputés présenter des ‘particularités *essentiellement traditionnelles*’, les enfants de maliens n'auraient plus aucune culture, situation proche de la ‘sauvagerie’ qui entretient un sentiment d'urgence à leur sujet. Dans la sollicitude à leur égard se joue une forme de mise à distance, qui s'inscrit dans un processus de production institutionnelle d'altérité. De la même façon que les problèmes sociaux rencontrés par les migrants sont rapportés à leur ‘culture’, les problèmes

¹⁵ As we will see in the methodological annex, the fact of telling them that I was a foreigner was able to eliminate any barrier between researcher and person interviewed.

d'échec, d'exclusion scolaire et de troubles sociaux dans l'espace urbain sont imputés à 'l'absence de repères culturels', de leurs enfants. L'usage courant du terme 'Maliens' entretient l'indistinction entre nationalité et origine nationale (..) (Palomares 2010 p.55, 56)

The latter issue concerning the problematic relationship between their (French) nationality, and that of their parents remains central in the debate involving all young people of immigrant origin, although it is not an issue in Italy, where, as already argued, debate is generally at an earlier stage. It is not focused on the integration of immigrants but still on the expediency of accepting them or not. On the contrary, in France, the problem of what the French call "issu de l'immigration" (Simon 2000) to be translated as: product of immigration, is not simply related to an identity issue, but calls into question the idea of citizenship and full legitimacy in participating in the local community and society (Palomares and Rabaud, 2006).

6.7 Poverty, unemployment and family solidarity

Single mother households and families of immigrant origin (especially if the two characteristics are present at the same time, as is the case of the many of the single mothers we interviewed in Montreuil) are considered profiles particularly at risk of poverty and social disadvantage. However, this is not the only typology experiencing socio-economic difficulties in both our neighbourhoods. Although our sample does not claim to have high statistical representation, it is worth mentioning that in Milan Quarto Oggiaro we met more cases of male breadwinner unemployment than in Montreuil. In part, this is due to the fact that, as we have seen, in the Haut Montreuil the single-mother household is a more widespread phenomenon, accounting on average for 22% in our neighbourhoods (Insee 2006).

As Adriana told us:

«Nessuno di noi lavora, tranne me che faccio le pulizie da una signora, ma in modo abbastanza discontinuo. I miei due figli, che hanno venti e ventuno anni non lavorano. È difficile trovare lavoro, soprattutto in questi periodi estivi. Abbiamo fatto domanda per il sussidio. Mio marito ha fatto domanda perché non l'ha potuto chiedere prima essendo sotto cooperativa, però adesso si è messo sotto assistenti sociali e stiamo aspettando. L'attività con gli assistenti sociali consiste nel fatto che si portano i documenti e loro sbrigano il tutto, li guardano.. e spediscono. Ci sono delle attività che ha proposto il comune tramite la regione. A settembre inizierà con una dote lavoro e

prenderà il patentino da mulettista. Quindi anche per un altro periodo non avrà lo stipendio, quindi l'unica possibilità è il sussidio. A giugno abbiamo fatto domanda e adesso aspettiamo. Tra l'altro non ha mai preso nemmeno l'indennità di disoccupazione perché essendo sotto cooperativa non ne ha diritto». (Adriana, 43 years old).

As we see in all these narrations, in both the contexts the family background can play a very significant role, in particular for the outcomes and development of young people.

However, in France the presence of a stronger welfare state seems to mitigate the negative effect of coming from a vulnerable, poor and disadvantaged family, at least from the economic point of view, since financial assistance comes from various sources (*RSA, bourse d'étude, allocations familial* and other local initiatives..) and is higher.

In the Italian context, as Andrea underlines through his story and as we saw in the introductory chapter, other more informal actors and institutions such as charity associations and the church are involved. Next to them, the family, and in particular grandparents, seems to be the main actor involved, representing a decisive resource.

However, while recognising this difference we do not mean to say that these actors have no function at all in the French context, but simply that they seem to have less decisive roles than in Italy.

In fact, as suggested by some scholars writing on the specific issue of the family in an Italian and French perspective (Rampazzi 2010; Sgritta 2010; Attias-Donfut), in our comparison of family and intergenerational solidarities we must take into account the contrasting representation of Italy as the kingdom of family and France as its opposition.

As Martine Segalen observes commenting on the work of Claudine Attias-Donfut and Marita Rampazzi (2010):

“Observons cependant que les deux auteurs explicitement ou implicitement, rejettent le mythe de la ‘crise’ de la famille; en Italie comme en France, la famille est la seule source de protection sûre contre la précarité de l’emploi” (Segalen, 2010 p.248).

In a previous study presented at the *International Party Conference on Labour Market Segmentation* in 2009, analysing the working poor phenomenon in Italy, with a regression analysis using *EU SILC* data (2006) we showed the fundamental importance grandparents' pensions can have in supporting the family. In fact, the presence of a pension represents an additional income on which the family can count and so reduces therefore the probability of in-work poverty for the household. Not being able to count on it is a factor that increases the risk of in-work poverty in both the North and South of Italy. The odds are very high: 4.5 times more risk in the North and almost 6

times more risk in the South. These data indicate that pension incomes can represent a fundamental resource for the family, especially in the Southern economy, due to the poor quality of the labour market (low quality jobs, worse paid and sometimes more unstable positions, in particular in agriculture).

Similarly, as we observed in our neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro, even if all the generations in a family present a vulnerable and disadvantaged profile, the grandparents quite often represent a source of finance and income for children and grandchildren, mainly through retirement or invalidity pensions.

«Io ho quasi sempre lavorato in nero come mia figlia Adriana e infatti sono preoccupata per lei. Speriamo non finisce come me. Io ad undici anni ho iniziato a fare la meccanica come mia madre in una officina e lavoravo alla fresa e naturalmente trattandosi di sessanta anni fa ero in nero. Poi ho fatto la piccinina cioè lavoravo in una sartoria a fare i colli. Andavo a prendere il cotone, andavo nella merceria e poi cucivo ma anche qui in nero. Poi ho lavorato in un ristorante, perché sono una brava cuoca. Ho lavorato in via varesina e poi in un ristorante e si parla di 38 anni fa dove ho lavorato 7/8 anni non di più. Poi ancora in una trattoria. Andavo la mattina e tornavo la sera. Come ultimo lavoro fino a tre anni fa ho curato una signora anziana che poi è morta. Praticamente lavoravo giorno e notte e prendevo solo 150 euro alla settimana neanche 5 euro all'ora. Facevo tutto, da mangiare, curavo la signora, stiravo. Quando è morta la mamma il figlio non mi ha dato nemmeno la liquidazione dicendo che ero in nero. Allora io un giorno l'ho chiamato e gli ho detto: tu a me mi devi dare almeno 7 anni. Quando ho minacciato di andare dai sindacati perché ho avuto l'incidente essendo scivolata vicino alla vasca da bagno, mi ha dato 3.500 euro anche se è molto meno di quello che mi avrebbe dovuto dare. Adesso tra qualche giorno mi deve portare altri 1500 euro e qualcosa darò anche a mia figlia. Però purtroppo adesso rimango rovinata anche di salute» (Carla 71, years old).

And again...

«(..) Quindi, per farla breve io non prendo la pensione del lavoro perché ho lavorato un po' qua un po' là, ma prendo la pensione sociale, la minima di 500 euro. Poi ho l'accompagnamento ma a novembre devo andare a fare la visita di controllo perché potrebbero togliermelo. Già faccio fatica adesso.. chissà poi. Poi i miei figli e nipoti non mi possono aiutare ed anzi a momenti hanno bisogno loro di me. Mio genero in questi giorni lavora ma prima era anche lui a casa, sta sostituendo un suo amico per tre settimane. Adesso è a posto ma poi finisce. Poi se c'è da

imbiancare o cose così si da molto da fare. È un bravo ragazzo. Io gli do una mano come posso ma tra l'altro uno dei figli è ai domiciliari e l'altro è dentro e quindi devono andare spesso a trovarlo ed è abbastanza lontano. Adesso prendo anche un sussidio comunale ogni due mesi di 250 mensili ma per esempio aspettano fino a novembre e se mi viene confermato l'accompagnamento di 480 euro mi tolgono il sussidio. La metà del sussidio lo do alla Adriana e metà la tengo io».

(Carla, 71 years old).

6.8 The complexity of family structures

Alongside the economic situation, another problem concerning the family regards its structure.

In both our neighbourhoods together with the issue of single-mother households considered above, we can register a wider-reaching complexity of family structures.

For instance, sometimes, even if the parents of the young people we interviewed were divorced, these were not single-parent households. In fact, very often the mothers had married again or simply had another partner.

However, during our interviews it did not prove easy to register this element and sometimes the presence of the mother's new partner was introduced only in the middle of the conversation, the interviewee having previously described him/herself as living alone with his/her mother and brothers.

This is, among others, the case of Matthieu when he says:

«J'habite avec ma mère, mon grand frère et grande sœur. Je suis très proche de ma mère mais pas sa famille. Du côté de mon père on a quelque contact mais pas avec la famille de ma mère. Ça c'est pas un problème parce-que quand ma mère a des soucis elle sait qu'elle peut me parler mais elle se débrouille bien, aussi si elle gagne pas beaucoup. Et après elle est pas seule à travailler.. Ah en fait il y a aussi mon beau père qui vit avec nous ..»

This discursive practice could be a sign of tensions within the family, having concrete consequences on the individuals. For instance, an uncomfortable feeling at home and a difficult relationship with one or more family members are elements possibly driving the individual to spend more time

outside the home,¹⁶ thus possibly more exposed to all sorts of situations including police controls¹⁷ - something which seems to be very frequent in the Haut Montreuil and in particular for young men of immigrant origin, and more in general offers from criminal groups and organizations recruiting young people for drug dealing. -Something which happens in both neighbourhoods but probably to a greater extent in Quarto Oggiaro.

This relationship between the family structure and the exposure of public spaces of the neighbourhood also seems to have been confirmed by some of the interviews we had with many young people in both contexts.

For example Nassim:

«Après le divorce de mes parents j'ai commencé à sortir tout le temps. J'en voulais à ma mère, surtout parcequ'elle a du vendre la maison pour des raisons économiques.. mais à l'époque j'avais quinze ans et j'ai pas compris. Ma mère pouvait pas payer le crédit et mon père on lui avait donné sa part de la maison pour en acheter une autre et du coup toutes les charges étaient sur ma mère. Une fois on devait payer 900 euro de frais.. Elle gagnait 1200 euro et en plus avec deux enfants et l'école privée à payer... Mais à l'époque je comprenais pas. On est passé du statut d'enfants pas vraiment de classe moyenne mais surement pas en difficulté à un autre. Quand j'étais petit j'étais avec des gens qui n'avaient pas d'argent et j'en avais. Mais après je n'en avais plus non plus .. Par exemple avant je pouvais acheter des bonbons et les donner a tous mes amis et de coup je ne pouvais pas en acheter... Ma mère n'était pas une femme isolée, mon père lui passait de l'argent et il y avait aussi des allocations familiales mais tout passait dans le crédit ».

¹⁶ From a policy perspective it is important to note that the presence of efficient structures and entertainment for young people can be an important tool in order to prevent this phenomenon. Lack in the supply of leisure activities for young people, especially after 16 years old, is to be underlined in both the neighborhoods. In fact, 16 years old is a sort of age limit for the Service Municipale Jeunesse in the Haut Montreuil and also more or less for the CTS of Quarto Oggiaro.

¹⁷ As Louis (19 years old) told us : « Entre nous et la police il n'y a pas de relations. Il viennent tous les jours faire des contrôles. Ça peut bien se passer, il font une blague ou deux pour rigoler.. on essaie d'être amical mais des fois on a pas envie. il y a des jours qu'on veut pas. En plus, la police chez nous est très lunatique, un jours ils peuvent être noir et un jour bleu .. mais ils aiment bien chercher la merde, c'est leur métier. Nous mettre en défi.. pour tout et il font toujours des contrôles pour rien ».

Thus, as Nassim told us and as is generally recognized in the sociological literature, divorce can be one of those events having decisive consequences on the situation of the family and its members, and in particular on children and adolescences.

As clearly evidenced by Nassim, this event can sometimes prove downgrading for the family, with at the same time loss of economic solidity, lacking for example one of the two incomes sustaining the family, but also, especially from the point of view of the children, loss of status for the family. In fact, divorce can also have decisive consequences for the relationships between children and parents and the educational and personal trajectories.

« C'était surtout le divorce qui s'est mal passé. Pendant quatre mois j'ai même pas parlé à mon père. Après on a déménagé dans une maison moins chère mais collée à une cité à Rosny et j'en voulais à ma mère parce-que j'aimais bien la maison où j'ai grandi avec mon père, ma mère et ma sœur. Je donnais la responsabilité du divorce à ma mère parcequ'en fait c'est elle qui a pris la décision de divorcer (...).

Moi dans ma carrière scolaire j'ai du jamais trop étudier parce-que j'étais toujours attentif dans la classe. Mais après le divorce de mes parents j'ai commencé à sortir tout le temps. On faisait rien de constructif avec mes amis du quartier.. je fumais pas mal de cannabis et donc ma scolarité a beaucoup baissé.. Ma mère elle le savait mais elle pouvait rien». (Nassim, 19 years old, student at Ecole de commerce).

As the example of Nassim shows, due to divorce and probably all the consequent struggles, parents sometimes have to face a number of problems. These problems can be of financial order but can also concern other aspects, such as children's education and relations with them, with the risk that parents might for several reasons lose their authority and at the same time consciously or unconsciously abandon their prerogatives and duties as parents. This does not necessarily depend on the socio-economic status and level of education of the parents but can have worse consequences if the family and neighborhood present certain negative characteristics.

« Ma mère comme elle devait s'occuper de plusieurs choses n'avait pas le temps de nous donner des règles très strictes, alors je crois c'est ce que je cherchais de dans. Après, vers 18 ans comme je sortais d'une période où je faisais ce que je voulais, j'ai voulu des règles strictes et j'ai commencé à 18 ans l'académie militaire à Saint-Cyr mais j'y suis resté seulement 3 mois. En fait j'ai été discriminé pour mon nom, pour le fait que ma mère était Algérienne»

(Nassim, 19 years old, student at Ecole de commerce).

Before reporting another similar and significant example in Quarto Oggiaro, we would like to cite what Nassim told us about his decision to join the army, an experience also shared by two other young men we interviewed in the Haut Montreuil.

During our conversation, Matthieu told us about his intention to join the army, which he is currently doing, for more than six months in the region of Alsace.

As he admitted, this can in part be considered a solution for more than one year unemployment, but he also told us of the need for a more ordered condition:

« Je sens le besoin d'être plus encadré ».

In this specific case, we can say that his decision does not depend on particular values or political views, such as the need for external law and order. In fact, during our conversation Matthieu also admitted some activities bordering on illegality.

« En cas de soucis économiques je peux toujours me débrouiller, je fais des affaires. Je veux pas trop rentrer dans les détails (LAUGH) mais je fais des petites choses. On peut dire comme ça.. »

(Mattieu, 19 years old).

Michael, a 23-year-old young man, living with his widowed mother, brother and sister, unlike the protagonists of the two previous stories, chose the army mainly for professional and economic reasons, after a very long period of unemployment, having left school without any educational qualifications when he was 17 years old.

«Entre tout ce temps que j'ai cherché du travail sans beaucoup de succès, j'ai oublié de te dire que je suis aussi parti à l'armée. Il y a six mois, je suis revenu en Novembre 2009. Je suis resté qu'un mois. Je suis pas fou, je veux pas partir à la guerre. J'ai été volontaire mais si il y avait pas la guerre je pouvais rester mais ils voulait m'envoyer en Afghanistan.. et quand j'ai compris ça je me suis barré. Je suis contre la guerre, je suis aussi musulman comme tu vois. Aussi si mes parents sont Français Français. L'armée je l'avais choisi comme un métier intéressant. C'est pas un truc comme les autres.. on fait du sport.. C'était déjà un moment que je voulais le faire après j'ai eu l'occasion et j'ai essayé. J'ai passé les examens à Vincennes et ils m'ont pris ».

(Michael, 23 years old)

Returning to the family structure and the possible consequences that divorce or other events can have on parents' attitudes and educative roles, we registered similar experiences also in Milano Quarto Oggiaro.

«Alle superiori andavo malissimo. Ho fatto la prima sono stato bocciato, ho rifatto la prima e sono stato bocciato ancora. Poi sono stato bocciato due volte in seconda e poi ho lasciato a diciassette anni. I primi anni andavo a scuola perché ero piccolo poi quasi non ci andavo più. Un anno ho fatto l'86% di assenze, praticamente ho fatto solo un mese di scuola.

I miei lo sapevano, ma comunque non potevano farci niente. Dicevano fai quel cazzo che vuoi, alla fine non potevano tenermi. Mia madre all'inizio non si era accorta di niente ma poi sì, però non ha fatto nulla e si è chiusa in una sorta di guscio. Non era per nulla severa, non si metteva a fare delle battaglie infinite che poi non poteva vincere. Con mio fratello si è accanita di più con me, ha lasciato perdere perché ha capito che non serviva. A livello scolastico se ne è resa subito conto perché quei risultati si vedono subito, per il discorso droghe se ne è invece resa conto dopo. Ad un certo punto non ci vietava più nulla, non ci riusciva, Nonostante fosse laureata non ci ha mai seguito nei compiti, non so perché ma è sempre stata abbastanza distante. Mi sono sempre chiesto perché abbia avuto questo comportamento e penso che sia semplicemente perché è fatta così a livello caratteriale» (Marco, 25 years old).

As we have seen, change in the family structure can influence relations between parents and their children and in particular the parental role and authority.

This is a fairly frequent case, and from the point of view of our study it can be even more an issue due to the vulnerability of the families concerned and the social context and space in which these families live.

In any case, we must approach these observations very gingerly.

In particular, we do not want to over-generalize, stigmatizing and interpreting all these families through the paradigm of social disorganization. In fact, we also registered cases of complex family structures or single-parent households in difficult socio-economic situations where the parents have no problems in the exercise of their parental roles, providing a solid educational project and a framework of rules and duties that their children respect.

« Ma mère si je travaille pas me ferait des pressions psychologiques ça c'est sur mais..Elle passe l'aspirateur à 8 h avant d'aller au travail. Seulement pour me faire chier. Ma mère est une femme très dure mais voilà. Elle est une femme fière, une vraie femme haïtienne. Elle travaille toute sa vie et je crois pas qu'elle a voulu de l'aide. Les vraies femmes seules elle font tout seules mais après c'est nous, les enfants qui faisons n'importe quoi. Les femmes seules sont fières, elles ont une dureté, elles sont fortes ». (Julien , 23 years old)

And again:

«Je peux rentrer quand je veux à la maison mais il faut que je préviens toujours si je rentre tard. Ma mère est très attentive. Sinon elle me casse la tête. Quand j'étais plus jeune je devais négocier l'horaire, ma mère elle était toujours là. Elle s'occupait de l'école, elle savait toujours avec qui je sortais, même maintenant». (Julien)

As in the case of Halima, the families in our French neighbourhood, including immigrant and those families with most disadvantaged characteristics, very often underline full assimilation of those republican values that they also seek to transmit to their children. In fact, very often, all the hostile attitudes and acts against 'La République Française', such as for example the urban riots of 2005, can be considered more as a protest than a real refusal of those ideals, which the young people have interiorized to a great degree through their families and socialisation processes in Republican Institutions such as school, despite all the problems we have seen associated with educational segregation and inequalities.

« Le quartier c'est le lieu où on vit et on essaie de faire avancer notre quartier. Il y a beaucoup de respect entre nous, à condition que chacun s'occupe de sa vie.. Il faut pas fréquenter n'importe qui parceque ça a beaucoup d'influence sur les enfants. Par exemple je ne veux pas qu'ils se mélangent avec des délinquants, des fumeurs etc.. je dis aux enfants de les éviter.. on parle avec les enfants, je lui explique que c'est dangereux, qu'il faut éviter des gens comme ça. Des gens qui boivent, qui fument l'haschisch. Il y a des jeunes qui boivent devant le lycée.. en fait pour encadrer l'enfant il faut lui communiquer qui si il fait comme ça, il va être en galère pour toute la vie..

Moi je veux que mes enfant deviennent des bons citoyens. C'est pour ça que l'école est très importante. C'est l'avenir, c'est se construire, pour comprendre le monde ou on vie. L'école c'est le devoir des enfants pour avoir après un travail.. » (Halima, a 52-year-old mother of three adolescents, two girls and one boy).

We found similar examples in the neighbourhood of Quarto Oggiaro:

«Per me è stato abbastanza faticoso crescere i figli nel quartiere, soprattutto nell'età critica dai 10 ai 15 anni. Specialmente col maschio, gli stavo molto addosso ma è andato tutto bene. Ora tiro quasi un sospiro di sollievo. Avevo molta paura delle cattive compagnie. All'epoca avevo il cagnolino e andavo a farmi i giri al parchetto o all'oratorio dove stava lui con gli amici. Con la scusa del cane verificavo cosa facessero e vedevo comunque che era li tranquillo e vedevo chi frequentava, anche se già li conoscevo tutti. Anche gli amici di mia figlia e i loro genitori li conosco tutti. Ancora oggi si vedono spesso sotto casa mia. Hanno tutti diciamo la stessa storia, hanno fatto quasi tutti la terza media e pochi hanno le superiori». (Lucia 50 years old mother of a 25 years old boy and a 22 years old girls).

On the contrary, sometimes, despite all the strategies implemented by the parents, the results can vary depending on the children. In fact, we must be wary of attributing excessive responsibility to the family.

Together with the role played by the family, each trajectory and all the experiences inside and outside the neighbourhood is individual and ultimately concerns the single person, the way he/she interprets the rules and values set by the family. This, for example, is what an Algerian origin mother of five children says about her youngest:

«Il a arrêté l'école. Il a fait le collège mais il a arrêté tout de suite le lycée. Déjà au collège on l'a envoyé à l'internat parce-que il voulait pas aller à l'école. Il est parti à l'internat après deux ans il est revenu. Il a commencé le lycée et tout de suite arrêté. Il aime pas l'école, il est comme ça. Il m'a dit je préfère travailler mais je lui dit alors va travailler.. mais je suis inquiète et j'ai peur parce qu'il traîne. Il y a beaucoup des jeunes qui trainent à droite et à gauche et les parents ne disent rien. Mais nous on fait gaffe on lui casse la tout le temps mais lui.. rien. Il a même pas peur de son père il a peur que de son frère aîné. Au contraire les autres ont jamais fait la merde. Le deuxième il est même allé à l'université. Tous les quatre sont bien, aussi Yassine. Il a arrêté l'école et après il a fait la formation, un stage pour devenir animateur mais avec le plus jeune c'est toujours la galère pour moi et mon mari». (Yassin's mother)

The decisive role and commitment of the individual is also valid from the opposite perspective. In fact, we sometimes registered quite positive trajectories for people originating from disadvantaged families. Such is the case of Francesco, a 19-year-old boy living with his older sister. His situation has appreciably improved considering the starting conditions of the family: the divorce of his parents when he was nine years old and, even more, the precarious economic and social condition as well as the mental health of his mother. L'extrait d'entretien qui suit est un peu contradictoire avec ton affirmation?

«Ha vissuto con la sorella, adesso vive in casa di amici e sua mamma è molto chiacchierata per la professione che fa. Io lo chiamo tutte le mattine per svegliarlo, perché ha già fatto molte assenze e se non lo chiamo non viene a scuola, è vero che è maggiorenne ma solo a livello anagrafico è un ragazzo molto debole, anche se ha un'intelligenza molto fine, solo che è proprio solo, ma solo solo, solo. Del padre non abbiamo notizie. Da quel che sappiamo è desaparecido. Adesso non più nemmeno seguito dai servizi sociali perché è diventato maggiorenne. Lui è forse il più problematico della classe anche se guardando da dove viene forse poteva andare anche peggio. Diciamo che però è al limite. Basterebbe poco per cadere giù. Però ripeto nella sua condizione poteva anche andare peggio..Già che viene a scuola è una gran cosa. L'anno scorso la mia collega è andata a

tirlo via dalle grinfie della polizia, perché è stato arrestato il compagno della mamma e hanno portato via la mamma e quindi rischiava di essere portato via anche lui. Poi la madre l'hanno rilasciata» (Teacher)

Francesco's mother is also known in the neighbourhood as the mistress of one of the big criminal bosses in Quarto Oggiaro. However, despite all these difficulties and concrete deprivations such as the absence of a place to stay, Francesco managed to obtain a lower secondary school certificate at the age of sixteen, supported by a non-profit association working in the neighbourhood, the *Cooperativa San Martino*, and he is currently attending a professional school in the neighbourhood with average results.

But this is not all: the most positive aspect of his story is that, as he proudly points out,¹⁸ he is not involved in any criminal or illegal activity, as also attested by some members of the local police who went on to define his case as one of the exceptions in the neighbourhood. However, as his teacher made a point of stressing, mainly due to his family background Francesco seems to be very much at risk of poverty, social exclusion, disadvantage and criminality.

6.9 The family and attitudes towards criminality

The situation of Carla's and Adriana's family is emblematic of those dynamics which can affect young people in these two neighbourhoods when the family and all its generations present a vulnerable and disadvantaged profile from the economic and social point of view, and where the family originally has no experience of delinquency or criminality.

In particular, as Carla underlines in her interview, it is important to note that one of her sons and all Adriana's children had problems with the law and had been arrested because implicated in criminal activities with the neighbourhood mafia, involved in drug dealing.

This does not mean that all the people from poor households in these two neighbourhoods and in particular in Quarto Oggiaro are likely to have this kind of experience. Of course many of the people we interviewed vehemently rejected this option. However, we cannot hide the fact that children but also adults from a poor and socially disadvantaged family can give way, because of severe deprivation, to the temptation of 'easy money - the Italian expression many people used during our interviews is exactly: 'soldi facili' - becoming involved in such criminal activities.

¹⁸ From our experience we think we could trust his statement. In fact, the general tendency for young people in the neighbourhood is to exaggerate and emphasize their involvement in criminal activities rather than minimize. This aspect is similar both in Quarto Oggiaro and in Montreuil, because it enhances the neighbourhood social status. This behaviour is also suggested by some Facebook nick names with direct reference to crime and bands.

As the police chief of Quarto Oggiaro told us:

«A volte succede che questi delle famiglie che trafficano droga utilizzino la disperazione della gente, dei giovani ma a volte anche degli anziani. Quindi questi, un po' per paura di rifiutare e di ricevere ritorsioni, un po' invece per necessità economica accettano di tenere ad esempio a casa loro dei pacchetti di droga o armi, perché naturalmente essendo incensurati sono molto meno visibili e controllati» (Police deputy commissioner)

«La polizia tende a non fare niente perché mirano ai pesci grossi, dei piccoli spacciatori non se ne preoccupano, ma sono loro che buttano dentro i nostri figli, io so di tanti compagni di scuola di mia figlia, certi sono anche figli di brave famiglie, che sono stati arrestati. Ma sono tanti, tanti, tutti spacciano. Qua a Quarto Oggiaro vogliono fare i signori, quando signori non lo siamo. Qua siamo tutte famiglie di operai, ma se giri per il quartiere vedi tutti i ragazzi con oggetti firmati, noi operai non possiamo permetterci queste cose no? Per esempio anche mia figlia si è comprata la Gucci originale ma per farlo ha dovuto mettere via tutte le mance di Natale e dei compleanni. Io personalmente penso che siano soldi sprecati, ma piuttosto di dire: vado a vendere due dosi e me la compro, beh ovviamente preferisco che faccia così. Anzi dico: comprati quello che vuoi. Io penso che le famiglie non si domandano il come facciano i propri figli ad avere tutte queste cose di marca. Secondo me la cosa si tramanda molto di padre in figlio e naturalmente ci sono le famiglie storiche che gestiscono queste cose e che tutti conoscono nel quartiere. Però poi ci sono quelli che non hanno nulla a che fare con la criminalità, che i genitori li hanno sempre seguiti in tutto per tutto. Mi viene in mente T. un amico di mia figlia. Si è fatto convincere dall'amichetto che gli ha detto: 'hai visto ho guadagnato 2000 euro altro che scuola' poi il giorno dopo essendo un po' scemo, si fa convincere. Sono proprio quelli così che prendono subito (...）」 (Luisa 42 years old).

And again...

Una mia carissima amica di infanzia si è sposata uno di questi delle famiglie, un calabrese capo clan. A sedici anni è rimasta incinta, a diciannove anni aveva già 3 bambini. Lei veniva da una brava famiglia di operai napoletani e lui è riuscito a tirare dentro tutti: padre, madre figlia e nonna. Non so se hai mai sentito parlare della nonna di Quarto Oggiaro. Ecco era la nonna di questa ragazza. Ha tirato in mezzo tutta la famiglia perché i soldi erano a palate ».

As we will see in more detail in the chapter dedicated to analysis of the neighbourhood dimension and to its role in determining peer effect and social relations, criminality can be the result of a sort of a peer and neighbourhood effect ‘contaminating’ the individual – in particular young people - even independently of social and family background.

As Giovanna pointed out talking about Luca, her 22-year-old son:

«Si è avvicinato a persone sbagliate e due anni fa è stato preso per piccolo spaccio. Nel 2008 è stato arrestato ma non ha fatto carcere perché era incensurato. Gli hanno dato un anno con la condizionale e ha fatto il processo per direttissima. Ha fatto solo una notte in questura ma in carcere no. Forse anche perché la famiglia era a posto, almeno così pensiamo noi avendo anche parlato con la polizia. Ovviamente se dovesse fare cazzate entro il 2013 paga tutto, sconta tutto. Questa paura mi fa impazzire e ci perdo la salute anche perché so che fuma ancora perché ogni tanto gli trovo il pezzettino. Spero che però non ci sia sotto altro (...)

Quando ne abbiamo riparlato, anche se molto a fatica, ci ha detto che lo aveva fatto per soldi, proprio per avere soldi, poi lui mi ha tirato fuori la cazzata che l’ha fatto per aiutare la famiglia, per aiutare sua sorella, le solite scuse per difendersi. Diciamo che non gli potevamo dare chissà che cosa, ma il necessario sì. Il fatto che abbia frequentato certa gente gli ha fatto acquisire questa mentalità del quartoggiarese, dei vestiti di marca, dell’apparire, di fare il guappo. Anche se noi in famiglia abbiamo cercato di trasmettergli altri valori. Suo padre si è sempre ammazzato di lavoro nel ristorante e anche per quello è stato assente come figura paterna. Ma da quando dopo le medie si è messo a frequentare certa gente di Quarto, soprattutto qualcuno di via Pascarella e Orsini con cui andava al La Grange.. è degenerato. Quello con cui l’hanno beccato, anche se lui è scappato perché più esperto, era un suo amico con lo zio che era agli arresti domiciliari e nonostante questo spacciava e ha messo a spacciare il nipote e mio figlio».

In her interview Adriana never mentioned the criminal issue concerning her children come but one the first things she said when talking about the problems for young people in the neighbourhood was:

«I ragazzi qui hanno poco da fare. C’è da dire che possono spostarsi fuori dal quartiere però siamo sempre lì, tutto gira intorno ai soldi, questi ragazzi non hanno disponibilità economica, magari vengono già da famiglie problematiche e quindi cosa fanno? Vanno a cercarsi il denaro facile.

Qui i giovani sono molto abbandonati a loro stessi, ci sono famiglie che non si occupano dei figli e questo incide molto sulla crescita di questi ragazzi, sul loro carattere e quindi questi alla prima occasione che gli si presenta bella o brutta che sia la prendono al volo. Poi però secondo me

c'entra non solo la famiglia ma anche il carattere, questi ragazzi crescono senza valori. È vero che tu sbagli anche se hai una famiglia normale. Ma se non hai una famiglia normale con il papà come figura portante della famiglia... Poi ripeto questi ragazzi crescono senza valori, senza ideali e soprattutto non hanno carattere, perché dovrebbero avere la forza di dire no io questa cosa non la faccio. Appunto perché a questi ragazzi il quartiere non offre niente e quindi la gente gli offre e questi accettano, perché comunque non c'è assolutamente niente per i giovani e hanno poco».

It is to be noted that, especially in Quarto Oggiaro but to a extent also in Montreuil, when we deal with family this dimension of criminality can arise, transversal to generations.

In Quarto Oggiaro criminality and illegality seem to permeate the whole social system, as a consequence implicating the family, too. As we have seen in other chapters, this dimension concerns all individuals, whether directly involved in this type of activities or not, especially in areas of the neighbourhood like as via Pascarella.

Here criminality is able to structure a sort of 'grey area' where boundaries between what is legal and illegal are less evident, a dimension which seems to permeate the whole social system. This is, for example, what happens with illegal occupation of public housing apartments, a problem which may arise both in Montreuil¹⁹ and in Milano but showing extremely high rates in Quarto Oggiaro²⁰, where the 'business' is managed by criminal organizations.

A first element that we noted concerns the language and thus the symbolic dimension and reference. In Milan the term used is 'occupazione abusiva' which in a way expresses a sort of military meaning. On the contrary, our impression is that the word used in French, 'squatter', has more a political meaning because it refers to a phenomenon having clear political and ideological significance (Reeve and Kesia 2001; Becher 2011). In fact, the actors are different in Milano and Montreuil: in Quarto Oggiaro it is mainly managed by organized crime, almost in a military way, through control of the territory, while in Montreuil the actions of squatters and the social centres are generally considered as 'incursions sociales'.

¹⁹ Unlike Quarto Oggiaro, in Montreuil squatting and occupations seem to be less connected to criminality and more managed by squatters and extreme left movements, occupying houses and apartments for their activities but also for some poor households (mainly *Sans Papiers*). Thus this type illegality assumes a very different significance. This post of an activist may give an idea of the organizations, methods and objectives that are behind house occupations. http://www.lepost.fr/article/2009/09/27/1714858_apres-la-klinik-un-nouveau-squat-a-montreuil.html

²⁰ http://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/11_gennaio_12/case-popolari-arresti-sos-racket-usura-sangermano-181241798443.shtml

Continuing our conversation with Adriana who, as noted above, emphasised in her interview the role and values of the family for the development and future of children, we discovered that the apartment where she brought up her two sons and where the whole family has been living for more than twenty years, is illegally occupied.

«Io sono una di quelle che ha occupato la casa e poi ho fatto richiesta di sanatoria ma sto ancora aspettando da 23 anni ed ho scritto ancora alla Moratti 8 mesi fa e sto ancora aspettando la risposta dal comune. Mentre invece il comune di Milano mi ha risposto che la mia richiesta è ancora al vaglio del TAR, ne ho vinto uno, ne ho fatto un altro e sto ancora aspettando la risposta del TAR. Ogni volta che viene fuori il bando di assegnazioni alloggi puntualmente faccio la domanda per l'assegnazione di questa casa. Siamo abusivi ma ogni tanto mando un contributo spese ma tanto non viene tenuto conto. L'affitto naturalmente non lo posso pagare perché come abusiva mi chiedono 1.020 euro. Prima non era così sistemato ma messo male. Noi abbiamo fatto i lavori e ora ci stiamo bene e anche il cortile è tranquillo, nonostante questa zona è considerata la peggiore del quartiere».

This probably represents an extreme solution for a situation of poverty and deprivation, although at the time of occupation Adriana's husband was working. However, we believe that in the neighbourhood, deciding on abusive occupation or not, apart from the concrete necessity for deprivation, may also symbolize adoption of a specific mentality. In fact, we should bear in mind that not all the disadvantaged households we met, including those that had experienced housing problems, opted for this solution.

For instance, as explained by Concetta, a woman of Sicilian origin, mother of two young boys of 16 and 20 years old:

«Nemmeno nelle situazioni più difficili, in cui non avevo i soldi per pagare l'affitto ho mai voluto occupare. Da un lato per non avere a che fare con certa gente, perché comunque quando hai a che fare con loro prima o poi il favore lo rivogliono indietro e poi anche perché non volevo dare un cattivo esempio ai miei figli. Come può crescere un bambino che ha visto i genitori buttare giù una porta e in qualche modo rubare per avere una casa.. Una casa che è il centro della famiglia. Questo bambino sarà così a scuola e nella vita. Penserà di poter rubare la merenda al compagno perché tanto tutto è permesso. Io questo proprio non lo volevo». (Concetta, 44 years old. Working as cleaning lady in a hotel in the city centre).

And again...

«Questa parrocchia in particolare è formata credo per il 95% da case popolari, quindi ad assegnazione oppure ad occupazione abusiva, visto che è un problema molto sentito in questa zona. Il problema occupazione ha tante sfaccettature. Se ALER ha permesso che queste persone occupassero per venti anni queste case abusivamente, non può certo buttarle fuori così. Se ci sono appartamenti murati e prima che l'assegnino passano anni è ovvio che diventa duro favorire la legalità. Dall'altra parte ti posso dire che benché sia un quartiere di case popolari, in situazioni normali, è difficile che le case vengano passate ai figli. Qui un giovane che si sposa non può trovare casa per forza quindi devono andare fuori. Ci sono però famiglie storiche che hanno occupato i nonni, hanno occupato i figli ecc... Famiglie legate alla criminalità e micro criminalità ma non solo. Ma diciamo che in generale però le famiglie che decidono di occupare forse non sono completamente trasparenti. Conosco una famiglia che ha occupato una casa tempo fa, poi quando li hanno sfrattati non hanno fatto una piega perché nel frattempo a poco a poco si erano comprati una casa da un'altra parte. Quindi diciamo che creare delle catene generazionali è molto difficile e in generale sono famiglie di un determinato ambiente che lo fanno» (Don Alberto, priest of the Church of Santa Lucia, near via Pascarella).

Without underestimating the phenomenon of squatting and illegal house occupation in Montreuil, which seems in any case to be less developed than in Quarto Oggiaro, we noted that only in part is it engaged upon by persons other than political groups, mainly young people implementing particular strategies, one aim being, for example, to go on living in the family's apartment after the parents have left or died.

«Oui j'ai eu de la chance, vu que ma mère a quitté son logement social j'ai téléphoné et j'ai dit que je voulais un appartement plus petit pour le quel j'avais fait demande, si non je serais resté dans l'appartement de ma mère et ils ne pouvaient rien faire... (LAUGH) et donc, dans une semaine ils m'ont trouvé un logement, comme ça j'ai quitté l'appartement de ma mère qui était plus grand et je suis allée vivre toute seule dans un studio au parc Montreux» (Caroline 23 years old).

Of course, the different extent of this phenomenon in Milan and Montreuil may in part be accounted for once again by structural and institutional characteristics. In fact, even if the municipality²¹ and many citizens' associations identify the existence of a real housing problem in

²¹ http://www.montreuil.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/Files/Grands_projets/plan_local_urbanisme/09-06-30-Montreuil.pdf

As the Plan Local d' Urbanisme (PLU) states:

«Avec 6 000 demandeurs de logement et des habitations parfois indignes, la Municipalité souhaite favoriser la construction de logements sociaux. Pour atteindre cet objectif, il faudra supprimer la règle d'antériorité afin de

Montreuil, the housing situation and public supply seems to be generally still quite efficient, especially if compared with the case of Quarto Oggiaro in Milan.

permettre la construction de logements sur n'importe quel terrain, quelle que soit son utilisation antérieure. Il est également envisagé d'abandonner la logique traditionnelle du coefficient d'occupation des sols (COS) au profit d'une logique volumétrique liée à la hauteur et à l'emprise au sol. Enfin, la Municipalité souhaite moduler la hauteur des constructions en fonction de la proximité des transports en commun 'lourds' (métro, tramway)».

Annex to chapter 6

Households and families in Milano Quarto Oggiaro and the Haut Montreuil: presentation of data

MILANO QUARTO OGGIARO

Source: Comune di Milano - Settore Statistica e S.I.T. Registry Office (Dati Anagrafici 31/12/2009)

Household typology QUARTO OGGIARO	N	%
Single	5.845	39%
Couples without children	2.277	15%
Unmarried couple without children	199	1,5%
Married couples with at least one minor child	1.986	13,5%
Married couples with children (more than 18 years old)	1.419	10%
Unmarried couple with children	443	3%
Single parent family (at least a minor child)	753	5%
Single parent family (all children 18 or more)	1.364	9,5%
Unmarried families (Tot.)	107	0,7%
Other typologies	416	3%
Total	14.809	100%

Household typology in MILANO (all)	N	%
Single	330.192	49%
Couples without children	105.001	16%
Couples with children	137.661	20%
Single parent family	63.699	9%
Other	37.120	6%
Total	673.673	100%

NIL	Families with minor children						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
76 – QUARTO OGGIARO	56% 1.744	34% 1.046	8% 245	2% 59	- 12	- 2	3.108

NEWBORN CHILDRENTerritory: Nuclei Identità Locale (NIL) -
Quarto Oggiaro (76)**2009**

Legitimate	N.	135
	%	51,5
Natural	N.	127
	%	48,5
Total	N.	262
	%	100

Number of members per household

(NIL) - Quarto Oggiaro (76)

Number of members		N
1	40%	5.952
2	28%	4.116
3	16%	2.427
4	11%	1.690
5 and more	5%	624
Total	100%	14.809

Foreign origin households (NIL) - Quarto Oggiaro (76)	Comune di Milano – Settore Statistica and S.I.T
Nationality (ref. person)	N
Albania	63
China	409
Ecuador	150
Egypt	324
El Salvador	39
Eritrea	36
Philipines	166
Marocco	160
Pakistan	34
Romania	118
Senegal	123
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	152
Ukraine	65

Others (rest of the world)	488
Total	2.327
	16%

Source: Report Urban PIC II 2008

Distribution of families having experience economic difficulties (typology)

Tabella 23 - Distribuzione percentuale delle famiglie che hanno avuto difficoltà economiche ad arrivare a fine mese per tipologia familiare; Indagine 2008

		Nell'ultimo anno la Sua famiglia ha trovato almeno una volta difficoltà economiche ad arrivare a fine mese?			% di famiglie indebitate
		Si	No	Totale	
Tipologia familiare rilevata	Persona sola con meno di 65 anni	39,9	60,1	100,0	18,1
	Persona sola con 65 anni e più	48,1	51,9	100,0	3,3
	Coppie sposate senza figli con p.r. con meno di 65 anni (solo coppia)	33,3	66,7	100,0	21,0
	Coppie sposate senza figli con p.r. con 65 anni e più (solo coppia)	17,4	82,6	100,0	4,9
	Coppie sposate con figli tutti >15 anni (solo coppia e uno o più figli)	42,2	57,8	100,0	32,3
	Coppie sposate con figli con almeno un figlio di età inferiore a 16 anni (solo coppia e uno o più figli)	47,2	52,8	100,0	47,6
	Monogenitore (p. r. e solo uno o più figli)	55,9	44,1	100,0	20,4
	Altra tipologia	49,3	50,7	100,0	28,8
	Famiglie straniere	66,0	34,0	100,0	32,1
Totale	40,9	59,1	100,0	21,5	

Source: Report Urban Pic II 2008

Working Population

Self employed	11.7%
Workers	33.8%
Employees	45.2%
High Qualification	4.2%
Other	5.1%
Total	100%

HAUT MONTREUIL (Census tracks: Paul Signac Murs à Peches, Ramenas Fabien Lagrange, Branly Boissiere)

Census Data 2006

Household typology	N	%
Single	3789	38%
Household with Family	6147	62%
Total	9936	100%

Family typology	N	%
Couples with children	2,988	47%
Couples without children	1890	31%
Single parent family	1269	22%
Total	6147	100%

Families with children (under 25 years old)	N	%
0 children	2316	38%
1 children	1673	27%
2 children	1329	22%
3 children	554	9%
4 children and more	274	4%

Household with ref. person working in/as Census Data 2006	N	%
Agriculture	0	
Trade, Manager (comm.. et chef d'entreprise)	406	4%
Intellectual professions (Cadre prof. intel. Sup)	1407	14%
Intermediate (Profession intermediaire)	1738	17%
Employee (Employé)	1650	17%
Worker (Ouvrier)	1682	17%
Pension (Retraité)	2397	24%
Other	350	7%

Conclusions

One of the questions which has to varying degrees run through this entire research concerns the nature of these neighbourhood typologies in France and Italy, and in particular those of the Haute Montreuil and Quarto Oggiaro.

The question is, are there “ghettos” in France and Italy? And, even more to our purpose, could these two areas be considered “*ghettos*”?

In part, we already answered this question in the introduction to the research, where we argued, among our hypotheses, that Italy and France, while showing certain differences, in general present characteristics differentiating both, for example, from the American scenario.

In fact, US peripheral neighbourhoods are traditionally represented as “*ghettos*”, becoming embodiment of the term, as emerges from the contribution offered by the Chicago School.

In Italy the matter has not been very highly institutionalized, while in France the social sciences, politics and the media have been stewing over it for at least twenty years and in particular subsequent to the events of 2005.

As we have extensively observed, the term ghetto is generally used to evoke the spatial dimension of poverty and social disadvantage at the local level, with all the consequences affecting people’s lives, opportunities, expectations and social relations.

Even if our two neighborhood cases are not among the most segregated, in the case of France in particular this phenomenon has reached considerable proportions and cannot be ignored. In the social sciences the argument, in some cases placing excessive emphasis on the “*ghetto*” dimension, is based on two main hypothesis.

On the one hand, the institutional mechanisms governing access to housing are sometimes accused of “barring” the weakest part of the population and immigrants to housing projects, while, on the other hand, as we have also shown through our empirical analysis, isolation can induce the resident population towards specific ways of life and behaviours, which, through the values they transmit and due to the limitation of the resources available, may in certain conditions prove obstacles to their social integration.

Returning to the first hypothesis, these institutional mechanisms of residential segregation may also be at work in the case of Italy, but in general they seem to be less of an issue and are less systematic than in France. However, this could also depend on the fact that this phenomenon is much less studied in Italy, where the research is quite rare, especially for some urban contexts and cities, being the research mainly focused on the major Italian cities.

As we have seen throughout our research, among the elements exerting an influence on the experiences and trajectories of young people we have in all cases paid prime attention to the institutional settings and their mechanisms, taking into account the main differences between the two countries - Italy and France - and the local levels – Milan Quarto Oggiaro and the Haut Montreuil.

In Italy, the local dimension of segregation seems to be mobilized for specific cases, such as the debate on via Padova in Milan, rather than at the general level, as is by contrast more the case in France.

Other Italian contexts, such as for instance our neighborhood of Quarto Oggiaro, while presenting clear and significant cases of (micro) segregation (Zayczick 2005; Vitale Torre 2010), are usually examined less in simple terms of segregation and are more considered for other correlated phenomena such as crime.

Thus we find authorities focusing far more on the fight against crime, for instance, dedicating greater attention to repressive methods than to the social problems and issues of the neighborhood. In fact, as argued in the third chapter dedicated to the neighborhood, unlike Italy, France developed, despite all the possible limitations, specific territorial interventions and tools for the implementation of numerous local policies within the framework of the *politique de la ville*.

The isolation of these neighborhoods exists and can be determined by a concentration of immigrants and working-class population in areas characterized by negative indicators (high unemployment, school dropout rates, criminality, etc.).

For example, Marchal and Stébé (2010) argue that the persistence of segregation shows that housing projects are not “airlocks for adapting to society” (2010 p. 44), for the gradual integration of immigrants, but “ghettos” in which the inhabitants are confined.

As far as our two cases are concerned, we can embrace this conception only in part. In fact, the level of residential segregation, despite some specific areas such as via Pascarella in Quarto Oggiaro and *cité* Leo Lagrange or Amitié in the Haute Montreuil, is not so high.

More in general, segregation in France and (especially) Italy remains relatively moderate and bears no comparison to the situation in the US (Wacquant 2006; Préteceille 2006 and 2009; Gilbert 2011). In Quarto Oggiaro, with the exception of certain areas showing micro-concentration of phenomena such as social disadvantage, high crime rates and unemployment, we generally registered a certain degree of social mix. It must be pointed out, however, that with reference to this neighborhood, when we talk about social mix, we generally mean relations between the working class and lower middle class but also, there is a difference between households or individuals who are connected to crime and those who are not. As pointed out in the foregoing chapters – although we do not claim

that social class ceases to be a significant variable –the attitude towards criminality is decisive: the fact of being to a certain extent involved with crime or completely estranged from it.

In the Haut Montreuil the racial-ethnic concentration is much more evident than in Italy.

As we found with our interviews, most of the young people we met were French citizens from households of immigrant origin (in most cases from Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa), which gave this neighborhood a certain homogeneity.

However, in terms of social class the blocks, the so-called *cités*, are not much more segregated than Quarto Oggiaro. In fact, in both neighborhoods the middle class population living in these areas resides in contexts other than the social housing projects. In the Haut Montreuil they usually live in *pavillons*, small independent houses around but completely apart from and independent of the blocks. In Quarto Oggiaro this differentiation seems to be less clear-cut: the (lower) middle class population usually lives in private flats and in particular in the newly built areas of Euro Milano, Largo Boccioni, via Arsia, via Cogne. As we have seen, the neighborhood of Quarto Oggiaro is clearly divided into two distinct areas: the east side, with via Pascarella, Capuana, via Lopez considered as the most social vulnerable and “dangerous” part of the neighborhood, and the west side, which is short more residential.

Apart from certain blocks and micro areas, considered exceptions, despite their great significance from both the concrete spatial and symbolic point of view, the two neighborhoods of Quarto Oggiaro and the Haut Montreuil cannot be considered areas of total degradation. In fact, in most cases, despite various objective problems, the buildings are generally decent and often undergo maintenance and restructuring.

However, a conclusion we wish to stress in this work is that, while the level of segregation is not so high as to justify use of the term *ghetto*, it is not simply spatial and physical segregation that seem to count. Even more, as also noted in the empirical chapters and in particular in the one dedicated to the neighborhood, this segregation often becomes a daily segregation, a sort of normalized experience. Nor does it create much conflict within or outside the neighborhoods, in particular in Milan, while things can be more complicated in the French neighborhood, as we have seen, due to the ethno-racial characterization.

However, it is a form of segregation that is becoming increasingly social, dividing the young working-class people, and in particular those with more social disadvantaged profiles, from the others in terms of concrete realities and daily life, in terms of expectations and opportunities. In the specific case of Quarto Oggiaro, there is also a distance between young people, who are to a certain extent closer to the criminal and deviant subculture - due to family origin but also role models/peer effects - and those who are completely external to this world.

As in the empirical analysis, this general situation of daily and normalized social segregation leads to reinforcement of the differences, driving these young people towards attitudes of self-segregation, as observed in chapters three (neighborhood) and five (school).

There are two major factors behind this self-segregating behavior. First of all, it is connected to certain conditions of material deprivation, such as the lack of resources available to get out of the neighborhood, but also to reduced public transport mobility. The latter factor seems to be much more the case for the Haut Montreuil, due to the existing fracture - also in terms of public transportation facilities - between the Haut and Bas Montreuil, the latter on the other hand being connected through the underground to Paris city center.

Moreover, we noticed how this behavior seems to be largely determined by the emotional role played by the neighborhood. In fact, the neighborhood often stands as a place where young people feel safe, in a positive but also negative way. They may feel safe from external discrimination, as seems to be more the case of the Haut Montreuil, but they also remain there, because they perceive the neighborhood as their own territory – an area where they think they are in control and where they believe they have “power”, although this power very often appears rather less than the image they try to form of themselves when it comes to concrete terms.

To a certain extent, we could argue that this created self-perception of their power is a reaction and response to the concrete situation of social disadvantage of their family, their personal school failure and experiences of unemployment.

Such, for instance, seems to be the case of Quarto Oggiaro, where, despite a relatively good availability of public transport, which should encourage mobility, a large part of the young people in the neighborhood remain, so to say, “entrapped” in it, while others, such as the middle class components, have more resources to study and practice other activities, such as sports, outside the neighborhood.

Having considered the hypothesis of segregation and having verified its presence in the terms described, we can now concentrate on what has also been the focus of our research, namely the hypothesis that poor neighborhoods have important effects on the outcomes and opportunities of individuals, and in particular of young people. In fact, the general assumption of the neighbourhood effects theory is that neighbourhoods and the forms they take have a direct influence on the life and behaviour of residents. They are able to structure opportunities and capabilities

As we have also shown through our empirical analysis, isolation (in the terms described above) can induce the resident population towards specific ways of life and behaviours, which, through the values they transmit and due to the limitation of the resources available, may in certain conditions prove obstacles to their social integration.

As in the sociological literature, we could also define these specific ways of life and values as a culture of isolation or, to apply a more popular term, a culture of poverty.

However, as already argued, this paradigm can be accepted only if we view it as a consequence and product of isolation and not as its main cause.

It is extremely important to note that in the use of this conceptualization we have consistently taken pains not to present a merely negative characterization of neighborhood effects.

Indeed, as observed in the whole research, neighborhood effects can be both positive and negative, and focusing simply on its negative effects would have been practically tantamount to considering these areas as pure and simple *ghettos*, which is not the case.

For example, some scholars (Gilbert 2011) have accused Lapeyronnie (2008) of describing the “counter-world” of the projects as a consequence of the structural process of banishment and isolation. They contested what they held to be his definition of the neighborhood as a “social order” ruled by street culture, violence, underground economy and male dominance. In doing so, these scholars criticized his approach for generalizing the social relations of the entire population of these neighborhoods.

In our research, we found much of the evidence previously underlined by Lapeyronnie (2008). However, we also concentrated on other aspects, including many positive cases of sociability, formal and informal associations, etc.

As pointed out in the introduction, we interviewed both young people from socially disadvantaged contexts and others enjoying better situations.

In doing this, we have been able to analyze better the mechanisms of reproduction of poverty and social disadvantage through comparison of positive and negative trajectories and experiences.

However, unlike other investigations, such as those accused of presenting an excessively pessimistic picture of these neighborhoods, reiterating the image of the *ghetto*, which is not completely applicable to the French and Italian case, our research did not aim to provide a neighborhood monographic study but, rather, the objective was to analyze the specific mechanisms of reproduction of poverty and social disadvantage for the specific target of young people.

This is why, in our analysis we could not neglect and in some cases insisted on certain negative phenomena occurring in the two neighborhoods. Of course, in doing so we have also set out to include some positive elements, such as the high level of sociability to be seen in both neighborhoods – all positive examples of associations and spontaneous local social capital.

As Bacqué and Fol pointed out (2006), various studies conducted in the US carry no suggestion that inner-city inhabitants’ social capital has a negative effect on occupational integration. In fact, as

underlined by these scholars, the negative conception of neighborhood effects would obscure the many resources that local ties may offer the working class population (Retière 1994; Renahy 2005). However, in our analysis we presented the problem in different terms. We did not argue that local social capital has a negative effect on integration but, rather, we remarked that people whose social relations are limited to the neighborhood have, as a result, a very a restricted social capital to count on compared, for example, with those individuals having less localized social relations and social capital. In fact, social capital in poor and socially disadvantaged local contexts may prove limited and generally of a lower quality, offering fewer opportunities to the people.

Another important issue of neighborhood effects concerns subculture, and here again we find some problematic elements. Basically, the idea is that the difficulties experienced in particular by young people in the process of integration are connected to the lack of positive local models of success with which they can identify. Some critics of this approach has accused it of proposing once again the concept of the *ghetto* through these mechanisms, arguing that these neighborhoods cannot have positive role models and posit a subculture leading people in these neighborhoods to replicate their own social exclusion.

In our opinion, although we cannot ignore the existence of positive role models in the neighborhoods and do not consider inhabitants only for their negative characteristics and the deficiencies limiting their social integration, we should take into consideration all local social relations, both negative and positive. In fact, positive “contamination” can be decisive in the learning and socialization process through peer effects and role models, spreading some behaviours and attitudes which are universally accepted by society as a whole. Similarly, less accepted and less universal models may also work as an important mechanism of reproduction of social disadvantage. As we have had occasion to observe more than once in this research, when looking for neighborhood effects we should focus on a specific target. The people most likely to suffer neighbourhood effects are those individuals whose lives are very much limited to the resident neighbourhood, such as adolescents and young people, and in particular those with socially disadvantaged profiles, representing the target of this study.

As the literature attests, scholars no longer concentrate on defining the existence or inexistence of neighbourhood effects in general. Actually, there are certain thresholds to neighbourhood effects (Crane 1991) implying the existence of critical levels, implying that the neighbourhood effect is appreciably more significant in difficult neighbourhoods whose characteristics exceed a certain threshold, and for a particular target of population.

For all these reasons, the precise and pure nature of structural elements influencing individual outcomes remains to some extent unclear (Hogan et Kitawaga, 1985; Crane, 1991; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Clampet-Lunquist, 1998), as also the problem of the exact spatial scale to which the NE may act (Overman, 2002).

These are two limits that we also came up against here and there during our empirical research, including the precise attribution of role of the family and social background, which we considered in some cases in doubt.

However, we believe that despite a certain “physiological” level of contradiction, due to the very complex nature of these phenomena, a number of important elements have correctly been considered in our analysis.

In accordance with the literature, we decided that the real issue to be addressed with our research question was not whether the neighbourhood effect exists or not, but rather to define in which particular contexts and for which individuals it is significant. To do so, we concentrated our attention on the processes and mechanisms through which neighbourhood effects act.

Of course, as pointed out above, some of the effects attributed to the neighbourhood could actually have more to do with family characteristics (income, education, employment, family structure); in fact, the *bias* between the real effect of the neighbourhood and the role of the family is probably the biggest problem involved in neighbourhood effects studies.

However, the role of the neighbourhood is unquestionable and acts, as we have seen, through various different mechanisms, which also depend to a certain extent on the basic institutional conditions, acting as a sort of filter for these effects.

In fact, as pointed out in the introduction, we cannot disregard the importance of each different institutional frame which shapes the effects but which, first of all, acts directly or indirectly on the neighbourhoods conditions. An example could be the high proportion of criminality in Quarto Oggiaro or the fact that there is an overwhelming majority of young people of immigrant origin in the Haut Montreuil.

We can look at neighbourhood effects as a circumstance or, better, as a series of circumstances, actualizing some potential phenomena. To a certain extent, we could also define the neighbourhood as a sort of amplification effect, augmenting certain positive or negative conditions which are already potential in the individual.

In fact, as pointed out in the introduction, from the very outset we have focused our attention on the dynamic dimension (Hill 1981; Duncan 1984; Walker 1994; Leibfried 1999), observing all the most significant biographical events that may have led, at both the individual and family levels, towards trajectories of social disadvantage and poverty. In doing so we have sought to track down in various

different trajectories certain decisive mechanisms, on the one hand driving some individuals towards accumulation of negative effects and handicaps and, on the other hand, leading others to accumulate advantages.

Analysing these dynamic processes that, as we have seen, depend crucially on family and individual characteristics, we decided to focus on the mechanisms in which space plays a significant part.

This was no easy task, and various findings and events were by no means easy to interpret, but we believe that the description and analysis of precise processes and mechanisms offered here should contribute to achieving a deeper focus on cultural, normative and collective action-perspectives, attributing significance to the way residents form their commitment to places and how place in turn affects in various ways their behaviours and outcomes (Sampson et al. 2002).

At this stage let us take some examples, albeit only partial. The first, as mentioned at the beginning of this conclusive chapter, concerns the type of segregation we found in both our neighbourhoods. In fact, although the level of segregation is not so high as to justify, for example, the use of the term *ghetto*, which would be inappropriate for these contexts, we must nevertheless point out that, when we talk about segregation in these contexts, we are not simply referring to spatial and physical segregation. In fact, this segregation often becomes a social routine segregation, which is in most cases even tacit, especially in Quarto Oggiaro, where immigration, although present, does not probably represent a major problem.

However, this segregation has important consequences in the daily life of young people, in their educational, working and social careers (included experience of crime), especially for those with more socially disadvantaged profiles, experiencing unemployment, educational failure and coming from vulnerable family situations.

Our second observation, which is connected to the previous one, refers to the phenomenon of self-segregation, which depends both on a lack of material resources to move out of the neighborhood and on the more protective role played by the residential area. In fact, especially in the French context the neighborhood dimension may represent a place where young people feel safe from discrimination, where the police, for example, having closer acquaintance with them, do not stop them on any street corner, as often happens when they go to Paris, for example.

In the case of Quarto Oggiaro, as argued above, this characterization of the neighborhood as a protective place, is only in part true. This is probably due to the lesser ethno-racial characterization of these young people, but it also depends more on the “*gang*” dimension, which looms larger in Quarto Oggiaro and drives the population to perceive the neighborhood as their own territory and therefore, as the only place worth staying in.

Both mechanisms clearly create a sort of “entrapment”, which can have negative consequences on the social, personal and working development of these particular young people – the “Quarto Oggiarese Doc”, as they are called by the other inhabitants of the neighborhood.

When for various reasons, people are “segregated” and “entrapped”, they tend to develop a particular way of life, behaviors and reference. This is what we called “toolkit” or “repertoire” (Swidler 1986, 2001; Lamont and Small 2008) or more in general culture, defined as a complex rule-like structure, becoming a resource to be mobilized when needed.

In particular, we observed how language and more in general communication, including the way of dressing, walking and gestures, can become significant elements representing a conjunction between space and the individual.

In fact, all these elements have strong spatial reference but at the same time are assimilated by individuals. As we have seen, all these elements can create a positive attachment to the neighbourhood, reinforcing the relationship towards it and towards other people, in the creation of a strong group dimension – a community of experiences, which is particularly felt in the Haut Montreuil, where the group becomes to a certain extent an extension of the family, while in Quarto Oggiaro it takes more the form of a gang, based on territorial control.

Returning to the important aspect of communication, we observed how space characterizes language in both contexts: in the Haut Montreuil, through the development of a real code, most of the words originally derived from gypsy language, and in Quarto Oggiaro with a version of Italian contaminated by Southern Italian dialects.

However, in general, we ascertained that this phenomenon represents more of an issue in the case of the Haut Montreuil, due for example to the marked ethno-racial characterization and also to what has traditionally been described as the tendency towards distinction, characterizing French society.

«Tandis que les français adeptes de l'exclusion culturelle marquent une très grande distance entre eux et “le français moyen”, les américains ont tendance à puiser dans une large gamme des répertoires culturels intégrant des éléments directement issues de la culture commune» (Lamont 1995, p.126).

As we argued, this self representation is very much based on the neighborhood dimension, in itself already representing a form of neighborhood effect.

However, it is to be noted that this representation does not proceed in one direction only, since it is not completely and always positively assumed by the individual. Very often, depending on age, a certain contradiction emerges between attraction to and rejection of the neighborhood dimension.

In fact, the individual himself quite often becomes conscious of certain “negative” mechanisms influencing his/her future development process, and for this reason he/she seeks to implement, whether consciously or unconsciously, certain exit strategies. Our French interviewees made frequent use of a very significant expression, “*s'en sortir*”, which literally means to get oneself out.

However, this mechanism, which is itself also a neighborhood effect, shows an internal distinction in the degree and level of such dynamics depending on individual experiences (level of neighborhood segregation, working condition, educational level and social background).

Another decisive element in this perspective is represented by school, which is considered by the neighborhood effects literature, as one of the most decisive and strong “institutional mechanism” of the neighborhood’s influence on young people. As the neighborhood population conditions the local school populations, schools are places where young people come into contact with neighborhood peers and their parents. Of course, as we have pointed out in the dedicated chapters, many studies have also documented important relationships between neighborhood characteristics, educational supply, parental school choice strategies and actions undertaken by school directors and teachers (Oberti 2007; Lupton 2004; Duru-Bellat and Van Zanten 2006).

All these issues are clearly influenced by the social characteristics of the context in which schools are embedded. In particular, the school population element is highly decisive in neighborhood effect theories, conceptualizing school as that primarily institutional mechanism. In fact, it involves all the specific neighborhood effects, such as the already mentioned peer effects and role models.

The literature questions whether schools are mechanisms through which neighborhood conditions can indirectly influence young people’s outcomes (Ellen and Turner, 1997; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

As also emerged from our analysis, the standpoint of neighborhood research on children and young people, the connections between neighborhood and school factors seem to be among the most important in claiming that neighborhoods have an effect on young people’s development. This is also one of the most important results we may deduce from our empirical analysis.

Of course, as we have seen, the role of the family and social background is extremely important, in particular for higher education, since some households can, better than others, implement strategies to avoid the neighborhood’s negative influence through school and education but also providing directly to their children, the information and support that young people from socially disadvantaged families are deprived of. In doing so, the more advantaged families manage to fill the potential gaps in their children’s education, which are also determined by the local context.

Educational experiences can therefore vary greatly. Depending on the school and sometimes also on the class they attended, students are likely to have had different experiences and their educational attainment can vary significantly in quality and performance. In this perspective, we can consider how all these variables can be decisive in educational careers.

School institutions generally claim that the distribution of students is casual. However, as we have seen, this is not the case. Both in France and Italy there is evidence contradicting this position

(Giry-Coissart and Niel 1997; Duru-Bellat and Mingat 1997; Checchi 2010), and we also underlined some of these mechanisms through our empirical analysis. This differentiation of classes may come about through different mechanisms. First of all, teachers control and decide which should be the contents and how to use them. Proposing the “adequate” level of difficulty for the class, teachers conform to this type of silent principle, dividing students by level. In this way, depending on the target and typology of students, they also adapt their teaching methods. Thus the attitudes and behaviours of students are heavily conditioned and the initial differences increase yet more. This is a typical example of how neighbourhood effects can act along the pathway of school, determining the educational career and preparation of an individual.

Other elements concerning school as a mechanism of transmission and peer effects include violence and perturbation, which are very important in analysis of the atmosphere obtaining in an educational environment, in particular in peripheral areas. These phenomena of violence and perturbation have important consequences on young people’s education and careers, since they can be decisive obstacles in the learning and transmission process. The phenomenon seems to be influenced in particular by variables such as teachers’ mobility and turnover, educational segregation and the socially homogeneous profile of schools. All these specific mechanisms seem to affect young people in both contexts. However, as we extensively observed in the chapter dedicated to the different institutional educational models, although both the French and the Italian system present a medium level of stratification, in Italy a first differentiation comes in only on starting secondary high school, while in France it starts at collège. In fact, families “choose”, to a certain extent, and especially those of a certain social background, to send their children to classes with particular specializations: Latin, German, Cham¹.

A major difference between France and Italy also lies in the orientation process, which is less formal and institutionalised in Italy, where students receive suggestions from teachers but are in the end formally free to choose any school. The literature on the Italian system argues that due to scant differentiation in the levels of competence of schools, the orientation seems to be less focused on the educational performance and results of the students but other elements such as social background and household characteristics can have a greater influence (Checchi and Flabbi, 2006). In France, high school is more stratified and differentiated in the levels of competence provided to students. However, as in the case of Italy social background still retains a decisive role in the orientation process.

¹ Programme d’enseignement des classes à horaires aménagés musicales (cham)

Nevertheless, an important difference between France and Italy concerns the place where education is received. For example, while in Italy the final exam mark and the school typology seem to count more, in France, there is also an important hierarchy in terms of place, not only in the case of university but also for high school.

For example, access to certain historical high schools of Paris considered particularly prestigious is very often in practice denied to students from, for example, a peripheral *collège*. Therefore, passing through the stigmatization of the place, we could say that in this specific perspective, the institutional mechanism of school seems to be stronger in the French than in the Italian context. In France, the area where education is received becomes itself a concrete factor in evaluation. However, of course, as we noted the context of education has concrete consequences on students future careers, in the Haut Montreuil as in Quarto Oggiaro.

To conclude with school and education, we could say that this is a typical phenomenon requiring a double level of analysis with twofold configuration at the national and also urban and neighbourhood level (Moulaert, 1995; Madanipour, Cars and Allen, 1998), once again accounting for the role of school as an important institutional mechanism.

As argued in the introduction, «Place as “social space” crystallizes the particularity of exclusion processes, social welfare regimes, local policy, and so on, but also of local demography, network dynamics, school and labour market dynamics. Place becomes a multidimensional exclusion and integration process by itself: as a vortex of social forces, it rejects or accepts, integrates or repulses, deteriorates or upgrades its inhabitants, and so on» (Moulaert, Morlicchio and Cavola, 2008 p.150). Therefore, even if the neighbourhood effect is not universal and to a certain extent can also be associated with other contextual variables, such as the family for example, we cannot but reaffirm its existence and functioning, contributing to the reproduction of phenomena such as poverty, social disadvantage and exclusion.

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