



GEITONIES Conference, *Generating tolerance and social cohesion*, 28-29 April 2011

Concordia Discors. Understanding conflict and integration in European neighbourhoods

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Concordia Discors is a project, funded by the EU Integration Fund, which is aimed at investigating the dynamics of integration through the analysis of intergroup relations at neighbourhood level in five European cities: Torino, Barcelona, Nuremberg, London and Budapest. It has both scientific and practical goals, which are pursued through the application of a variety of tools, the combination of which is one of the most challenging and innovative features of the project.

The explanation of the main conceptual and methodological instruments is therefore the focus of this paper. Firstly, we clarify the theoretical assumptions of the project. We then we illustrate the concepts and theories that feed Concordia Discors through a brief literature review. Finally, we describe the mixed methodology we are using which combines statistical analysis on the socio-economic context, ethnographic fieldwork, analysis of local policies and local media and the production of user-friendly tools conceived for making the project “usable” by local actors who deal with integration issues.

1. Objects and theoretical assumptions of the project

The object of the project, which is funded by the European Integration Fund, is to investigate mechanisms driving integration in everyday life, starting from the idea that conflict and cooperation can coexist. That is the reason why the project is called “Concordia discors”, which is an expression coming from one of Latin poet Horace’s epistles and becomes paradigmatic of a dynamic state of “discordant harmony”. The traditional view that equates cooperation and conflict with positive and negative outcomes of intergroup relations appears in fact an oversimplification: conflict and cooperation are not mutually exclusive and can both be part of integration dynamics. They may be seen as developmental processes within which conflict can have a positive role since it allows the expression of minorities’ views and may increase the diversity of ideas and perspectives leading to more creative solutions to problems (Dovidio, Saguy and Shnabel 2009; King at al 2009) and to a more cohesive society.



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Obviously, also indifference is an option, a relevant mode of coexistence. Once again, the value of indifference in terms of integration cannot be determined *a priori* and identified with the denial of minorities' cultural specificities. Lofland (1989), for instance, states that "civility towards diversity" does not necessarily imply a specific appreciation of diversity, but it can be translated into treating people universally the same despite diversities, whereas Siebel (2011) points out that modern societies are not only integrated by homogeneity, but by not taking notice of differences.

Another key assumption of the project is that "place matters". We are interested, on the one hand, in understanding the role of immigration in urban changes as it is perceived by the resident population; on the other hand, we are focusing on the influence of diverse urban contexts on intergroup relations and integration. These are the reasons why we have chosen to focus research on the neighbourhood level. Differences are indeed not only among cities, but also within cities, which appear increasingly fragmented, made up of areas which differ for urban spaces, economic structures, urban resources, social features etc. As a consequence, a peripheral social housing settlement and an inner re-gentrified neighbourhood of the same city may have more features and dynamics in common with similar areas of other cities than between them. The growing awareness of this urban internal heterogeneity has contributed to a recent increase in studies which investigate integration looking at intergroup relations and interactions within urban neighbourhoods (Ray, Hudson and Phillips 2008; Tyler and Jensen 2009; Jayaweera and Coudhury 2008; Joseph Fonseca 2007; Wessendorf 2010). Concordia Discors aims at contributing to this growing field of research.

A third assumption concerns the view of intergroup relations. We have adopted a boundary-making perspective, according to which ethnic distinctions have a relational nature. They indeed result from a two way process: a self identification, on the one hand, and a social categorisation by others, on the other (Barth 1969; Jenkins 1997; Wimmer 2007). Of course, the two processes may not coincide. Furthermore, identification processes are not evenly shared: some members are more enthusiastic than others and the reasons for identifying with the group are usually different (Banton 2009; Dovidio, Saguy and Shnabel 2009). It is thus evident that ethnic distinctions do not coincide with objective cultural differences but they are referred to how actors perceive differences. They may (or may not) crosscut groups of shared culture or nationality. Therefore, our units of observation are individuals and organised groups, without pre-clustering them into ethnic groups



since the existence and the configuration of such groups will rather be part of the research findings (Brubaker 2004; Banton 2009; Wimmer 2007).

Given the boundary-making approach, we have chosen to focus the attention on two main levels:

- Attitudes and representations
- Behaviours and practices

On the one hand, we inquire what is the relevance of ethnic elements in the boundary-making processes, what groups are regarded as responsible for neighbourhood deterioration and/or for its improvements and what are the positions (self-)assigned to immigrants within these groups.

On the other hand, we look at behaviours and relations developed between groups within the neighbourhoods. Do behaviours crosscut perceived groups? Do perceptions and everyday practices change in parallel or can they move even along divergent directions so that negative representations towards other groups persist despite the development of collaborative intergroup relations?

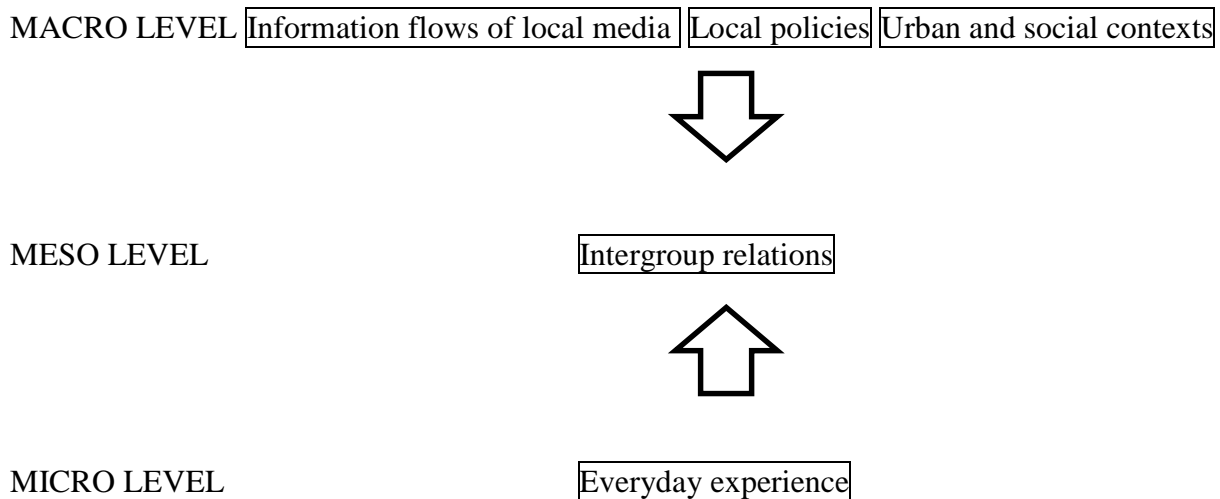
The answers to these questions will be situationally defined. As various scholars suggest (Allport 1954; Wimmer 2004; Kissler and Eckert 1990; Baumann 1996; Lamont 2000; Lance and Dronkers 2009), inter-group representations and behaviours do not develop according to general rules but they vary according to the local context, socio-economic status, time, etc. Concordia Discors aims at investigating some of these determinants, in order to provide context-specific findings. We then focus on the neighbourhood specificities, nonetheless adopting a wide perspective and taking into account factors belonging both to the macro and micro levels. In other words, we study a little piece of society in details. In particular, we intend to analyse the role played in shaping intergroup relations by:

- Neighbourhoods as urban and social context;
- Everyday experience;
- Information and representation flows of local media concerning the target neighbourhoods;
- Local policies producing their effects on the target neighbourhoods, including political/electoral communication strategies.

These different factors are supposed to drive intergroup relations both from below and from above by influencing the symbolic stakes and (material and immaterial) valued resources on the base of which intergroup representations and behaviours are usually organised.



Figure 1 – The levels of analysis



To sum up, we intend to carry out a “thick analysis”, which is not aimed at singling out the “crucial factor” which makes integration work *ceteris paribus*, but at investigating the combinations of conditions and synergies among determinants which foster or hinder integration in everyday life at local level.

2. The theoretical and methodological tools provided by the literature

2.1 Concepts: defining intergroup relations

From the standpoint of a theoretical framework, it is generally good practice to begin any study of the relations between groups of immigrants and native populations by first defining the conceptual parameters of reference. International literature in this area commonly agrees in talking of relations between “ingroups” and “outgroups”, “insiders” and “outsiders”, or “majority groups” and “minority groups”. “Ingroups”, “insiders”, as well as “majority group” are categories made up of people who see themselves as the direct descendants of the population that allowed for the constitution of the national society which they are now part of. In this regard, the contribution of Max Weber still remains fundamental: the primary condition on which the definition of “majority group” is based, is a subjectively-held belief in a common descent (Weber 1971, or. 1921). The



consequent socio-political dynamics that follow on this pre-condition serve to determine: a) who is perceived as having the right to actively participate in the life of the national society, and to what extent; b) who is limited to enjoy a merely passive participation; c) and finally, who has no right to enter it and is confined to remain an outside spectator. The “majority group” draws its legitimacy from the instruments available to it – whether demographic, political, economic, etc. – means which allow it to qualify the prerogatives and privileges which it boasts an exclusive right of use (Blumer 1958). This same privileged status allows it to exercise a determining role in the process of defining the social status of “minority groups” (Guillaumin 1972).

At this point, the problem lies in qualifying relations between the “majority” and “minority” groups. The international literature is rife with references to such terms as *interethnic relations* (Rex, Mason 1986; Coenders, Gijsberts, Sheepers 2002) and *interracial relations* (Hallinan, Maureen 1989; Quillian 1995; Quillian, Campbell 2003). Having said this, it should be underlined that the objective of the Concordia Discors project does not lie in the study of ethnic or racial characteristics of group relations. Rather, the project focuses on the nature of interactions, in an attempt to highlight the variables that contribute to conflicting or cooperative relations between the majority population and minority groups. For this reason, it is preferable to adopt the more neutral expression *intergroup relations*.

The term *intergroup relations* refers to the interactive process between majority group and minority groups which involves using particular stereotypes, and aims to define the specific intergroup borders. Such stereotypes have an eminently social origin and contribute to determining the level of conflict or cooperation between the groups: although the term is now a little outdated, it could also be defined as the *level of social distance*. In this sense, it’s clear that the “Other” is the product of a meticulous process of social construction. This is also why, for the intents and purposes of this study, a more neutral starting point has been chosen and, only later, on the basis of the material collected, may the “Other” become the object of some ethnic qualification. It would thus be risky to assume that ethnic groups and ethnic borders are notions that can be taken for granted. Intergroup relations are therefore the result of a continuous process of dichotomization between the majority and minority groups (Poutignat, Streiff-Fénart 1996, 2008).

Parallel to this aspect is the issue of diversity. In the same way as for the “ethnic” category, so cultural diversity cannot be presumed to be the sole element that sparks conflict or fosters cooperation between groups. Similarly to ethnic groups, cultural diversity is anything but an objective data. Cultural diversity can become the cause of tension only insofar as it becomes the target of particular moral or political value judgments (Goffmann 1963; Memmi 1982, 1994). The



basic objective of every study of intergroup relations is the investigation of the social mechanisms through which the diversity that characterizes certain groups becomes the object of either positive or negative value judgments. Such judgments can generate cooperative or conflicting behaviors. However, the concept of diversity must not be considered in the strict sense of cultural diversity alone, but rather in its much broader definition, which includes religious, linguistic, gender, economic diversity, etc.

According to Wimmer, “ethnic groups are seen as the result of a reversible social process of boundary making, rather than as given component parts of the social world” (Wimmer 2007, p. 13). Intergroup boundaries thus arise as the result of a meeting of social stereotypes that are continually constructed and reconstructed in the endless dialectic between majority and minority groups. The social organization between groups is structured within this symbolic communication, and it is here that the nature of their relationship is defined (cooperative or conflicting). An example of this drawn from the recent debate on immigration can be found in the “Rom issue” as it unfolded in Italy in 2009 and in France in 2010. In both countries, the violent political rhetoric against this community resulted in the production of a process of essentialisation and naturalization of Roms. This process took place according to the logic of racialisation (De Rudder 2000; Bonilla Silva 1997, 2004). The Rom community then appeared as naturally different in the eyes of the general public and, for this reason, their presence was perceived as radically awkward. This also explains why the prejudices directed at this group took on a specifically ethnic, if not racial quality, in light of the particularly stigmatizing debate that surrounded the Rom community. It can be argued that the intergroup boundaries that derived from this, boundaries which relegated the Rom community to a place outside the majority space, were produced within the public debate (van Dijke 1987, 1993; Wimmer 2004). Interethnic relations are thus the product – though not inevitable – of a process. They are not therefore, a predictable element.

2.2 The paradigms: mixing rather than testing theories

Following this epistemological premise, it is now possible to define the theoretical foundations on which the project will base the study of intergroup relations, or relations between majority and minority groups.

There is a vast literature on the subject and the most significant number of contributions come from the United States tradition. This school of investigation is marked by a series of characteristics that make it readily identifiable. These can be summarized as: a) a predominance of survey-type



quantitative studies; b) an over-abundance of studies on relations between the White group and the Black group – dictated by the profoundly entrenched *color segregation line* in American society; c) a consistent attention towards conflict and the variables that contribute to its formation; d) little attention to the local dimension as opposed to than the national one; e) finally, a lesser attention to epistemological issues (concepts such as racism, ethnic group, racial, ethnic or any other kind of declension, are introduced into the argumentation as *explanans* without actually pondering their real coherence with the *explanandum*).

Studies conducted in the European field, which have become notably more numerous since the eighties and nineties, stand out for their greater focus on the local dimension (city, neighbourhood) and, in particular, for their determination to investigate more heterogeneous subjects of study. Some of these studies analyse conflicting relations, others investigate cooperative ones, while yet other studies focus on the factors that contribute to increasing integration and social cohesion. With regard to these last concepts - integration and social cohesion – despite their huge proliferation in both journalistic language and in the scientific one, it's important to note the difficulty to furnish a shared definition. This paradox is mainly due to a methodological and epistemological problem. In fact, as Martiniello said, the debates about the integration of the immigrants in the host societies develop without a clear definition of integration and especially without a clear vision of the end result of this process (Lafleur J-M, Martiniello 2008).

Despite the above-stated differences between the American and European schools, both can nevertheless be shown to share a series of common paradigms.

Firstly, relations can be conflicting when the majority group considers that one or more minority groups is impinging on their privileged status and prerogatives, or when it fears that the minority groups' presence is incompatible with its own traditions as culturally integrated group. In the first case, the object of contention is generally connected to material stakes. This is what is referred to as *Realistic Conflict Theory* (RC-T). According to this paradigm, manifestations of hostility on behalf of the majority group are dictated by the fear that the minority groups might interfere with privileges linked to their socio-economic status (Blumer 1958; Sherif 1967; Bobo 1983, 1993).

In the second case, the object of contention is generally connected to symbolic or identity-related stakes. The fear is that the growth of cultural and religious pluralism could undermine the roots of



the majority society's identity (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel, Turner 1986). This is what is referred to as *Social Identity Theory* (SI-T).

RC-T and SI-T are two important and flexible paradigms that can serve as a framework for interpreting highly diverse realities. Given that they are both ideal-types with very elastic borders, intermediary situations can also arise. An exemplary case of this is constituted by the accusation often brought against minority groups of having altered the nature of the neighbourhood. This case touches on both socio-economic values – declining value of real estate, closing down of shops and businesses, stigmatization of certain public space, etc. – as well as cultural and identity-related values, since it is believed the neighbourhood will now lose its original spirit, a spirit from the past which the locals could once identify themselves with.

A third paradigm that also lends itself to a broad application is *Contact Theory* (C-T). According to this model, the possibility for majority and minority groups to potentially interact is a fundamental variable in the construction of positive relations. The guiding principles of C-T do however exclude that simple and anonymous contact can lead to serene meetings, which can actually lead to an increase in conflict. In order for contact to create positive effects, it has to take place according to certain pre-conditions, including the absence of opportunities for conflict or competition, in an institutionally controlled situation, where there is cooperation on a common goal and there is equal ecological distribution of diversity (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998; Lance, Dronkers 2009).

The essential point here is that the various threats, whether of a socio-economic or symbolic and identity-related nature, can be triggered by concrete and objective situations, just as they can be the product of purely imaginary concerns.

Regardless of which theoretical model is adopted, and of the real or imaginary character of competition, the basic objective remains arriving at an understanding of the mechanisms that gave rise to intergroup tensions or cooperation. In this sense both conflict and cooperation are the products of social constructs that reflect the characteristics of a given context.

As we explain above, we investigate some of the factors regarded as crucial in this process, but usually analysed separately, such as media information flows, local policies, urban and social context and everyday experience.

Media are indeed regarded by authors who are concerned with inter-group attitudes as a key variable in shaping cognitive processes (Bevelander, Otterbeck, 2007; Ward, Masgoret 2008). However, their effect does not seem direct, but rather indirect and mediated. If the media plays a determining role in fuelling a particular type of public discourse, this is mainly transmitted thanks to



inter-individual communication, almost as if to underscore that in the final analysis, everyone can contribute to modeling the contents of discourse through their own preconceived notions on the subject (Barth 1998). Furthermore, as demonstrated in some cases, the media would seem to play a predominantly reinforcing role of stereotypes and pre-existing cognition (Takeyuki 2004). Thus, these studies encourage a careful examination of the particular ability of the media to entrench existing stereotypes and their relatively insignificant influence on modifying attitudes (Curran, Gurevitch, Woollacott 1977). Finally, some authors suggest that the role of the media should be interpreted in synergy with the characteristics of the given context. In this sense, the less direct experience there is with minority groups, the greater the probability that stereotypes spread by the media will become rooted in the population at large [Castells 1989].

Although less investigated, also policies seem able to influence intergroup relations. For Wimmer (1998), for example, intergroup conflict and intergroup boundaries are more marked in situations where the welfare state is strong. While Friedrichs, Galster and Musterd (2003) through the comparison between the States and Europe have highlight that impact of welfare-state policies might decrease the impact of residential environments.

On the contrary, the influence exerted by the urban and socio-economic context on relations developed among different categories of population has been more deeply scrutinised. The effect of urban infrastructures has been traditionally analysed by studies on mixed neighbourhoods, which highlight how schools, effective transportation and pedestrian links, green spaces, sport and recreation spaces usually foster social mix (Arthurson 2008; Bailey et al. 2007; Lee 2002). Looking at the social dimension, the diversity of the residential area has also been object of several studies which have led to the development of different and contrasting theories. As we already said, according to the contact theory, the intergroup contact fosters-mutual tolerance and social solidarity, although only at certain conditions(Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998). On the contrary, the conflict theory states that diversity fosters out-group distrust and in-group solidarity (Allen and Cars 2001; Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Letksi 2008). Finally, the constrict theory developed by Putnam (2007) asserts that diversity might reduce both in-group and out-group trust.

More recently, some scholars have investigated the impact of diversity on intergroup relations looking at diversity experienced in everyday life rather than defying it in statistical terms. The focus is then on social networks and practices developed in daily experience in specific urban areas (Ray, Hudson and Phillips 2008; Tyler and Jensen 2009; Jayaweera and Coudhury 2008; Fonseca 2007; Wessendorf 2010; Stolle, Soroka and Johnson 2008; Amin 2002; Lee 2002)



As already underlined above, Concordia Discors project intends to follow a line which adopts an interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical approach to the study of intergroup relations. It is therefore important to pay attention not only to perceptions and to the concrete objective conditions of interaction, but also to distinguish between where interactions take place and what type of interactions derive from the context, without forgetting the question of values and attitudes.

3. From an integrated theoretical approach to a mixed methodology

3.1 Various objects, several actors, diverse approaches

The project involves five European cities. In each city, a research partner is in charge of carrying out the empirical fieldwork: FIERI in Torino, efms of the University of Bamberg in Nuremberg, the Migration Research Group of Autonomous University of Barcelona in Barcelona, COMPAS of the University of Oxford in London and TARKI in Budapest. Furthermore, EPC is involved in the project in order to support the dissemination and favour the networking with decision-makers and civil society organizations at EU level.

Within each selected city, we have identified two neighbourhoods to investigate, characterised by:

- a relevant percentage of foreign residents;
- different levels of interethnic conflict, i.e. one neighbourhood characterised by a high level of conflict and the other by a lack or non explicit conflict.

As we said above, the project aims at investigating cooperation and conflict dynamics driving integration in each neighbourhood and the influence of the residential context, local policies, communication flows and everyday experience on these dynamics. This influence is analysed considering various actors (civil society and residents, policy-makers and street level bureaucracy, opinion-makers etc.), referring to different disciplines and fields of study, and using mixed methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative.

- a) Analysis of social and urban context. The first step consists in reconstructing the urban and social context of the target neighbourhoods. With this purpose, we collect statistical data referring to the last decade and concerning three different dimensions:



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- the demographic dimension, which includes indicators relating to the population structure and movements;
- the economic dimension, which describes the economic structure of the investigated urban areas;
- the social dimension concerning data on anti-social behaviours and crimes and on social and economic features of the resident population, such as income, employment, education, housing, etc.

Besides the quantitative analysis, for each neighbourhood we reconstruct the history of internal and international immigration, as well as the history of the economic and urban development, and we try to catch their perceived impact through qualitative interviews with key informants.

b) Analysis of policy impact perceptions. Also the policy analysis is meant to point out the various perceptions of the impact of policies developed in the last decade on intergroup relations within the selected neighbourhoods. With this purpose, we carry out interviews and focus groups with neighbourhood policy communities (policy makers, street level bureaucracy, and local stakeholders) investigating:

- policy frames (i.e. the cognitive dimension of policy, the way immigration and intergroup relations are regarded);
- policy outputs (i.e. the policy products, the measures that have been implemented);
- policy outcomes distinguished into specific outcomes (i.e. the achievements of the pursued goals), and systemic outcomes (i.e. impact and consequences on intergroup relations).

Since the focus is on policies whose impact can be regarded as relevant for intergroup relations at neighbourhood level, we have chosen not to limit the analysis to certain policy sectors, because all of them can be potentially relevant: welfare cuts may fuel intergroup conflicts on ethnic basis or push conflicts towards cleavages different from ethnicity, urban renewal or local development policies can foster cooperation or raise competition to grab better places and resources, and so forth. In this perspective, we assume that also non-decisions (Bachrach and Baratz 1970), i.e. the lack of political intervention, can impact on intergroup relations and should be taken into consideration.

- b) Analysis of media flows. The third macro-factor investigated in the project is represented by mass media communication flows, which play a key role in producing public representations



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and in ethnic boundary-making. In this framework, the main questions concern the relevance given to

- c) immigration and the representations of inter-group relations conveyed by media when covering the target neighbourhoods. Our analysis covers the last decade and is based on two local newspapers or local pages of two nationwide newspapers per city, possibly with different political orientations and/or attitudes towards immigration.

Also media news will be analysed through quantitative and qualitative methods. First, we try to understand if in media representation the target neighbourhoods are strongly related to immigration. We do this by singling out the share of local news on the target neighbourhoods which deal with immigration. As a second step, we analyse the contents of news stories, and carry out news frame analysis for identifying the dominant representations of intergroup relations and of policy interventions on immigration and integration issues.

We should add that policy and media are investigated also through the ethnographic fieldwork, which is the core of the project. The aim is understanding which is the impact of policies perceived by policy targets and/or beneficiaries (i.e. persons who live and/or work in the neighbourhood), on the one hand, and the exposure to media and the degree of agreement with media representations by resident population, on the other hand. In fact, the local policy communities might have representations of policy impact that are very different from the ones developed by target populations. In the same way, resident population may consider the images of the neighbourhood conveyed by media as stigmatising or, on the contrary, neglecting problems. Catching the complexity and the heterogeneity of collective narratives is in fact an overarching goal of Concordia Discors.

- d) Investigation of the influence of everyday experience on intergroup relations. As Stolle, Soroka and Johnson (2008) suggest, measures of diversity within neighbourhoods as drawn from censuses can provide a picture of the context, but do not accurately reflect the immediate environment. A high degree of diversity, for instance, does not necessarily imply a high level of exposure to strangers.

We try to catch the experienced diversity through the ethnographic fieldwork. It consists in both direct observation and interviews that would allow us to single out residents' representations of differences, on the one hand, and investigating everyday practices and daily encounters, on the other hand – while ego-centred networks are not examined.



In order to carry out an in-depth analysis, the ethnography is focused on 3-4 subzones per neighbourhood, regarded as significant in terms of intergroup relations and geographically circumscribed – they can be squares, stretches of road, open markets, public gardens etc. In these subzones we consider both the open public spaces and the buildings overlooking them, such as shops, associations and NGOs offices, public services premises, apartment buildings, etc. Therefore, we take into account spaces with different degrees of accessibility:

- a) public spaces
- b) private spaces
- c) “micropublics” (Amin 2002), i.e. spaces of associations where habit of practice substitutes the mere co-presence and dialogue and “prosaic negotiations” are compulsory; these spaces resemble the “zones of encounter” pointed out by Wood and Landry (2007), where deeper and more enduring interactions between people engaging in shared activities and common goals can take place. Such places are, for example, a local knitting clubs, housing associations, parents’ groups, schools, workplaces, youth centres, sport clubs, etc.

The decision of considering places with differentiated degrees of accessibility and possibilities of contact with strangers is based on the assumption that such different characteristics foster the development of diverse kinds of relations (Wessendorf 2010). Private, public and micropublics, in fact, are partially matched with the three relational realms identified by Hunter (1985) and Lofland (1998):

- a) the private realm, that is characterised by relations with friends and kin;
- b) the public realm, that is the “world of the streets”;
- c) the parochial realm, that is made up of more communal relations among neighbours or acquaintances made through associations and informal networks.

Not only the strength of interpersonal links, but also the representations of intergroup relations may change according to the type of space. For instance, the five conditions that according to Allport (1954) are required to reduce prejudice through inter-ethnic contacts (equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, support of law, potential friendship) are more probably achieved in the so-called “micropublics” than in public places.

Given these assumptions, observation is carried out both in public spaces and “micropublics”, and interviewees are differentiated in terms of the use of neighbourhood places, i.e. local samples are made up both of residents who frequently use public spaces, persons who attend the “zone of encounters”, and individuals who spend most of their time at home.



3.2 Treating the findings: drawing the links and building user-friendly tools

Considering the influence of different factors on intergroup relations is one of the most innovative aspects of the project, but also one of the most challenging. How can we single out relations between them?

The main tool is comparison in a) time and b) space.

a) The systematic collection of information over the last decade allows us to carry out a diachronical analysis of local policy, local media representation, socio-demographic and economic structure of the neighbourhoods, narratives and retrospective perception of the people about intergroup relations. The comparison among these levels can help us to highlight the relations among the analysed factors and understand, for instance, if frames developed by residents, policy communities and media towards immigration show similar or opposite trends and if their convergence or divergence makes a difference in terms of intergroup relations.

b) The other axis of comparison is among different territorial units. As already said, the project investigates ten neighbourhoods of five European cities with the aim of singling out how different “local configurations” of analysed factors may have different impacts on intergroup relations.

The attention for “local configuration” is relevant not only from a scientific point of view, as we explained in the previous paragraphs, but also in practical terms. In fact, a crucial aim of Concordia Discors consists in providing evidence-based recommendations and concrete tools to local decision-makers and stakeholders for dealing with integration issues. Given difficulties to transfer good practices which do not work in any conditions and starting from the assumption that (un)successful outcomes are often the result of a mix of factors, our intent is providing context-specific recommendations rather than policy packages suitable for certain categories of neighbourhood.

For improving its practical impact, the project includes also some instruments that can have multiple uses and can be employed by different actors besides researchers.

First, we intend to collect photographic material and use the method of rephotography. From public archives we select old photos of spaces of the neighbourhood that have changed as a result of immigration and take the same photos in the present. These photos will represent useful visual materials on neighbourhood changes. Further pictures are collected during interviews: in order to stimulate individuals to talk about transformations of the neighbourhood, we ask them whether their family albums contain photos taken in the neighbourhood, how it has changed over time and why.



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Second, in each target neighbourhood a Neighbourhood Forum (NF) is organised. This is an half-day event, involving residents and stakeholders belonging to different social groups (local administrators, NGOs, ethnic associations, students, professionals, retired and elderly people, immigrants, teachers, entrepreneurs, etc.). The aim is creating a devoted room for expressing alternative (and obviously even opposite) narratives of intergroup relations in the neighbourhoods. In our intentions, these NFs could also represent experiments of participatory practices at neighbourhood level that, if effective, can be used by local actors.

Finally, a documentary will be produced. It has a twofold aim: a) facilitating the dissemination of the project results among different kinds of public (scholars, students, residents, NGOs, etc.), b) providing user-friendly material potentially useful for triggering collective reflection and future experiments in participatory governance at neighbourhood level. The documentary will be indeed potentially usable as an awareness-raising and information tool not just by the research partners but also by the other actors.

In conclusion, Concordia Discors is a project with scientific and practical aims, which can be achieved through the application of both theoretical and practical tools. Keeping all of them together and making them interact, although on a small territorial scale, is certainly the most challenging aspect of the project.

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