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**Youth on the Asiago Plateau: A Grounded Theory  
Approach**

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*To my mom and dad*

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*To my mom and dad*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This research questions the youth conditions present in the territory of the Plateau of the seven municipalities, it does so by examining the themes and data that emerged from the research "Being young in the Plateau" carried out by researchers Lisa Cerantola and Davide Girardi. Grounded theory, a qualitative research method, was used to analyze the research data.

The first chapter tells the story of the Asiago Plateau through its history, its geolocation, and its socio-economic context. This is useful to better understand the themes that will be introduced in the following chapters.

The second chapter explains the aims and objectives of the research "Being young in the plateau" focusing on the phases and methods that were used to carry out the research and on the documentation obtained from this analysis.

The third chapter explained how the grounded theory research methodology was applied, specifically explaining which steps were used to analyze the data and interviews of the research "Being young in the Plateau. The information expressed in this chapter will be useful for understanding the results obtained, and how they were acquired.

In the fourth chapter I included the data obtained from the application of the grounded theory research methodology. In this phase I focused on the categories that I found to be most important and above all on the themes that were referred to several times in the documents in my possession. The references to the categories were often made by reporting in full the interventions of the interviewees, therefore in this chapter there is also a work of paraphrasal contextualization of the interventions and references to the themes present in the documentation.

In the fifth chapter I carried out a contextualization of the categories that emerged during the analysis to explain how all the characteristics and themes that characterized this research are strictly interconnected with each other, and together give voice in writing to the problems of the youth condition plateau.



## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE PLATEAU OF THE SEVEN MUNICIPALITIES**

#### **1.1 A PECULIAR HISTORY**

The Altopiano dei Sette Comuni (also known as the Asiago Plateau), is a vast plateau in the Vicentine Pre-Alps, straddling the northern part of the province of Vicenza and the south-eastern part of the autonomous province of Trento. According to the International Orographic Subdivision of the Alps, it is a subgroup of the Highlands Group. "The first signs of human presence on the Plateau, by nuclei of Neanderthal hunters or flint gatherers, date back to the Middle Palaeolithic period. Traces of seasonal passage, even in later periods, have emerged in numerous caves and shelters in various places on the plateau'. (Frigo, 2015) In actual fact, however, the Plateau - excluding its outermost areas such as Rotzo and Enego - remained substantially depopulated until the 10th-11th centuries, when colonisation was consolidated by woodcutters, shepherds and peasants from the foothills, with the support of the Ezzelini who had fiefdoms there.

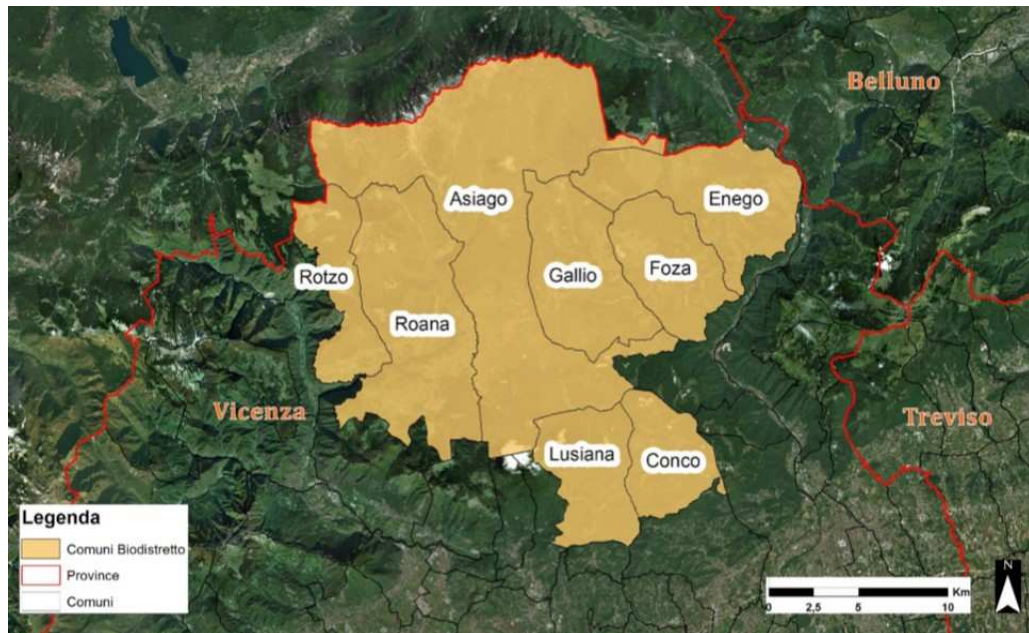
A phenomenon that, on the other hand, united these lands with the other depressed areas of the country was emigration, which from the mid-19th century onwards also brought thousands of highlanders to Europe and overseas. On the other hand, what further characterised the history of the Sette Comuni in the 20th century were the two world wars - in particular the First, fought up here from the first to the last day - that left deep traces in the territory and in the collective memory. These traces can be found in particular in the work of the writer Mario Rigoni Stern, who was the cantor and guardian deity of this land, but also in the work of many other authors who during and after the Great War and up to the present day (from Lussu to Gadda, from Musil to Weber, from Comisso to Parise, from Trevisan to Strukul and Righetto) have made it the backdrop for their works.

## 1.2 THE CIMBRIAN IDENTITY

The original presence of people of Venetian origin was rapidly absorbed or overwhelmed, after the year 1000, "by a consistent migration, in successive waves, of Germanic peoples, later called Cimbri, who involved substantial areas of the upper Veneto region but ended up becoming dominant up here: There are still divergent interpretations of its origins, but from then until the First World War, the Plateau was largely a German cultural and linguistic enclave, characterised by a dialect close to Bavarian dialects and by religious manifestations linked to Nordic mythology, to which the spectacular rock of Altar-Knotto above Rotzo would bear witness". (Frigo, 2015)

Migration from Germany occurred at different times and in different ways, leading to a radical cultural and linguistic transformation: the Germanic Cimbrian language of the Asiago and Lavarone plateaus is among the oldest of the German dialects spoken in other Italian regions. Nowadays, the Cimbrian language is known by very few people, especially in the Roana area, where there is a cultural institute that studies its history, although, as Frigo (2015) reminds us, a popular festival that has been held in the various villages for a few years now has brought its memory up to date; there are also some speakers in Lessinia, while Cimbrian is still used in the nearby Trentino village of Luserna. These historical and linguistic peculiarities have in any case deeply marked the toponymy and memory of the community and still today constitute a significant element of identification and education even for the younger generations.

### 1.3 A SEPARATE GEOGRAPHY



*Fig.1.1<sup>1</sup>*

Located in the Venetian Prealps, between the Astico and Brenta rivers, the Plateau (defined by Gabriele D'Annunzio as "the little Switzerland of Italy"), is often described as a balcony overlooking the Venetian plain, even if its shape is more of an enormous basin, with the north edge decidedly more raised, engraved to the west and east by the two deep fissures of the Val d'Assa and Val Frenzela (Frigo, 2015).

From a geological point of view, the Plateau is a local result of the overall uplift of the Alps which occurred starting from the last Mesozoic but above all in the Tertiary, in the last 7 million years: an upheaval of which various traces can be found in the outcrops of rocks and fossils in many places on the plateau. Its average altitude is 1317 meters above sea level, with the vast central urbanized area positioned at a height of one thousand metres, and the wilder northern edge, which with Cima Dodici reaches up to 2336 metres. Its total surface area is 560 km<sup>2</sup> (466.68 administrative area) (Frigo, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> European Bio-Districts Map ([www.bioaltopiano.com](http://www.bioaltopiano.com))

The Italian Alpine Club of the Veneto region (2017) estimated that, <<The plateau is crowned to the north by a ridge line, whose peaks reach over 2300 m., while to the south it is delimited by a ridge with altitudes between 1000 and 1400 m.; in the center there is a morphologically depressed band, stretched in an east-west direction, with an average altitude of around 1000 m, which houses the major inhabited centres: Rotzo, Roana, Canove, Asiago, Gallio, Foza and d Enego. >>

The plateau is clearly isolated due to the deep valley incisions that separate it from the nearby mountainous areas: to the north the Valsugana and to the east the Brenta Canal, to the west the southern stretch of the Val d'Astico and the Val Torra; only towards the south is there an escarpment connecting to the foothills which allows relatively easy access to the plateau. On the other hand, the slopes that descend to the bottom of the mentioned valleys are very steep, often characterized by overhanging walls; here erosion has exposed the sequence of rock layers that make up the body of the Plateau, allowing the geological history to be reconstructed (Alpine Club of the Veneto region, 2017).

A large part of the plateau (473.5 km<sup>2</sup>) is divided into seven districts (municipalities) which until the advent of Napoleon, in 1807, were organized into a federation called Respectable Regency of the Seven Municipalities born between the 13th and 14th centuries which constituted an autonomous state linked, later, to the vicissitudes of Very serene. The seven municipalities all belong to province of Vicenza (of which they constitute one fifth of the territory), only a small part of the territory falls within the borders of province of Trento.(Alpine Club of the Veneto region, 2017)

#### 1.4 DEMOGRAPHY AND ISOLATION

The seven municipalities are: Asiago, Lusiana Conco, Enego, Roana, Rotzo, Gallio, Foza

<b>Popolazione residente</b> (al 1/01/2021)	<b>n. residenti</b>
<b>Asiago</b>	6371
<b>Enego</b>	1561
<b>Foza</b>	665
<b>Gallio</b>	2364
<b>Lusiana Conco</b>	4671
<b>Roana</b>	4238
<b>Rotzo</b>	652
<i>Totale</i>	<i>20522</i>

*Tab. 1.1*

As shown in Tab. 1.1, the resident population in seven municipalities Plateau (as of 01/01/2021) is 20522 regular inhabitants distributed throughout the territory in all 7 municipalities. It must be kept in mind, however, that this figure can even triple during the high tourist season, when thousands of people move to the plateau to enjoy the festivities and the wonderful landscape areas it offers.

It should be specified that the urban center with the greatest population density is Asiago, where the greatest services and the greatest tourist and restaurant offers are present. The distance between the municipality of Asiago and the municipality of Enego is approximately 28.4 km for a travel time of approximately 39 minutes by car, while for example the distance between the municipality of Rotzo and that of Lusiana-Conco is approximately 31.1 km for a travel time by car of approximately 40 minutes. This may seem of little importance if you think about an urban landscape itinerary, but what characterizes the distance between the different municipalities is the viability of the roads which in the winter season is put to the test due to snowfall and icy roads. Furthermore, it is normal to travel several kilometers of road in the woods without finding services, or without having telephone reception. This condition of isolation between the municipalities often generates conditions of

detachment between them, this situation of isolation has had and still has an important impact on the social condition of the inhabitants of the Plateau.

### 1.5 AN ECONOMY DOMINATED BY TOURISM

After the war, emigration from the Plateau resumed, but significant economic development also began to be recorded, which was catalysed above all in the surge in tourist presences in the 1960s, which was followed by a tumultuous and often chaotic building expansion. More recently this evolution has been partly accompanied by the uneasiness which in recent years and in conjunction with the worsening of the economic crisis has affected not only the Plateau, towards state and regional centralism, which has determined among other things the removal of many public offices and also resulted in a referendum for the transition to Trentino. Furthermore, a hypothesis that Mario Rigoni Stern, despite largely sharing the discomforts and discontent of his fellow citizens, has always fiercely opposed (Frigo, 2015)

As already mentioned previously, the altitude of the Plateau is between 87 m and 2341 m, this characteristic makes it identified by many citizens of the Veneto and beyond as an ideal destination for spending the summer holidays, during which the citizens of the Po Valley take refuge in the coolness of the woods and mountains, and obviously also as an excellent winter tourist destination, thanks to the possibility of using cross-country and downhill ski slopes.

Currently tourism in the Plateau has a structure based mainly on second homes and hotels, but over time and due to the crisis, it has seen the periods of stay gradually shorten, despite an increase in daily presences. The winter activity is particularly tested, due to the decrease in snowfall and the strong competition from Trentino locations, which benefit from greater funding.

The response to the crisis has been articulated, over time, in the valorization of the natural and historical heritage and in an accentuation of the sporting, gastronomic and cultural offer. In addition to alpine skiing (which has 45 ski lifts with 80 km of slopes) and cross-country skiing (7 centers and 500 km of

slopes, the largest Italian ski area), ski jumping (Gallium springboard) is added. hockey and skating in the Asiago ice stadium (open all year round), in the Roana ice rink (active in summer and winter) and in the speed facility in Busa Fonda di Gallio, and also a varied offer of mountain bike trails, horseback riding, trekking, Nordic walking and snowshoeing, swimming pools and spas, an 18-hole golf course and an airport equipped for gliding; there is also numerous opportunities for lovers of extreme sports, from paragliding to hang gliding to bungee jumping (Frigo, 2017).

In addition to summer and winter tourism, the economy of the seven municipalities Plateau is based on agriculture and breeding, in fact in the panorama of dairy farming in the national Alpine arc, the seven municipalities Plateau certainly represents one of the liveliest realities. The 16,000 hectares of useful agricultural surface host approximately 330 companies that raise 5,000 dairy cows and over 3,000 young replacement cows (Cozzi, Bizzotto, Rigoni Stern, 2006).

Dairy production is particularly important, in fact Asiago cheese comes from these same mountains and companies, a hard Italian cheese, among the best known nationally, and also highly appreciated internationally. The mountain dairy farms of the Asiago PDO cheese chain Asiago is the fourth most produced PDO cheese in Italy. Nowadays, the geographical area of milk collection recognized by the PDO Production Specifications, however, is much broader than the original area of the seven municipalities Plateau (Cozzi, Magrin, Prevedello, Lora, 2019). This product attracts hundreds of curious tourists to the plateau area, eager to try the typical product in its place of origin. Other sources of income coming from the Plateau of the 7 municipalities arise from the huge expanse of forest that covers the territory for an extension of approximately six thousand hectares dotted with a great variety of flora and fauna, it is an expanse of greenery that seems to unite the sky and the land from its privileged position on the Asiago plateau.

## 1.6 EDUCATIONAL OFFER

**Tab. 2 Popolazione residente per anno di nascita (fascia d'età dai 14 ai 18 anni)**

Popolazione residente (al 1.01.2021)	Anno di nascita					Totale
	2007 (14 anni)	2006 (15 anni)	2005 (16 anni)	2004 (17 anni)	2003 (18 anni)	
<b>Asiago</b>	53	55	55	50	72	285
<b>Enego</b>	9	10	16	8	14	57
<b>Foza</b>	7	6	9	8	6	36
<b>Gallio</b>	18	29	28	26	23	124
<b>Lusiana Conco</b>	41	44	43	40	46	214
<b>Roana</b>	32	42	30	32	38	174
<b>Rotzo</b>	9	2	5	11	5	32
<b>Totale</b>	169	188	186	175	204	922

Fonte: ISTAT ([www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it))

*Tab 1.2*

As can be seen in Table 1.2 the total number of adolescents living in the plateau of the seven municipalities is 922 (ISTAT, 2021). The educational offer of upper secondary school is influenced by the cultural and regional specificities of the area. The economic and employment context, therefore, appears favorable with respect to some of the Institute's directions, such as the hotel and agricultural sectors of the Professional Institute. These addresses are useful in the economy of the Plateau; the Made in Italy direction for Industry and Crafts is integrated with the economy of the Province of Vicenza, where there is a high demand for work from companies operating in the mechanics and mechatronics sectors; The ITE (AFM and Tourism addresses) responds to the needs of the territory, in particular the demand for professional figures linked to the tertiary sector and, above all, the tourism economy. Finally, the high school courses offer an adequate training path for future university education: the Applied Sciences High School course provides students with a solid preparation in all disciplines, aimed at continuing their studies at any university faculty, with a particular propensity for the field of scientific faculties, the Liceo Scientifico Sportivo specialization allows you to acquire the knowledge and methods of mathematical, physical and natural sciences as well as economics and sports



law. Added to this is the presence of an ITS post-diploma course "*Mountain Hospitality and Management*" at the headquarters of the Polo "G.B. Pertile", which allows newly graduated students a path in continuity with the major they attend and with good opportunities for entering the world of work (Ministry of Education, 2023).

For teenagers who wish to undertake a high school path different from that offered by the area, travel to the plain via public transport is mandatory. Once embarked on a course of study in the plains, the teenager will have to wake up at 5 for the entire school period to be able to catch the bus that will take him to school.

From what emerged from the research "Being young in the Plateau" "With regards to school provision, a weak quality of provision is reported especially among women (in six out of ten cases, compared to five out of ten for men), among older students (twenty percentage point margin separates those who are at least seventeen years old from the youngest) and among Plateau residents who study in the same area, who indicate school provision as a weak point in five cases out of ten (against eight out of ten respondents among residents who study outside the Plateau)(Cerantola & Girardi, 2023)

*"I am a hotelier student because it was a choice made both by my parents and the professors. When I was younger in middle school my parents told me: - Look at the end of the day, do something that you need in life. So in the end you take home the hotelier student diploma, maybe you won't need it for what you want to do in life, but you still have a diploma with which you can go anywhere, so I'm going down this path -. I started to take out schools but also to discard them immediately for studying, because of who I am and also because of the fact of having to go to the plains because there is little choice here" (interview 5, 17 years, f)*

Similar traits are repeated in very close terms for job opportunities (also due to the clear connection between the school offer and entry into the employment system).

## 1.7 SOCIAL NETWORK YOUTH CONDITIONS

An aspect that characterizes this mountain area, but which can also be said to be common to other areas, is the condition of isolation.

An aspect that not everyone thinks about is the intermittent isolation, or tourist intermittency, it is a phenomenon that occurs in mountain tourist areas and in particular on the plateau of the seven municipalities. The winter tourist period extends from December to approximately March (depending on weather conditions), while the summer period extends from June to early September. In fact, during these periods in the Plateau, two phenomena develop cyclically every year; the first is that of the displacement of holidaymakers who own second homes in the plateau area, who emigrate to high altitudes during the tourist seasons. The second phenomenon is that of commuting, the movement of individuals from the plains to the mountains for short periods of time, which can last a weekend or even just a day. This bipolar cyclical condition therefore means that the people of the Plateau during the tourist months find themselves immersed in tourist and restaurant work, while in the intermediate seasons they experience a condition of isolation that is particularly felt especially in the neighboring municipalities.

One of the first sub-dimensions that emerged as critical in the research concerned a "hot topic" experienced daily by respondents, namely the topic of transport. The distances and the conformation of the territory, as we have already said previously, greatly influence the mobility of young people in the plateau, and above all of those who live in the municipalities adjacent to the center of Asiago and in the peripheral areas (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

Consistent with what has just been mentioned, young people aged at least 17 (a cohort which obviously includes eighteen-year-olds with a driving licence) prefer "exclusive" use of the car driven independently and, on the other hand,

are less present in reference to the car " led by others." "Getting a driving licence", in fact, as confirmed by the young people interviewed, becomes a desired objective and a crucial point in being able to move more freely in the area, as this young woman states:

*"It also allowed me to take up space that I wasn't able to take up before... for example going out with my friends at clubs in the evening... without having to insist and burden my parents... Now I feel I'm more autonomous and I am less of a burden to my parents. Then maybe I had been in a city where there is more public transport... it wouldn't have been such an important result but in this precise context (getting the driving licence) in my opinion it was a transition between a before and an after". (interval 6, 19 years, f)*

Another important aspect to highlight is the fact that, there is a poor bus transport network in the area, there is also a complete absence of the railway service that can connect the Plateau to other areas of the province. The closest railway stations to the area are located in Bassano del Grappa (distant 34 kilometers) and in Thiene (distant 31.9 kilometers). This condition forces the inhabitants of the area to have to take the car to get around, which is obviously the case impossible for minors living in the area, if not accompanied by an adult

Having crossed the threshold of appearance, the Plateau of the Seven Municipalities presents itself as an extremely complex tourist reality, but rich in a vastness of landscape and cultural treasures that distinguish this territory from many other places in the Veneto region.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **“BEING YOUNG IN THE HIGHLANDS” - THE RESEARCH**

#### **2.1 RESEARCH**

The “Eyes Open to build Justice” Association in collaboration with the Salesian University Institute of Venice (IUSVE), the IIS “Mario Rigoni Stern” and in agreement with the local administrations of the seven Municipalities of the Plateau, in continuity with some actions to raise awareness of the local communities on the condition of youth, promoted and then started research in the autumn of 2021 to delve deeper into the point of view of adolescents and young people aged 14 to 18 who live on the plateau of the seven municipalities (whether reside there or attend the Asiago Higher Institute)(Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

The objective of the research project is to understand the point of view of young people aged 14 to 18 who reside or study in the Plateau, continuing with the aim of:

- know how they live in the area in their daily lives and in their free time,
- know what their social and relational networks of reference are,
- understand which school/training and work paths they prefer as well as deepen their sense of socio-territorial belonging and their aspirations for the future,
- understand if and how the health emergency caused by the Sars CoV virus has influenced the relationships, experiences, life and study paths and aspirations for the future of these young people,
- collect elements to interpret the phenomenon of school abandonment and school dropout by young people residing in the Plateau, with the aim of hypothesizing, with their involvement, possible support actions; involve a group of young people from the area ("young advisors") in some specific phases of the research so that they can support the

researchers by offering their point of view and their contribution in generating the research field, the tools to be built (questionnaires and interview), in the collection of data and in their interpretation and presentation to peers and the local community. This "comparison group" worked closely with the researchers, and contributed to the distribution and collection of the questionnaires to their peers, participating in the discussion and analysis of the results of the survey; with the aim of raising awareness in the local community and the territory of seven municipalities Plateau, involving some stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, sports coaches...) in the different phases of the research: collecting their point of view on the condition of young people in the Altopiano and on the possible actions to be implemented, involving them in identifying the comparison group ("young advisors") and making them participate in the monitoring of the process and its outcomes, in order to facilitate the emergence of common support actions and new ideas for work with and for young people in the area.

The results of the research process offered an unprecedented snapshot of the young population that resides and lives on the Plateau, providing useful elements for the integrated development of youth policies in the area.

## 2.2 THE PHASES OF THE RESEARCH

There are five phases that characterized the journey, which began in the autumn of 2021 and ended in May 2023:

- First phase: involvement in which the action-research project was presented to the main stakeholders and each of the local communities and the Young Advisors group was set up. This research phase also included three focus groups aimed at gathering some initial information from adults on the condition of children and young people, to which were added a number of exploratory meetings on the world of youth

proposed to the Young Advisors through interactive and expressive activities (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

- Second phase: this was characterised by the preparation and completion of the online questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared by the researchers on the basis of information gathered from focus groups and group activities, but modified and refined thanks to considerations and ideas that emerged from the young people, then tested by them before being distributed and made to be filled in (anonymously) to all the students of the "Mario Rigoni Stern" Institute of Asiago. This compilation carried out at school thanks to the great willingness and cooperation of teachers, headmaster, students, educators of "Open eyes to build justice" reached 665 subjects to which were added in the following months another 142 questionnaires filled in by young people living on the Plateau but attending schools on the plain (Bassano del Grappa, Breganze, Marostica, Schio, Thiene, etc.)(Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).
- Third phase: was dedicated to the process of carrying out 25 dialogical interviews aimed at a sample of young people who could be representative in terms of age, origin, course of study, choice of school (in the highlands and in the plains). The interviews were carried out both in person and online between September and October and involved 13 girls, 12 boys between 15 and 20 years old (average age 17 years), resident in the seven municipalities of the Plateau.
- Fourth phase: this was characterised by the analysis of data (quantitative and qualitative) and had as its pivotal moment a workshop open to the participation of some institutional representatives (administration and school), citizens and young people. On this occasion, some data emerged from the research on territorial attractiveness were discussed with the participants. This first moment of sharing was followed by a focus group with the YA group and a series

of meetings with the local communities to update and collect reflections useful for the interpretation of the data (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

- Fifth phase: the last phase of the action research, culminating with a public event to present the results (11 May 2023), had as further protagonists some young people from the area who, accompanied by the research team and two university graphic design students and web design, were able to prepare some communication materials (posters and postcards) to be used for the dissemination of the study in the area but also to collect further ideas and points of view from citizens.(Cerantola & Girardi, 2023)

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter I will illustrate how I put the grounded theory research method into practice by analyzing the qualitative data obtained from the research "Being young in the Plateau" which, as I explained previously, is a research project aimed at gaining insight into the views of adolescents and young people aged 14 to 18 years who live on the Plateau of the Seven Municipalities.

#### **3.1 THE GROUNDED THEORY**

The "grounded theory" Is a qualitative research method, it is also an approach in social research that focuses on generating theories directly from collected data, rather than applying pre-existing theories. In other words, it involves developing concepts and theories organically based on observations and data emerging during the study, rather than starting with preconceived hypotheses. It is an inductive methodology that provides systematic guidelines for gathering, synthesizing, analyzing, and conceptualizing qualitative data for the purpose of theory construction (Charmaz, 2001).

Qualitative research is used to explore the potential antecedents and factors about which little has been known and explored (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

Grounded theory is not a theory at all, it is a method, an approach, a strategy.

“Grounded’ means that the theory will be generated on the basis of data; the theory will therefore be grounded in data. Theory’ means that the objective of collecting and analysing the research data is to generate theory. The essential in grounded theory is that theory will be developed inductively from data (Khan, 2014).

#### **3.1.2 METHODOLOGY**

I worked by analysing the qualitative data obtained through the conduct of the research, the data used for the application of the grounded theory approach are



therefore those obtained from the conduct of three focus groups that took place between October and November of the year 2020. The focus groups, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, were conducted with inhabitants of the area and people settled for work reasons, who have knowledge that is useful for understanding the youth conditions of the adolescents who populate the area. The focus groups were conducted with three groups of adults:

- Local councillors
- Teachers of the Mario Rigoni Stern institute
- Members of citizenship active in youth policies (sports coaches, educators, bartenders);

I also applied the grounded theory method of analysis to the end-of-research report that was drawn up by the researchers once the research had been completed.

### 3.2.1 FOCUS GROUPS

Focus group interviewing is widely used by academic and applied researchers. A focus group is a qualitative research method in which a small, diverse group of participants is brought together to discuss and provide feedback on a specific product, service, concept, or topic.

Focus groups have been used for a range of purposes and in various contexts by academic and applied researchers. As defined by Krueger and Casey (2009) "a focus group study is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment." The origin of focus groups is often traced back to the eminent sociologist Robert K. Merton at Columbia University in the 1940s. Beginning in the 1960s, focus groups became the method du jour among commercial market researchers. It was not until the 1980s when focus groups reemerged and gained traction as a prominent research technique in academic settings (Bloor et al. 2001; Fontana & Frey 1994; Morgan 1996, 1997).

This method is commonly used in market research, product development, and social sciences to gather insights and opinions from a variety of perspectives.

The idea behind the focus group method is that group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview. Group discussion is particularly appropriate when the interviewer has a series of open ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities. When group dynamics work well the participants work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new directions (Kitzinger, 1995).

During a focus group session, a skilled moderator guides the discussion, encouraging participants to share their thoughts, perceptions, and experiences related to the subject at hand. The goal is to uncover a range of opinions and attitudes within the group and explore the reasons behind these perspectives. The information gathered from focus groups can be valuable for businesses, organizations, or researchers in shaping decisions, refining products, or understanding public opinion (Mishra & Lokanath, 2016).

The pervasive use of focus groups is partly based on the time and cost savings compared to individual interviews. Beyond these pragmatic benefits, group interviews create an opportunity for participants to discuss collectively normative assumptions that are typically unarticulated, thus providing insight into complex motivations and behaviors (Bloor et al. 2001; Morgan and Krueger 1993). The interaction between focus group participants has the potential to create a dynamic synergy that is absent in individual interviews (Molly, 2013).

Focus group studies can consist of anything between half a dozen to over fifty groups, depending on the aims of the project and the resources available. Most studies involve just a few groups, and some combine this method with other data collection techniques (Kitzinger, 1994).

Sitting round in a circle will help to establish the right atmosphere. The ideal group size is between four and eight people. Sessions may last one to two

hours (or extend into a whole afternoon or a series of meetings)(Kitzinger, 1995).

In the case of the focus groups carried out to collect data for the research "Being young in the Plateau", the chairs were arranged to form a U letter, to facilitate dialogue. The average duration of each focus group was approximately an hour and a half, the researcher and the scribe provided themselves with a tape recorder for each meeting, to record the voices and conversations of the participants, and a notepad to take notes. . However, it should be remembered that "The choice of type of stimulus material and its content is strictly inherent to the focus to be analysed" (Colombo, 1997).

All participants were asked to consent to being recorded during the meeting, to facilitate the drafting of the minutes. At the end of each focus group, the scribe carried out a meticulous transcription of all the recordings, with the aim of being able to provide the researchers with a report that was as consistent as possible with the original speeches.

The administration of the interview outline is left to the discretion of the moderator, who plays an undoubtedly important role. His task is to keep the group discussion adhering to the chosen theme, and then make it proceed towards the selected sub-themes, trying to avoid delays in progress and facilitate everyone's intervention. The outline should contain a planned series of open questions (maximum a dozen), the formulation of which is flexible, although some tricks can help with focus: that of proposing different formulations of the same question; that of predicting the widest possible range of responses, regardless of the number and type of respondents included in the group; that of promoting a climate in which there are no correct or incorrect answers but only autonomous references. This last suggestion helps to develop the reporting of details which often does not occur in individual interviews, enhancing the effectiveness of the group (Colombo, 1997).

### 3.2.2 COUNCILORS FOCUS GROUP

Carrying out a focus group with municipal councilors to talk about the topic of youth conditions in a specific area can be extremely useful as it guarantees the collection of different perspectives as the municipal councilors can come from different areas of competence of the territory and different political parties, which offers a variety of perspectives and opinions. This diversity can enrich the discussion and lead to more comprehensive solutions. Furthermore, municipal councilors have practical experience in managing local issues and can share valuable information on successes and challenges faced in the field of youth development. Municipal councilors are able to identify the specific priorities of the local community, helping to direct efforts towards issues that are relevant and crucial for citizens.

The focus group carried out with the councilors of the Asiago Plateau took place on 18 November 2021, there were ten people present:

COUNCILORS FOCUS GROUP-PARTECIPANTS	
WORK POSITION	GENDER
Municipality of Gallio Councilor	Female
Lusiana-Conco Councilor	Male
Municipality of Rotzo Councilor	Male
Municipality of Roana Councilor,	Female
Municipality of Enego, Rotzo e Foza, Social Councilor	Male
Municipality of Lusiana-Conco Social Councilor	Female
Municipality of Roana Social Councilor	Female
Municipality of Asiago Social Councilor	Female
Researcher	Female
Verbalizer	Female

*Tab.3.1*

The officials present had been called and invited with the aim of having a representative guest for all the municipalities of the plateau. The meeting place of the Focus Group is the Council room of the Municipality of Gallio, a large and welcoming room.

### 3.2.3 TEACHERS FOCUS GROUP

Carrying out a focus group with teachers from a high school is useful for understanding the youth conditions of a territorial area. Teachers have a key role in monitoring and understanding student wellbeing, as well as being well placed to provide insight into the social, cultural and educational dynamics of young people in the local community.

Teachers interact directly with students every day and can provide detailed information about their experiences, concerns and challenges. Teachers may also be able to identify and report social or behavioral problems among students that may reflect broader youth conditions in the area. Additionally, teachers can be aware of local resources available to students and their families, helping to identify gaps or areas where more interventions or resources are needed.

This focus group took place on 18 November 2021 in a meeting room of the Mario Rigoni Stern institute with the teachers who made themselves available to carry out this interview, ten people in total were present:

TEACHERS FOCUS GROUP-PARTECIPANTS	
WORK POSITION	GENDER
The principal of the institute,	Female
The vice principal of the high school,	Female
The vice principal of the vocational institute,	Male
An educator from the boarding school (where students from remote areas to the plateau stay),	Female
A support teacher,	Male
A history and philosophy teacher,	Male
A math teacher,	Male
An English language teacher	Male
A teacher of literature and history	Female
The researcher	Female
The verbalizer	Female

*Tab. 3.2*

### 3.2.4 CITIZENSHIP FOCUS GROUP

By involving members of the public, active community involvement in issues affecting young people is promoted. This can encourage community participation and support in initiatives aimed at improving youth conditions. Furthermore, the perception and atmosphere of the community can significantly influence the lives of young people. A focus group can help evaluate the quality of life and safety for youth in the area. By involving members of the citizenry, participation in the planning and implementation of initiatives and policies that can improve youth conditions is promoted.

The focus group with citizens was held on December 1st 2021, in the hall of the Mountain Union Regency of Asiago. It was held with personalities belonging to the citizenship of the Asiago Plateau, whose interests or jobs lend themselves usefully to coming to know and learn more about the issues and conditions of the Asiago plateau youth community. There were a total of fourteen focus group participants and they came from very significant work backgrounds:

ADULTS FOCUS GROUP-PARTECIPANTS	
WORK POSITION	GENDER
Asiago parish pastor	Male
Manager of a sports club	Male
Educator in a juvenile community	Female
Educator in a juvenile community	Male
President of a community of minors	Female
Parent committee liaison	Female
A parent	Female
Educator	Female
Administrator	Male
Young person interested in the community	Male
Neuropsychiatric educator	Female
Bartender	Female
Parent committee member	Female
Researcher	Female
Verbalizer	Female

*Tab 3.3*

### 3.3 END OF RESEARCH REPORT

An end-of-research report, also known as a final research report, is a document that summarizes and presents in detail the findings, conclusions and recommendations of a study or research project. This type of report is often requested by funders, academic institutions or organizations interested in the work carried out during the course of the research. In this report in particular, considerations are made on the qualitative data, but also on the quantitative data collected through the distribution of the questionnaire and the interviews (which covered the second and third phases of the research).

### 3.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPLICATION

The methodology of applying a qualitative analysis refers to the set of procedures, techniques and approaches used to conduct and interpret an investigation based on qualitative data. Qualitative analysis is a process of in-depth exploration and understanding of complex phenomena, often used in the social sciences, humanities, and other disciplines to examine in detail aspects such as opinions, behaviors, social contexts, and other subjective aspects.

In this case I will explain the methodological approach I adopted to apply the grounded theory investigation on the documents I previously described. I adopted a very specific action plan, obviously taking inspiration from the guidelines indicated by his parents theorists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. This process allowed me to extract information by extrapolating an interpretation, I therefore applied this reading and analysis scheme to all the documents I had available.

I would like to point out that the analysis of a qualitative document with the Grounded Theory method is a systematic process that allows you to develop theories in an inductive way, based on the data collected, This type of research is not considered novel in this context, as the phenomenon has already

been investigated, but in different contexts (Halaweh, 2011) . The structure I used was the following:

#### 3.4.1 FIRST READING

First of all I proceeded with a familiarization action with the data, before starting the analysis, in fact, it is important to read and familiarize yourself with the qualitative data collected. This occurs with the aim of creating an initial mental skeleton on the content of the documents available. This is also done to have a general idea of the context, the language used, and the document transcription methodology on which I worked.

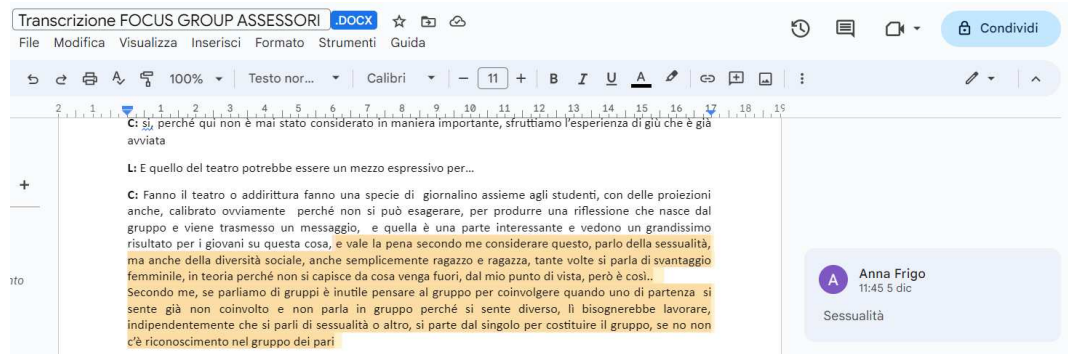
#### 3.5.2 INITIAL CODING

Subsequently I moved towards the second reading of the documents, accompanied by the generation of the first categories that emerged in the speeches made by the participants in the focus groups, and by the considerations made by the researchers in the research report. This is the beginning of open coding, where you examine the data to identify relevant concepts, themes, or categories. Initial or open coding is the first step of data analysis. It is a way of identifying important words, or groups of words, in the data and then labeling them accordingly (Birks & Mills 2010).

More specifically I created descriptive labels for these categories without forcing a predefined structure. Field notes are an important part of Grounded theory research because they allow a researcher to record observations and thoughts about the research process and topic as a progressive research. (Hoflund, 2013).

The descriptive labels were created (as I mentioned previously) by adding and highlighting the themes and placing comments in the google document containing the transcript I was working on, figure 3.1 can clarify how the highlighting and insertion process was carried out:





*Fig.3.1*

Through coding, the researcher codes keywords and assigns names for them, which later become concepts and categories. However, the researcher also needs to be creative and innovative in choosing meaningful, representative, and reflective names. “This creativity involves brainstorming and manipulating the data several times. The notion here is that creating a name for a new concept/category is not an easy task, since the code sometimes reflects a sentence or even several statements/paragraphs (Halaweh, 2011).

### 3.5.3 AXIAL CODING

Axial coding consists of a set of procedures according to which qualitative data are re-read, recomposed, assembled and integrated with each other on the basis of the connections between the categories (Ricolfi, 1997). With a third reading, therefore, I went in search of connections between the categories I had previously identified, also trying to find points in common between them and correlations that would allow me to create a pattern of assonances and similarities that emerged that could recall themes that also arose between different focus groups and the end of the research report. In fact, it could happen that a macro-theme emerged within a certain discussion contained in a document, and that the same macro-theme had also emerged in another context in another focus group.

It must be kept in mind that categories and subcategories should not be created as if they were the defined and unchangeable pieces of the mosaic of theoretical construction. Indeed, I have repeatedly found reason to introduce changes, substitutions, mergers, insertions, new names, deletions. Grounded Theory procedures are oriented towards all this and are based on the principle that qualitative sociological research is a process in which one can always retrace one's steps, on the basis of the interweaving between the acquisition of data, their codification and the theoretical annotations on them that is characteristic of the paradigm of conceptualisation and codification (Ricolfi, 1997).

Therefore in this phase, I looked for relationships and connections between the categories identified during open coding, trying to create subcategories or refine existing categories.

#### 3.5.4. SELECTIVE CODING

Selective coding is that in which it is decided around which phenomenon or event under study all the other categories should be integrated. It follows the other codings and interrupts them, in the sense that it converges analysis and processing on choosing the central category of the investigation in progress (Ricolfi, 1997).

The case I am working on and the amount of data I have at my disposal have not allowed me to generate a proper theory, but this selective coding phase has allowed me to group the central categories that would allow me to have an overview of the social condition of young people in the Upper Plateau area, in which the common properties of activities, productions and human conceptions of the young men and women who populate the Upper Plateau area are grouped. "Developing categories through the process of intermediate coding will increase the level of conceptual analysis apparent in the developing grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2010).

Therefore I began to build "the theory" on the basis of the categories and relationships identified. I tried to understand the underlying processes and to develop an organic explanation of the phenomenon studied, with the help of consulting the researchers' notes and the indications and clarifications given to me by those who personally participated in the focus group or who carried out the transcription of the latter.

During the process of concurrent data generation or collection and analysis, and the constant comparison of data. The researcher employs intermediate coding in two ways: firstly, to develop fully individual categories by connecting sub-categories, and fully developing the range of properties and their dimensions; and, secondly, to link categories together. Initial coding is often said to fracture the data, whereas intermediate coding reconnects the data in ways that are conceptually much more abstract than would be produced by a thematic analysis. Axial coding is the most advanced form of intermediate coding and has been a feature of the work of Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin over time (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

#### 3.4.5 CONSTANT COMPARISON

L'identificazione di una categoria comporta ripetuti processi di codifica e confronto. Impressioni, osservazioni, riflessioni, giustificazioni e ragioni di enfasi o di codifica si susseguono e devono essere annotate. Sono appunti che riportano i fili di un ragionamento, raccolgono idee fresche, annotano qualche intuizione, restituiscono le prime sensazioni, registrano i passaggi da un'idea all'altra (Ricolfi, 1997). The constant comparison of incident to incident, incident to codes, codes to codes, codes to categories, and categories to categories is important to always have a clear idea of the categories and the relationships between them. This is termed constant comparative analysis and is a process that continues until a grounded theory is fully integrated. Induction of theory is achieved through successive comparative analyses (Birks & Mills, 2010).

### 3.5.6. THEORIZATION

The ideal type I theorized gradually became more and more articulated and complete with the evolution of the analysis and with the repetition of the reading. In fact, in this phase the identification of key concepts, the relationships and processes existing between them has gradually become more and more complete.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 CATEGORIES**

It is a basic assumption of both grounded theory and other methods of qualitative analysis: the data and information gathered in empirical investigations do not explain or illustrate themselves. The process of knowledge unravelling is generally marked by immersion in the chosen field of investigation (Ricolfi, 1997).

In what follows, therefore, I will set out the results obtained from the qualitative analysis, attempting to read them with a key that allows one to fully understand the links and meanings of the categories I have identified.

The "findings" obtained through a qualitative research method represent the results and, in this case, the categories that emerged during the data analysis process. These results are based on observations made thanks to the analysis carried out on the focus group transcripts and the documentary analysis carried out by me. Findings include a detailed description of the data collected and the categories identified by me during the coding process, in this case direct quotes or concrete examples taken from interviews, observations or other sources will be reported. As you analyze your data, you identify themes, patterns, and trends that emerge from the data. The "findings" therefore reflect these key aspects of the phenomenon studied.

At this point, therefore, we will delve into the analysis of the sub-categories identified, the complexity of its dimensions emerges, since it is on the basis of these that the category may be subject to change. All this is the result of the conceptualisation work I have carried out on the data and information collected, based on the concepts and their groupings (Ricolfi, 1997).

The "findings" in this case allow us to highlight the relationships and connections between different aspects of the phenomenon studied. These relationships contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the context and social dynamics present in the territory of the Seven Municipalities Plateau.

These findings can also highlight significant contrasts or variations within the data. These can provide valuable information on the diversity and complexity of the area. In addition to describing facts, "findings" also include interpretations and explanations that help make sense of the data. Analyzers seek to provide a contextual and in-depth understanding of the results. In some cases, the "findings" are also compared with existing theories or relevant literature. This helps place findings within a broader context and make connections with previous research. The "findings" may have practical implications and provide a basis for future recommendations. These can be used to inform decisions, policies or practices in the field of study.

In summary, "findings" in qualitative research represent the emerging discoveries, understandings and interpretations that arise from the analysis of data collected through qualitative methods.

## 4.2 FINDINGS FOCUS GROUP ASSESSORI

From the minutes of the focus group, approximately twenty pages of transcription emerged, containing: 12.781 words and 77.149 characters. In these lines, the concerns and satisfactions hidden in the minds of the councilors who participated in this meeting have emerged.

### 4.2.1 UNCERTAINTY AND SOLITUDE

Sometimes the theme of uncertainty is brought to light, it appears in the speeches of the councilors almost always accompanied by references made to the theme of loneliness and youthful anxiety, connected in particular with the distance present between the institutions and young people.

Adolescence is a transition period characterized by several uncertainties and elevated vulnerability to psychopathology. Intolerance of uncertainty (IU) is the tendency to experience negative cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions in the face of uncertain situations and it may be a risk factor for the development of psychopathology in this population. IU was originally conceptualized as a disorder-specific vulnerability factor, but its transdiagnostic nature is currently established (Bottesi, 2023). Adolescence is a life stage characterized by significant physical, psychological, social and emotional changes, and these changes can create a variety of challenges and pressures. Adolescents are still developing their identities and often face social and cultural standards to define who they are. The pressures for conforming to ideals of beauty, success and social acceptance can generate insecurity.

*“Yes, an uncertainty, an instability about the future, you don't know if they will continue school, if they will return to DAD (Online lessons). I'm talking about my daughters, you don't know what you'll do at university, you haven't chosen university yet, you don't know if you'll be able to go to the faculty you want, because now there are talks, there's uncertainty.. ”*

Here, reference is made to the feeling of instability that grips the minds of young people accompanied by the uncertainty inherent in their educational future. At the end of their secondary school education, young people in the Highlands find themselves caught in a crossroads that forces them to choose whether to remain in the area to work in the available sectors of activity, or to leave to continue their schooling in tertiary education.

#### 4.2.2 LACK OF SPACES

The lack of spaces dedicated to adolescents can be a problem that affects their well-being and development. Teens have unique needs, and having adequate space can have a significant impact on many aspects of their lives. Teenagers need spaces where they can socialize with each other. The lack of such spaces

can limit opportunities to build relationships, with possible negative consequences on mental health and social well-being.

“In this growth process the adolescent needs a comparison with his peers, moments and spaces for comparison with “real, flexible and capable interlocutors”. The adult's task is not to provide certainties, but to "restore one's own existence to make the existence of others possible". Numerous studies on adolescent needs have shown the need to provide adolescents with orientation and sharing tools not only to get information but above all to have spaces in which to share their questions and places in which to be listened to (National Congress Italian Society of Adolescent Medicine, 2006).

Informal spaces can encourage learning and personal growth. For example, libraries, youth centers or cultural venues can be places of informal learning that are lacking in the absence of dedicated spaces. Creating and maintaining spaces suitable for adolescents is important to support their physical, emotional and social development. Communities, educational institutions and local authorities can work together to ensure the availability of such spaces and promote a positive environment for adolescents to grow.

Repeatedly the need for a space for young people other than the village bar is mentioned, this will be a theme mentioned several times in the focus groups.

*“There isn't even a room for young people to do catechism, rather than find, rather than activities related to catechism, with the parish, those playful things. And there isn't even that space. And this is certainly a problem.”*

In fact, the meeting places for the youngest are limited to the environments used for the practice and performance of the sports that are normally cultivated in the area (swimming pool, gym, ice stadium, etc.). Emphasis is therefore placed on the lack of meeting places that differ from the school or sports environment, these meeting points are often and unfortunately identified in bars where young people already experience alcohol abuse at an early age.



### 4.2.3 GENDER INEQUALITY

A topic that caught my attention was that of sexuality and in particular the social diversity existing between boys and girls in the plateau area. Below I will list some interventions that are relevant to grasp this factor:

*"In my opinion, it is worth considering this, I am talking about sexuality, but also about social diversity, even simply between boys and girls, many times we talk about female disadvantage, in theory because it is not clear what it comes from, from my point of view, but that's how it is"*

Therefore, already analyzing the first focus group, the theme of female disadvantage is brought to the fore without there having been the stimulus of the interviewer, this aspect denotes a particular relevance of this theme for the councilor who brought it out. The same interlocutor, however, is unable to grasp or describe the cause of this perceived disadvantage.

There was another comment that caught my attention, as I believe it is capable of describing how, very often, even if in a playful way, the female figure is belittled:

In this context we were talking about how some girls tried their hand at cleaning a house during the social day activity (an active citizenship path, managed and created by young people aged 11 to 19 which involves the involvement of schools.)

*" S: If we had started from girls, I don't know the old-fashioned ones in a manner of speaking to understand us eh, who worked who cleaned, but these were girls who never even did at home. I mean it starts from a base*

*Sa: There are no longer the good women of the past (laughter)*

*S: I hope you won't misunderstand me. Once upon a time, the girls were used to picking up the rag, these ones weren't, but in spite of a non-compliant base of preparation... they did a marvellous job*

*L: A positive surprise*

*S: Almost unexpected'*

In this case it is described how the interlocutor was surprised by the fact that young girls were able to clean a house in an excellent way. The tone with which the words were used recalls with nostalgia the era in which women were primarily designated to take care of the house and carry out domestic work.

In the words of Ulivieri, "Teachers and administrators have a historical fault, since instead of using their otherness and extraneousness with respect to sexist knowledge, in innovative terms and of openness with respect to gender difference, they accepted the role of mere transmitters of that knowledge" (2001, p. 28). For this reason, it would be desirable to hypothesize training courses for teachers or administrators starting from the proposals and studies developed in the field of gender pedagogy, which focus on the innovative scope and operational potential of a gender approach (Ulivieri, 1996).

Gender education cannot ignore the profound awareness that moves teachers, male and female trainers: the teachers themselves are embodied subjectivities, bearers of stories, biographies, experiences marked by the differences of the gender that the teaching practice of Gender education cannot be ignored. Since we cannot teach others a free and constructive relationship with reality unless we have first-hand experienced its possibilities and limits, teachers should use all the richness of their research experience on themselves.

himself to work in this direction (Guerrini, 2013).

#### 4.2.4 ABANDONMENT OF THE TERRITORY

Another theme that emerged in this but also in the others is that of the abandonment of the territory by young people, who often, as stated by the interviewees, feel the need for more freedom. In fact, many people, especially young people, decide to leave a mountain area to pursue higher educational opportunities at universities or training institutes in other locations. This may be motivated by searching for specific academic programs or better educational resources. Lack of opportunities, especially for young people, can lead to

population declines in these areas. Some people seek more varied and exciting life experiences, moving to places with greater cultural diversity, access to cultural events and entertainment opportunities.

*"Then we talk about why we abandon the plateau, why the choice to go to school down there, many times I speak from personal experience, but I also tend to share with boys and girls who have similar difficult conditions, a person moves to the lowlands to study to escape and get some fresh air, because perhaps among the larger numbers there is a perception of freedom, then perhaps it isn't even like that, if we go and see, perhaps there are more critical situations, but in my opinion this is one of the elements to be evaluated, together with all the other problems of diversity or non-inclusion which do not depend on family situations, but on the individual person"*

The impacts of abandoning a mountain area can include loss of biodiversity, loss of cultural heritage and decreased resilience of local communities. To address these problems, it is important to implement policies that promote sustainable development, preserve local culture, improve access to services and responsibly manage resources and use them to improve not only the tourist but also the socio-environmental offer for those who live in the area all year round.

#### 4.3 TEACHERS FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

From the minutes of the focus group, approximately seventeen pages of drafting emerged, containing: 11030 words and 66254 characters.

##### 4.3.1 RADICAL POLITICAL POSITIONS

Those present were found to be inclined to support to extreme right-wing political ideology on the part of some young people at the institute:

*"Look that radical political positions, let's call them extreme right-wing Nazis and fascists are there in this school, it's just that they are very dormant."*

*What happens around us unfortunately also happens here, and for the first time I am telling you about this episode since it has never happened to me, I am deeply anti-fascist following the principles of the constitution. It has never happened to me in the corridors of this school to hear 'Giovinezza giovinezza' being sung, and the other day I heard it."*

In this fragment, a teacher sadly recounts the episode in which one of his students started singing the song "Giovinezza" in the school corridors, one of the most popular songs during the twenty years of fascism. The text of Salvatore Gotta was officially approved by the Directorate of National Fascist Party as the "Triumphal Hymn of the National Fascist Party". The song will become of equal importance to a national anthem, when in all public events it will be played immediately after the Royal march (Repubblica, 2010).

This speech therefore expresses the professor's fear for the radical orientations of young teenagers from the plateau, who according to him would have a tendency to sympathize with the political current of the far right. These types of statements obviously must not lead to a generalization about young people and their political orientations as these differentiations can easily be found in all institutions and in all Italian clichés.

It may be useful to point out this reminder to reflect on how sometimes the mountain environment and some mountain communities can be characterized by deep-rooted cultural traditions, which can influence political mentalities; the preservation of traditions can in fact be associated with more conservative political positions. In some mountain areas, geographical isolation may have contributed to greater autonomy and independence of communities. This sense of autonomy could be reflected in political positions that value individual freedom and the limitation of government intervention.

Stein Rokkan defines the fundamental oppositions within a territorial population as fractures, which differ in intensity from the rest of social conflicts (Valbruzzi, 2021)

The analysis of the formation of social fractures (cleavages) was considered by Rokkan to be an effective interpretative key for understanding the political dynamics within a territory.

According to Rokkan, in the structuring of Western European party systems, a persistent connection has been formed between the fault lines that run through society and the political offer (understood as a set of significant formations present in the political system).

Rokkan identifies several fracture lines and among them we can identify two that are particularly suited to the case of the Highlands, also explaining the emergence of this type of political interference.

The first is the centre-periphery fracture, which pits the elites who pursue the objective of national and European integration and the peripheral elites that resist this attempt. At stake is the control of linguistic resources. The opposing party formations are the nation-builders VS the local parties.

The second is the city-country divide that pits urban interests (free-traders) against those of the agricultural world (protectionists). At stake is the control of economic policies and the opposing parties are the liberals VS the agrarians (protectionists).

In the Italian case, the most significant political-territorial identities, i.e. the territorial political subcultures, are linked to the fault lines generated by the processes of building the state and the nation. Along these fault lines the parties organized local society and favored the sedimentation of political orientations convertible within the democratic constitutional framework (also through the control of local political institutions), have reproduced different ways of regulation for local development and favored the extension and thickening of trust networks (Almagisti, 2016)

The social capital of the plateau sedimented in the territorial subculture has guaranteed the horizontal connections that have held the local society together over time (Almagisti, 2016).

Many mountain regions, such as in this case the Plateau of the seven municipalities, are characterized by rural economies, often based on agriculture or land-related activities. In agricultural contexts, political visions oriented towards the conservation of traditional values and private property can be developed.

#### 4.3.2 GEOGRAPHICAL MARGINATION

In this focus group, the theme of marginalization emerges due to the geographical location of the territory and the distance between the municipalities, which I spoke about in the first chapter:

*"For Asiago perhaps even less so, but certainly for other municipalities, they spend their lives not only as young people, but then also as elderly people in a condition of marginalisation, in fact physically, where thoughts then arise and come to ugly, always quoting Bernardi, the suicide rate rises, which we measure every now and then, which we don't even hide with surprise because in our mountainous area, precisely the loneliness, this somewhat peculiar intermittence creates within people situations of unease precisely because they are unable to see something for themselves and imagine even our young people therefore their own future with a few more certainties with a few more positive elements. "*

Loneliness and depression can be problematic in many mountain communities, and several factors can contribute to these challenges. The geography of mountain areas, often characterized by sparse communities and difficult accessibility, can lead to a sense of social isolation among young people and adults. The lack of recreational and cultural services can contribute to this isolation. Logistical difficulties, such as a lack of efficient transport infrastructure, can make it difficult for young people to move easily from one place to another, limiting their social opportunities and activities.

To address these issues, it is important to implement strategies that promote mental well-being and social support in mountain communities. This could include implementing mental health awareness programs, accessing counseling services, and promoting recreational and cultural activities that foster socialization. Furthermore, improving access to health services and promoting sustainable economic opportunities can help reduce loneliness and depression in mountain areas.

#### 4.3.3 GENDER INEQUALITY

Also in this focus group the theme of social diversity between males and females emerged.

*“Perhaps there is a distinction between males and females in the way they use the territory, perhaps overall I notice greater discomfort, apparently dissatisfaction in the girls, while the male with a controlled designation of origin, the mechanical in quotation marks type here he is, is really fulfilled in being a son of the plateau and seems almost proud to possess a wisdom that seems like that of Heidi's grandfather; that is, he already knows a lot and as soon as he can tell you what he knows he reveals wise extracurricular skills that come straight from a past of which he is very proud.*

*I give the typically anecdotal example of the passage of the tractor, when you are giving a lesson to the mechanics student and there is no lesson that is relevant, the tractor is very interesting and they are able to guess what tractor it is, engine capacity, brand, everything and then they bet on who is driving it, of course they often guess, the uncle is the relative of the other one, so here are these more picturesque and colorful aspects linked precisely to the male.*

*Here's the girl I would see as suffering more. Or they amaze you in general with an ability to still savor very simple things that are apparently out of fashion such as writing a collective letter in Barbian style to a partner who we can say in quotation marks is in social retreat and therefore everything is put in place so as not to lose her; still find something worthy in the drafting of a collective letter, which surprises me and which makes them say that "it is the best lesson they have ever given", and yet you proposed something almost with shame because it seemed like a heartfelt book, or in any case very very old.*

*Maybe I don't teach in the right direction perhaps to grasp the satisfaction of the girls, perhaps colleagues from other institutes grasp the satisfaction more, clarification on the fact that the girls I have dealt with are from the hotel sector, a tiring, very masculine course and cooking does not always seem to satisfy them as a life perspective. Paradoxically they work as a hotelier but then they hope for something completely different, so a bit paradoxical.*

*Perhaps the female intolerance that I have seen over the years is less macroscopic than the male one, it is less noticeable and then little by little you want to discover that they talk to each other, that they talk to you about cuts, about things of a certain type, about a certain depth, but more secret that are under a sweatshirt that can really go unnoticed.”*

In this case, she is a teacher who teaches speaking in a professional setting, as can be seen from her words what is described is a sense of inadequacy perceived by her young students, an inadequacy that is contrasted with the pride with which the average highland male interfaces with daily life. The aspect of the intolerance of the young women who inhabit the plateau emerges, while on the other hand we see the description of a male individual perfectly incorporated and at ease in this geographical area, who seems to have raised him to be the favorite son of this mountain territory.

This last intervention makes us reflect on what the socio-cultural causes that characterize and determine this condition of gender difference could be.

Below I will show another exchange of information carried out during this focus group, which highlights the condition of dissatisfaction and frustration that accompanies adolescent girls in the area:

*“This is something that concerns girls from the plateau, just yesterday I spoke to a girl who clearly experienced the COVID period badly, but is still experiencing it badly. A somewhat strange situation in fact, which I don't know how to handle at the moment:*

*there is precisely this girl, a girl who told me that she has found a way to express her own value only through studying, but she doesn't like studying, she doesn't understand the usefulness of what she is doing, that is, the only usefulness is taking good grades and therefore she demonstrates her worth but*



*otherwise what she is doing makes no sense to her, she is a very brilliant girl and we are talking about a girl who gets a grade of nine or ten in all subjects, she doesn't know what she wants to study because she doesn't like any subject and the only thing she seeks is confirmation of her worth there and only there because only there she believes she can prove her worth, not in sport or anything else.*

*She told me that during this lockdown period she has gotten worse in this, there is probably also an underlying disorder problem, she needs her own recognition, she has found the valve that gives it to her but otherwise she doesn't appreciate herself so above all she doesn't find stimuli to find other versions of herself. She said that this period even more she finds herself truly meaningless.*

*For me it is inconceivable that a person who also manages to have such a high performance can disgust what he is doing but the human variety is truly even wider now. Evidently the need for recognition is so great that even that disgust is able to resist, yes because even a person who poses relationships in class therefore practically revealed to me an aspect that I could never have imagined and therefore I believe that it is there, there will be work a lot even beyond what I do in class, which on the one hand I feel involved in and then in other cases I don't know."*

This intervention made by a high school history and philosophy teacher automatically leads to a reflection on the condition of social dissatisfaction experienced by adolescents, this young woman in fact manages to find the meaning of her own being only through study. This anecdote highlights the aspect that perhaps there is a lack of opportunities and involvement that can integrate both males and females in an undifferentiated manner.

In fact, in some mountain communities, strong traditional gender roles may persist which influence social expectations towards adolescents. This could translate into differences in educational and employment opportunities between genders.

Active participation in community life may vary between genders in mountain areas, with differences in responsibilities and opportunities for social involvement.

#### 4.3.4 ALCOHOL ABUSE

This is a theme that in my opinion particularly characterizes the youth and inhabitants of the plateau area; in 2010 the share of the population aged 11 and over who consumed at least one alcoholic drink during the year was equal to 65.7% (Adamo, Domenico & Orsini, 2006).

*“Then another issue which in my opinion is crucial is alcohol which for example, among the male users of the mechanical sector passes as an act of virility and very right to practice, indeed it is healthy while the joint is unhealthy, it is toxic. You see them laughing proudly at alcoholic exploits.*

In this case the teacher who is speaking places the emphasis on how widespread alcohol abuse is among young people, and how this is a practice that especially characterizes the male gender. In fact, there are studies that demonstrate that 20.4% of males believe that alcohol increase the virility (Aiello & Pierlorenzi, 2007).

In some mountain communities, access to entertainment alternatives may be limited. A lack of leisure options could push young people into risky behaviors, including excessive alcohol consumption. The geographic isolation typical of mountain areas could contribute to a sense of boredom and social isolation among young people. Alcohol abuse could become a form of escape or socialization that occurs in nightclubs or bars.

Overall, risky behaviors in alcohol consumption (non-moderate daily consumption), binge drinking (six or more glasses of alcoholic beverages on a single occasion) and alcohol consumption by children aged 11-15 years concern 8 million and 624 thousand people, 16.1% of the Italian population aged 11 years and over. This share appears stable over time.

Among young people aged 18-24 who regularly frequent nightclubs, risky alcohol consumption behaviors are more widespread (33.9%) than among their peers who do not go to nightclubs (7.2%) (Adamo, Domenico & Orsini, 2006). Furthermore, in some mountain communities, there may be cultural traditions that favor the consumption of alcohol on certain occasions. These cultural

patterns can influence the social and behavioral norms of young people, as is highlighted in this case.

#### 4.4 CITIZENSHIP FOCUS GROUP .FINDINGS

From the minutes of the focus group, approximately nineteen draft pages emerged, containing 11.692 words and 67.993 characters.

##### 4.4.1 HAVING TO SETTLE FOR

Another theme that was much discussed in this focus group was that of "having to settle for", referring in fact to the isolated condition of the territory, and to the limited range of activities and spaces it offers:

*“My word is settle. I also see my kids in the community, they have few opportunities. There are sports that don't exist here and therefore cannot be played. And laughing we say to each other "well come on, we'll settle for it!". But why should we be satisfied? If someone has potential, talent or even the desire to do something, why must the territory limit this talent, this potential? That, in my opinion, as far as I'm concerned, is the word.”*

Speaking here is an educator employed in the community for minors present in the plateau area. The aspect of the limited offer of places or experiences that the plateau can offer is highlighted, which often weighs on the possibilities of young people who, if they want to cultivate a sport or an activity that is not normally offered in the area, they are forced to move to the plains or to the city, being forced to make long journeys by car, in fact many young people often abandon their hobby due to complications due to logistical or transport factors.

##### 4.4.2 GENDER INEQUALITY

In this focus group, the theme of social differentiation present between male and female in the area was placed less emphasis. But there are still some interesting intervention, concerns the conception and lack of awareness that young people have regarding the issue of violence against women.

*“Last Saturday we put up a red bench against violence against women, with the participation of schools... now it's funny, but we expected it... now it's been*

*defaced. Probably by the same ones who made it. These are things that we knew would happen, it's normal. But then there is a question of credibility, that those values that we give ourselves are truly important to take flight. In my opinion, this thing of looking for these excellences, of asking them, can be very interesting."*

This reminder hurts even more today, when the news of his murder is still so fresh Giulia Cecchettin, yet another young victim of violence against women in Italy. This act indicates a lack of involvement in the issue of violence against women. Raising awareness raises awareness of the scale of the problem of violence against women, greater awareness can lead to greater prevention, as people will be more likely to recognize signs of abuse and intervene.

Achieving equality between men and women is considered a fundamental element for preventing gender violence, which in turn is defined as one of the mechanisms through which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men. The role of education in preventing this phenomenon is considered crucial( Aiello & Pierlorenzi, 2007); in fact, the Istanbul Convention reiterates that it is necessary to «include in school programs of all levels educational materials on topics such as gender equality, non-stereotypical gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent resolution of conflicts in relationships interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity, appropriate to the cognitive level of the students" (art.14 Education, paragraph 1).

Raising awareness can help change cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. Promoting cultural change requires widespread commitment to challenging harmful stereotypes and promoting respectful relationships. But when, even in the face of efforts made to raise awareness, we find ourselves faced with cultural rejection carried out through these acts of vandalism, the concern grows, together with the questions that accompany it: what could be the causes of this cultural rejection?

As highlighted in the previous paragraphs, the training of the teaching staff is a central element so that the educational activity can be free from stereotypes and

able to intercept the signals of discomfort of the students. The teachers are the main reference figures of the students, after the family, and, not being involved with them in the dynamics of family relationships, they can accompany the girls and boys in the construction of an inclusive femininity and masculinity respectful of differences and free from dominant and constraining cultural models( Aiello & Pierlorenzi, 2007).

#### 4.4.3 DISTANCE AND TRANSPORTS

The problem of roads and transport in the mountains has undergone slow but profound changes over time and can be said to have followed the development and decline of mountain territories. Until the 10th century, the Alpine mountain had in fact remained a closed structure with limited exchanges with external non-Alpine economies. Only after the year 1000 did it take on the character of a more open structure where, alongside agricultural activity, which began with the use of pastures and forests, trade increasingly developed, especially in livestock and livestock products. craftsmanship, through transport. This new flurry of activity begins to produce the first real communication and transport network of a capillary or minor type and of a major type with an increase in valley bottom and interval roads (Polelli, 1979).

According to those interviewed, however, the connections between the plateau area and other local areas are still too poor.

*F: Distance does not allow you to have experiences...*

*M: The distance and the type of country we live in, where you always have to take the car or bus to get around, affects and isolates you.*

*Go: I'll join in, because the topic of distances comes to mind too. In the sense that accessibility to what is around them makes the difference. What I find now I also speak of as services. It is not easy to think of a proposal, a connection that is accessible. And when you think about a proposal it's not so obvious. I experience both Bassano and Asiago on a daily basis: they are two completely different worlds. Because in Bassano there is a willingness, an ease among the kids in being able to access the world around them, from sport to school and to choose.*

*L: Give us an example of how they can access the world around...*

*Go: But also only with means of transport, as mentioned.*

*L: Transport therefore as the main issue with respect to accessibility. Are you also referring to other distances?*

*G: It's all a bit related, in the sense that physical distance goes hand in hand with social distance. The moment I can't log in or I can't choose how to go, where to go, I'm somehow cut off from a whole series of possibilities.*

Roads and transport therefore become one of the fundamental topics of the discussion, as two logics clash on these issues, one which sees the road as a means of transforming the environment with the possibility of settlement and user development and the other logic the one linked to the more traditional values which see in it a means suitable for improving the living conditions of the mountain dweller (Polelli, 1979).

In particular, with regard to mountain communities, a more in-depth knowledge of the relationships that link roads and transport with the different sectors of activity is necessary in order to make a more rational and articulated choice of interventions. This leads to careful consideration of the delicate balances existing between the different communication routes, natural resources, social resources and other sectors. It must therefore be concluded that the problems of roads and transport, in the "Mountain Communities" plan, find their precise place both in methodological and operational terms. In this sense they come to assume a coagulation function for a better distribution of resources and therefore can contribute to a better territorial structure, both from a social and economic-territorial point of view (Polelli, 1979).

#### 4.4.4 LONELINESS

In the focus group on citizenship, the theme of transport is directly linked to the theme of loneliness, the fact of having to deal with a small reality which for logistical reasons cannot guarantee the same offer as a city reality is perceived as a matrix that involves loneliness and social closure for the young people who

live on the Plateau, but the discussion of this category does not stop at this argument.

The impact of social isolation, generally defined as the absence of contact with other people, is a key factor when exploring the influence of the social environment on people's quality of life. Social isolation is consistently related to a negative impact on health and well-being, and there is growing evidence of the effects of social isolation in older people . As the proportion of older people in the population increases, more are at risk of social isolation (Hawton, Annie, et al, 2024).In this case, the loneliness category is also perceived as a problem for young people and not only for adults or older people.

*Mi: My word is loneliness.*

*L: Can you explain it to us then?*

*Mi: I'm talking about our town...there are very few kids of that age there. At school last year there were 48 children in middle school and 39 in elementary school. And it's something that carries over to everything. Because if you don't organize football... everything is in small groups anyway: there are those who cross-country in the winter, those who follow the activities in the parish. But it is always sectoral and they are always the same: it is always the same group, based on age. So this influences a lot and leads to that discussion. There is disorientation when you find yourself in a different world. My son is at a boarding school in Asiago: having had the chance to change schools, to interact with other kids, it has changed his world. And the same goes for other parents of his age, speaking with some parents. Those who went to Bassano had the bus drama. Because since kindergarten age , the bus driver is always the same, who also knows what the child eats in the morning, who is slow in getting dressed. You go from a situation like this, which is always the same driver from kindergarten to eighth grade, to find yourself in a world, in Bassano at 7.30, 8.00 in the morning that seems like Star Wars. There is the one who perhaps manages to bring out the strength and the one who remains terrified. It's not a simple thing, some mothers have told me: "I, as a mother, would have had problems understanding which bus to take". And as with the bus, also the fact of having to agree on food. As long as they are a pack, that they are all together, in the same class, they go and move like geese. When they begin to spread out, some go to Trento, others to Feltre, to Bassano, many here in Asiago find themselves alone...*

*L: And here loneliness returns... facing new things alone because you have chosen a path that others have not chosen...*

*Mi: But also because, whatever activity you do, the friends themselves are the ones you find close to home. In small towns like ours, if it isn't something motivating to get the kids out together, it's difficult. You see small groups, two, three no more.*

*L: So you told us about both the loneliness of those who find themselves displaced, confronted with a context they don't know and also the solitude more thought of as an organized group moment, but which always sees the same people participating.*

In this case we are not really talking about loneliness experienced in the plateau area but about the loneliness that affects individuals who, for different choices, have decided to move to other places or other cities. In this case, a feeling of unsuitability perceived by the children is described, who, according to the interviewees, have never been used to dealing with larger realities other than those of the Plateau and for this reason, once they leave the nursery they find themselves gasping like fish out of water.

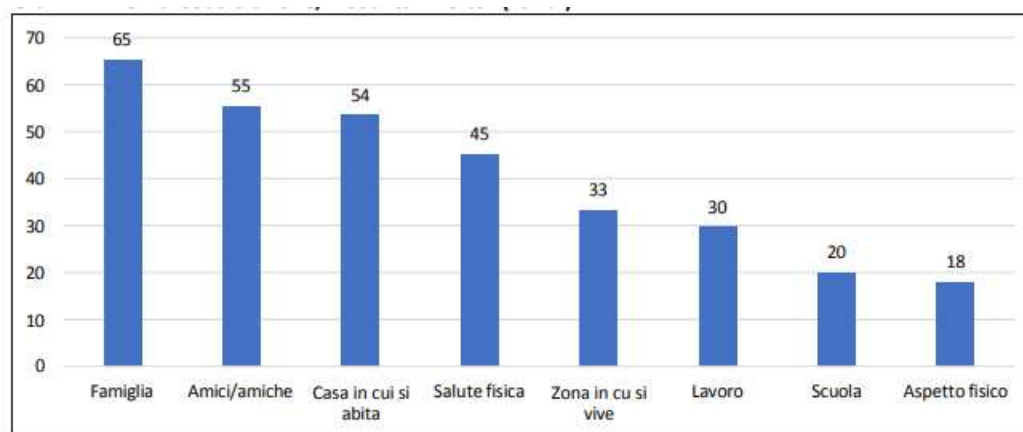
“Human beings are social animals and our biological, psychological, and social systems evolved to thrive in collaborative networks of people. In many societies, social networks are likely to thin as people age, leading in many cases to isolation and loneliness. Social isolation affects health and mortality, whether or not the isolation is accompanied by subjective loneliness ( Singer, 2018).

#### 4.5 END OF RESEARCH REPORT

In this report, the themes that emerged during the research are highlighted both thanks to the qualitative data and thanks to the quantitative data. There are many issues that emerged. In this subchapter in particular I will highlight the references made by the researchers that are linked to the topics covered. in the focus groups previously analyzed.



#### 4.5.1 SATISFACTION



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Remaining on a subjective level, it is useful to also illustrate from a quantitative point of view what are the elements of greatest satisfaction perceived by young respondents in terms of relationships and personal well-being, as can be seen in table number 3: the family reaches 65% satisfaction in the answers, while it drops to 55% and 54% respectively for "friends" and for the "house you live in". Even the "public dimension" of 14-18 year olds on the Plateau sees lower levels of satisfaction: again for the "very" answers, 33% for the area in which they live, 30% for their job (for those who, among those interviewed, works) and 20% for their school (for those among those interviewed, who study) (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

However, if attention turns to the future, the share of those who, given the choice, would choose the Plateau as a place to live drops to three out of ten; a fact that recalls on the one hand the desire for mobility among young people, but on the other also makes us reflect on the aspects on which to intervene for the future of the territory (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

*“If you imagine the future, you don't imagine it on the plateau, unfortunately that's the way it is (...) I hope to see development in the area, maybe I'll also*

*have my job on the plains but in any case I would like to be able to live here anyway or at least on weekends... we have all of them have quite deep roots"*

This intervention was made by a 19 year old male interviewee, who gives voice to the thoughts of countless young teenagers from the plateau. In fact, despite the strong attachment to the territory, the future of work is often imagined elsewhere, in the plains or in the big cities.

In the last 60 years the Italian mountains have lost around 900 thousand inhabitants. All the growth, in practice, has been concentrated on the plains (8.8 million residents) and hills (around 4 million) (Marcantoni & Cerea, 2016) where mostly adults move because the job offer is more convenient or tempting.

#### 4.5.2 TRANSPORTS

Having reached this point, I intend to dedicate attention to one of the most discussed categories during the research process, present not only among the priority objectives set for the investigation. One of the first sub-dimensions detailed by the survey concerned a "hot topic" experienced daily by respondents, that of transport. Distances and the shape of the territory greatly influence the mobility of young people in the Plateau, and especially of those who live in the municipalities adjacent to the center of Asiago and in the peripheral areas (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

Distances and the shape of the territory greatly influence the mobility of young people in the plateau, and especially of those who live in the municipalities adjacent to the center of Asiago and in the peripheral areas.

In fact, from the analysis of the questionnaires, a distribution emerges that sees the private car driven by others (adult peers, parents, family members) as the means of reference (68%) for moving within the Plateau; however, there are some deviations that respond both to the different life phase of the young people interviewed and to some accentuations that constitute a different employment not only between men and women, but also between the different

"school populations"; a finding, the latter, which is especially valid with regard to the evaluations reserved for the public service (buses). Consistent with what has just been mentioned, young people aged at least 17 (a cohort which obviously includes eighteen-year-olds with a driving licence) prefer "exclusive" use of the car driven independently and, on the other hand, are less present in reference to the car "led by others." "Getting a driving licence", in fact, as confirmed by the young people interviewed, becomes a desired objective and a crucial point to be able to move more freely in the area, as this young woman states (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023):

*"It also allowed me to take up space that I wasn't able to take up before... for example going out with my friends at a disco in the evening... without having to insist and burden my parents... before I paid a lot of attention to myself, now I feel I'm more independent and less of a burden for them. Then maybe if I had been in a city where there is more public transport... it wouldn't have been such an important result but in this precise context (getting the driving licence) in my opinion it was a transition between a before and an after". (interv. 6, 19 years, f)*

With reference to the other means of transport used, it can be observed that the female component uses the bus significantly more (with ten points in favor of the male component, 53% vs 43%), as well as (and to an even greater extent) of the car "driven by others" (80% vs 56%).

As regards the satisfaction inherent to the quantity of stops (89% of "yes" answers) and the quality of the service (71%) they give rise to less discontent (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

#### 4.5.3 SPACES AIMED AT YOUNG PEOPLE

Another theme that is deeply felt among the 14-18 year olds protagonists of this research is that of spaces aimed at young people: places of aggregation and meeting, occasions and events that are aimed at this age group, which is certainly very heterogeneous in terms of interests and experiences but rather compact in highlighting the scarcity of physical places, social spaces and youth

aggregation that allow them to meet and have fun (with the exception of parks and bars).

From a quantitative point of view, the responses that in the questionnaire refer to events organized mainly for younger people can be considered. In a question relating to events and occasions in the Plateau aimed exclusively or mainly at young people in the last year, the item "sports events" is the only one for which respondents declare a level of knowledge higher than four out of ten respondents (42% 12), while "concerts and musical events", "cultural events", "occasions organized by schools", "training courses" and "village festivals" are placed at levels just below or above three out of ten answers; Finally, "tourist trips and outings" and "religious events" see a share of positive responses lower than two out of ten (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

#### 4.5.4 GENDER INEQUALITY

As for another hot topic, discussed in every focus group, the "Gender Difference" category also finds its place in the final research report. As can be seen in graph number 4, with respect to the question posed by the questionnaire "I often feel sad", the gender of the respondents again forcefully differentiates the answers: taking into consideration those who declare themselves to be "very" or "fairly" in agreement with the statement, girls (58%) surpass men (30%) by almost thirty points, then, they see more than ten percentage points (51% vs 62%) less regarding the statement "I can imagine my future" (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).



N. casi totali: 659; marzo-maggio 2022

Fig.4.1

The reasons underlying the study and intentions for the future are characterized by the same reference variables: the type of school attended and gender. Regarding the first dimension, in fact, studying "to then attend university" is reported above all among women (in comparison with men) and among high school students (in comparison with students of the technical institute and the professional institute) . "Building good professionalism" among the latter (compared to high school students). The share of those oriented towards tertiary education is, then, much larger among women than among men, with over twenty percentage points in favor of the latter (Cerantola & Girardi, 2023).

Contingency table How do you plan to continue your education/training? *					
Gender identity					
		Gender Identity			
		Man	Woman	Total	
How do you plan to continue your education/training?	I will continue my studies after graduation/qualification to go to university	Count	162	249	411
		% in Gender Identity	42,10%	64,70%	53,40%
	I will not continue my studies after graduation/qualification and go to work	Count	211	128	339
		% in Gender Identity	54,80%	33,20%	44,00%

Table 4.1

The researchers in this case refer to the data that emerged from the cross-references carried out with the answers given in the questionnaire, in

particular the fact that the desire to continue with tertiary education is much higher among women than among men is highlighted.

As you can see from tab 4.1, the gender difference expressed by the students regarding the prospects after the conclusion of the secondary school course is notable, what struck me most in this case is in fact the notable gap between male and female as regards the intention to continue their studies after graduation by going to university. In this case, in fact, we can see that 411 adolescents expressed their desire/intention to go to university, 64.7% girls and 42.1% boys. This data emerged like a resonator in my mind, as I associated it with episodes seen and reviewed by me firsthand.

Also in this case, therefore, female dissatisfaction is emphasized compared to male dissatisfaction in the limited area of the Seven Municipalities Plateau, a condition on which it is right to carry out considerations and reasoning to understand and find a triggering cause.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONSIDERATIONS ON EMERGING TOPICS AND DATA AND**

#### **5.1 FIRST CONSIDERATIONS**

Using the Grounded Theory method allowed me to codify the informations and make a comparison between them in order to fully understand the meaning that is attributed in each specific case.

Having worked directly on the distribution of the questionnaires and the conduct of the focus groups made it easier for me to understand the references and references made by the participants interviewed.

From open and axial coding there is a network of conceptual relationships between which to probe, under which conditions it makes sense and under which, on the contrary, it does not. Connections are systematised in this way and given substance by studying properties and dimensional characteristics of the main categories. Following this, one observes which categories are connected.

This leads to the last stage, which involves comparing different contexts to validate the hypothetical assertion and completing the categories created with every detail, both to give conceptual density to the theory constructed and to increase its conceptual specificity (Ricolfi, 1997).

The awareness of the complex mediations that stand between the social phenomenon under study and its temporary and final illustrations is combined with the scholar's reflection on his own cognitive action, since the interactive acts carried out by social actors are brought into focus. This leads to clear distinctions between Grounded Theory and sociological analyzes based on the quantitative research paradigm (Ricolfi, 1997).

In this chapter I will therefore carry out an all-encompassing analysis of the categories that emerged during this research journey, trying to highlight the hypertextual links existing between the different categories I identified. To allow a more organic and overall vision of the themes that emerged.

The themes that arose in the discussions and in the report were many, and they differed widely from one another, but the considerations made and the terminological references that emerged during the analysis allowed me to carry out reflections on what the relationships are between the different categories I have identified, leading me to understand that they are connected by a chain reaction in which the existence of a certain category determines the birth of another.

## 5.2 THE CATEGORIES

What I understood through this research path is that young adolescents from the mountains have needs, knowledge, skills and needs that differ from those of an adolescent who lives in a lowland area.

What I will do next will be to explain how all the categories I have identified are connected in a cause-effect relationship that generates a chain reaction of consequences.

I have summarized the different categories I identified in table 5.1 to ensure an all-encompassing vision of the themes that emerged in the focus groups and in the final research report.

Emerging categories			
ADMINISTRATORS FOCUS GROUP	TEACHERS FOCUS GROUP	ADULTS FOCUS GROUP	END OF RESEARCH REPORT
UNCERTAINTY AND LONELINESS	RADICAL POLITICAL POSITIONS	LONELINESS	SATISFACTION
LAND ABANDONMENT	GEOGRAPHICAL MARGINALISATION	TRANSPORTS ISOLATION	TRANSPORTS
GENDER INEQUALITY	GENDER INEQUALITY	GENDER INEQUALITY	GENDER INEQUALITY
LACK OF SPACES	ALCOHOL ABUSE	HAVE TO SETTLE FOR	SPACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

*Tab.5.1*

### 5.2.1 GEOGRAPHIC MARGINATION AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

The geographical peculiarity that characterizes the plateau area which makes this area a rare gem in which to take refuge for tourists, is the same that makes it a solitary theater for the young residents who live there even in periods



outside the tourist season. Living in the mountains can promote a more nature-oriented lifestyle, with greater involvement in outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing or mountain farming. This can influence people's mindset and priorities. However, trying to mitigate this geographical marginalization by implementing the public transport service could be an important incentive for the socialization and autonomy of young people from the highlands.

The theme of marginalization is directly linked to the category "solitude", this correlation can be better understood by taking up a speech by an interviewee in a focus group:

*"It's all a bit related in the sense that physical distancing goes hand in hand with social distancing. The moment I can't log in or I can't choose how to go, where to go, I'm somehow cut off from a whole series of possibilities."*

The theme therefore is that geographical and social marginalization are strictly correlated. First of all, the geographical marginalization of the residents of the neighboring municipalities comes into play with the socialization opportunities that can take place in the area, this happens because, when a young adolescent feels the need to leave home to socialize, or carrying out activities that integrate them into society must inevitably clash with the geographical reality of the area characterized by a transport network which, according to those interviewed, does not satisfy the mobility needs of young people from the plateau who do not have a car. In fact, it is not an aspect to be forgotten that, as soon as young people turn 18, they rush to obtain a driving license which for them is considered a pass for independence and autonomy.

#### 5.2.2 HAVING TO SETTLE FOR AND ABANDONMENT OF THE TERRITORY

As a consequence of geographical marginalization we connect to the themes of "having to settle" and "abandonment of the territory", in fact what I found from the interviews and qualitative data analyzed is an insufficiency of leisure offers for young people, since, as highlighted by the interviewees, there is a lack of entertainment offers for young people, who, if they want to carry out activities

that are not offered by the area, necessarily have to move to the plains periodically or permanently. The plausible option that others choose is to be satisfied and adapt to the socio-cultural offer of the plateau area.

In fact, the percentage of young people abandoning mountain areas is increasingly higher, this is due to the need or desire to expand their educational, training and work opportunities.

How can we avoid a depopulation that risks desertifying entire valleys and marginal areas? South Tyrol counters this phenomenon successfully, first of all by mitigating the inconveniences of life in the mountains, for example by financing local shops, guaranteeing good local and socio-health services by creating a good network of roads and public transport incomparable compared to other areas. Secondly, it has maintained or created economic activities that allow young people to find jobs in line with their aspirations. To achieve these objectives, Alto Adige puts in money but also a good dose of social cohesion, with the autonomous province doing as director (Dalla Zuanna, 2022).

It must obviously be considered that even if there is a shortage regarding certain sports offers, there is still a high quality offered regarding the sports centers offered in the Plateau.

### 5.2.3 LACK OF SPACE AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

Another issue directly related to those just mentioned is that of the lack of spaces dedicated to adolescents. The scarcity of meeting places for young people creates favorable conditions for the bar to be identified as a meeting place, where young people find themselves protagonists of alcoholic exploits from an early age. "Alcohol consumption in Italy is a constantly evolving phenomenon, in particular over the last few years the prevalence of teenage consumers (14-16 years) of spirits and alcoholic aperitifs has increased for both sexes (+47%) and consumers between meals (+50%); in the case of these last two types of consumption the greatest variations are recorded for the female sex. The Mediterranean consumption model, prevalent until a few years ago in

Italy, which included the consumption of drinks with a lower alcohol content during main meals, seems to have been replaced by the more characteristic Northern European model of drinking until one gets drunk (Scafato, E., et al. 2006). This phenomenon, therefore, may be further accentuated in geographical areas in which meeting in bars is one of the few plausible options for having social interactions with one's peers.

#### 5.2.4 LONELINESS

At this point I must emphasize the condition of solitude that young people have to face once they leave the plateau area, the people of the plateau, in fact, having always been used to growing up surrounded by the same educational figures and the same sports or school companions, they find themselves disoriented when faced with the outside world. Many young people, as was also said in the focus groups, have never even been used to interfacing with the daily life of the city, just think that none of the young inhabitants of the plateau have ever been used to traveling by rail, which are so commonly used by the young inhabitants of the city. Getting kids used to interacting with realities outside the plateau area from an early age would help young people not to suffer a shock if they decide, once they become young adults, to experience life outside the mountains.

#### 5.2.5 GENDER DISPARITY

At this point, after talking about the topic of social isolation, we connect directly to the topic of social disparity between men and women found in the area. Reflecting on the data collected, what emerges from the focus groups and the research report is a socio-cultural condition that still recalls a patriarchal mentality, in anthropology, a type of social system in which 'paternal right' exists, i.e. the exclusive control of domestic, public and political authority by older males of the group (Treccani, 2024).

If we have to take a look at how this type of culture manifests itself in everyday life we see the difference in conditions and treatment between men and women

in various fields of life, together with the greater difficulty women have in finding work. Other ways in which patriarchal society manifests itself are, for example, catcalling, sexist jokes, or the lack of recognition of women's professional role. Gender role strain is the stress and pressure caused by societal expectations from individuals to behave and perform according to the role expectation attached with each gender (Farah, Shahed & Arshad, 2017)

In the focus groups we see a young woman described as impatient and who, in a certain sense, does not feel fully satisfied in this area. This context contrasts with the male figure, the male in fact manages with little effort to juggle and cope with the daily life of the territory, feeling in most cases fully realized and proud of his being a man. From this reality the young woman from the plateau, as the data collected also confirm, tries to escape, seeking her own affirmation and full fulfillment elsewhere, in a place that is often identified as the city, where she can give full vent to her being without being a victim of acts of belittlement.

The objective of education on the value of gender difference in school is to offer young generations tools that allow them to critically understand reality, including those cultural conditionings which, by limiting scholastic and professional choices, prevent the realization of their project of life. Enabling subjects to exercise their freedom of choice, of being and of doing recalls the concept of capability, which, applied in the educational field, launches an innovative paradigm. The new challenge lies in thinking about the capabilities approach both in the teaching-learning process and in teacher training, since they are the first architects of the learning process of the young generations. A democratic society, which seeks to guarantee that everyone achieves citizenship skills throughout their lives, must invest in the training of new teachers so that they are able to build an authentic, maieutic educational relationship that recognizes the value of difference and which aims to enable each subject to reach the maximum level of awareness and freedom of realization (Guerrini, 2013)

## CONCLUSIONS

I am a young woman, born and raised in the area of the Asiago plateau, this aspect has allowed me to have an all-encompassing, and deeper vision of the topics covered by the research. During the process of analysis, however, I tried not to 'contaminate' the themes that emerged with personal insights, in order to guarantee a result as pure and relevant to the text as possible.

The criticisms and notes that I was able to identify through the documentary analysis of the grounded theory approach were not few, but this does not mean that one should have a negative judgement based on the data collected, it is indeed thanks to the emergence of this type of data that problems, through the commitment of the administrative and educating community, can be resolved.

The main characteristic of Grounded Theory is the inductive approach, which means that the theory emerges directly from the data collected during the research, rather than being based on a pre-existing theoretical framework. The process of developing a grounded theory is based on the constant comparison of data, trying to identify patterns, categories and key concepts.

As I already mentioned in Chapter III, the limited amount of data I had access to did not allow me to generate a theory proper, but it did allow me to develop a general framework for understanding the conditions, gaps and flaws present in the socio-cultural youth system of the Altopiano.

The Asiago Plateau is a natural paradise, with its meadows and hidden paths, it presents itself as a marvel that fortunately many tourists and inhabitants are able to appreciate and value. This peculiarity, these marvellous qualities, must not be changed, but on the contrary must be emphasised more and more, with respect for nature and the living beings that inhabit it.

Through the use of the grounded theory approach, I was able to ascertain that the research brings to the surface shortcomings and gaps in the services and lives of the adolescents, which, when compared with the lives of other peers living in other geographical areas, bring out dissimilarities between the city-country lifestyle and the mountain lifestyle.

The young inhabitant of the plateau is therefore aware of these differences between him and adolescents living in another geographic area, and therefore develops an awareness of his own condition. This condition, however, is not always conceived of as a diminishment of his own being, but is often assimilated as a condition to be proud of.

Lo status del giovane adolescente viene descritto spesso come uno status caratterizzato da divergenze, ma allo stesso tempo gli intervistati lo descrivono con fierezza ardita, questo per la capacità degli abitanti altopianesi di fare fronte alle difficoltà che vengono poste in essere dal territorio. Questo orgoglio innato che è percepibile nelle voci e nelle parole usate dagli altopianesi, trova le proprie origini anche nelle radici culturali e storiche che caratterizzano la popolazione altopianese, la quale, nonostante le condizioni, a volte svantaggiate va fiera del proprio passato e di quello che è riuscita a costruire con le proprie mani in diversi anni di storia.

L'utilizzo della teoria grounded theory permette di entrare a stretto contatto con i dati qualitativi, dando l'opportunità di comprendere in maniera profonda le parole degli intervistati, questo mi ha permesso di intendere che l'Altopiano sta subendo nell'ultimo ventennio una veloce apertura al turismo, grazie alla quale sta crescendo economicamente. Dall'altro lato però, l'Altopiano sembra arrancare nella crescita di un'offerta tanto allettante anche per i suoi abitanti più giovani.

Sembra quasi che, sotto il quadro di sviluppo dell'offerta sociale giovanile, l'Altopiano fatichi a progredire, questo lo vediamo attraverso i richiami presenti nei focus groups.

Se dobbiamo dunque dare uno sguardo alle categorie citate con meno frequenza troviamo la categoria riguardante la "mancanza di spazi" per i giovani, la categoria "solitudine", la categoria "abuso di alcol" e quella riguardante la presenza di ideologie politiche radicali. Le categorie più citate in assoluto, invece sono quella inerenti la disuguaglianza di genere, e quella inerente l'isolamento geografico, queste problematiche toccano profondamente

i cuori degli intervistati, ed è soprattutto da questi che vado a trarre le seguenti conclusioni.

Ci tengo a chiarire che la gerarchizzazione delle categorie alla quale sto facendo riferimento è prettamente basata sulla quantità di volte che questi temi sono emersi nella ricerca e non si basa su una classificazione personale.

Sono ridondanti le connessioni tra le diverse categorie, come ho già accennato nel capitolo V, esse pongono in essere un sistema di interconnessione tra le cause che portano in essere una determinata condizione e l'effetto che essa ha sulla condizione della gioventù altopianese.

What I have noticed is the need to develop a plan that would 'open the doors' for the highlanders as well, and not only for tourists; the highlanders seem to be more and more ready to welcome incoming tourists, but seem less ready to encourage growth that would allow a greater openness to its inhabitants. I am talking about an openness that would allow the area to be attuned to the youth conditions of other localities or cities to which young people from the highlands often go to seek refuge. The kind of attunement I am talking about concerns both the aspect inherent to the offer of spaces and transport for young people, as well as an attunement and openness that makes the gap between the Upland world and the world outside feel less.

Developing policies and projects that take into account the specific youth conditions of mountain communities is essential to ensure the equitable development and well-being of all young people, regardless of the geographical context in which they live. This requires a holistic approach that considers the unique challenges and opportunities of mountain areas and aims to create an enabling environment for the full development and fulfilment of young people.

What I am talking about may come across as a description of a closed society; in reality, people in a mountain community may have more traditional lifestyles or be more connected to local traditions, but this does not automatically mean a closed mindset.

Some might perceive life in the mountains as more isolated or less open to new ideas, the reality is that it offers a different and stimulating perspective. The

only thing that needs to be done is to realise this condition and try to improve it so that this heritage can be enjoyed to the full by the young people who live in and visit it.

*"We lived differently from other places in Italy. There were no masters because the pastures, the woods, the mountains belonged to the community".*

*Mario Rigoni Stern*



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