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*Rethinking Anti-Southern racism: a qualitative study
in Veneto*

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Abstract

This research intends to investigate if and what kind of legacy of anti-Southern racism still exists in Italy. For this reason, exploratory research was conducted in Veneto based on dialogic interviews. These interviews offer an interesting picture of contemporary Italy from a sociological point of view, showing the perception of the existence of two well-differentiated parts within the country, the southern and the northern one. In the discussion of results, it is argued that forms of discrimination against Southerners are still present in Italy, although they have changed in terms of form and intensity.

Introduction

In the past, the Southern Question was the focus of studies and debates for a long time. Prejudice and racism against Southerners in Italy are long-standing phenomena. Nonetheless, anti-Southernism seems to have disappeared from the public agenda, above all following the rise of the Northern League which in the 1990s had laid the foundations for the creation of a "Northern question"¹ to defend a North that was being exploited and robbed of its resources from which the South was taking advantage. The issue of Southern racism is not a matter of debate today. The North-South conflict is narrated in terms of prejudices and parochialism, systematically removing the racist matrix of anti-southernism². Anti-southern racism is considered by most to be a historical phenomenon that has now been left behind, no longer exerting any influence on the lives of Southerners.

And yet, on the contrary, the very emergence of some phenomena suggests to us the urgency of studying and understanding it is far than being unnecessary. The progressive growth of the consensus granted to the League causes a comeback of the anti-southern prejudice up to the birth of separatist and anti-unitary instances. At the beginning of the 90s, the South once again became the cause of the lack of growth in the Northern regions and the Southerners were deemed responsible for the degradation and the corruption in Italy³. In 1993 the leaders of the League became the vehicle of a barely concealed hatred towards Southerners. The slogans and writings that appeared at their gatherings left little room for interpretation: "*Terroni* accept them ... with the hatchet";

¹ Teti, Vito. *La razza maledetta: origini del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Manifestolibri, 1993, p. 8.

² Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, p. 125.

³ Teti, *La razza maledetta*, p.11.

“N*⁴ yes Terroni no”; “Either the Mafia or the League”; “Terroni go home”; “Stay in Africa”; “Go Etna”

“*Il terrone accettalo...con l’ accetta*”; “*Ne*ri sì Terroni no*”; “*O la Mafia o la Lega*”; “*Terroni go home*”; “*State in Africa*”; “*Forza Etna*” and many others⁵.

Some studies were conducted to investigate the period of great emigration of Southerners to Northern Italy, especially between the 1950s and 1970s in the large cities of the industrial triangle Milan, Turin and Genoa and in the surrounding areas. These studies investigated the extent of discrimination suffered by Southerners during that period. Enrica Capussotti's article in *La razza al lavoro* provides an overview of employment discrimination in post-war Turin; Marco Walter Battacchi carried out a psychological study through surveys with Southern and Northern students to analyse the degree of social distance and the structure and intensity of prejudices; Anna Anfossi in *Differenze socio-culturali tra gruppi Piemontesi e Meridionali a Torino* illustrates the most common stereotypes against Southerners. Grazia De Michele and Danilo Montaldi with Franco Alasia conducted research with a qualitative method respectively in Turin and Milan. De Michele investigated the educational field where ad hoc classes, the so-called *classi differenziali*, were created for children of southern immigration. Montaldi and Alasia focused on housing discrimination in Milan that had triggered new urbanization processes in peripheral neighborhoods where only Southerners lived, the so-called *Coree*, with makeshift homes and precarious conditions.

However, there are few studies on anti-southern racism and the impact that discrimination against Southerners could have in our day. Among the most recent studies we can mention the 2012 study by Marco Romito, *Crescere alle Vallette*⁶, in which the mechanisms of reproduction of inequalities among the children of Southern immigrants in Turin were analysed. Interesting research is provided by Ribeiro Corossacz Valeria in

⁴ The n-word that appears in the original Italian version has been censored both in the quotation and in the translation as intrinsically racist. An asterisk was introduced for the Italian version following the orientation that Annalisa Maria Frisina adopts in her book about sociological theories on racism.

Frisina, Annalisa Maria. *Razzismi contemporanei : le prospettive della sociologia*. Carocci, 2020, p. 67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

“*Il terrone accettalo...con l’ accetta*”; “*Ne*gri sì Terroni no*”; “*O la Mafia o la Lega*”; “*Terroni go home*”; “*State in Africa*”; “*Forza Etna*”

⁶ Romito, Marco. *Crescere alle Vallette: una ricerca sui meccanismi di riproduzione delle disuguaglianze tra i figli degli immigrati meridionali a Torino*. In: *POLIS*, 26:2, Aug 2012, pp. 227-254.

2008. In *Da marucchen a marrocchino*⁷, racism is described by Southern and foreign workers in Modena. Racism against *marucchen* people, a term which in the Modena dialect means Moroccan and which was used in the 80s to depreciate Southerners, is intertwined with the more recent and stronger racism against *marocchini* (literally Maroccans), a general term to refer to foreign immigrants from Africa.

Racist practices intersect, overlap and slowly change in form and intensity, labels stratify and merge as in *L'invasione degli extraterroni*⁸. It is a comic in which the Albanian Renald Hysi told when following the civil war and to the Albanian anarchy in 1997 he emigrated with his mother and brother (later his father would join them) arriving in Otranto, then in Lecce and finally settling in Lequile, in the province of Lecce, Puglia. After the initial welcome, Hysi describes how a few years later the narrative began to change: the arrivals were described as invasions and racism against Albanians became increasingly strong. When work began to run short, the Hysis moved to the Marche region where Renald discovered a new label for himself, that of *terrone* which added up to that of *extracomunitario* (literally non-EU citizen) within a mix of hatred and discrimination that transformed him into an "*extraterrone*".

The present study is part of the qualitative studies on the experiences and backgrounds of Southerners to understand if and what kind of legacy has been left by anti-Southernism in Italy. The interviewees are 10 Southern students who moved to Veneto to attend university. My interest also stems from personal reflections as a Southern student who moved to Trieste for the three-year study course and later to Padua for the master's studies. After the impact with the Northern reality which, before moving, I did not even perceive as separate from the Southern one, some treatments, comments and reasoning that some Northern people made about me or Southerners and the South in general, prompted me to investigate the phenomenon from a sociological point of view in order to study it more closely and understand it better. The dialogic interviews have been conducted following the method described by Salvatore La Mendola in *Centrato e aperto*⁹. The empirical study will constitute the last part of my thesis. In the previous

⁷ Ribeiro Corossacz, Valeria. *Da marucchen a marrocchino. Il razzismo descritto da operai meridionali e stranieri a Modena*. - In: STUDI CULTURALI, V, n.1, 2008, pp. 51-74.

⁸ Hysi, Renald & Rapa, Elena. *L'invasione degli extraterroni*. BeccoGiallo, 2023.

⁹ La Mendola, Salvatore. *Centrato e aperto: dare vita a intervista dialogiche*. Utet, 2009.

chapters I have provided a background that can support the understanding of the historical, political and cultural landscape within which my research takes place.

The first chapter focuses on the Southern Question, i.e., "the set of problems posed by the existence in Southern Italy from 1861 until today of a lower level of economic development, of a different and more backward system of social relations, of a weaker performance of many important aspects of civil life compared to the central-northern regions¹⁰". First of all, the meaning of the key terms used in studies on the Southern Question are analysed, followed by the discussion of the pre-unification situation and the ways in which the Question was created; the political function of Southern prejudices that have changed in form and content according to the flow of historical and political events; the racist theories against Southerners born within the social sciences during the 20th century; a brilliant intersection between postcolonial studies and Southern Question by Carmine Conelli¹¹ and finally, the Sardinian question is mentioned, as a real question within the question, which has not been given the right amount of consideration yet.

The second chapter provides data on the racist discrimination suffered by Southerners in the period of great migrations between the 50s and 70s. The studies already described above denounce discrimination at a social, housing, working and educational level. The research concerns Turin and Milan, the large industrial cities in Northern Italy, the first cities in terms of number of Southern immigrants in those years.

The third chapter describes the creation of Souths nationally and globally through the perspective of the Global South and will help understand how the Southern question fits into a global context of wider disparities. After a definition of the Global South, a description of a model of global racism proposed by Michelle Christian will be addressed.

The fourth and final chapter is devoted to empirical research. The discussion of results obtained from the analysis of the interviews is preceded by a section in which the use of the derogatory word *terrone* is analysed from a linguistic point of view and by a

¹⁰ Guido Pescosolido. La questione meridionale, in *Dizionario di Storia Treccani*, 2010. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/la-questione-meridionale_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/

¹¹ Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022.

detailed description of the method used for dialogic research. In the final section I try to draw conclusions from this study.

For the first part of this study, I consulted sources in several languages. In the text I inserted my translation of the quotations that were not originally in English. You can find the original text quoted in the notes.

Chapter 1: The Southern Question

The purpose of this chapter is to give an insight into the *Southern Question*. This phenomenon will be addressed through an historical and political perspective to retrace the process of its genesis.

1.1 Vocabulary

In the initial part of this work great attention was paid to terminology. Power dynamics are reflected in and through the language. Language can be inclusive or create metaphorical or physical boundaries. The way in which language is used can engender distorted vision and influence the public opinion. Some of the words which are relevant to the question are difficult to translate or present a sub-meaning that is strictly related to the subject and it is therefore extremely important to explain them in detail. This small vocabulary would facilitate the approach to the question for any person interested in the topic. The selection of words proposed here is drawn from both formal and informal contexts.

Meridione and Mezzogiorno

The Southern Question is a phenomenon that is tightly linked to its geographical dimension. The involved geographical area corresponds to the Southern part of the Italian peninsula, also known as *Meridione* (literally the South) or *Mezzogiorno* (literally midday). In the Treccani dictionary the word *Mezzogiorno* is defined as following: “*Per antonomasia, e come nome proprio, l’Italia meridionale*¹²”. These words are not just used in their neutral sense, referring to the Southern region of a country. In the field of Italian studies, they indicate by custom a specific territory in Italy including not only the actual Southern regions¹³ but the islands (Sicily and Sardinia), the territories of Abruzzo and the Southernmost part of Lazio region as well. The territories that are referred to through these two labels correspond to the area that was ruled by the House of the Bourbon

¹² Literally “the Southern Italy par excellence and as a proper name”.

¹³ Le politiche per il Mezzogiorno, *Treccani*. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/le-politiche-per-il-mezzogiorno_%28L%27Italia-e-le-sue-Regioni%29/#:~:text=Differenze%20importanti%20sussistono%20non%20solo,ma%20anche%20al%20oro%20interno Southern Italy includes 8 regions: Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sardinia and Sicily.

(Borbone) on the throne of the *Regno delle due Sicilie*¹⁴ (Kingdom of the Two Sicilies) from 1816 to 1861. This period begins immediately after the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the Restoration of the main royal families in Europe and ends in 1861 with the Unification of the different states of the Italian peninsula through the battles and the uprisings of *Risorgimento* movement (literally Resurgence). The interlacement between the geo-political and the inner social dimensions of the question will prove to be seriously problematic and will serve in an ambivalent way to the construction of the discourse on the South. The usage of the words *Meridione* and *Mezzogiorno* mainly imply a whole packet of preconceived ideas such as backwardness and underdevelopment, widespread criminality and etc..

In less formal contexts these regions are also referred to simply using the word *Sud* (South) or in a pejorative sense by the word *Terronia* (this term will be analysed later). Another extreme informal and derogatory definition, particularly spread because of Lega's discourse, would consider all the territories South of the Po river as *Terronia*.

By derivation from the word *Meridione* the words *meridionale* (literally Southerner) used to indicate indistinctly people coming from the Southern regions and *meridionalismo* are obtained.

Meridionalismo

The word *meridionalismo* (meridionalism) has two meanings¹⁵. From a linguistic point of view, it means a word coming from a Southern dialect which is adopted by the standard Italian language and starts to be commonly used also within the Southern area or even nationwide. In this regard, in one of his essay, Luca Serianni¹⁶ shows how Southern dialects (above all Neapolitan and Sicilian dialects) have influenced post-unitarian Italian language (within the 20th century), analysing different sources: literature, press articles, lexicographical works. He provides some examples concerning micro-syntax (which show some dialectal constructions appearing in the standard syntax) and a

¹⁴ With the only exception of Sardinia which was not part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies but was rather under the domination of the Kingdom of Sardinia, ruled by House of Savoy. Nowadays, Sardinia is commonly included within the concept of *Meridione*.

¹⁵ *Meridionalismo*, Vocabolario Treccani. <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/meridionalismo/>

¹⁶ Serianni, Luca. *Il contributo del Mezzogiorno alla lingua italiana contemporanea*, in *Italia* (New York, N.Y.), 2016, Vol.93 (4), pp.764-791

categorisation of the dialectal loanwords, based on their different degree of acclimatization and standardization.

The other meaning of the word *meridionalismo* is closer to this work. By the word *meridionalismo* is commonly meant the historical and economic studies related to the problems caused by the annexation of the Southern territories to the Kingdom of Italy. In this sense, the word includes the Southern Question debate and the studies attempting to find economic and political solutions through the 20th century.

By derivation from the word *meridionalismo*, the word ***meridionalista*** is obtained to indicate scholars who study the abovementioned questions.

Terrone

In the Treccani dictionary¹⁷, the word *terrone* is marked as a derogatory term used by people coming from the Northern Italy to name people coming from the South. In Northern dialects this word is subject to change and some variants are attested: *terùn*, *terù*, *teròn*, *taròn*, *tarùn*, *taroch*, *tarù*, etc. This word probably derived by some designations of Southern areas such as *Terra di Lavoro* (literally Land of work) in Campania region, *Terra di Bari* and *Terra d'Otranto* (in Apulia region). In an article published in the linguistic advice section of the Accademia della Crusca¹⁸, more information in this regard is provided. The word *terrone* (*terùn* in the Northern dialects) is reported as a word mirroring the stereotypes and the divergences between Northern and Southern Italy and as the counterpart of the word *polentone* (literally *polenta* eater, used in a pejorative sense from the Southerners to indicate Northerners). The *GRADIT*, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*¹⁹ (literally Great dictionary of the Italian language) suggests different etymologies: it could have been built from the word *terra* (referring to the backward agriculture of the Southern regions) with the derogatory meaning of “peasant, serf, bumpkin, boor or rude”. It could also come from the blending of the words *terremoto* and *meridione* (literally earthquake and “South”); it could have been built on

¹⁷ *Terrone*, Vocabolario Treccani. <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/terrone/>

¹⁸ *Da dove arriva questo terrone*, Accademia della Crusca. <https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/consulenza/da-dove-arriva-questo-terrone/1333>

¹⁹ *Terrone*, GRADIT. https://www.gdli.it/pdf_viewer/Scripts/pdf.js/web/viewer.asp?file=/PDF/GDLI20/GDLI_20_ocr_969.pdf&parola=terr%C3%B3ne2

the model of “*polenta eater*” as “*mangiatore di terra*” (earth eater); it could refer to a darker skin colour similar to the soil or it could indicate a person coming from the “*terre matte*” or “*terre ballerine*” (literally crazy lands or quake country) as a reference to the frequent earthquakes. The DELI etymological dictionary mentions the existence of words with a similar form and pronunciation meaning a mound of earth and surnames as well, both existing in Spanish, French and Portuguese, dating back to the 14th century with the meaning of peasant or landowner. A hypothetical derivation from the word *terra* could therefore be stronger supported. In any case, the pejorative meaning of the word referring to social and cultural inferiority is a construction of the 20th century.

Due to its increasingly frequent use several other words are derived from *terrone*: *Terronia* (to indicate the Southern regions), *terrónico* (adjective referring to anything related to Southerners) and *terrone* (denoting the “Southern variant” of the Italian language). Nowadays the word *terrone* is subject to a form of positive reappropriation especially by many Southerner students leaving in the Northern placing themselves in the wake of the wave of pride that inflamed the South in the 90s²⁰.

The Question

The book *Italy's “Southern Question”*²¹, which is considered an essential reading in the field, opens an interesting path in the studies on the Southern Question. The subtitle *Orientalism in One Country* immediately clarifies the adopted approach: in this book it is examined how the construction of a whole discourse has affected Southern Italians through dynamics like the ones that were functional to the orientalist discourse.

In this work the Southern Question is defined as following:

In Italy, and in Italian studies, the “Southern Question” evokes a powerful image of the provinces South of Rome as different from the rest of the peninsula, above all for their historic poverty and economic underdevelopment, their engagement in clientelistic style of politics, and their cultural support for patriarchal gender relations and for various manifestations of organized crime. This tenacious catalogue of stereotypes includes, as well, the notion that Southerners, by dint of their essence, or at least their age-old culture and traditions, possess character traits that are opposite to the traits of Northerners. Passionate, undisciplined, rebellious, intensely competitive, and

²⁰ Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p.10.

²¹ Schneider, Jane. *Italy's “Southern Question”: Orientalism in One Country*. Berg, 1998.

incapable of generating group solidarity or engaging in collective action, they were and are, as the cliché, would have it, unable to build the rational, orderly, civic cultures that, in the North, underwrote the emergence of industrial capitalist society²².

Analysing this definition, some important observations can be made. In the first place the image of the South is created comparing the “provinces South of Rome” with “the rest of the peninsula” falling into a series of stereotypes. This image arriving from elsewhere, consists in a description made by others and that does not include the self-perception of Southerners. The discourse is composed through opposition, creating a dualistic system that opposes the negative South to the positive North. Other features of this discourse are generalization and stereotyping: all the provinces “South of Rome” are described in the same way, erasing all regional differences and creating a homogeneous stereotyped portrait centred around criminality, poverty, underdevelopment, patriarchy and clientelism. From the social, economic, cultural and political levels, then the stereotypes get to compromise even individuals. Southerners are described as emotionally explosive, incapable of civic sense and social solidarity and the whole of these features attributed to their “essence” would be the cause of their failure seen from the perspective of the industrial capitalistic development. Once again, the dichotomy industrial development- underdevelopment acts as pivot for the construction of a discourse in which countries are ordered on a scale calibrated on capitalistic values. It is clear that the differences are not seen as a source of richness and as a starting point for future development but rather they emerge through the contrast with “the rest of the peninsula” and are strongly stigmatised. This definition points out many of the traits that will be encountered again and again as central core of the representation and of the discourse on Southern Italy.

1.2 Before the Question

The most acknowledged positions regarding the causes of the question assume the Unification as the starting point of the Question. It happened, in fact, after the broadening of the market that the Southern economic backwardness was intensely stressed or to say it according to Gramsci’s perspective, the Unification allowed an alliance between

²² Ibid., p. 1.

Northern industrialists and Southern agrarian conservatives, which granted the interest of an elite and “condemned the South to the role of a permanent periphery²³”.

Anyway, to outline the path that led to the creation of the Southern Question narrative, it is enlightening to understand firstly which were the Kingdom conditions before the creation of the Question, and secondly which were the critical elements at the time and how they turned to be the main themes of the discourse. In her article *Before the Southern Question: “Native” Ideas on Backwardness and Remedies in the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, 1815-1849*²⁴, Marta Petrusiewicz describes the cultural climate of the Kingdom in the years between 1815 and 1849 with great attention to the Southern perception of backwardness and the discussions about possible remedies led by the intelligentsia of the Kingdom. Analysing the sequence of events, she tries to identify in them the elements which will pave the way for the Question itself. While it is mainly assumed that the Question arose after the Unification, in this article Marta Petrusiewicz indicates the year 1848 as the year in which the discourse on the South began. According to her, the intellectuals, who saw their Enlightened ideals betrayed on many occasions, contributed in large amount to the stereotyped representation of the South that has been crystallising over time.

After the Kingdom achieved the independence from Spain in 1734 a truly autonomous policy and an effective chance to reform the economy could seriously be taken into consideration. Reforms aimed at reducing feudal privileges, improve the public finance and taxation systems and restricting the Church power. From a European perspective Naples was a veritable cultural capital, even if it was surrounded by barbarism. This was the period when the excavation of Herculaneum and Paestum were discovered. The Teatro San Luca was built, music and art were flourishing in the salons where intellectuals used to meet and King Ferdinand, who ruled from 1759 to 1825 was considered an “enlightened despot”. Although he had refused to grant a constitution, he proved to be very committed to reformation and innovation especially in the fiscal, industrial and social fields. King Ferdinand used to consult the enlightened intellectuals of his court about the causes of backwardness which at that time were estimated to be

²³ Ibid., p. 27

²⁴ Ibid..

above all feudalism and the consequent immobilization of huge plots of land, then fiscal iniquity, summary or partial exercise of jurisdiction, the lack of incentives aiming at agricultural improvement and in the end “poverty, ignorance and superstition of the peasants”. As we can see, according to the intellectual s’ considerations of that time, the Southern backwardness was mainly due to economic and administrative inefficiency, and it was not a matter of inherent inferiority or inadequacy of the people of the Kingdom. It “was not, however, a specifically Southern Question, but a question of “normal backwardness,” common to most of Europe”²⁵ with a few exceptions of extremely modern countries such as England or France.

The acme of the intelligentsia ideals which was almost achieved through the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution, leading to the foundation of the Parthenopean Republic (22nd January 1799) only lasted 5 months. The Neapolitan patriots²⁶ welcomed the French and worked intensely to reform the territory, but their revolutionary ideals were betrayed twice by the popular mass of the *lazzari*²⁷: in 1799, after the King had fled to Palermo, they fought bravely to avoid the entrance of the French and to defend Naples and the Crown and then they proved once again their loyalty to the royal family when the Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo formed the Army of *Sanfedisti*²⁸, which they joined to destroy the Republic and re-establish the Bourbon dynasty on the 13rd June 1799. The monarchic repression was very harsh: 119 people were condemned to death, 122 sentenced to life imprisonment or imprisoned, 457 were exiled or banned for life from the Kingdom and 231 temporarily exiled or expelled²⁹. The same repercussions hit the intellectual s who collaborated with the Napoleonic government of Joseph-Napoléon Bonaparte and than of

²⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁶ The historical and philosopher Benedetto Croce used to call “*patrioti napoletani*” (literally Neapolitan patriots) the supporters of the Revolution inspired by jacobin ideals.

²⁷ *Lazzari*, Treccani.

[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lazzari/#:~:text=\(o%20lazzaroni\)%20Nome%20usato%20spregiativa%20mente,da%20Scipione%20Giannettasio%20detto%20Pione](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lazzari/#:~:text=(o%20lazzaroni)%20Nome%20usato%20spregiativa%20mente,da%20Scipione%20Giannettasio%20detto%20Pione)

This name had been disparagingly used by the Spanish to refer to the insurgent people during the peasant uprising led in 1647 by Masaniello against the fiscal policy of the Spanish viceroy.

²⁸“Sanfedisti”, *Cathopedia*. <https://it.cathopedia.org/wiki/Sanfedisti>

The army’s name comes from its objective: defending the “*Santa Fede*” (literally the Holy Faith).

²⁹ Rosamaria Delli Quadri, *La rivoluzione del 1799: la repubblica napoletana*. Storica in National Geographic. [La rivoluzione del 1799: la repubblica napoletana \(storicang.it\)](https://www.nationalgeographic.it/la-rivoluzione-del-1799-la-repubblica-napoletana)

Joachim Murat during the "happy decade" from 1805 to 1815 when the Bourbon dynasty was re-established in the wake of the Congress of Vienna who restored the ruling families of the Old Regime. The exiled patriots were seen as "passive"³⁰ revolutionaries who in the end sold out the Kingdom to the French. The post-Napoleonic intelligentsia harshly criticised the Enlightened ideals which were based on ideas born elsewhere that they just imported and applied to the territory of the Kingdom without any kind of adjustment or forms of local rethinking. These ideals were replaced by romantic inspiration. The new generation, in fact, also contested the contempt and disregard of popular folklore which characterized the old generation of patriots and their distance from the people. In this peculiar climate a new secret organization was founded: the *Carboneria*. Its members were mainly students, intellectuals and a minority of the petit bourgeoisie. The revendication and the obtaining of a Constitution under King Ferdinand I was due to their fights in 1820 but after a few months it was abolished by the intervention of the Austrian army called by the same King Ferdinand who betrayed his people.

In 1830 King Ferdinand II succeeded to the throne and initiated important modernization works. The cultural climate was lively because of the activities of artistic and literary cafés, salons, liberal newspapers and public and private schools. Instruction in private schools was "free, liberal, and original"³¹ and all talented men could access it regardless of their social background even from the provinces. The King even granted amnesty for the old exiles. Therefore, the Kingdom was a quite modern and progressive country which was still backward on a relative scale if compared to great industrialised countries such as England and France. Its weak points were above all the lack of industries, a highly deteriorated road network and the social conditions in which the people lived: poverty, lack of health and illiteracy. At that time the main reasons of backwardness were estimated to be caused by the inefficient government administration and could be overcome through improvements in the fields of industrialization, public education and legislation. The Southern representation changed dramatically after the events of 1848. The rebels fought for a new Constitution and a Parliament: this time intellectuals, students, old exiles, artisans and peasants were fighting side by side. In

³⁰ Schneider, Jane. *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country*. B, p.31.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.33.

February the King promulgated the Constitution but, when on the 15th May some members of the Parliament proposed further negotiations, he had them arrested and new clashes begun. The repression was longer and harsher if compared to the previous one. The king ordered mass imprisonments and death sentences. Censorship reigned in every field and many informers among the people threatened public freedom. The King opted for a total insular policy: protectionism in economy, every attempt of reform was banished, education was once again imparted by the Church, public works were suspended, and plentiful resources were invested in the army. Many intellectuals refused to collaborate to such a government and opted for an "internal exile" and self-banished from public life or works, thus resulting in a lack of administrative experts in the Kingdom. This climate will sow the seeds of a new representation of the Kingdom in which appear in embryo the elements that will characterize the future "discourse" on the South. Two famous letters from Gladstone³², for example, reported the terrible conditions of the kingdom prisons that he witnessed visiting some liberal patriots. Through his words, Naples was defined as "the negation of God erected into a system of government"³³. The exile intellectuals deepened their pessimism and sense of inferiority towards their land because they could constantly compare it with other realities, in particular to life conditions in Piedmont, France, England Switzerland, and Tuscany. In their writings they harshly denounced the police state, prison conditions, censorship, poor health conditions, illiteracy and general backwardness of the Kingdom. If at the beginning these sharp critiques were attributed to the Bourbon government, over the time they shifted on the people itself paving the way for a dramatic representation of Southern Italy.

1.3 Story of the anti-Southern prejudice

The story of how prejudices on the Southern Italy developed and spread with a particular focus on their **political function** is discussed by Antonino De Francesco in his book *La palla al piede*³⁴.

³² William Ewart Gladstone was a British statesman and liberal politician.

³³ Gladstone, William E.. *Two Letters to the Earl of Aberdeen, on the State Prosecutions of the Neapolitan Government*, Letter I, 1851, pag. 9.

³⁴ De Francesco, Antonino. *La palla al piede: una storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Feltrinelli, 2012.

De Francesco adopts a peculiar approach: unwilling to rely on an exceeding simplistic interpretation of Italy's Southern Question and of the anti-Southern prejudice, he refuses to exclusively link those prejudices to a continuous manifestation of pure ethnic discrimination, insisting on their mainly political origin. De Francesco reminds us that this perspective had already been adopted by Giuseppe Galasso³⁵ in his historical anthropology studies on the Southern Italy. Galasso, for example, argued that about stereotypes on Neapolitans "the ethnical element- that is another of its distinctive traits - historically played a subordinate and chronologically deferred role (because it appeared much later) in the act of determining the stereotypes about the South³⁶". Two arguments can be advanced to support this perspective: firstly, over the decades prejudices on the South took different shapes following the flow of political events and the second and even stronger point is that Sicilians and Neapolitans have been differentially evaluated in the course of history and this aspect can be better understood by following the history of these two different areas that have been separated kingdoms for a long time. De Francesco chooses to make his analysis narrowing the field of stereotypes and he considers only those affecting Neapolitans and Sicilians (and at times Calabrians for some peculiar traits especially related to brigandage) because these two realities synthetically embody all sorts of anti-Southern commonplaces.

De Francesco's discourse can easily be followed analysing some key historical events in the history of the two Southern kingdoms. In 1734 the Kingdom of Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples gained independence from Spain but, even if ruled by the same dynasty of the Bourbon, they remained two separated States until 1816 when they were reunified in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Stereotypes started to circulate in the XVIII century. The new powerful role of the Southern kingdoms in the Mediterranean and the discovery of the Greek and Roman ruins attracted the interest of the other states in Europe. Naples became an important stop for the Grand Tour. Journey's accounts and travel guides which had to emphasize the beauty and the exotism of the territory to rise the interest of potential travellers contributed to the stereotyped depiction of Southern Italy. The stereotypes of inactivity, untrustworthy, violence, explosiveness and reactionism were

³⁵ He was an Italian academician, historian, journalist and politician, one of the major representatives of contemporary Southernism.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pag. 18.

strengthened by the memories of the "lazzari", idle and dressed in rags peasants who fought in the revolt of Masaniello³⁷ in 1647. *Lazzari* burst onto the scene again against the Republic in 1799 resulting in the restoration of the monarchy and in the subsequent harsh repression suffered by the liberal patriots. The barbaric violence of the people whose culminating point was reached by cannibalism episodes and the cruelty of the Bourbons' reaction will assure the Kingdom its reputation of anachronistic backwardness especially from a socio-political point of view. As regards the Kingdom of Naples, these stereotypes disappeared and were replaced by praises and admiration, for example, in 1820 when Neapolitans fought to be granted a constitution but reappeared when on the 15th of May 1848 the people supported the troops of Ferdinand II against the liberal patriots or in the post-unification years when Southern opposition to the Kingdom of Italy was expressed through brigandage. While in the Kingdom of Naples many have been the political contradictions, the situation for the Kingdom of Sicily was rather different. In 1849 Sicilians started to be seen positively due to their resistance against Bourbon's return. They were even praised for their support to Garibaldi in 1860 but in 1866 the perception about them changed as well because of the Seven and a Half Days Revolt, a liberal revolt by the Sicilians who had once again seen themselves deprived of their age-old independence against the monarchy of the Kingdom of Italy that threatened the recent unity.

From this evidence De Francesco infers that because of the irregular and shifting use of prejudices, interpreting them as a pure manifestation of ethnic prejudice would be an error, given that their origin can be, as shown, ascribed to political reasons.

The double standards with which [Garibaldini and Piedmontese] judged on the one hand Sicily and on the other Naples just clamorously contradict these considerations and suggest bringing them back to a precise political context, which saw, in contrast with patriotic Sicily, the outline of the legitimist brigands taking shape from the deep gorges of the internal provinces of the continental South³⁸.

³⁷ *Masaniello*, Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Masaniello>

Masaniello, byname of Tommaso Aniello, was a young fisherman in 1647 when he was chosen to lead a protest against a new tax on fruit, levied by the nobility to raise money to pay the tribute demanded by Spain. The insurrection against the nobles was successful, but Masaniello became intoxicated and urged the people to slaughter the nobles. Shortly thereafter, he was murdered by assassins hired by the nobles.

³⁸ *“Proprio i diversi pesi e le diverse misure che gli stessi [garibaldini e piemontesi] riservarono da un lato alla Sicilia e dall'altro a Napoli smentiscono clamorosamente queste considerazioni e suggeriscono di ricondurle a un preciso contesto politico, che vedeva, a fronte di una patriottica Sicilia, prender forma,*

The sources analysed to trace the history of anti-Southern prejudices are varied: Northern journals, popular readings, theatre works, songs, photos, films. This shows how these stereotypes easily spread through mass entertainments and knowledge sources and how they permeated people's mind. The representation these sources offered was so impactful that it was seen as a synthesis of the South through which people could even replace reality. Instead of informing people providing them up-to-date news, articles in many newspapers seemed to recycle the commonplaces and the stereotypes that the readers were expecting to read and even peculiarities of the Southern territory were negatively reversed to create evidence of Southern alterity.

All this clearly emerged from the journalistic prose which, in order to capture the reader, worked for generalizations, very often destined to fall into trivialization through the refined and constant use of stereotypes. In short, the choice of this language reflected the scruple to offer the reader images that were supposed to be already known to him, almost as if the news should not inform about an unknown reality, but only bring back to the mind of whoever encountered it a world that he already considered to dominate extensively.³⁹

From a political perspective after the unification, South was seen as a reactionary stronghold, as a subversive threat for the unity of the Kingdom, as an obstacle to progress or an economic parasite that would have been the cause of a considerable slowing down. It was thus the crash on the basis of politics and not the complexity of the Southern Question itself to engender and outline reflections and representations about Southern economics and culture.

dalle profonde gole delle province interne del Mezzogiorno continentale, la sagoma del brigante legittimista.”

De Francesco, Antonino. *La palla al piede: una storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Feltrinelli, 2012, pag. 23.

³⁹ “Tutto questo appariva molto bene dalla prosa giornalistica che nell'intento di catturare il lettore operava per generalizzazioni, destinate molto spesso a scadere nella banalizzazione tramite il ricercato e costante impiego di stereotipi. Nella scelta di questo linguaggio si rifletteva insomma lo scrupolo di offrire al lettore immagini che si presupponeva gli fossero già note, quasi che la notizia non dovesse informare su una realtà sconosciuta, bensì solo riportare alla mente di chi la incrociasse un mondo che già reputava di dominare ampiamente.”

Ibid., p. 24.

1.4 The Southern Question and the social sciences: an anthropological romance

1.4.1 Positivism and the racial Otherness

During the 20th century, the Southern Question was also approached from the perspective of the social sciences, in particular psychology and anthropology. Some scholars related the alleged backwardness of the South back to Southern character traits and based their theories on pre-existing stereotypes and racist misbeliefs. Racism at that time was mainly based on two widely spread ideas: the first consisted of considering physical and psychological traits as stable and unchangeable and directly transmissible across generations and the second consisted of distinguishing people according to their race. The division into races created a hierarchy at the top of which were the populations of Northern Europe, followed by those of Southern Mediterranean Europe and finally by the African populations. The superiority or inferiority trait could be clearly derived by “the “intellective and moral” level and the degree of civilization achieved⁴⁰” by a certain population or group. If Northern Europe was superior and more advanced, the South was consequently backward and inferior. The most common prejudices at the time were also spread by the conservative newspapers of the Italian kingdom which used expressions such as "barbaric Italy" or "Italian Africa⁴¹" to speak of the land of brigands and described the inhabitants of the South as “aggressive and rebellious (and thus potentially more inclined to commit crimes), individualistic and asocial (and thus less able to construct a civil society), and ultimately as more primitive and less evolved⁴²”.

In the 19th century, positivist and evolutionary anthropology and psychology began to develop. Some of the positivist scientists attempted to give a scientific basis to the idea of inferiority of the Southern race which was considered the cause of their backwardness. Some scholars decided to carry out analyses of the somatic and psychological traits of some individuals through quantitative measures (craniometry and

⁴⁰ Cimino, Guido & Foschi, Renato. *NORTHERNERS VERSUS SOUTHERNERS: Italian Anthropology and Psychology Faced With the “Southern Question”* in *History of Psychology*, 2014, Vol. 17, No. 4. American Psychological Association, 2014, p. 291.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 290.

psychometry) to create more general categorizations. Cesare Lombroso, Italian anthropologist and founder of criminal anthropology made extensive use of the theory of Southerners inferiority in his studies. As a young medical officer, he took part in the kingdom's campaigns in Calabria against brigandage. This experience will be the starting point for the theory he formulated in 1876 in the book *L'uomo delinquente* (literally *Criminal man*). His theory, that could be addressed as "innatist" (following the classification of Cimino and Foschi⁴³), considered the inclination to crime trait to be hereditary and physiognomically recognizable through a series of measurements. According to his atavism theory, the development of the criminals' psyche was stopped at a primitive stage. The criminal individual by birth had no possibility of changing or improving his condition and had to be for this reason isolated from society or even sentenced to death when guilty, to avoid his reproduction. He analysed the skull of a Calabrian farmer, Giuseppe Vilella, suspected of brigandage and judged the particular occipital dimple as a sign of involution. Teti points out that in the 19th century Calabria became a sort of laboratory for the construction of Southern psychology⁴⁴. Calabria had already been the target of innumerable prejudices and typification. In his writings Lombroso deprecates the political, social and economic conditions of the region but these appear only secondary. The cause of the backwardness in Calabria is the "race", the "seed". The few positive traits are attributed to the ancient seed of the Greek-Romans, then damaged by the mixing with the Semitic populations. According to Lombrosian studies, the criminal genes were more present in the Southerners precisely because of the numerous crossbreeding of races. An example of the racist criminalization used extensively by Lombroso in his writings can be gleaned from this passage from the book *L'uomo delinquente*:

Race shapes criminal organizations. Both Bedouins and Gypsies can be considered races of organized criminals. The same seems to apply to n-word in the United States (according to A. Maury), and to Albanians, Greeks, and sometimes the indigenous people of Southern Italy. . . The inhabitants of Palermo, which is the centre of Mafia, are descendent from the ancient bodyguards of the nobles (according to Villari) and,

⁴³ Ibid., p.284.

⁴⁴ Teti, Vito. *La razza maledetta: origini del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Nuova ed, Manifestolibri, 2011, p. 198.

even further back, from the rapacious Arab conquerors of Sicily who were related to Bedouins⁴⁵.

According to some scholars, in this theoretical system we can find the roots of a variant of modern racism called Nordicism which considers the Northern European populations, in particular Aryans and Teutons, as superior to the Mediterranean populations, a theory which will later be the basis of the extermination of the Jews.

Another scholar stands out in the field of anthropology: the Sicilian follower of Lombroso, Alfredo Niceforo. Niceforo makes no secret of his racist theories. In 1897 his first book *La delinquenza in Sardegna* (literally Criminality in Sardinia), he describes the population as genetically prone to crime while in his second book *L'Italia barbara contemporanea* (literally Contemporary barbarian Italy) he gives ample vent to the currents of Nordicism describing the existence of "two Italys", "two races" and "two psychologies". In his book *Italiani del Nord e Italiani del Sud* (literally Northern Italians and Southern Italians) Niceforo wrote:

As there are therefore in Italy - in general - two races: the Aryans in the North and the dark Mediterraneans in the South; thus there are two different and almost opposite collective psychologies. [...] As can be seen, the psychological difference between the Aryans and the dark Mediterraneans essentially lies in the greater and lesser excitability of the ego [...].⁴⁶

The negative consequences of the high excitability of the ego in Southerners would cause above all inattention and weakness of will, both amplified by what had already been hypothesized by the theory of climates⁴⁷. According to his analyses, Nicephorus pragmatically explained the causes of Southern backwardness on the basis of psychological factors:

⁴⁵ Lombroso, Cesare. *L'uomo delinquente* in Cimino, Guido & Foschi, Renato. *NORTHERNERS VERSUS SOUTHERNERS: Italian Anthropology and Psychology Faced With the "Southern Question" in History of Psychology*, 2014, Vol. 17, No. 4. American Psychological Association, 2014, p.286.

⁴⁶ "Come vi sono in Italia adunque – in linea generale – due razze: gli ari al nord e i mediterranei bruni al sud; così vi sono due diverse e quasi opposte psicologie collettive. [...] Come si vede, la differenza psicologica tra gli ari e i mediterranei bruni, sta, essenzialmente, nella eccitabilità maggiore e minore dell'io [...]."

Teti, Vito. *La razza maledetta: origini del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Nuova ed, Manifestolibri, 2011, p.236-237.

⁴⁷ According to Montesquieu's theory of climates, climate influences the character of peoples.

The same formula that has helped to explain social progress in the Eastern world and in the Greco-Roman world also helps to explain the reason for the current progress of the Nordic societies and the decline of the societies populating the South of Latin Europe.⁴⁸

According to Niceforo, human progress is achieved through the "organization and discipline of the masses⁴⁹" through despotism or the will of the masses themselves. Southern traits that were functional in the age of despotism are, in the age of democracy, totally inadequate. Indeed:

The psychology of the man of the North - in Italy - is therefore much more suited than the character of the South to modern social progress and to the creation of modern civilization: for this reason Northern Italy is so much more developed, in terms of civilization, than Southern Italy, which is populated by that race which has already worn itself out with the creation of a great civilization, and which has those psychological characteristics which are no longer suitable today.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, Lombroso's positivist theories deeply influenced intellectuals, bourgeois and popular classes both in the North and in the South. For example, in the book *La Galassia Lombroso*⁵¹, for example, Livio Sansone describes the terrible influence that Lombroso's theories had on social policies throughout the world and particularly in Latin America at the end of the 19th century. His theories were also accepted by doctors and psychiatrists who worked as experts in police headquarters and by magistrates and were used to explain and interpret certain phenomena such as delinquency, emigration or mental illness. The anthropometric measures, the physiological and psychological characters became proof of the natural criminal inclination of the Southern psyche, of the disposition of an entire population on which regional temperament, geographical, ethnic and social factors played an important role,

⁴⁸ "La medesima formula che ha contribuito a spiegarci il progresso sociale nel mondo orientale e nel mondo greco-romano, contribuisce anche a spiegarci il perché dell'attuale progresso delle società nordiche e la decadenza delle società popolanti il sud dell'Europa latina."

Teti, Vito. *La razza maledetta: origini del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Nuova ed, Manifestolibri, 2011, p. 250.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 248.

⁵⁰ "La psicologia dell'uomo del nord – in Italia – è dunque assai più adatta che non il carattere del sud al moderno progresso sociale e alla creazione della moderna civiltà: per questo l'Italia del nord è tanto più sviluppata, in civiltà, dell'Italia meridionale, la quale è popolata da quella razza che si è già consumata con la creazione di una grande civiltà, e che ha quei caratteri psicologici che oggi non sono più adatti."

Ibid., p. 251.

⁵¹ Sansone, Livio. *La Galassia Lombroso*. Editori Laterza, 2022.

while poverty was not recognized as a trigger of delinquency . Mental illnesses, often associated with epilepsy, are attributed to "ethnic and moral degeneration of peasant families" and to "intoxications⁵²" linked to the living conditions of the populations. In terms of mental health, for example, Calabrians would derive their convulsionary behaviour directly from the geography of their land repeatedly torn apart by sudden earthquakes throughout history.

Even the press proves to be permeated by positivist theories that overshadow the historical and social analyses of Southernists. The “two-race theory” also crosses the ocean and appeared in full force in the US press and cinematography. In the USA, in fact, at the beginning the Italian emigrants were all perceived through the profile of the “Italian= criminal” due to the stereotypes that had originated in Italy, while at the beginning of the 1900s a distinction began to be made between a positive immigration (that of Northern Italians) and a negative one (that of Southern Italians)⁵³.

The echo of Lombrosian theories still surrounds the present. Since 2009, when the Lombroso Museum was opened in Turin, part of the public opinion has been firmly acting against the exhibition with petitions, requests for closure, books and even in 2012 the request for the return of the skull of the alleged Calabrian brigand Giuseppe Vilella on whose remains the theory of atavism was elaborated and with the accusations of racism by Senator De Bonis in 2021. The accusations against the museum for disseminating racist and anti-scientific theories keep being rejected by the Departments of Culture of the Piedmont Region and the City of Turin, as well as by the University of Turin which declare to have the opposite intention, that is to show what were the errors and anti-scientific ways that led to these theories, supporting the importance of studying how anthropological and scientific thought has evolved over the years. The controversy is still open today.

1.4.2 The response of the “Southernists”

Several scholars from the South and from elsewhere devoted themselves to refute Lombrosian racist theories. One of the leading figures of the Southernists (that is to say,

⁵² Ibid., p. 78.

⁵³ Ibid., 64.

experts on the Southern Question⁵⁴) is the Sicilian Napoleone Colajanni. Colajanni in 1898 in his essay *Per la razza maledetta* (literally For the cursed race) lashed out in harsh and sometimes ironic tones against Niceforo's theory of race.

In this essay he explained the contradictions and inconsistencies found in Niceforo's book *La delinquenza in Sardegna* (literally Criminalism in Sardinia). In this book Niceforo assigns to the island the Italian primacy for delinquency and maps its territory distinguishing for each area a certain genetic influence and a corresponding criminal specificity. The anthropological difference would, according to the scientist, be the cause of delinquency and this would be confirmed by craniology. But the same dolichocephaly found in the Sardinian skulls of Portoscuso and interpreted by Niceforo as a sign of inferiority would have previously been interpreted as a sign of superiority by his master Lombroso in the case of the Jews in his writing *L'Antisemitismo* (literally Anti-Semitism). Furthermore, Colajanni judged such a clear distinction of crimes between the provinces unclear and wrote that: "*In such a geographically limited environment as that of Sardinia, it is not possible to understand how the various ethnic elements have remained isolated and distinct from district to district, and almost from municipality to municipality*".⁵⁵ An important contradiction within the Lombrosian school would be found starting from the anthropometric atlas of the doctor Rodolfo Livi who, based on various criteria (cephalic index, height, colour of the complexion, height of the forehead, etc...) would describe Sardinia as the region with the highest anthropological uniformity. It would therefore be difficult starting from this uniformity to distinguish the genetic contributions of the different populations on the different areas of Sardinia.

According to Colajanni the cause of delinquency in Sardinia, as he had already stated in his volume on Sicily *The events in Sicily and their causes* was to be found in the

⁵⁴ Cimino, Guido & Foschi, Renato. *NORTHERNERS VERSUS SOUTHERNERS: Italian Anthropology and Psychology Faced With the "Southern Question"* in *History of Psychology*, 2014, Vol. 17, No. 4. American Psychological Association, 2014, p.289.

⁵⁵ "*In un ambiente geograficamente così limitato com'è quello della Sardegna non si riesce a comprendere come i vari elementi etnici si siano mantenuti isolati e distinti da circondario a circondario, e quasi da comune a comune*".

Colajanni, Napoleone. *Per la razza maledetta*, quoted in Teti, Vito. *La razza maledetta: origini del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Nuova ed, Manifestolibri, 2011, p. 135.

environment and more specifically in the poor economic and political conditions of the islands as well as in the South. He wrote: “*The cases of extreme poverty that Niceforo describes and table XVI which demonstrates the parallelism between thefts, murders, robberies and the price of cereals would be enough to explain the high delinquency of Sardinia, without the need to appeal to race.*”⁵⁶

Colajanni underlined how the economic condition has an enormous indirect influence on delinquency as it does not allow an adequate education, giving more space to the emergence of delinquency. As proof of this, he cited statistics that correlate illiteracy with crime rates on the national territory but also on an international scale. Furthermore, he considered inappropriate to evaluate a civilization in a narrow period of time since each population has had its own period of progress and of regression and the same presence of a period of splendour and one of decline involving the same "race" in the same place would be in itself a proof against the predicated immutability of races. Against immutability, Colajanni showed statistics demonstrating a decrease in long-term delinquency rates in Sardinia and cited an internal contradiction in Niceforo's own writings. In fact, Niceforo observed how in Gallura (a region in Sardinia) once prevailed murder for revenge while today in case of revenge the enemy's sheep are killed and their grapevines are cut off, which demonstrates an enormous difference in terms of criminality degree of revenge actions.

Colajanni's critique became harsher when he illustrated the very meaning of the theory of race. For the scholar, race had often been used as a convenient explanation to explain social problems and even to legitimize colonial dynamics. He wrote:

Those who want to find a high justification for collective brigandage, that is, for colonial policy, speak with great certainty of the inferior races and of the superior races [...]. These inferior races, which had to be destroyed without regret in the interests of civilization, were once sought in Africa, Asia,

⁵⁶ “*I casi di miseria estrema che Niceforo descrive e la tavola XVI che dimostra il parallelismo tra furti, omicidi, rapine e prezzo dei cereali basterebbero a spiegare l'alta delinquenza della Sardegna, senza bisogno di ricorrere alla razza.*”

Ibid., p. 135.

America, Australia - wherever there was fertile land to conquer, mines to exploit - whatever in short, to be usurped ⁵⁷.

Given that from Rome downwards all the provinces were similar in matters of delinquency, this primacy that Niceforo attributed to Sardinia should be extended to the whole of the South and, if the Lombrosian theories of immutability were believed to be true, the only solution would be that:

the accursed race, which populates all of Sardinia, Sicily and Southern Italy [...] should equally be treated with sword and fire - damned to death like the inferior races of Africa, Australia etc. that the ferocious and villainous civilizers of Europe systematically destroy to steal their lands ⁵⁸.

1.4.3 Cultural otherness in the 19th century

Schneider⁵⁹ shows how after the Second World War, the paradigm of backwardness and paternalistic rhetoric were revived by scholars, especially in the American circle. In 1958 *The moral Basis of a Backward Society* was published by the American political scientist Edward C. Banfield who affirmed the urgency of modernizing Southern Italy. According to Banfield, there was a direct link between industrial economic development and the propensity of men to join associations to carry out civic works for the common good. On the contrary, in the backward Southern Italy the regime of amoral familism was in force: the Southerners acted for the good of their own circle of relatives and for short-term interests, without feeling the weight of civic responsibility upon them. It is from this trait that the tendency towards clientelism in Southern politics would originate.

⁵⁷ “*Coloro che vogliono trovare un'elevata giustificazione al brigantaggio collettivo, cioè alla politica coloniale, parlano con grande sicumera delle razze inferiori e delle razze superiori [...]. Queste razze inferiori, che si dovevano distruggere senza rimpianto nell'interesse della civiltà, altra volta si cercavano nell'Africa, nell'Asia, in America, nell'Australia - dovunque c'erano terre fertili da conquistare, miniere da sfruttare - qualche cosa insomma da usurpare.*”

Ibid., p.132.

⁵⁸ “*La razza maledetta, che popola tutta la Sardegna, la Sicilia e il mezzogiorno d'Italia [...] dovrebbe essere ugualmente trattata col ferro e col fuoco - dannata alla morte come le razze inferiori dell'Africa, dell'Australia ecc. che i feroci e scellerati civilizzatori dell'Europa sistematicamente distruggono per rubarne le terre.*”

Ibid., p.140.

⁵⁹ Schneider, Jane, and Jane Schneider. *Italys “Southern Question”: Orientalism in One Country*. Berg, 1998, p. 6.

In 1993 in his book *Making Democracy Work; Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* another American political scientist, Robert D. Putnam, returned to the concept of backwardness. From the observation of 6 regional governments, Putnam concluded that the North was the only one characterized by efficiency and ability to implement political choices. For Putnam, the greater efficiency of Northern governments would derive from the long communal tradition leading to “horizontal collaboration” which, on the contrary, the South would never have known due to the feudal and absolutist governments which had suffocated it since the Middle Ages leading only to “vertical hierarchy”. While Northern governments relied on civic cooperation, Southern governments fostered distrust and conflict to strengthen the bonds of dependency and exploitation. The demonstration of this would be in the fact that the North had accomplished the unification and had been able to undertake the process of industrialization unlike the South, still lost in clientelistic practices.

Schneider offers us a key to interpret these "new" assumptions. These conceptions about the Southern Italy were echoed by the international press which began to paint Southern Italy as a problem even within the European community. Therefore, the responsibility for the creation of the discourse on Southern Italy could be erroneously attributed to the US and Northern European economic expansionary aims. According to Nelson Moe⁶⁰, scholar of the Southern Question, interpreting these dynamics as previously described, would discard two elements that have largely contributed to the generation of the discourse: firstly, the tendency of the Northern elites to discharge on the South their anxiety of inadequacy in comparison with a much more developed and homogeneous Northern Europe and secondly, the tendency of Southern elites to harshly criticise their governments and their culture.

⁶⁰ Moe, Nelson, et al. *Un paradiso abitato da diavoli : identità nazionale e immagini del Mezzogiorno. L'ancora del Mediterraneo*, 2004.

1.5 Investigating the intersections: the Southern Question and the Postcolonial Studies

In his recently published book *Il rovescio della nazione*⁶¹, Carmine Conelli describes how he investigated the Southern Question through new lenses and in particular through the perspective of postcolonial studies. The subtitle is quite explicative: *La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*⁶². His purpose is not to feed the same old and dichotomous discourse on the South as metaphorically and concretely opposed to the North but rather show how this national question can be put on the global map of the “Southern Questions“ resulted from the European colonialism. The discourse would be developed by a Global North that is thinking and building a Global South as a “*non-ancora-nord*”⁶³.

In the first place Conelli considers the most recent developments of the question: the internal migration after World War II, an uneven division of labour and exploitation suffered by the Southerners, the '68 working rebellions to which Southerner workers gave a large contribution, the rising of the anti-Southern rhetoric of Lega Nord⁶⁴ and the subsequent surge of pride in the South which also acted as a counterpart to it. This movement was the spark for a cultural and identity rediscovery and to a positive re-appropriation of the Southern identity but led as well to the creation of a selective mythologic narration of a glorious past destroyed by the annexation to the Kingdom of Italy. The main aim of his research is to trace the influence of colonialism in the construction of the Southern Question and to underline the responsibility of the Southern elite in this process. He aims at abandoning the simplistic reasoning that only recognizes an exploiter North and an exploited South. The dynamics of the discourse of

⁶¹ Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022.

⁶² Literally: the colonial construction of the idea of South.

⁶³ Literally: not yet North.

⁶⁴ “Lega Nord”, *Treccani*. <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lega-nord>

Political movement born in 1989 from the aggregation of some autonomist regional organizations born in the 1980s; has placed among its priorities the federal reorganization of the State and greater political-administrative autonomy of the Regions.

inferiorization and the series of prejudices imbued with racism modelled on the language used in the colonies emerge from his study.

1.5.1 South and North as geographic reflections of power

The starting point of these reflections considering the Southern Question as a global question is the thought of the Sardinian philosopher and politician Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci was the first thinker to break out of the dualistic schemes through which the question had always been analysed and to include the figures of the subordinates in his reflection. Initially the philosopher saw his region, Sardinia, as opposed to the rest of Italy and exploited by it. As his studies and research continued, Gramsci realized that the Sardinian situation was not an isolated case: the same dynamics also emerged, for example, in the continental South of Italy. It was rather a matter of power dynamics that were both transversal and internal to the regions. It therefore became increasingly clear to Gramsci that: *“it was not the “continent” that oppressed Sardinian peasants, small landowners and “bandits”, but the alliance between the continental and the island ruling classes”*.⁶⁵

Gramsci's most acute intuition concerns the spatialization of power relations. In his thinking, the North is described as a large city while the South as a large countryside, basing his view on the analysis of the hegemonic dynamics of the former over the latter. In this regard Gramsci added that since it was not a matter of an industrial city and a neighbouring province, but rather of two vast territories very different in tradition and culture, the conflict of nationality could only get worse⁶⁶. It is interesting to note that Gramsci himself spoke of a conflict of nationality within a country which had already been unified. This statement can be better understood if we consider the philosopher's reflections on Italian *Risorgimento*. In the online Encyclopaedia Britannica, Italian *Risorgimento* is defined as follows:

⁶⁵ “[...] a opprimere i contadini, i piccoli proprietari terrieri e i «banditi» sardi non fosse il «continente», ma l'alleanza tra le classi dominanti continentali e dell'isola”.

Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p. 23.

⁶⁶ Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks*, notebook n. 19 as quoted in Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p. 29.

Risorgimento, (Italian: “Rising Again”), 19th-century movement for Italian unification that culminated in the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. The Risorgimento was an ideological and literary movement that helped to arouse the national consciousness of the Italian people, and it led to a series of political events that freed the Italian states from foreign domination and united them politically. Although the Risorgimento has attained the status of a national myth, its essential meaning remains a controversial question. The classic interpretation (expressed in the writings of the philosopher Benedetto Croce) sees the Risorgimento as the triumph of liberalism, but more recent views criticize it as an aristocratic and bourgeois revolution that failed to include the masses⁶⁷.

Gramsci fits into the critical vein of the Risorgimento movement, recognizing the mythology of its narration. Gramsci's main criticisms of this narration concerned its passivity (a concept taken up by Benedetto Croce), or rather a revolution carried out by elites and which had not involved the popular masses. Through the figure of Cavour, the process of unification then became the expression of the interests of the moderates, namely of the upper middle class. The “national awareness” from the political point of view was linked to the urge to free themselves from foreign domination (an urge not shared by the people) and from the cultural point of view it was linked to the Italian language which was in any case a prerogative of the most educated classes (the people could neither write nor speak Italian). It could easily be deduced that in 1861 unity had been won on a political level but not on a socio-cultural level or rather in the words of Gramsci that: “*In the history of the 19th century there could be no national unity, due to the lack of the permanent element: the people as the foundation of the nation*”.⁶⁸

The geographic intuition of Gramsci describing the North and the South as metaphors of power will be taken up by other scholars who will contribute to its articulation. Conelli traces some of the developments of Gramsci's thought through two key figures: Stuart Hall and Edward Said. In particular Stuart Hall, following the line of Gramsci's reflections on the cultural and ideological aspects of hegemony, inaugurated a new approach in the human sciences. Hall criticized the supposed positivist objectivity.

⁶⁷ *Risorgimento*, Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Risorgimento>

⁶⁸ “*Nella storia del 19° secolo non ci poteva essere unità nazionale, mancando l'elemento permanente, il popolo-nazione*”.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Prisons Notebooks*, notebook n. 3 , quoted in Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p. 28.

In fact, according to the scholar, behind this objectivity is hidden an actual war between ideological systems on a political field aiming at the conquest of hegemony. Edward Said used the geographical approach in his studies of the East. In his book *Orientalism*⁶⁹ he defines the representation of the East as a hegemonic construction of the western gaze.

Again, it had been Gramsci himself to define East and West as arbitrary constructions of European upper classes:

“But the most typical fact [...] is the North-South and especially East-West relations. They are real relations and yet they would not exist without men and without the development of civilization. East and West are arbitrary and conventional constructions, since every point of the earth is East and West at the same time: conventional and historical constructions not of men in general, but of the European educated classes, which through their world hegemony have made them accepted to all the world.”⁷⁰

While Hall reflected on how Gramsci had shown that through various specific forms of incorporation the "most backward sectors" such as Southern Italy for example could be enslaved in the regime of capital by the more advanced sectors such as Northern Italy and even more generally the Northern Europe. The same discourse could be applied to the “peasant economies” in Asia or South America. A key factor to remark is how these forms of incorporation have been accompanied by racist or ethnic segmentation⁷¹. Through the considerations of Hall and Said, the geographical-hegemonic categories are not applied limitedly to the Italian case but can be used on a global scale.

1.5.2 National identity development in Italy: the South as “the reverse of the nation”

To understand the process through which the Italian national identity was built, it is therefore necessary to return in a critical way to the analysis of Risorgimento from a

⁶⁹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Penguin books, 1985.

⁷⁰ “Ma il fatto più tipico [...] è il rapporto Nord- Sud e specialmente Est-Ovest. Essi sono rapporti reali e tuttavia non esisterebbero senza l'uomo e senza lo sviluppo della civiltà. Est e Ovest sono costruzioni arbitrarie, e convenzionali, poiché ogni punto della terra è Est e Ovest nello stesso tempo: costruzioni convenzionali e storiche non dell'uomo in generale, ma delle classi colte europee, che attraverso la loro egemonia mondiale le hanno fatte accettare a tutto il mondo”.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Prisons Notebook*, notebook n. 7, quoted in Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p. 31.

⁷¹ Hall, Stuart. Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity ,2015, quoted in Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p. 33.

historical point of view and even more from its previous and contemporary socio-political traits. This will highlight how representations were articulated and how the hierarchies of value that still influence public opinion were produced.

Conelli explains that traces of representations drawn from what he calls the "global colonial archive" are present in the building process of Italian identity before, during and after unification⁷². In the light of the analysis of stereotypes conducted by De Francesco⁷³, it could already be observed how the accounts of the Grand tour had the effect of exoticizing the South, of contributing to the process of alterization of the South, portraying it as the "other", different and opposite to the advanced Northern European civilization; how the representations of the South produced by the elites changed according to the course of political events and what was the role of newspapers in "informing" Northern Italy and Northern Europe about Southern Italy.

In particular, according to Conelli, the language of coloniality⁷⁴ to represent the South would have been adopted by the Southern elites before unification and by the national ones during and after the Risorgimento to allow Italy to enter the European community which represented modernity. The idea of modernity was born with the conquest of the Americas as a narrative category to legitimize colonization itself. In the construction of the dominant discourse, Europe stands as a beacon of modernity placing a series of political events (for example the French revolution and the industrial revolution) and cultural and moral traits in dualistic contrast with the image (that Europe itself had created) of the backward colonies. This discourse is clearly functional to the dynamics of power. But beyond the narrative, as the Argentine writer and philosopher Enrique Dussel argued, for the most part, the superiority of Europe would have been the result of the accumulation of wealth, experience and knowledge derived from the conquest of the Latin American continent. Therefore, European superiority could not have existed without the entire experience of colonization.

⁷² Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p. 61.

⁷³ De Francesco, Antonino. *La palla al piede: una storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Feltrinelli, 2012.

⁷⁴ Term coined by the Peruvian sociologist Quijano who uses it to indicate the effects of colonialism that persist beyond the end of the historical phenomenon.

However, the importance of the colonial experience for European development is eclipsed by our system of knowledge, by our "archive of modernity". In this regard, Michel Foucault's definition of the archive is enlightening. In his opinion the archive is not the sum of all documents relating to a certain subject, but it rather follows the law of what can be said about that subject⁷⁵. Haitian Revolution scholar Rolf-Michel Trouillot points out how omissions in the archives are never neutral and how *"every event enters history deprived of one of its constituent parts. Something is always left out while something else is recorded"*.⁷⁶ According to the scholar, historical narratives are always influenced by previous visions, by the archival power and by the conventions and procedures that are in any case of Western origin.

The effects of the colonialist logic and its representations persist despite the fact that the phenomenon has ended from a strictly historical point of view. To talk about this impact, the Peruvian sociologist Quijano coined the term *coloniality*. Coloniality is based on two main elements: eurocentrism and the idea of race. With eurocentrism, the scholar refers to the European prerogative of producing knowledge and representations that are universalized and considered the only valid models. The idea of race, on the other hand, is the device through which the differences that legitimize and naturalize the relationships of domination-submission are codified, together with the unequal division of labour and the inferiorization (sometimes dehumanization) of colonized populations.

It is important to consider how great differentiations were outlined even within Europe in relation to modernity. The main centre of progress in the most spread narrative of the 19th century was North-western Europe. The European peripheral areas such as Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal were downgraded from this point of view. The spatialization of power was not only reflected in the geographical categories East (colonies)-West (Europe) but also in the European North-South axis⁷⁷.

⁷⁵ Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p.50.

⁷⁶ *"Ogni evento entra nella storia privo di una delle sue parti costitutive. Qualcosa è sempre lasciato al di fuori mentre qualcos'altro è registrato"*.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the past. Power and the Production of History*, 1995 quoted in Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p.51.

⁷⁷ Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p.56.

In the Italian case, ever since the sixteenth century traces of the colonial language appear in the descriptions of the South. As early as the 16th century, for example, the Jesuits, who had travelled to the Americas to evangelize the natives, strengthened the exoticizing gaze on the Southern Italy which they called "*las Indias de por acá*"⁷⁸. The more peripheral areas of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies were described as wild and primitive and the people who lived there had to be civilised.

Over the centuries, the political events that concerned the South were always inscribed in the binomial modernity-backwardness and judged according to this pre-existing vision. The popular masses continued to be described as savage and primitive and in 1647, for example, on the occasion of Masaniello's revolt, he himself and the insurgents, called *lazzari*, will also acquire the trait of criminality. This was the elites' reaction to Masaniello's revolt: "Il suo nome incuteva timore alle emergenti classi borghesi europee e ai latifondisti nelle colonie nordamericane, i quali apostrofavano come «masanielli» i capi delle rivolte, ai loro occhi criminali, che minacciavano le loro proprietà"⁷⁹. The revolution had been branded because it was feared by the ruling classes who in the future will also try to de-politicize it by representing Masaniello as a simple agitator with no depth to avoid the diffusion of the freedom ideals with which his figure had been associated.

Between 18th and 19th century, reported of the Grand Tour also profoundly affected public opinion. Particularly those written by established intellectuals shaped the common perception more than others. This is the case, for example, of the saying that describes the city of Naples as "*a paradise inhabited by devils*"⁸⁰ or of Montesquieu's climatological theory. Montesquieu's theory was formulated on the basis of his stay in Naples. This theory would have traced the "typical traits" of Southern peoples back to the infernal heat: slowness, idleness, inclination to despotism while the harsh and cold climate of the North would have favoured the development of traits of industriousness

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.40.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.42.

His name instilled fear in the emerging European bourgeois classes and in the landowners in the North American colonies, who called «masanielli» the leaders of the revolts, who were considered criminals because they threatened their properties.

⁸⁰ "*Un paradiso abitato da diavoli*": this saying is the title of an essay written by Benedetto Croce in 1923 whose purpose is to reconstruct its origin by tracing its appearances in documents of various types.

and the spirit of independence⁸¹. The narrative on the South focused on a few clichés: the longing for an ancient glory prompted by the discovery of the ancient Greek and Roman ruins that collided hard with the alleged brutality and backwardness of the popular classes of the time, stigmatized through the exploitation of the lazars.

After the overthrow of the Neapolitan Republic to which popular masses also contributed, these were widely denigrated both in the reported of patriots in exile (profoundly disappointed by the outcome of the republican parenthesis) and by European public opinion which denounced the atrocities and barbarism of a people who had once again chosen to take the side of the oppressor and not of freedom.

Later in time, Risorgimento in the first place and the unification after that, created a mythical narrative that forced even very different historical events into a single stream of events that would have led to the creation of the nation. The mythical construction of a genealogy of the nation had the objective of naturalizing the nation itself and of self-affirming an “imaginary community” which had always existed. This genealogy was built through dynamics of inclusion of a “selected common heritage” and through dynamics of exclusion of the elements not deemed suitable for this purpose. The contemptuous discourse about peasant values carried forward by intellectuals and patriots who had repeatedly been politically disappointed by the popular masses, after unification was extended to all the South. The South was therefore excluded from this imaginary Italian community which aimed at achieving European status and which had to somehow justify its "backwardness" in front of Europe.

After the unification, the exoticizing gaze on the South was getting stronger and stronger. John Dickie had already highlighted how during brigandage prejudices and stereotypes about the South were strengthened and spread further, transforming the South not only into the negative pole of the continent but of the nation itself⁸². The assimilations of the territories of the former Kingdom of the two Sicilies to Africa were certainly not new but intensified in the reported of Cavour's officers sent to the South to counter brigandage. Already in the beginning of the 19th century the Napoleonic officer Creuzé de Lesser wrote: “*Europe ends in Naples and even there it ends very badly. Calabria,*

⁸¹ Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p.69.

⁸² Dickie, John. *Darkest Italy: the Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900*. St. Martins press, 1999.

Sicily, everything else is Africa".⁸³ The Piedmontese diplomat Costantino Nigra, for example, cheerfully wrote: "*I am a Nigra, and therefore you sent me among the n-word. Better, a thousand times better than the n-word of South America.*"⁸⁴ In the parliamentary debates of the time, the metaphor of the disease affecting the Southern territories that the civilizing North would have the task of eradicating and treating was frequent. Massimo d'Azeglio, senator of the Kingdom of Italy, wrote in a letter in 1860: "*In any case, the fusion with the Neapolitans scares me; it is like going to bed with someone sick with smallpox sufferer*".⁸⁵

1.6 A question within the Question: Sardinia

Leopoldo Ortu, professor of the history of *Risorgimento* and of the history of Sardinia at the University of Cagliari, traces the history of this Italian region in his *La Questione sarda tra Ottocento e Novecento*⁸⁶ (The Sardinian question between the 19th and 20th centuries). Echoing the thought of one of his colleagues, Giuseppe Marci, it is claimed that the history of Sardinia has often been the subject of an inadequate historiography, tragically fictionalized, magnified or diminished or even cancelled by a narrative that begins only at the time of the Savoy domination. According to the scholar, on the contrary, the Savoyard domination could not be considered in these terms, but rather as the beginning of the Sardinian Question. According to Umberto Cardia, another of his colleagues, the term "*question*" refers to "a knot of unresolved problems of a political, economic and social or other nature"⁸⁷. From the mid-1870s the expression Sardinian Question appeared as the manifestation of the political awareness of the

⁸³ "*L'Europe finit à Naples et même elle y finit très mal. La Calabre, la Sicile, tout le reste est de l'Afrique*". De Francesco, Antonino. *La palla al piede: una storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Feltrinelli, 2012, p.41.

⁸⁴ "*Sono Nigra, epperò mi avete mandato tra i ne*ri. Meglio, mille volte meglio i ne*ri dell'America del sud.*"

Petraccone, Alice. *Le due civiltà. Settentrionali e Meridionali nella storia d'Italia dal 1860 al 1914* quoted in Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p.80.

⁸⁵ "*In tutti i modi la fusione con i napoletani mi fa paura; è come mettersi a letto con un vaiuoloso.*"

Ibid., p.83.

⁸⁶ Ortu, Leopoldo. *La Questione sarda tra Ottocento e Novecento*. CUEC Editrice, 2005.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

specificity of this question with respect to the Southern one. This awareness criticized the monarchy and the ruling class of the new state and the whole community that had renounced the autonomy of past centuries.

Ordu shows how after the Risorgimento the individual political, social and economic issues, that had always existed in the numerous states of Italy before the unification, showed themselves in all their strength and problematic nature. Since the 1880s imperialism and price competitiveness forced the new Italian state to enter a protectionist economic regime which worsened the situation of the poorest parts of the country and further widened the gap between Northern and Southern Italy. In particular, Sardinia appeared even more disadvantaged than the rest of the South due to its agricultural and pastoral economy which appeared extremely backward compared to the rest of the peninsula. In the last decades of the 19th century an attempt was made to intervene in Sardinia, in 1897 and in Sicily with "special laws" to allow the economic recovery of the sectors blocked by protectionism. Thanks to incentives, financial and banking groups began to invest in the South. However, these interventions were insufficient and did not allow for organic economic or social development, ending up being useful only to gather parliamentary consensus (with the exception of the special law for Naples which allowed the start of the industrialization process in the city).

In Sardinia as well, at the time of the "perfect fusion" (1847) with Piedmont, the question took the form of a compromise between two elites: the Piedmontese bourgeoisie and the islander one. The latter renounced their autonomy but for the purpose of increasing and making their power even more stable against the subaltern classes through the legitimation of their power by the Piedmontese. Already in 1820 with the "*Editto delle chiudende*" (Edict of closures), the creation of private property was legitimized ignoring the traditional Sardinian system of collective usage of land. This measure favoured the large landowners, the only ones able to afford new lands, and harmed farmers and shepherds. The '68 milling tax worsened the situation. In the following decade, the *ademprivi*, lands in common use on which the population had the right to let animals graze after mowing the crops, to collect wood, to collect dead plants, leaves, acorns, were abolished. The operation was publicly legitimized as necessary for the construction of the railways. But even the latter became problematic: although Sardinia was rich in sleepers and lignite, these materials were imported from England. Furthermore, the main and

branch railways were built on questionable layouts and with different gauges. Even the dairy sector was soon monopolized by industrialists (often non-Sardinians) who widely exploited the shepherds but even more reduced the peasants to poverty as many large estates were reserved for grazing due to production demands. Woods and mines were equally exploited. The workers' revolts of the early 1900s, which naturally arose from this context of intense exploitation, were harshly repressed by the Italian government. The culmination of this dramatic situation was reached with emigration which was particularly dramatic on an island where inhabitants were already too few for its extension.

In recent years, a collective of scholars of various backgrounds has set the aim of returning to the history of Sardinia through the decolonial perspective to build new paths of reflection and emancipation for the island and its inhabitants. Their book “*Filosofia de Logu*⁸⁸. *Decolonizzare il pensiero e la ricerca in Sardegna*⁸⁹” (Decolonizing thought and research in Sardinia) aims at re-creating a Sardinian philosophy that can re-think and interpret Sardinia independently, deconstructing the dominant narratives and clichés through the combined and emancipating gaze of different disciplines. According to these scholars, Sardinia's state of dependence would have generated subordination at a social, economic and political level which, thanks to various devices, is reproduced through ideology and common sense. It is for this reason, for example, that it would even seem strange or ironic to associate the term philosophy with the region of Sardinia, as it would not be if it was a recognized place on a cultural level.

Among the core questions of the new philosophy there is a rethinking of the Sardinian identity free from colonial myths, from the stereotype of insular isolation, the criticism of the choices of imposed modernization. The consequence of the hegemonic power over Sardinian subjectivities is that Sardinian people perceive their Sardinian identity as a category of the past that must necessarily be overcome in order to open up to modernity and this self-perception would end up helping to justify and strengthen the production of inequalities within the territory. This mechanism is reproduced on the

⁸⁸ “*Lógu*” in Sardinian dialect means “place”.

⁸⁹ Ghisu, Sebastiano & Mongili, Alessandro (editors). *Filosofia de Logu. Decolonizzare il pensiero e la ricerca in Sardegna*. Meltemi Editore, 2021.

historical perspective as well: to ennoble Sardinian past, a history of foreigners in Sardinia, of rulers, is outlined. For this reason, philosophy in Sardinia must regain possession of spatiality (Sardinia) and temporality (the present) and start to work from these in order to avoid the readaptation and the import of concepts elaborated elsewhere that do not suit the specificities of the territory. Even the Sardinian language is involved into the analysis. For example, the frequent dubitative structures are analysed and interpreted as a possible internalization of the subordinating dynamics. Another aspect that involves Sardinian language is the intention to restore dignity to this language through the creation of a philosophical vocabulary in Sardinian language that can meet the research needs anchored to the territory. The forms of modernization which in Sardinia coincided with the elimination of the Sardinian civilization (which had been more and more associated with backwardness) are also criticised. An example of this kind of modernization can be found in the official development plans of the *Rinascita Sarda* (Sardinian Renaissance) from 1962 to 1974 in which an "aesthetic of backwardness and of incivility" is outlined. In this sense, the reflections of the *Filosofia de Logu* are linked to those inaugurated by Gramsci on subalternity and passive modernization and by other scholars such as Antoni Simon Mossa, Cicitu Màsala, Placido Cherchi, Bachis Bandinu and Mialinu Pira who had already demonstrated the need for a critique of the colonial culture⁹⁰.

⁹⁰ *Il manifesto*, Filosofia de Logu. <https://www.filosofiadelogu.eu/il-manifesto/>

Chapter 2: Anti-Southern racism in the post-war period

La tua cultura e del tuo paese,
sia chiaro, "terrone", va buttata via;
la scuola ti dà un'altra cultura,
quella dei padroni e della borghesia

Your and your country's culture,
let's be clear, "terrone", it must be thrown away;
school gives you another culture,
that of the rulers and the bourgeoisie

From *Ballata per Ciriaco Saldutto*, song by Ivan Della Mea. 1972, dedicated to Ciriaco, a 15-year-old boy who hanged himself in Turin

In this chapter discriminations against Southerners especially during the great migrations years from 1950s to 1970s are discussed. The areas that were investigated are: housing, work, social and educational areas. The cities in which the studies were carried out are Turin and Milan, respectively the first and second among the large industrial cities that during the postwar years were affected by the greatest number of immigrants from the South.

2.1 The Southern Question after the Second World War

An analysis of the developments of the debate on the Southern Question in the post-war years is essential to understand which kind of representations Southerners brought with them when they arrived in the big cities of the North and which was the perception of Northerners. In addition to that, the events of the late 1900s (decline of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia) sparked in Europe a wave of nationalism⁹¹. Nations began to auto-define themselves through external and internal borders along the axis of gender, class, race and ethnicity. In this way groups within the nation could be incorporated or excluded according to the circumstances. In Italy the construction of the “internal other” affected the territories of the South and its inhabitants.

After the silence imposed by fascism, the Southern Question began to be perceived again as an emergency, especially in conjunction with the waves of immigration from the South, seen as a threat to the Northern order. Stereotypes and cliches about the Southern

⁹¹ De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 2.

Question and the consequent imaginary geography built by intellectuals, by the reported of the Piedmontese army that descended to the South after the unification, by the analysis of the Southerners (Villari, Sonnino and Franchetti) and by criminal anthropology were spread mainly by the press and photography. Many examples can be found in the pages of the illustrated weekly "*Illustrazione italiana*" published in Milan, and on Piedmontese newspapers which constituted a sort of chronicle of the problems of unification and of the interpretation given to them⁹². The depoliticization of revolts in the South was still the practice, as confirmed by the articles on the Piedmontese press about the peasant revolt of the *Fasci Siciliani* between 1893 and 1894 when the land occupation was defined as a manifestation of collective insanity and criminal tendency to brigandage. Concerning photography many are the analogies noticed between the representation of the South and of the Italian African colonies. These photos do not show workers and industries, but only natural beauties and inhabitants portrayed in forced and unnatural poses as in the case of "macaroni-eaters" who eat pasta barehanded⁹³.

On the referendum of 2nd June 1946 concerning the Republic, new stereotypes struck the South. Due to the reactionary majority that had voted for the monarchy, the entire South was branded as conservative even though in some industrial centres the vote for democracy had reached the majority. The explanation for this phenomenon was based on another cliché: that of the South which had not participated in the Resistance. Even the episodes of civilian insurrection, the aid to the Jews and the "Four days of Naples" in which Neapolitans freed the city from Nazi occupation only by themselves before the arrival of the Allies were not recognized as the right form of resistance which had instead largely occurred in the North.

Again, although the post-war conditions were the same everywhere in Europe, Naples became the symbol of physical and moral decline. The discourse of public opinion focused mainly on the plight of children that, if not helped in time would have constituted a serious threat to the future social order. A pamphlet entitled *Let's help the children of*

⁹² Ibid., p. 13.

⁹³ Ibid., p.14.

Naples edited by the *Comitato per la salvezza dei bambini di Napoli* (Committee for the Rescue of the Children of Naples) reported :

“[...] the physical and moral degeneration of children, the black market, juvenile crime, vagrancy and begging” were not peculiar to post-war Naples: many other Italian and European cities had been hit by these phenomena. Nevertheless, it was claimed that “in no other place as in Naples do these facts constitute a frightening threat to the whole society⁹⁴”

Between 1946 and 1947 about 12 thousand Neapolitan children were temporarily hosted in the regions of central and Northern Italy by wealthier families, a measure that had previously started between 1945-46 in Milan and Turin from where thousands of children had been welcomed from wealthier families in Emilia. This bears witness to the dramatic nature of the situation in the South as well as in the North. The issue of children was exploited by various weekly newspapers such as *L'Europeo* or *Epoca* which in the late '40s and early '50s carried out surveys where photographs depicting battered children and women had not necessarily a logic link to articles, proposing once again stereotypes and clichés about the South. Even *L'Espresso* published a survey mainly focused on Sicily and Naples entitled *Africa at home*⁹⁵ which denounced people's ignorance, the habit of living by expedients and invented jobs that could not guarantee a high of life, sexual promiscuity and outrages on public decency due to homosexual groups walking "free" in the streets, people's indifference to children walking naked in the streets and peasant houses that looked like African huts, applying once again the same language and images to make Africa and Southern Italy inferior.

2.2 Migrations to the North

24 million people moved within the Italian territory between 1955 and 1970. Some within the Centre-North (15 million), others within the South (5 million), some from the Centre- North to the South (more than a million) and more than 3 million moved from the South to the centre-North⁹⁶. In the previous years, Fascism had created anti-urbanism measures in the 1920s which became more severe in 1939: to move to a large urban centre

⁹⁴Comitato per la salvezza dei bambini di Napoli, *Aiutiamo i bambini di Napoli*, Naples, 1946, quoted in De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 19.

⁹⁵ “L’Africa in casa”, *L'Espresso*, V, 17, 26 April 1959, quoted in De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 36.

⁹⁶ De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 40.

one had to be already employed in that city but to be employed one had to show a certificate of residence. These measures encouraged illegal displacements and facilitated the labour exploitation of Southern immigrant males who had to pay to be hired by cooperatives which then withheld a portion of their pay while women were hired almost exclusively as maids in hotels or houses. The only accommodations that Southerners could access were outlying, overcrowded and in poor repair.

Immigrants were considered a threat to public order in host cities and an economic burden. In the city of Turin, for example, from the mid-1950s to the 1960s an anti-Southern party, the MARP, was active. The MARP complained about the fact that the city of Turin was robbed of its resources because of the taxes that filled the pockets of the government and of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*⁹⁷, but nevertheless the city had to deal with immigrants. Southern children were believed to be different from the Northern ones: they were said to be already accustomed to a hard life (often forced into work or begging by their families), not loved or cared for by their parents, unaware of the progress, condemned to poverty and to their condition of "sub-children"⁹⁸, were left alone hungry and frightened in the attics.

Anti-Southern sentiment emerged from the letters sent to Turin newspapers columns between the 50s and 60s. "Invasions" was the word often used to describe internal migrations while Southerners were often referred to with the word *forestieri*, lit. "foreigners". Differences in mentality, customs and traditions between Northerners and Southerners were described as a source of economic, social and welfare problems. In this situation, it was not abnormal to hear or read statements like: "*on an equal footing, Northerners must be preferred for jobs in the North [and] residence must be guaranteed*

⁹⁷ *Economy of Italy*, Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/Economy#ref318073>

The Southern Development Fund (*Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*), a state-financed fund set up to stimulate economic and industrial development between 1950 and 1984, met with limited success. It supported early land reform—including land reclamation, irrigation work, infrastructure building, and provision of electricity and water to rural areas—but did little to stimulate the economy. Later the fund financed development of heavy industry in selected areas, hoping that major industrial concerns might attract satellite industries and lay the foundation for sustained economic activity. Yet these projects became known as "cathedrals in the desert"; not only did they fail to attract other smaller industries, they also suffered from high absenteeism among workers.

⁹⁸ Grifoni, C., "Infanzia alle porte della civiltà", *La Stampa*, 11 February 1969, quoted in De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 46.

only to people who work".⁹⁹. In another letter, an engineer argued that only honest and qualified Southerners should emigrate, only they should be granted the right of citizenship, while Southerners without a job specialization and without money should not be able to move¹⁰⁰. On the political side, in those same years the MARP, a short-lived party, clamoured for "*Naples [get] out of Turin*"¹⁰¹, where Naples meant the whole South¹⁰².

In this regard it is interesting to mention a survey on immigration in Turin¹⁰³ in the 60s carried out by Brando Giordani and Ugo Zatterin and televised by Rai. The documentary begins with a description of the so-called *Treno del Sole* (literally "Train of the Sun"), which after a long journey from the extreme South, travelled all the peninsula up to Turin, where it "unloaded" 100-200 new Turin residents every day. Despite the use of the expression "new inhabitants of Turin" that could prove an inclusive intent, the verb "to unload" immediately brings to mind the semantic sphere of goods trains, a sphere which is evoked by the description of the positive effects of migrations as well: the phenomenon "served" to relieve the demographic pressure in the countryside and enrich the labour supply in the industries. From a utilitarian point of view introduced by the verb "to serve", immigrants were presented as human goods unloaded and immediately absorbed and employed by large industries to produce capital. In the attempt to subjectivize immigrants, traditional prejudices were activated: migration were said to mix Italians born under different climates (echoing again Montesquieu's theory of climates), raised with different traditions, driven by different needs and inspirations, as if Southerners' aspirations for a well-paid job and a decent house, in short, for a dignified life were not the aspirations Northerners nursed. The new settlements were presented alluding to colonialism: Southern colonies in the North were swelling - the North was the

⁹⁹ "*A parità di condizioni, per i posti di lavoro al Nord siano preferiti i settentrionali [e] la residenza sia garantita solo a chi lavora.*"

Gazzetta del popolo, 31 October 1956, p.4, quoted in Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, p. 135.

¹⁰⁰ Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, p. 135.

¹⁰¹ "*Napoli fuori da Torino*"

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹⁰³ Giordani B. & Zatterin U., Meridionali a Torino: un'inchiesta sull'emigrazione in Italia negli anni 60, <https://www.teche.rai.it/1961/10/meridionali-a-torino/>.

new frontier of Southern pioneers; old uninhabited buildings were said to be stormed by Southerners. Concerning housing, the journalists reported that owners did not like tenants without a specific occupation. But the rental announcements which explicitly mentioned "not for Southerners" were not followed by any mention suggesting an interest in their actual occupation.

The journalists went to interview some men who were staying in the dormitory of a popular hotel: rooms were crowded, mattresses were rotten and dirty and some rented a single bed together with a fellow villager because they could not afford a whole one. A man from Palermo reported that he had tried to look for a house but as soon as he mentioned having 5 girls, the answer was negative: they did not want children. Another Southern immigrant complained that when he went to ask for information about rental ads hanging in the streets, owners always answered him that the house was no longer available or that it had just been rented. Another present intervened and thinking about the reaction that Northerners had as soon as they heard the word Southerner, wondered: "*Who knows, maybe we scare them*". The journalists then mentioned the avalanche of prejudices with which Northerners opposed "mostly only in words" the "advance" of Southerners. Once again, the semantic field of war was evoked: in this struggle between South and North, Northerners would oppose only "in words" and not in deeds with discriminatory and racist attitudes and forms of exclusion. In the interviews with Northerners, traditional stereotypes associated with Southerners emerged: low-skilled, unwilling to work, too jealous, molesters of women, inclined to the use of knives, intrusive and rude. An elderly man proposed to resolve the question by issuing expulsion papers. A Sicilian immigrant complained about his condition: he kept being fined, "*They do not let me work*", he said, "*we need special permits*". Another Sicilian immigrant said that Southerners were going to do the jobs that Northerners refused to do, taking advantage of it to save lighter jobs for them, so that they could go to work well dressed and with clean shoes.

The journalist commented on these complaints by saying that in their own way, with a crudeness of language "resulting from their poor education", interviewees wanted to explain to them how Southerners were trying to replace Turin people in the heaviest and least paid jobs just as they were replacing them in the more inconvenient houses. The chance that Southerners had of "replacing" Turin people was said to be given by the

progresses made by Northern working classes, by the improvement of their working conditions and standard of living. They added that at that time only the South and a small part of the Veneto offered fresh recruits to the army of unskilled labourers: "What else could immigrants hope for, only knowing how to farm the land and barely having elementary education?".

A Neapolitan welder who has been in Turin for 13 years appeared to be a victim of the discourse and of a simplistic view of the problem: after reporting that people often called him "Naples", he added that for him the "quarrels" between Northerners and Southerners occurred because many Southerners moved to the North to steal or they were troublemakers or because they should be more polite.

The two directors of the Caselle tannery, Emilio Montalcini and Adolfo Mattiolo were interviewed as well. In company, there were a little more than 100 workers, of which 15% were Southerners. One of the two directors mentioned their initial difficulty in adapting to the rhythms of work but that after a while, getting used to the machines a few hours a day (machines were referred to as a "medicine" taken in small doses), they could perform fairly good. The other director mentioned immigrants' poor preparation to answer for the absence of Southerner employees: even when they presented themselves with diplomas and good marks, in the practical tests they resulted "very very deficient", especially in the Italian grammar.

The investigation ended with an interview with a teacher of a differential class: children were described as undisciplined and poorly performing, they were not looked after by their families whose main concern was "the loaf" and not "the book". According to her, they were sent to school because their families almost had to get rid of them not having time to care about them. The suggested solution was to transfer Southerners' children in a previous grade class instead of attending the suitable class according to their age because their previous preparation was deemed as good as that of schools in the North.

2.3 Education in post-war Italy

In her recently published book¹⁰⁴ Grazia De Michele fills one of the gaps in modern Italian historiography linked in particular to the analysis of internal emigrations and education especially in the fascist period and in the post-war period. The scarcity of studies on internal migration is not accidental. In relation to the new migratory flows, Italians present themselves as a model of successful modernization without grey areas. This presumed modernization would contrast with the tendency that turned Southern immigrants and their children into a problem in the Italian cities of the North-West between the 1950s and 1970s at both a social and educational level. Through a parallel between the motion passed in 2008 at the suggestion of the then leader of the Northern League Roberto Cota regarding the "*classi di inserimento*¹⁰⁵" (literally preparatory classes) for the children of immigrants who did not pass the entrance test to Italian schools and the "*classi differenziali*" (literally "differential classes") created for children of the Southerners who emigrated to the North after the Second World War, De Michele highlights how the lack of reflections on the racist classification of Southerners in the 50's, on its consequences and implications led to a new, modified version of the same phenomenon.

To analyse schooling in Italy between the 50's and early 70's, De Michele mainly studied the registers of two primary schools in Turin¹⁰⁶ (Margherita di Savoia and Gian Enrico Pestalozzi) and educational periodicals. Despite the poor conditions of Italian archives, according to De Michele schools are an excellent field of inquiry and must not be considered "as detached from the rest of the society, but as places where social conflicts and stratifications find expression¹⁰⁷".

In the post war years, education constituted a huge problem in Italy. The main concern was to eliminate all traces of fascist ideology from any field of action of the state and in particular from the field of education. The school reforms that should have been

¹⁰⁴ De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Separated classes with a different study plan including Italian language classes and legality and citizenship lessons which should facilitate integration into the country.

¹⁰⁶ Turin was one of the cities most affected by internal migration from the South.

¹⁰⁷ De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 5.

the basis for the country's moral and material reconstruction did not go in the direction of an actual social change: the system remained largely classist, the school personnel largely the same as in the fascist period and the textbook as well (with only some modifications), the influence of the church grew stronger through the Democratic Party. The idyllic world filtered by the fascist book and the strict Christian education put the family at the centre of the educational universe.

Within this macro framework, the micro situation in the South appeared dramatic. At the time of the Unification three quarters of the population over the age of 5 was illiterate. The equivalence between education and progress that had long been affirmed reinforced the stigma of backwardness in the Southern regions. Furthermore, schools were intended to transmit not only skills but also moral teachings. For this reason, the evident lack of education in the Southern regions was strongly demonized and believed to cause deviance. In 1910, some eminent scholars founded *ANIMI* (Association for the Interests of Southern Italy) to establish nursery schools and popular bookstores and pursue Southern studies. Among these studies, in Malvezzi and Zanotti Bianco's one on western Aspromonte¹⁰⁸, despite having claimed that part of Italy was "not barbarous... but abandoned¹⁰⁹", the two scholars linked illiteracy to the lack of progress caused by the very psychology of Southerners whose natural excitement did not allow good concentration. The Southern indifference to ignorance could only be defeated with the help of the ruling classes who were supposed to guide them. Another study conducted by Gaetano Salvemini¹¹⁰ and other scholars instead highlighted the growing demand for education by the population of Reggio Calabria. Despite the many difficulties in reaching the schools (the children of Grotteria area, for example, had to wade a river) 61% of school-age children were enrolled in primary schools and some families even resorted to private education, considered better than the public one. In the post-war years the discourse on illiteracy and lack of education was built almost exclusively around the South, taking up the old *topoi* on Southerners. The poor condition of the rundown schools and ignorance were portrayed as an expression of Southern backwardness. It is important

¹⁰⁸ Aspromonte is a mountain massif in the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria.

¹⁰⁹ Zanotti Bianco, Umberto. "Tra la perduta gente (Africo)", *Il ponte*, II, 5, 1946 quoted in De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 66.

¹¹⁰ Italian anti-fascist historian and politician

to underline that, at that time, many school buildings had been bombed or were used as reception facilities for displaced people both in the North and in the South. The colonial narrative was revived considering Southern schools even worse than those of the “countries still in need of European domination and guidance¹¹¹”. Furthermore, migrations would have undermined the rosy statistics of the North by increasing the illiteracy rates again.

In 1947 the National Union for the fight against illiteracy was founded which operated almost exclusively in the South. According to ISTAT data¹¹², the illiterates in 1951 were: 2.8% in the North-West, 6.3% in the North-East, 11.5% in the centre, 24.6% in the South and 24% in the islands. Illiteracy was believed to be linked not only to backwardness but also to inadequacy for civil cooperation and criminality. Ignorance considered as an isolating factor forced men into their primitive state, depriving them of actively participating in history. The same discourse had been applied to the colonies, believed to have remained “out of history¹¹³” until the Europeans had brought them writing.

Southern children were presented and treated as the Other in the classes as it can be observed in the teachers’ registers: malnutrition presumably led them to mental deficiencies, dirty clothes and lice as a demonstration of their poor hygienic conditions and the lack of interest of the families, held responsible for the overcrowding of the classes (which in Turin had already been a problem in the fascist era, before the great migrations), less intelligent and with a poor level of preparation due to the previously attended Southern schools, maladjusted and predisposed to failing, disturbing the class or committing juvenile crimes. Southern children were believed to struggle to adapt to modern Northern cities due to their cultural inferiority. They were stigmatized as poor when they publicly received the meal or clothes/shoes by the school patronage and ruined

¹¹¹ De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 68.

¹¹² ISTAT, *L'ITALIA IN 150 ANNI. SOMMARIO DI STATISTICHE STORICHE 1861-2010*, <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/228440> .

ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica) is the Italian National Statistical Institute. In 2011, on the 150th anniversary of the Republic, the Institute published a summary of historical statistics from the year of unification to 2010 (*L'ITALIA IN 150 ANNI. SOMMARIO DI STATISTICHE STORICHE 1861-2010*). In chapter 7 concerning education, in table 7.1 cited data can be found.

¹¹³ De Michele, Grazia. *Anti-Southern Racism and Education in Post-War Italy*. Routledge, 2023, p. 64.

by their dialect which for an indefinite but long time would have prevented them from mastering the Italian language.

An attempt was made to remedy this dramatic situation with differential classes provided only for "*falsi anormali*¹¹⁴", children who were only temporarily disadvantaged due to health conditions, malnutrition or unsuitable environmental and family conditions and that after a period of recovery would be able to return to normal classes. Differential classes had existed in Italy since the early 1900s. During Fascism, differential schools were designed for "acts of permanent indiscipline"¹¹⁵ which, according to the judgments of the teachers, could derive from psychic anomalies. In the post-war period, maladjustment was thought to be caused by the rapid changes especially due to the war that children had witnessed and failed to adapt in time. Maladjustment and school failure were intrinsically considered linked to "abnormalities of conduct" and difficulties accepting rules, and therefore to antisocial behaviour and even criminality. In 1962, differential classes were also established for middle schools and in this decade many funds were assigned to special education without, however, a well-defined program: the system continued to be regulated by circulars, without a proper structure that could replace the fascist one. Educational guidance and teaching staff requirements were also vague and inaccurate.

In Turin in the 1950s, differential classes were considered a modernizing tool that raised teaching standards for the good of the whole society. Teachers often collaborated with to adjust their pedagogical guidelines based on medical reported. Southern children were often diagnosed as "primitive subjects", referring to their "developmental retardation"¹¹⁶. When the Department of Education asked for an account of special education in 1962, many schools summarized their practices in differential classes as intended for immigrant children, particularly false abnormal children, who were finding it difficult to adjust to a new environment. In the 60s it was even customary to call the differential classes "classes for failing pupils" or "classes for immigrants" and many pupils were assigned to these

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

Literally "falsely abnormal" children

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

classes without a medical examination. Some heads of school claimed to be competent enough to recognize by themselves which children needed special education while teachers mastered a medical lexicon to label children and use differential classes as a solution to the migration problem. From the registers of teachers emerged a strong concern about the deviance of these neglected pupils and about the social impact that these underachieving and troublemaking children would have. Prejudices on migration were so strong that the ethnic factor was considered as the only possible cause for youth deviance. The official status of the differential classes was ambiguous: sometimes they were not explicitly named in this way but were formed, for example, in the middle of the school year by grouping all the pupils who had problems in the curricular classes; they were often mixed gender classes (despite the praised traditional system with separated genders) and assigned to temporary teachers.

At the end of the 60s and even more in 1970's protest movements against the differential classes raised and they became even stronger after the suicide of the fifteen-year-old Ciriaco Saldutto of Apulian origins, who hanged himself after having failed the second year of middle school. However, the harsh criticism of the school system raised within public opinion did not call into question neither the boy's alleged otherness nor the otherness of the children of immigrants and their need for special education. In fact, these children were pictured as moving "from sub-cultural conditions to a culture¹¹⁷" they were struggling to adapt to. However, the differential classes began to be primarily attacked as an instrument of bourgeois power which excluded the lower classes from compulsory education. Some modifications were proposed to the whole system, among which the establishment of a medical team in each school to accompany children who needed it during a proper therapy instead of diagnosing them and banish them in second choice classes. Nonetheless, the measure proved to be ineffective due to the small number of experts compared to the very high number of pupils. Full-time classes were proposed, where pupils would carry out activities in the morning and in the afternoon, thus having a better chance of being followed. Again, the full-time experimental sections began to be discredited, being formed by the pupils that were unwelcome in the mainstream classes. In any case, the debate on the validity of differential classes as a teaching tool split the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 136.

teaching staff and experts in two. The matter ended in 1975 with the Falucci document which laid the foundations for the official suppression of differential classes and an orientation towards full-time classes.

De Michele ends her research with 14 interviews of people (7 women and 7 men) who came from Southern families and attended primary schools in Turin. Despite the great social and individual impact, differential schools do not clearly appear in the memories of the interviewees and only a small part of them knew what they were. The narratives of the interviewees had many features in common: they often started from the family choice to emigrate and the fathers' difficulties in finding work or a house: either houses were not rented to Southerners or Southerners were required to pay a whole year's rent. They described the modest conditions of their homes: mostly one single room in immigration quarters. Regarding discrimination, responses and perceptions varied: some did not feel discriminated against because they had good school results - as if racism against Southerners came exclusively from assessments of the level of education. Others, on the contrary, perceived their being "different " as soon as they left their neighbourhood: when they entered the shops and their parents were mistreated for their poor understanding of Italian, or when at school they were grouped in classes with mainly Southern pupils or when in mixed classes Southerners were seated in the last rows, when they wore battered clothes or sometimes dirty aprons, when they were sometimes blamed on the basis of the mere prejudice (as in the case when a girl who had been given a second-hand pencil case was accused of theft by her teacher¹¹⁸) or when some questionable teaching methods forced children to share elements of Southern culture in the classroom without thinking about the effects that this could have in terms of mockery by the other classmates as in the case narrated by Marcello¹¹⁹, forced by his teacher to participate to a project in which it was necessary to share a poem or a song in one's own dialect, a project which forced Marcello to change schools due to the insistence of his teacher and the disagreements that arose between the two after Marcello's refusal to participate.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 182.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 186.

In conclusion, in the wake of Enrica Capussotti¹²⁰ and Michele Nani¹²¹, among the first scholars to speak of racism in relation to the Southern Question¹²², De Michele states that also from an educational point of view, the situation suffered by children of Southern origin in the primary schools of Turin in the post-war period can be defined as racism. It is not possible to establish for certain what the teachers who compiled the registers really thought about Southern children because they often used to reproduce the stereotypes disseminated by the press to justify themselves and protect their career during the inspections of the heads of school. Anyway, the otherness and inferior traits that were applied to Southern children are evident. This situation was similar to that of migrants and minorities in other European countries in the after-war period, such as for example the question of West Indian children who were systematically made subnormal in the British educational context.

De Michele's position could apparently in contrast with the interviews she realized. Only in some cases, in fact, did the subjects reported feeling discriminated against as children, while other reported were positive. However, we must bear in mind that the interviews are in any case the result of what Alistair Thompson calls *composure*, that is a process of reconstruction of one's memories which is influenced not only by the public and the context in which this is carried out, but also by the interviewees' desire to feel satisfied or comfortable with their identity and the image they are projecting of themselves. Therefore, interviewers as narrators choose the content and the form of their narration and categories such as gender and/or class can have a great influence on the narration itself. In all these kind of studies, the interviewer's job would not be to certify the veracity of the interviews but to analyse how the interviewees make sense of their own experiences to deduce from that more general and theoretical implications.

¹²⁰Capussotti, Enrica. "Nordisti contro Sudisti": *Internal Migrations and Racism in Turin, Italy: 1950's and 1960's* in *Italian Culture*, XVIII, 2. 2010, pp. 121 to 138.

Capussotti studied Southern migrations towards the Turin-Milan-Genoa industrial triangle and how racial differences were translated into spatial and geographical disadvantages.

¹²¹ Nani, Michele. *Ai confini della nazione. Stampa e razzismo nell'Italia di fine Ottocento*. Carocci Editore, Roma, 2006.

Nani studied the representation of Southerners in the Italian press at the end of the 19th century.

¹²² Even at a scholar level it is more common to talk of *Anti-Southernism* than of racism in relation with the Southern Question.

2.4 Employment discrimination

The recent tendency in Italy and in Europe is to consider racism as a mere "ideological manipulation"¹²³ induced by the power and race as a discursive construction. But in fact, the mechanisms they set in motion have real effects in the lives of racialized people. Colonialism, slavery, imperialism and institutional racism still have repercussions on the present. As Frantz Fanon wrote in his book *Peau noire, masques blancs*¹²⁴, although race is an ideological and scientifically refuted representation, the symbolic, psychological and material effects of discourses and practices built on this idea are still present.

According to Anna Curcio and Miguel Mellino¹²⁵, racism is a constitutive and intrinsic element of every modern capitalist reality, closely connected to the colonial roots of capitalist modernity and to the narratives that modern states produce. From the very beginning of modernity, class domination has been intertwined with the discourse of race. As the decolonial scholar Anibal Quijano¹²⁶ argues, when colonizers conquered America, they created the categories of race to distinguish the phenotypic differences of Native Americans. Shortly after, these differences passed from a phenotypic to a biological level and, at the time of black slavery and the extermination of indigenous people, they were coded on the basis of colour. Colour and race became a way to give legitimacy to the new global colonial structure and division of labour, to the system of rulers and ruled.

In contemporary Europe, racism declines often in the discursive production of immigration as a problem and danger, turning into the juridical and cultural construction of practices and devices. One of these practices consists in segmenting the labour market by reason of "race". The result is that certain jobs are associated with people of certain origins, regardless of the skills of the individual worker. The German *Gastarbeit System*, the *banlieu* device gathering the workforce from the former French colonies and the postcolonial immigrants' riots in Great Britain against the immigration system

¹²³ Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012.

¹²⁴ Fanon, Frantz. *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Éditions du Seuil, 2012.

¹²⁵ Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, pp. 7-9.

¹²⁶ Quijano, Anibal, *Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina*, in Lander, Edgardo (ed.) *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas*. Clacso, 2003.

management demonstrate that race is a constitutive element of European capitalism and is still problematic¹²⁷.

Another observation regards targeted groups: according to economic changes in the production and to the intensity of rebellions, racism appears in different forms. Over a short period of time, racialized targets can change and those same groups can be revalued as "white" or "black" according to different factors. Gaia Giuliani and Cristina Lombardi¹²⁸ explain how the constructions of colour and race define one's social position in power relations. According to the whiteness studies approach, whiteness is the social and cultural construction produced by the dominant group through which other groups can be defined as black or non-white¹²⁹. Through some practices and devices, whiteness becomes normative in the same way that gender and sexual norms become part of common sense and start to be considered biologically grounded¹³⁰. Colour takes the form of a spectrum and, based on political and socio-economic factors, a greater proximity to black or white determines access to material and class privileges following a positional scale of whiteness and blackness.

In Italy the construction occurred above all in the Fascist era through the whitening of the Mediterranean race and the continuous reference to the Italian lineage, language and culture¹³¹. Under Fascism the Southern Question was intentionally eclipsed: the ideology of the fascist "new man", loyal to the nation and to the family, was centred on the defence of the race and could not admit racial divisions within the country. Anyway, the Question reappeared again after the war in conjunction with the great migrations to the North. The internal boundaries of whiteness and blackness were redefined. In 1950s Italy, the internal construction of blackness that targeted Southerners was clearly visible in the labour market. E. Capussotti in *La razza al lavoro*¹³² underlines that in those years,

¹²⁷ Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, p. 16.

¹²⁸ Giuliani, Gaia. *Bianco e nero : storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani*. Le Monnier, 2013.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 21.

¹³² Capussotti, Enrica. «Per I posti di lavoro al Nord siano preferiti i settentrionali». *Migrazioni interne, razzismo e inclusione differenziale nel secondo dopoguerra a Torino* in Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, pp.123-137.

the racialization of Southern workers was not based on biological diversity but on the essentialization of cultural traits. The differentialist¹³³ perspective maintaining the inferiority of Southerners took the form of discriminations in the fields of social relations, employment and housing.¹³⁴ Old prejudices and stereotypes were revived to give meaning to identities and differences and above all to processes of inclusion and exclusion of Southerners in Northern cities. Southerners were even deprived of some citizenship rights and ended up forced to live as illegal immigrants in their own nation.

Southerners living conditions can be understood consulting the press of that time. In one of the first investigations into immigration in Turin published by the *Gazzetta del popolo* in 1956 with the title of: *I torinesi e gli altri*¹³⁵, literally “Inhabitants of Turin and the others” (where the word “others” meant Southerners), some announcements in the classified ads of newspapers were reported : women searching for Northerners to marry, rental announcements addressed only to Piedmontese, search for a young Turinese in the role of shop boy. Announcements of this kind were openly accepted in the public debate, despite engendering a hierarchy of preference for Northerners over Southerners.¹³⁶

Two fascist laws (law n. 358 of 1931 and law n. 1092 of 1939) regulated internal migration and the 1949 law n. 264 regulated unemployment¹³⁷. These laws were not actually able to stop internal migration but, before the Terracini law in 1961 abrogated them, they were used as blackmail. Due to these laws, in fact, Southerners had to show an employment contract to obtain a residence certificate, but to register themselves at job centres they needed the residence certificate and finally, workers owning a residence certificate had precedence in the employment lists. In this way native unemployed workers of big cities had an advantage over foreigners. The fascist laws were in contradiction with article n.16 of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of residence

¹³³ Based on a difference.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

¹³⁵ “I torinesi e gli altri”, *Gazzetta del popolo*, 24 October 1956, p.4, quoted in Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, p. 129.

¹³⁶ Capussotti, Enrica. «Per I posti di lavoro al Nord siano preferiti i settentrionali». *Migrazioni interne, razzismo e inclusione differenziale nel secondo dopoguerra a Torino* in Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, p. 130.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

for all citizens¹³⁸. In any case, these measures favoured the clandestinity of the new arrivals, their exploitation and job and housing precariousness.

Goffredo Fofi's interviews¹³⁹ with Southern workers in Turin highlighted the existence of some cooperatives that guaranteed work certificates but at the price of low wages and no rights in the workplace. Local authorities in the large Northern cities were aware of the situation as demonstrated, for example, by a communication from the Regional Labour Office of Turin to the Prefect¹⁴⁰. In this communication the first tried to give an explanation of employment discrimination to the detriment of the Southerners: these discriminations would be due to previous bad experiences with the hiring of Southern workers unwilling to work, differences in temperament and language that created misunderstandings among workers, illiteracy that made them unsuitable for the large factories of the North, as if the Northern workers from the Northern countryside were all well-educated. Another interesting aspect was the institution of repatriation for illegal workers, as if Southern worker were not part of the Italian state.

2.5 *Coree* in Milan: housing discriminations

After the war Milan was one of the 3 cities of the industrial triangle, therefore among the most affected by internal migrations. In Turin and Genoa, in advertisements in newspapers or on signs posted on the streets, it was clearly stated that apartments and houses were available for rent except to Southerners. In Milan, living arrangements evolved in a very peculiar way. The data discussed in this paragraph are provided by the survey on immigrants¹⁴¹ carried out by Danilo Montaldi and from the interviews with Southern workers in Milan carried out by his pupil and close collaborator Franco Alasia, who was a worker in the Breda factory in Milan. The initial idea of the research was to investigate the strong contradictions that emerged in a city like Milan, where in the same era of the economic boom, the international furniture and household appliances

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 131.

¹³⁹ Fofi, Goffredo. *L'immigrazione meridionale a Torino*. Ed. ampliata, Feltrinelli, 1975.

¹⁴⁰ Archivio di Stato di Torino, Gabinetto Prefettura, Secondo versamento, mazzo 203, Ufficio regionale del lavoro e della massima occupazione di Torino, 26 May 1959, quoted in Mellino, Miguel, et al. *La razza al lavoro*. Manifestolibri, 2012, p. 132.

¹⁴¹ Alasia, Franco, et al. *Milano, Corea: inchiesta sugli immigrati*. Ed. del cinquantennale / con una introduzione di Guido Crainz e una postfazione di Jeff Quiligotti, 2010.

exhibitions, the Compasso d'oro award¹⁴² and the Pirelli skyscraper, the misery of a part of the population was clearly visible. In the City, in fact, 13 out of 100 houses lacked drinking water, 42 lacked bathrooms and 24 toilets with running water¹⁴³. Alasia and Montaldi's initial aim was to trace life conditions of poor people. After a short time, they soon noticed that in those years in Milan the humblest jobs were all carried out for the most part by people of non-Milanese origin. Labour exploitation was, in fact, intertwined with internal migrations. Immigrants constituted the socially inferior level of the urban classes¹⁴⁴. They were exploited in terms of work by the labour cooperative system and victims in terms of housing of building speculation and racial discrimination.

In addition to the discomforts of the masses in the city, a new problem emerged: new settlements were springing up far from the cities creating new neighbourhoods without any services. These areas were called *Coree*. The neologism was linked to the fact that the first settlements of this type appeared during the years of the war in Korea. Southern immigrants in Italy appeared as desperate refugees¹⁴⁵. Following the first waves of migration, in 1953 the Regulatory Plan was approved in Milan and the value of the area tripled, thus reinforcing the tendency to move to further areas. Since the administration did not consider the construction of public housing, speculation in the building had free rein. The accommodations in Milan were too expensive and even building a makeshift house in the outskirts of Milan was problematic due to fines. The few available houses were overcrowded. For example, the *Corriere d'informazione*¹⁴⁶ reported that a man from Puglia in Via Ripamonti was renting an apartment with two rooms in which he housed 7 family members, 3 pensioners, 2 girls and a boy. The owner of a building in *Corso di Porta Romana* had 6 apartments of 3 rooms each in which he had accommodated 18 families (one for each room) with shared bathrooms¹⁴⁷. For this reason, immigrants settled north of Milan, in municipalities that were well connected to

¹⁴² A design award established in 1954.

¹⁴³ Ibid., Introduction p. IX.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁴⁶ *Corriere d'informazione*, 27-28 febbraio 1959 quoted in Alasia, Franco, et al. *Milano, Corea : inchiesta sugli immigrati*. Ed. del cinquantennale / con una introduzione di Guido Crainz e una postfazione di Jeff Quiligotti, 2010, p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

the metropolis by fast means of transport. Controls in the villages were less strict than those in the city and there residence could also be obtained by living in a cellar even if not even the minimum hygienic conditions were guaranteed. In fact, in these areas, houses appeared as cement cubes. Cellars were rented out to families who did not have the money to build their own house and with the rent money the owners continued the construction of the first floor. As soon as the construction was completed, tenants of the cellar went up to the ground floor and the owners to the first floor¹⁴⁸.

Workers who had to reach Milan from the towns in Bergamo area spent from 15 to 18 hours of their day to reach the workplace and work. *L'alba della Città comincia a tanti chilometri di distanza con un risveglio di massa*, wrote Danilo Montaldi ¹⁴⁹. Concerning the topographical disposition of the *Coree*, their separation and atomization is highlighted. From research carried out by a group of students of the University of Milan on the housing phenomenon in the municipality of Cologno Monzese, it was observed that a *Corea* is negatively built around a void: the birth of the new city does not go hand in hand with the birth of a community or group or class awareness. The inhabitants tend to isolate themselves and new stratifications are created¹⁵⁰.

On June 16th, 1957, the Convention of the municipalities to the north and north-east of Milan met to deal with the problem of immigration. The provided data showed a 16% increase in the population of the municipalities north of Milan from 1952 to 1956, while in the rest of the province the increase was only 4%¹⁵¹. For the expenses related to these new settlements, one could certainly not rely on the taxes of the new arrivals. It was necessary to build new homes, schools, roads, sewers, drinking water, hospitals and other assistance services. An estimated expenditure of around 700 million was estimated for the urbanization of the new municipalities, counting essential services only: roads, water and lighting. Building speculation and the proceeds of electricity monopolies were denounced as both elements acting to the detriment of immigrants who invested all their savings in the construction of a makeshift house. The conference concluded with a request

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 11. The dawn of the City begins many kilometres away with a mass awakening. (self-translation)

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 73-76.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 61.

to the province to assume the greatest possible burdens for the construction of public works and necessary sanitary systems and other requests for solving the immigration problem.

Franco Alasia's interviews proposed an empirical and qualitative approach, deemed necessary in a situation of ignorance in which the country found it extremely difficult to look at itself¹⁵². The aim was to look at the phenomenon from the inside. The collected biographies revealed the different ways in which Southerners fit into the industrial reality, where they slept, what they could afford and what they suffered, their social and human conditions, forms of closure to the novelties of the new environment and attachment to one's own land or forms of enthusiasm and openness even of rejection of one's origin. Extremely different personal portraits of immigrants emerged: traditional and fatalistic mentalities, peasant mentalities, claims for rights, the struggle to get a job, dignified accommodation, the maturation of political awareness in some and an awareness of the exploitation they were suffering or the refusal to understand politics in others, an isolation which was sometimes voluntary and other times the direct consequence of un-lived social occasions missed in order to save money to recreate a reassuring context that includes house and family. The statement of Ruggero C., a Breda worker, during one of the interviews are striking: *They do not even know what the word terrone means, that derives from the word earth. They do not even know that it derives from the word earth, they said terun and they do not know it, this is how I shut them up.*¹⁵³. ", words that reflect all the concrete and psychological weight of a discrimination which, like any other discrimination, has no real foundation.

2.6 Studies of ethnic prejudices in Italy

In 1950s-60s Italy, the word Southerner immediately evoked prejudices and stereotypes. Some data on social prejudice and on the attitude of Northerners towards Southerners and vice versa were provided by Marco Walter Battacchi and Renzo

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁵³ "Non sanno neanche che cosa significa la parola terrone, che deriva dalla parola terra. Non lo sanno neanche che deriva dalla parola terra, dicono terun e non lo sanno, ecco come gli tappo la bocca."

Ibid., p. 135.

Canestrari's 1959 psychological study¹⁵⁴. Battacchi described the structure of the prejudiced attitude as a bipolar opposition between "us" and "*the Others*"¹⁵⁵. This type of structure is built around a positive egocentric polarization: one's own group is positively valued, while that of others negatively. When the attitude is not prejudiced, the "we" group has expanded to include "the others" within it. Two groups of university students were involved in the study: one group of 50 Northern students at the University of Bologna (mainly from Emilia Romagna) and the other of 50 Southern students at the University of Salerno (from Calabria, Campania and Lucania).

Different techniques were used in the study. The first is the "rigidity test"¹⁵⁶: Northern participants were given newspaper articles with news containing references to characteristics usually attributed to Southerners. Most of the answers were rigid: despite the effective impossibility of locating the events, participants attributed them to the South. The test of perceptive evaluations¹⁵⁷ was measured through a series of photos depicting different subjects that had to be divided according to the alleged origin of the subjects, revealing the existence of Northern and Southern "types" and physiological traits. The Katz and Braly's test¹⁵⁸ consisted in underlining in a list of adjectives those referring to Northerners and those referring to Southerners. The Bogardus scale of social distance¹⁵⁹ was then used, asking participants to express their agreement about possible attitudes towards the other "ethnic community" by marking them with a cross: e.g.: I would take a Southerner as my wife; I would accept a Southerner as friend; I'd like to have Southern customs and traditions; it wouldn't bother me to be mistaken for Southerner. The story-to-complete test¹⁶⁰ asked participants to complete stories by imagining their outcome. The same scenario was proposed twice: once the protagonist was a Southerner and the story

¹⁵⁴ Battacchi, Marco Walter, and Renzo Canestrari. *Meridionali e settentrionali nella struttura del pregiudizio etnico in Italia*. Il mulino, 1959.

¹⁵⁵ Here I propose the spelling used by Fatima El-Tayeb in her book *European Others*. El-Tayeb, Fatima. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. NED-New edition. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

was set in the South while another time in the North with a Northern protagonist. Finally, the self-assessment questionnaire¹⁶¹ was used to detect favourable and unfavourable opinions first towards other specific regional groups in Italy and then in general towards Northerners and Southerners.

From the analysis of the results, hypotheses on the two groups were advanced. Northern students completely opposed themselves to Southern students and denied sharing with them any common characteristics. Assimilation with them was perceived as a danger but they admitted a form of acceptance if Southerners were willing to adapt to Northerners' customs. This attitude could be described as a bipolar opposition with an egocentric positive polarization but not totally rigid as it admitted a minimum form of enlargement of the "we" group even if under precise conditions.

The Southern participants group perceived themselves as different from the Northerners as well, but they showed a willingness to adapt to Northern values by rejecting their own. This type of structure often characterizes minority groups. It could be described in terms of bipolar opposition but with a positive heterocentric polarization.

On the whole, attitudes of Northerners and Southerners seemed to maintain a prejudiced attitude structure. According to Battacchi, the attitude of Southerners towards Northerners was less rigid than the other way around and should be further and deeper investigated as it is unlikely that all subjects lacked a positive egocentric polarization. The study concluded with a reflection on the dangerousness of Northerners attitude towards Southerners (which appeared to be reinforced by the complementary attitude in the opposite direction) which could even prevent forms of cultural interaction between the two groups.

Another study by the sociologist Anna Anfossi¹⁶² on the socio-cultural differences between Piedmontese and Southerners groups in Turin in 1962 offered an overview of the stereotypes about Southerners reported by 122 Piedmontese interviewees. Anfossi underlines how Southern groups were stigmatized and how labels were attributed to them

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁶² Anfossi, Anna. *Differenze socio-culturali tra gruppi Piemontesi e Meridionali a Torino*, Immigrazioni in industria in AA.VV. *Immigrazione e industria, Studi e ricerche di scienze sociali*, Torino, Edizioni Comunità, 1962.

more or less frequently. The three most frequent reported stereotypes were: Southerners are inclined to have many children and live at the expenses of others (83.1% of interviewees); they are obsessed with loyalty (80.9%); clichés about their professions and professional skills (70.4%)¹⁶³. These stereotypes were followed by others however strongly present stereotypes: inclination to violence (65.6%); support only within the group (63.8%), image of the Southern woman suitable only for housework and gossip (63.7%); predatory instinct of men (57.6%); predisposition to parasitism (55.8%); inclination to squander money (52.7%); the Unity was a mistake because it would have been better without the South (51.5%); amoral familism (51.1%); superficiality and inaptitude in business (48.2%); they are African (43.6%); laziness (42.7%); theft of resources from the Piedmontese (40.3%).

These positive studies that were analysed in the previous chapter show how in some cases the paradigms of social disciplines can influence public opinion and vice versa, creating another layer of preconceptions and harmful categorizations that mixes with the previous ones. It is important to bear in mind that, particularly for the human and social sciences, reflexivity and a critical and self-critical spirit are essential to avoid the creation and reproduction of sociological novels, essentializing categorizations, stereotypes and prejudices.

¹⁶³ Scaffidi, Luca Giuseppe. *Gente di giù*, Menelique Magazine. Vol. 8 Sud. Torino, 2022.

Chapter 3: The Global South

This chapter will discuss the creation of Souths at a European and global level. A definition of the global South will then be provided and a model for analysing racism at a global level will be proposed.

3.1 From colonialism to the Global South

Decolonial studies see the conquest of America as a watershed in world history. Spain and Portugal initiated the conquest and subsequent practices of domination and representation that would form the basis of "European superiority". Despite this, other events changed the narrative in the 1800s. Northwestern European states due to the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution became the protagonist of the new pivotal episodes of modern subjectivity. At that moment within the paradigm of European superiority, the Iberian Peninsula, Southern France, Italy, Greece and the entire Mediterranean area were downgraded to marginal and backward areas in opposition to North-western Europe. These countries are still referred to in a derogatory manner with the acronym PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain)¹⁶⁴. According to Conelli, the so-called "colonial difference" and "imperial difference"¹⁶⁵ guided the new representations and geographies of power. The British, Dutch and French colonial empires would have been evidence of the superiority of these nations. On the contrary, peoples of the American colonies and of the Mediterranean, even when not directly colonized, were instead to be considered inferior due to their language, their culture and social organization. The downgrading of the Mediterranean in the international political economy was already underway in the 19th century when its coasts were entirely colonized by Europeans. The new narration and the new hierarchy of modernity with the European white man at the top of society also affected Southern Italy. Because of these considerations, the Southern question can be inserted into the broader scenario of the Global South.

3.2 What is the Global South?

Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell define the phrase "Global South" in these terms:

¹⁶⁴ Piperno, Franco, et al. *Briganti o emigranti: Sud e movimenti tra conricerca e studi subalterni*. Ombre corte, 2014, p. 61.

¹⁶⁵ Conelli, Carmine. *Il rovescio della nazione: La costruzione coloniale dell'idea di Mezzogiorno*. Tamu Edizioni, 2022, p. 56.

The phrase “Global South” refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It is one of a family of terms, including “Third World” and “Periphery,” that denote regions outside Europe and North America, mostly (though not all) low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized. The use of the phrase Global South marks a shift from a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power¹⁶⁶.

According to Dados and Connell, early sociological writings had always described global differences in terms of “advanced” and “primitive”. Colonialism would have created the historical context in which to place these considerations: according to them a clear connection lies in the fact that the most geographically distant and Southern populations were considered by European colonizers to be the most primitive. Antonio Gramsci in *Southern Question*¹⁶⁷ redefined and deconstructed the traditional concept of the South starting from his reflections on Southern Italy "colonized by capitalists from Northern Italy", highlighting the hidden dynamics of power within Italy. In the Italian context, the North-South divide was presented in terms of different economic development. Other scholars took up Gramsci's geo-economic distinction between centre and periphery, concepts that soon took on the name of North and South in international politics. *North-South terminology, then, like core-periphery, arose from an allegorical application of categories to name patterns of wealth, privilege, and development across broad regions*¹⁶⁸. In particular, the concept of Global South began to be framed around developing countries (above all former colonies) as opposed to the economies of both communist and capitalist industrialized countries. In Northern sociology “core” and “periphery” became alternatives to the “modern/traditional” binary¹⁶⁹.

According to Anne Garland Mahler, the expression "Global South" has three different meanings¹⁷⁰. In its first meaning it has been used since the Cold War era by

¹⁶⁶ Dados, Nour & Connell, Raewyn. “The Global South.” *Contexts* 11.1 (Winter 2012), p. 12.

¹⁶⁷ Gramsci, Antonio. *La questione meridionale*. Rinascita, 1951.

¹⁶⁸ Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁰ Mahler, Anne Garland. "Global South". In *obo* in *Literary and Critical Theory*. 22 May. 2023. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0055.xml>

intergovernmental development organizations, especially those created through the NAM¹⁷¹, as an alternative to the "Third World" label, to refer to economically disadvantaged countries. In its second meaning, especially in the context of literary and cultural studies, it indicates the people and places that suffer the negative impact of capitalist globalization. Therefore, this meaning is disconnected from the purely geographical meaning of the word "South" and pertains more to the economic dimensions of Norths and Souths. There are economic Souths, i.e. peripheral and subaltern areas of wealthy states, also in the geographic North and there are economic Norths also in Southern states. In the third meaning it indicates a transnational political subject born through the Third World Project and the NAM and through the solidarity and mutual recognition of the subaltern communities of the global South. In this sense it would be a pragmatic and concrete response to the postcolonial theory that had stalled to the analysis of colonial differences. The North-South perspective also stood in contrast to the theory of globalization which proposed a world in which cultures and societies would have become increasingly homogeneous.

One of the most recognized texts to adopt the global North-South perspective is the Brandt Commission reported of 1980¹⁷². The reported identified strong economic disparities between the states of the Northern and Southern hemispheres and proposed effective cooperation strategies¹⁷³. In 1990, the South Commission, born within the

¹⁷¹ Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), international organization dedicated to representing the interests and aspirations of developing countries. [...] The Non-Aligned Movement emerged in the context of the wave of decolonization that followed World War II. In the context of the Cold War, they argued, countries of the developing world should abstain from allying with either of the two superpowers (the United States and the U.S.S.R.) and should instead join together in support of national self-determination against all forms of colonialism and imperialism. The Non-Aligned Movement was founded and held its first conference (the Belgrade Conference) in 1961.

Non-Aligned Movement, *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Non-Aligned-Movement>

¹⁷² Brandt, Willy. *North-South: A Programme for Survival; Reported of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1980.

¹⁷³ Mahler, "Global South".

NAM, published a new reported¹⁷⁴ in which it highlighted that cooperation between Southern countries could help reduce their dependence on Northern countries¹⁷⁵.

3.3 Racial worldview: racism as a global system

Drawing on critical race theory and the perspective of the global South, a new global framework can be formulated that reflects the functioning of race and racism. The system of racial classification appeared on the world scene explicitly in the past centuries and more or less invisibly today as a system of social division based on the supposed differences between human groups on the basis of their “race”.

This ideology or “racial worldview” is a systematic, institutionalized set of beliefs and attitudes that includes the following components:

1. All the world’s peoples can be divided into biologically separate, discrete, and exclusive populations called races. A person can belong to only one race.
2. Phenotypic features, or visible physical differences, are markers or symbols of race identity and status. Because an individual may belong to a racial category and not have any or all of the associated physical features, racial scientists early in the 20th century invented an invisible internal element, “racial essence,” to explain such anomalies.
3. Each race has distinct qualities of temperament, morality, disposition, and intellectual ability. Consequently, in the popular imagination each race has distinct behavioural traits that are linked to its phenotype.
4. Races are unequal. They can, and should, be ranked on a gradient of inferiority and superiority. As the 19th-century biologist Louis Agassiz observed, since races exist, we must “settle the relative rank among [them].”
5. The behavioural and physical attributes of each race are inherited and innate—therefore fixed, permanent, and unalterable.
6. Distinct races should be segregated and allowed to develop their own institutions, communities, and lifestyles, separate from those of other races¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷⁴ The South Commission. *The Challenge to the South: The Reported of the South Commission*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

¹⁷⁵ Mahler, "Global South".

¹⁷⁶ “Race” as a mechanism of social division”, in *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/race-human/Race-as-a-mechanism-of-social-division>

Michelle Christian¹⁷⁷ starts from the structural national racialized social system proposed by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva¹⁷⁸ to draw the map of a system that acts on a global level and that is transversal to all geographies. Its two main characteristics are: the core components that allow its implementation and its link with whiteness. Through this perspective *permanence and flexibility of racism across the globe can be seen, in all its overt, invisible, and insidious forms*¹⁷⁹. Bonilla Silva's study initially focused on the United States. Rejecting an "idealistic view" of racism (considering racism as a mere system of ideas), he denounced its structural presence, defining what he called a *national racialized social system*¹⁸⁰. Bonilla Silva concluded his analysis with an appeal to scholars from all over the world to systematically analyse the mechanisms that produce and reproduce inequalities in their countries.

According to Christian, twenty years after Bonilla-Silva's intervention, US sociology has not still incorporated a global approach to racism and would still be anchored to paradigms based on ethnicity or nationality or linked to specific geographies. Anthropology and sociology in the past have supported racist conceptualizations that were considered scientifically based. Starting from Boas' critique of biological determinism and the concept of race¹⁸¹, many scholars started to exclude the word race from all discussions and treat it as a taboo. Even today, several studies tend to adopt paradigms based on ethnicity or on the concept of nation¹⁸². These approaches focus on individual countries and analyse group dynamics in a bottom-up view of social groupness, emphasizing the complexity and specificity of race and ethnicity embedded in different spaces and places. This approach which considers the various racisms as extremely diversified and isolated fragments is contrasted by the critical theory of race which treats

¹⁷⁷ Christian, Michelle. "A Global Critical Race and Racism Framework: Racial Entanglements and Deep and Malleable Whiteness." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 5(2). 2019: p. 169-185.

¹⁷⁸ Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation." *American Sociological Review* 62(3). 1997: p. 465-80.

¹⁷⁹ Christian, 2019, p. 169.

¹⁸⁰ Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. 2001.

¹⁸¹ Boas, Franz. *Anthropology and modern life*. New York: Dover. 1986.

¹⁸² Christian, 2019, p. 170.

racism as a global phenomenon, underlining the dynamics of domination also at an institutional level¹⁸³.

Although the primary principles of analysis are different, the two perspectives converge on three points: 1. race was born with modernity whose governing devices (capitalistic political economy, slavery, imperialism, knowledge production, etc.) hinged on the European-non-European difference; 2. race has shaped the balance of the whole world, even of places not colonized by Europeans through the categories of “black”, “white”, “yellow”, “red” and “brown” and the “scientific racism” paradigm; racism changes in form according to times and places¹⁸⁴. Christian suggests readapting Bonilla-Silva's model introducing two new dimensions of analysis, the historical and the global dimension.

In the Global Critical Race and Racism (GCRR) framework the historical dimension is essential for understanding contemporary racism in national social systems. Historically racialization in the world system has occurred through Western colonialism, slavery, state building, racial violence and genocide. In this picture, the direct and indirect effects that colonialism has had all over the world play a primary role. Only in the light of these analyses is it possible to understand the persistent underdevelopment of Africa and most of the global South and the prevalence of whiteness in non-Western societies.

The global dimension, on the other hand, underlines the preponderance of economic aspects in hierarchical relationships at a global level. After the fall of colonialism and the spread of neoliberalism, countries have been forced by institutions of the global North (such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) to open their economies to foreign direct investment, to produce goods for export, to limit the role of the state and to employ externally controlled debt management regimes. The setting of a global economy and the hierarchies within it are heirs of the colonial racial hierarchy and continue to feed those same racial logics and to reproduce hegemonic conceptions of whiteness, negritude and intermediate categories. Even militarism would have a preponderant role together with the war on terror which

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid..

would have helped to create a new racialized anti-Islamic orientalism through complex practices such as the distribution of military aid, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, racist Islamophobia, thus reinforcing a white global order.

Different types of racial states are identified such as post empire states, postcolonial states, noncolonized states, etc. The GCRR highlights how each state defines racial groups through laws and censuses, regulating race relations, and managing racial economic location. States construct national racial identity and adopt racial policies to explain racial homogenization or racial diversity according to national racial political projects in response to global logics and internal racial demands related to local conflicts. For example, based on different factors, postcolonial states in Latin America have adopted policies of "*blanqueamiento*" (whitening) through European immigration or have adopted *mestizaje* (mixture) as a cardinal principle to mask racist practices¹⁸⁵.

Discourses and representations are also analysed as ideological mechanisms that support and maintain the racist structure. Through racism, new meanings concerning races and "spectacle of the Other"¹⁸⁶ are produced in order to generate hegemonic justifications for racism. In recent times, the ideology of "colour-blindness" is working to minimize the importance of race and racism which would be belied by different phenomena such as multiculturalism, racial democracy, *mestizaje* and ethnic nationalism. These discourses and representations help to maintain the white racial status quo and to exert control over non-white groups by giving them recognition that remains relegated to the mere cultural sphere.

Finally, it is highlighted that despite the decolonization processes, the end of apartheid and the advent of civil rights, global whiteness remains an undisputed indicator of cultural, economic, political, social and symbolic capital and power. Whiteness is argued to underlie all racialized social systems, including *global capitalism, the state, legal principles, spatial arrangements, wealth, tastes and preferences, the family, and even the terms and categories that we use*¹⁸⁷. A deep whiteness and a malleable whiteness are distinguished. Deep whiteness is defined as historical privilege resulting from white

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 179.

economic and political control in the world system. Malleable whiteness can be acquired through the "whitening" practices of countries and groups can move along a racial hierarchy. Some countries and groups that have not historically been considered white seek to acquire the benefits of whiteness through *symbolic, economic, cultural, social, or aesthetic capital*¹⁸⁸. Malleable whiteness is not stable and once acquired can be subject to revision based on political and economic conjunctures. Global whiteness impacts non-white bodies and countries that are obsessed with the aspiration to whiteness and are pushed to take white institutions, white norms, and white values as model. Antiblackness represents the opposite end of global whiteness and would be a direct consequence of the inferiorization of any body or value that is not considered white.

3.4 Post and de-colonial approaches

Since the 1980s, race and racism have become the condition that allows or not to access welfare services. Economic disparities and repressive policies in the different states are more and more clearly based on race¹⁸⁹. Yet national narratives describe post-racial states where racism is an outdated phenomenon. The new ideology of colour-blindness, i.e. of the non-relevance of race in social relations, would do nothing but favour and strengthen contemporary racism precisely by silencing the episodes of racism which, in a world without races, would become general forms of violence and discrimination and not recognizing to individuals the specificity of their experiences. In his book *Racism without Racists*¹⁹⁰, Bonilla-Silva criticizes the ideology of colour-blindness and describes a structural racism in which manifestations are more subtle and less overt than in the past but which continues to disadvantage specific groups. He provides examples of everyday episodes of institutional, cultural, media and political racism.

At the antipodes of the colour-blindness ideology, various scholars instead highlight the centrality of the category of race and retrace the continuity between the European imperial past and the present by describing European modernity and culture as the product of the exploitation of peoples and territories colonized. As Gurinder Bhambra argues, it is therefore essential that social studies adopt post-decolonial

¹⁸⁸ Ibid..

¹⁸⁹ Frisina, Annalisa. *Razzismi contemporanei: le prospettive della sociologia*. Carocci, 2020, p. 65.

¹⁹⁰ Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. 5. ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.

approaches in order to free research from the Eurocentric paradigms that have dominated it for centuries until now¹⁹¹. In Italy the first decolonial studies are due to Renate Siebert who adopts Fanon's purpose of fighting against racism and of unlearning its internalized forms¹⁹². A decolonial approach in Italy mainly takes the form of bringing attention back to the Italian colonial history which is obscured and silenced and to everyday and institutional racism. Decolonizing means denouncing contemporary policies of discrimination against migrants, the sexist violence of colonialism and all forms of erasure of colonial memory.

¹⁹¹ Frisina, p. 66.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Chapter 4: Dialogic interviews in Veneto

This section will describe the whole process that led to the creation of a qualitative study investigating the condition of Southern students in the Veneto. The first section offers a reflection on the linguistic use of the words *terrone* and *meridionale*, showing the contexts in which these two words appear. In the second section, the method of the dialogic interview is presented. The third section is dedicated to the discussion of the research results. In particular, I will investigate whether, although there has been an improvement compared to the past, in contemporary Italy there are still prejudices and forms of discrimination against Italian people of Southern origin.

4.1 The weight of words: *terrone* and *meridionale* in Sketch Engine

In this section I will discuss how the words “*terrone*” (literally “Southerner” in a pejorative sense) and the less connotated word “*meridionale*” (literally “Southerner”) are used in Italian. For this purpose, data collected through the Sketch Engine software will be analysed. Linguistic analysis is extremely relevant. In fact, since language is the main tool for sharing and transmitting ideas and concepts, it has a primary role in the reproduction of stereotypes and discrimination.

Sketch Engine performs analysis of authentic corpora in which texts are collected according to various criteria to return data on the linguistic use of words. The corpus I used is the Italian Web 2020 (itTenTen20): “an Italian corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet¹⁹³” containing 12.4 billion words. It is “an all-purpose Italian corpus covering the largest possible variety of genres, topics, text types and web sources¹⁹⁴”. In this way the data obtained will give information on how certain words are used on the web. The research will be carried using different functions of the software. The “Word Sketch” function shows the most frequent co-occurrences that appear in the corpus with

¹⁹³ See the general description of itTenTen: Corpus of the Italian Web on the page: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/ittenten-italian-corpus/>

¹⁹⁴ For all the technical data regarding the corpus, consult the Italian Web 2020 page (itTenTen20): https://app.sketchengine.eu/#wordsketch?corpname=preloaded%2Fittenten20_fl1&tab=basic&lemma=terrone&clustercolls=0&sort_ws_columns=s&showresults=1&itemsPerPage=50&corp_info=1

a certain word. Co-occurrence is a term which expresses how often two terms occur alongside each other in a certain order, or simply put, which words most frequently combine with a certain word in the collected texts. Co-occurrences are divided according to their grammatical category: verbs, modifiers (mostly adjectives) and nouns.

WORD SKETCH Italian Web 2020 (itTenTen20)

terrone as noun 8,549x

verbs with "terrone" as object	verbs with "terrone" as subject	modifiers of "terrone"
comandare Comandano i terroni	puzzare	scansafatiche
odiare chi odia i terroni	emigrare	merdoso
insultare	trapiantare	somaro
chiamare chiamano terroni	immigrare	emigrato
amare Ti amo terrone	salvare Perché i terroni salveranno l' Italia	cosidetti
gridare	dimenticare	puzzolente
seminare	votare	ignorante c' è un terrone ignorante , godo tantissimo
		parassita terrone parassiti
		deceduto
		sudista
		zitto
		lurido

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noun modifiers of "terrone"	nouns modified by noun "terrone"	prepositional phrases with nouns
terrone	riscossa Alla riscossa terroni	"terrone" del
nullafacente	terrone	"terrone" di
fannullone	orgoglio dell' orgoglio terrone	"terrone" a
fuorisede	noialtri	"terrone" da
trapiantato	accento con accento terrone	"terrone" in
doc	appellativo	"terrone" fuori
DOC	animo	"terrone" al
figlio	sangue mezzo sangue terrone	"terrone" dal
	Marinella	"terrone" con
	prof	"terrone" nel
	cielo	"terrone" della
	cognome	"terrone" sul

"terrone" is a ...	"terrone" and/or is a "terrone"
terrone ...	polentoni ... terrone e polentoni	terrone ...
libro ...	polentone ... terrone o polentone	veneto ...
	terrone ... terrone e terrone	padre ...
	negro ... i terroni , i negri	
	nordico ...	
	frocio ...	
	lavativo ...	
	terremotato ...	
	extracomunitario ...	
	zingaro ...	
	marocchino ...	
	mafioso ...	

I started searching for the co-occurrences of the word “*terrone*”. Results show that the word “*terrone*” appears as a noun in the corpus 8549 times accompanied by mostly derogatory co-occurrences. For example, in the noun modifiers section we can find the words: “*nullafacente*” (deadbeat), and “*fannullone*” (slacker) but also “*fuorisede*” (someone who lives away from home) and “*trapiantato*” (transplanted). In the section “*terrone* and or”, other derogatory words appear such as: “*ne*ro*” (ne*ro), “*frocio*” (faggot), “*lavativo*” (good-for-nothing), “*terremotato*” (earthquake victim), “*extracomunitario*” (non-EU-national), “*zingaro*” (gipsy, with a derogative sense in Italian), “*marocchino*” (Moroccan), “*mafioso*” (member of the Mafia).

It is useful to remark that through the "Concordance" function it is possible to examine one by one the contexts in which the word *terrone* appears co-accompanied by the words in the tables. From the very first pages scanned through with "Concordance" some occurrences of the word appear in forums or similar pages in which some users express, for example, their personal opinion on the "*terrone*" while other occurrences result instead written by people who simply reported or denounced some expressions that they had heard in daily life or in political speeches or clichés and stereotypes. The analysis of the results should be certainly more deeply investigated to understand case by case in which meaning and with which connotations words are used in the different contexts.

However, the present study still allows us to understand which words most often co-occur with the word *terrone*, thus giving an idea of the environment in which it is used.

A comparison between the above analysed case and the Word Sketch analysis of the word *meridionale* (considered as a noun and not as an adjective) can lead to interesting insights. Some of the collected data is not relevant to the research focus. For example, in the section "modifiers of *meridionale*" the word is considered as an adjective denoting a geographical position with the sense of “southern” (such as in “*Africa meridionale*”= Southern Africa or “*nell’Atlantico meridionale*”= in the Southern Atlantic) and the same thing happens in the section "nouns modified by noun *meridionale*" (such as in “*Messico meridionale*”= Southern Mexico or in “*del Cile meridionale*”= of Southern Chile). However, the linking point with the previous word sketch can be explicitly found in some verbs such as “*insultare, offendere, disprezzare*” (insulting, offending, scorning) related to the word *meridionale* and with other at first sight "neutral" co-occurrences which are however used in a problematic way, such as in the cases of the verbs *emigrare, accettare, volere* (emigrate, accept, want) used for example in these sentences as: “*non hanno voglia di lavorare*” – literally are unwilling to - an expression generally used to introduce the stereotype of Southerners who are slackers.

meridionale as noun 33,177x ...

← ↻ ⋮ 🔍 ✕	← ↻ ⋮ 🔍 ✕	← ↻ ⋮ 🔍 ✕
verbs with "meridionale" as object	verbs with "meridionale" as subject	modifiers of "meridionale"
notabilato ...	emigrare ... meridionale emigrata	versante ... sul versante meridionale
dirupare ...	votare ... meridionali votano	africo ... dell' Africa meridionale
deportare ... deportare i meridionali	smettere ...	tirreno ... Tirreno meridionale
libare ... nel Libano meridionale	dimenticare ...	atlantico ... nell' Atlantico meridionale
capolinea ...	trasferire ...	florido ... della Florida meridionale
insultare ... insultare i meridionali	capire ... meridionali capiscano	abside ... dell' abside meridionale
drenare ... drenano il versante meridionale del	pagare ... meridionali pagano	falda ... sulla falda meridionale del
traversare ...	accettare ...	tirrenico ... tirrenico meridionale
denigrare ...	credere ... meridionali si credono	toscano ... della Toscana meridionale
sudare ... del Sudan meridionale	cominciare ... i meridionali cominciarono	adriatico ... dell' Adriatico meridionale
offendere ... offendere i meridionali	volere ... meridionali non hanno voglia	mediterraneo ... del Mediterraneo meridionale
disprezzare ... disprezzano i meridionali	caratterizzare ...	
⌵ ⌵	⌵ ⌵	

"meridionale" and/or ...	adjective predicates of "meridionale"
settentrionale ... meridionali e i settentrionali	mafioso ...
terrone ... meridionale o terrone	intelligente ... perché i meridionali sono meno intelligenti dei settentrionali
meridionalista ... i meridionali e i meridionalisti	italiano ... I meridionali sono italiani
nero ... i meridionali , i neri e i rom	inferiore ... meridionali sono inferiori
siciliano ... i meridionali e i siciliani	diverso ...
calabrese ... per i meridionali , un calabrese ; per i	
isolano ...	
extracomunitario ... i meridionali e gli extracomunitari	
Belize ...	
Guatemala ... del Messico meridionale , Guatemala	
Oceano ...	
immigrato ... i meridionali e gli immigrati	

In the last column, containing adjectives that co-occur with the word *meridionale*, disparaging terms are listed, such as: *mafioso* (member of the mafia), *intelligente* (intelligent) but to be precise as "less intelligent than" in 9 of the 12 occurrences, *inferiore* and *diverso* (inferior and different). To conclude, in the section “*Meridionale* and/or” the word *terrone* appears in the second position.

The terms appearing as synonyms of the word *terrone* in the Thesaurus section are all highly discriminative: *frocio*, *ne*ro*, *Terroni*, *fanullone*, *barbone*, *drogato*, *zingaro*, *cruccho*, *meridionale*, *stronzo* (literally: faggot, *ne*ro*, Terroni, slacker, bum, drug addict, gypsy, Kraut, Southerner, asshole).

terrone as noun 8,549x ...

	Lempos	Frequency ?
1	frocio	9,581 ...
2	negro	24,312 ...
3	Terroni	1,291 ...
4	fannullone	13,553 ...
5	barbone	20,877 ...
6	drogato	18,040 ...
7	zingaro	28,256 ...
8	crucco	3,681 ...
9	meridionale	33,177 ...
10	stronzo	38,318 ...

Rows per page: 10 1-10 of 56 1 / 6

Synonyms are automatically collected on the basis of distributional semantics theory, according to which “*words that appear in the same context are similar in meaning*”¹⁹⁵.

4.2 Dialogic interview as method

In this research carried a qualitative methodology is employed. It was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation would be dialogic interviews. The key feature of dialogic interviews is to encourage the interviewees towards a narration that is as free as possible. The interviews were carried out according to the "centred and open" method illustrated by Salvatore La Mendola¹⁹⁶.

La Mendola describes his approach in detail: the interview is presented as a particular form of listening whose purpose is to collect and welcome representations of the narrator's experiences and relationships. Narrator is the term used to name the interviewee. According to him the knowledge to which the interviewer aspires is a relational process. Interviewees are no longer an object of research, as they had previously been in traditional research, but become active parts co-creators of this process aimed at knowledge gaining. The interviewee and the interviewer are therefore placed at the same level. La Mendola describes the interview through the metaphor of dance: the dialogic

¹⁹⁵ For further details see Thesaurus — synonyms, antonyms and similar words on the page: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/guide/thesaurus-synonyms-antonyms-similar-words/#toggle-id-3>

¹⁹⁶ La Mendola, Salvatore. *Centrato e aperto: dare vita a intervista dialogiche*. Utet, 2009.

interview is like a couple's dance in which following in the footsteps of the other means remaining open, that is, participating in the relationship while at the same time maintaining one's own balance, remaining centred, avoiding stepping on the other or to colliding with them. The interview becomes a particular form of listening: it is a multi-sensory listening in which the body is not a secondary element, but an essential one. This is why during the interviews listening means not strictly listen at an auditory level: attention is paid to narrators' facial expressions, to the changes in their tone of voice, to the body movements that can reveal emotions and states of mind that the interviewer must consider when formulating the next communicative moves in respect of the relation that has been established with the interviewee. The interviewer's purpose should not be to collect individual data but to listen to the representations of the frames that the narrator builds to make sense of individual data. The frames, referring to Goffman's phenomenology, are defined as representations of representations that give the interviewer the tools to understand how narrators make sense of the events they experience. The frames indicate the type of reasoning to be used to correctly interpret something in the interviewee's vision. La Mendola often resorts to Goffman's theory to explain his method. For example, during the interview the narrator can adopt the attitude of the "defence of the face": through a theatrical metaphor, the social actor is compared to theatre actors on the scene, who is destroyed by continuously having to check the impressions that others have of them. Narrators, for fear of social judgment in the broad sense or, in the strict sense, of the interviewer's judgment, will tend to wear a mask behind which they will feel protected. The interviewer's task will not be to shatter the mask and extort information, but to fluidify it by establishing an equal and bilateral relationship in which narrators can express themselves freely.

To give life to a dialogic interview, therefore, some key points were identified, that could have opened adequate narrative paths with respect to the sample. The subjects interviewed are all students from Southern Italy who moved to Veneto to study at the University of Padua and, only in the case of Margherita, at the University of Venice. In only one of these cases, a former student, Alice, reported that she stopped to work in Veneto in the previous months, immediately after her studies. The sample of interviewees is made up of 7 girls and 3 boys coming from the following regions: Campania (Maurizio, Franca, Rosamaria and Margherita), Puglia (Alice and Ilaria), Sicily (Livia), Molise

(Ermenegildo and Luca) and Abruzzo (Gaia). It is important to remember that although Abruzzo is geographically a region of central Italy, for historical-economic reasons it is considered as belonging to Southern Italy¹⁹⁷. The specific objective of this study was to investigate was the personal experiences of 10 master students of Southern origin in Veneto to understand what kind of experience they had had and in particular whether, due to their origin, they had been victims of racial discrimination and if so, understand the type of discrimination suffered, evaluate whether an internalization of racism then poured onto other categories had taken place, detect examples of consequences of racism, understand whether processes for the removal of anti-Southern racism were underway, evaluate the possibility of further personal forms of reproducing stereotypes about Southerners and detecting any intersections with other types of racism.

To draft the outline of the questions this process has been followed: after having formulated a draft of questions, the latter were reviewed and gradually refined to eliminate traces of implicit premises or of prescriptive and cagey terms and expressions that would have forced the interviewee to answer within certain schemes or paradigms. In fact, it is essential to choose terms that are as neutral as possible in the questions to avoid more or less explicit conditioning and to avoid transforming the interview into a hypothesis test. The outline, according to the method of La Mendola, has the function of preparing the interviewer to the listening. It is a form of preliminary preparation through which the interviewer prefigures the frames of relationships and experiences that are most likely to be relevant during the interviews. In this way, having a draft of "cleaned" questions relating to these frames, the interviewer will be able to devote him or herself entirely to listening without the constant preoccupation of how to formulate the next communicative move. As it has already been said, the dialogic nature of the interviews encourages a free narration. The narration for the narrator must in fact remain free both in form and in content. Informative, typifying or evaluative questions were avoided, especially in the initial phase of the interview. Informational questions, in particular, which can be answered with a single word, do not encourage the narration and create an inquisitorial atmosphere similar to interrogations. Expressively evaluative questions, on

¹⁹⁷ Abruzzo, *Treccani*.

<https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/abruzzo#:~:text=Regione%20dell'Italia%20peninsulare%2C%20con siderata.119%20ab.%2Fkm2>.

the other hand, tend to strengthen the face's defence mechanism. Typifying questions provide lists of elements but do not allow access to meaning frames. Requests for examples and anecdotes were privileged, in order to be provided with an even more in-depth view of the narrator's frames. To ask for further information, the probing technique was mostly adopted: when the narrator hinted at something of interest but did not linger on it much, his or her last words were repeated in a suspensory tone so that he or she could provide explanations or in other cases with questions like "*In che senso?*" (literally "What do you mean?") that could open a window on the way in which the narrator attributed meaning to a certain element or event.

Particular attention was also paid about the initial and final phases of the interview, i.e., the moment of contact and farewell. Regarding the contact phase, participants were asked to participate in a project carried out for a master's degree thesis in which non-resident students from Southern Italy in the Veneto region would be interviewed. Throughout the interview terms such as "racism" or "discrimination" were not mentioned, except after the narrator explicitly named them. Very general and basically neutral terms were used in the questions so that the narrators themselves could decide which specific terms to use to refer to certain topics. The interview was preceded by the communication agreement. It was a moment when the modalities of the interview were explained to the interviewees: they would have been suggested only with a few elements on which they could focus their attention and they would have full freedom to tell what they wanted and in any way. It was clarified that answers could not be right or wrong because they would have been completely personal and free. Participants were then encouraged to enrich their narration with concrete examples, explaining that in this way they would make their contribution even more valuable. Finally, they were reminded that their statements would be protected by privacy and that pseudonyms would be used in the analysis of results instead of their real name.

4.3 Does Veneto never make one feel part of the place?: The experiences of the interviewees

The interview was conceived as a path where questions were increasingly specific. For example, the first question was very generic: interviewees were asked to describe their hometown focusing particularly on people, spaces, smells, noises. The purpose of

this first question was to put interviewees at ease and to create the circumstances to let them speak freely, trying to avoid the embarrassment of the initial silence or the fear of not knowing what to say. This question was also intended to detect the opinion that interviewees have about their hometown, to provide the research with a better understanding of their attitude and their statements. In most cases interviewees described their hometown in a positive way, sharing the memory of some particular smells, some patronal feasts and other elements they remember about it. Several interviewees underlined a slight annoyance for the fact that in small villages everyone knows each other. Two of the interviewees criticized their former citizens quite harshly regarding certain aspects with descriptions that recovered some elements of the narrations about Southerners:

However, typical inhabitants of San Severo are very coarse. They are the ones who do not speak Italian very well and when they try, they seem almost uneasy because in reality they only know the dialect. But the people of San Severo always try to put you at ease because they are people from the South who always have a very broad principle of hospitality [...] in what is in any case a village in Southern Italy with a high crime rate, with a certain let's say, good-natured ignorance even towards today's sensitive issues.

(Ilaria from San Severo, province of Foggia in Puglia)

People up to 20 are all special, fine. Then from the age of twenty if they still remain in that place, let's say the least part is saved from being lazy, from being slovenly, not looking for stimuli, etc. Otherwise, after all, we are in that "brilliant" place in short.

(Ermenegildo from Larino, a small village in Molise)

The complaint became stronger when interviewees started to think of problems such as the lack of services and opportunities in the South. Maurizio, a male student who comes from San Cipriano, a very small town in the province of Salerno in Campania, for example, underlined the impossibility of dedicating himself to activities in his village where there is nothing other than bars. Speaking of Salerno, the nearest large city, he denounced the impossibility of finding work there. He added:

There are very few things. There is no library to study in, for example. There are only private associations of young people who put money out of their own pockets to be able to open places to study; where the books that exist are ours, we bring them with us; and they are even ostracized by society, by the city because maybe the space

is public and someone, who maybe isn't exactly a good person, would like to use it for their own private purposes. It is a city of many contradictions.

(Maurizio from San Cipriano in the province of Salerno in Campania)

Franca from Nocera Inferiore in the province of Salerno, Campania, mentioned the lack of green spaces and pollution. Livia from Enna in Sicily, spoke of depopulation, lack of work and transport.

A serious problem is that it (Enna) is suffering, for 10 years however I would said that it has worsened after the covid, is depopulation because most of the people who live in Enna are now adults and therefore this means that there is a general slightly impoverishment. And what caused this depopulation? The fact that there is basically no work. That is, in Enna you can either hope to enter the public sector, so that they will hire you, but there is no dynamism. For example, you and I with our two degrees really would not have where to look for work, unless you say you want to work in administration, which is not the best. So, a vicious cycle in which there is no work and therefore you see that during the year, except in the periods that are Easter, Christmas and summer, there is really a whole age group that is missing.

(Livia from Enna in Sicily)

Gaia from a small village in the province of Teramo in Abruzzo, Sant' Egidio alla Vibrata, told that to attend middle and high schools it was necessary to move to the adjacent region, Marche region. Rosamaria from Torre del Greco in the province of Naples in Campania and Alice from Latiano in the province of Brindisi, Puglia also mentioned the lack of services.

The case of Margherita is singular. Margherita told me that she was born in Capri but that she has spent most of her life in Naples, a city that offers many more services than the small island. Margherita immediately said that, based on the circumstances, she presents herself as a person from Capri or Naples as according to that, the perception other people have of her is very different. This is a clear example of the effective weight of stereotypes which the Southern people and the inhabitants of Naples in particular are burdened with, as we will also see later from other answers. She said that presenting herself as Neapolitan while looking for a room in Venice could have fuelled concerns about her reliability in paying the rent, a concern based also on accounts of other of her friends who have moved both to other parts of Italy and abroad and that have had a similar experience.

Because obviously Capri gives an idea of a socio-economic condition, but also of a life that is very different from saying that I have spent most of my life in Fuorigrotta,

which is a generic and residential district of Naples. And so, let's say, many times in Veneto, I found myself choosing to introduce myself saying that I am from Capri, when normally in life I don't do it very often, in fact I even deny it. [...] In general, however, I know that I could have had more problems and therefore introducing myself saying that I'm from Capri, I had the perception that potential house owners didn't wonder "maybe she won't pay the rent!", or she is an unreliable person.

(Margherita from Naples, Campania)

The second question instead asked them to describe the arrival city, which is Padua for everyone, except for Margherita who studied in Venice. Padua is described as a very active city from a social and cultural point of view, where young people have various possibilities for recreation and where it is easy to move around, especially by bike as it is not an excessively large city. Some students also mention air pollution. Venice, on the other hand, is described like a stage where, due to the extreme interference of tourism, everything is somewhat false and created ad hoc for visitors.

The first to overtly mention racism issues are Maurizio and Margherita. Maurizio defined his friends as coming from the "Global South," said he has made friends with very few locals and often felt looked down upon especially when he hangs out with his Iranian girlfriend. He told me of an episode:

Once, while going to a party around here, a man came at the window while I was talking to my friends in dialect and said to me: "Why don't you go back to your country and talk like that? Here we speak Italian!"

(Maurizio)

Even Margherita, while she was describing Venetians as particularly introvert and concerned with defending their identity from the invasion of tourists, she claimed to have perceived racist discrimination against her. For example, she said that for a while she asked her roommate from Veneto to buy tobacco and cigarettes for her because it had happened to her to pay them at different prices in the same place based on whether or not she was recognized as a local student or perceived as "foreign" and therefore she was asked to pay more because of her accent. Maurizio's testimony demonstrates that there is still a problematic perception of Southerners considered "out of place" while Margherita's one gives us an example of differential treatment that Italian people can receive based on their accent and therefore on their origin.

Subsequently, the interviewees were asked whether they had photos or objects that reminded them of their hometown and if there were activities, songs or idioms that they willingly shared with others in the arrival cities. Only three students reported that they do not have objects or photos in Padua that remind them of their hometowns, while in another case Livia reported that she had hanged photos of family and friends on the wall in her room during the Bachelor and that she has none now. The most interesting results concern the discussion on idioms: all the students affirm that they share songs from their region or dialectal expressions with the others in the arrival cities, demonstrating a more or less strong attachment to the places of birth. In only one case, Ermenegildo, stated that he shares some dialectal expressions but underlines the fact that he does not do it often because “*nobody is really interested in Molise*”. Margherita's answer to this question is particular. She got her licence in Foreign languages and when she came arrived in Veneto to study Political Sciences, she often had to demonstrate how regionalisms are not errors according to Italian grammar and above all that there is no hierarchy of "linguistic correctness" favouring the Italian spoken in Northern Italy.

It happened to me that partly as a joke and partly because maybe someone really corrected me, that I had to underline that regionalisms are not an error. They are a peculiarity of the language, but in my linguistics textbooks they are not considered an error and it happened that I had to underline that, just as there are things that go beyond the norm that I am saying, there are just as many in the Veneto dialect and that one cannot be considered more correct than the other. So, either we condemn all regionalisms, which from a linguistic point of view is not correct, but at least it is fair, or we condemn none of them. But this constant perception of the fact that my idioms, my peculiarities were more wrong than someone else's to the point of having to prove it, to have to look for even trivial things.

(Margherita)

Ilaria's answer is also problematic: Ilaria spoke of a real rejection that she felt in the past towards the South. For her, the South was home, the place where she had met the most important people in her life but also the place that had "*clipped her wings*", where she had worked since she was a little girl but illegally and underpaid.

So I almost had an unconscious rejection of the South for a long time because in any case my home, the South, was the place that still clip your wings a bit. Of course, it's the place where I found the best people of my life: my best friends, my husband is from Foggia, I did my three-year degree there as a student and it was one of the best periods of my life, but from the point of view of post-study perspectives it was dark. I have been working since I was 19 years old. I had the first contributions when I moved to Belluno at 27 because I've always worked only illegally with wages that

were a pittance. So, the South has always been...beautiful but impossible. For a long time, I was angry with what the Southern world was: with crime, with the attitude of illegality which then also involves good people because in a world without rules even those who are good must do something to survive.

(Ilaria)

She said that only recently she has regained her Southern accent with more pride and she happens to share some idioms with her students and to ask them for translations into Venetian as a form of cultural exchange and creation of bonds.

Students are then asked to describe the moment when they arrived in Veneto, the way they found a place to stay and the first steps in the arrival city. The intent was to obtain descriptions of the first experiences in the new city, of any possible feeling of disorientation or inadequacy and of any housing discrimination. In Venice and in the last two years in Padua as well, the search for a house is very complex: rooms for rent are not sufficient with respect to the students' demand, prices are high and real interviews with future roommates and/or with the owner are often held to assign the room. The scenario, which is already problematic from the outset due to the housing situation, became even more complex in the interviews. Only two of the students reported that they had no particular problems with house searching as they had obtained a place in a university residence. Other two students said that they found a house in a fairly simple way thanks to social media, while the rest told of different difficulties related to their origins.

Maurizio said he visited about twenty houses, some in which all were from the South or all were from the North, a house where they were looking exclusively for people from the Polesine¹⁹⁸ area. He said sometimes he had to face discriminatory attitudes from the owners when they heard his accent and to them, he replied: "*I understand you from a certain point of view, because I know a lot of Neapolitans who have wrecked houses. Perhaps you too have met them and therefore I understand it, however...*", trying to underline how it is senseless to derive some characteristics exclusively from the origin of a person. He recounts two episodes in which he had problems with house owners in Padua:

I'll give you a very practical example: being a woman, my girlfriend was looking for a house because it was easier, (most of the time) it was written only girls, and so it

¹⁹⁸ Polesine is an area in Veneto, around the city of Rovigo.

was her to look for. Once there was a double bed, a room for two, she said: "It's me and my boyfriend, we would come tomorrow". "Yes, yes, yes" "Good morning", "Good morning, I'm a student, I'm from Salerno...". the day when we contacted this lady. "I'm Alice, I'm from Salerno, it's me and my boyfriend. He is 3 years older than me, also from Salerno. "Yes, yes, yes, see you tomorrow." We arrived there and we were quite simple people, that is, we were on a bicycle in overalls with a backpack, you know, looking for our own business as adults without parents, with counted money. Two girls come out of this house with the daddy in the black Mercedes with tinted windows, with a Prada bag and they were leaving this house (they had just visited it). So, I also understand the economic social difference... When the lady understands that we were next: "Hi, nice to meet you". "Good morning, nice to meet you, I am Maurizio", with my typically accent from Salerno, this one (the owner) looks me head to toe, looks me up and down and says: "Ah sorry, I understood Maurizia". Meaning no, the room is for two girls. So, my ex who was a bit irritable blurts out and says: "No, no, look on the phone, I wrote to you: "Hi nice to meet you, I'm Alice" and "my boyfriend" without a name. Fortunately, Italian is a gendered language, so this "Maurizia" you invented it because you're a racist. This one went crazy: "Out of my house, how dare you? I've never been a racist in my life, ever. I've done a lot of charities to n-word. I have a lot of friends who are foreigners. We left of course. Or for example, we had a fight with another lady because we were asking questions like: "Madam but the contract isn't very clear, you know, where I come from when someone does this it's a scam". "How dare you, maybe where you come from, you're used to it. Here we are serious people, look at the financial police, look, my husband is this, my husband is that and so on. And I say: "Yes madam, you are saying the same things they tell me when someone cheats me [...]. However, at the end of the speech she sends us out and says: "Not only did I come back from the sea to talk to you, but you also don't even like it". From the series: you guys from the South have to adapt.

(Maurizio)

Maurizio concluded his answer by recalling the words of his grandfather who 60 years earlier had moved to Veneto: "*60 years ago I lived in an attic because I was disgusting, I had cholera. And now I don't know how it will be for you, but... don't pay much attention to it because that's how it works*".

Livia told that in her first year she moved in a room rent by the nuns, having seen that the initial telephone attempts did not prove very fruitful as soon as she mentioned the fact of being Sicilian and the owners urging therefore to meet her in person. She also said that at first, she could not believe that people in the North had such a strange idea about people of Southern Italy: they were amazed when she mentioned the existence of motorways or airports in Sicily for example. She told of a time when in her first year of university after a speech in the classroom her colleagues laughed at her accent or even of the first day of university in which, although being full of good intentions to meet new people, she found herself sitting behind a boy who had said to his friend: "*now a lot of*

*Southerners*¹⁹⁹ are about to turn up". Livia reported that she no longer cares about these things but that perhaps she would not like to stay in Padua for work and that she would be afraid of moving from a protected context such as the university one to a more exposed one. They refused more explicitly Alice over the telephone when she said she was from Puglia:

There are so many (criteria for choosing tenants), unfortunately I have to admit that they certainly tend to favour the locals a bit and it happened to me in particular that a house owner was explaining to me how the house was with all the information to give and at a certain point he asked me where I was from and the moment I said I was from Puglia he said to me: "Ah, are you from Puglia? No, no then no." and he hung up on my phone. He did exactly that. Even others, perhaps they didn't say it explicitly, but made it understandable that they tended to dislike the fact that I came from the South in general.

(Alice)

Margherita also denounced such discomfort and affirmed that on the phone she tried to emphasize her accent less:

So I told you, the perception of having to correct the accent when I heard the owners on the phone to sound more trustworthy, because I was afraid that they would make decisions like that without even showing me the place.

(Margherita)

Luca reported that a friend of his from Molise who asked for information about a room had been answered: "*No, you come from too far down*".

As regards the perception of oneself in the arrival context and the possible formation of a subgroup, none of the interviewees said they felt part of the Venetian or Paduan context. Everyone said they feel part of the student context which, however, is very different from that of native people. Four of the ten interviewees state that their group of friends is mainly made up of Southerners, two said that they have a mixed group of Southern and international friends while the rest state that they have friends of mixed origin from both Northern and Southern Italy. As for inclusion, Ilaria explains that Veneto does not encourage you to feel particularly part of the context. She said that she hears the word "*terrone*" a lot in Veneto and that therefore the difference of origin is well emphasized:

¹⁹⁹ In the original version the word "*terrone*" was used.

Veneto by the way never makes you feel too much part of the place. We talked about the t-word (*terrone*) when we met, didn't we? I keep hearing that t-word here in Veneto. Of course, I already knew it before. But of course, in Puglia no one says to you: "hey, *terrone!*", no, because we are all *terroni*. In Bologna perhaps there are more Sanseveresi than Bolognese people. It's once you arrive in Veneto that you are the one from the South, but in reality, even here there is an astonishing diversity. [...] Then you see that (here in Veneto) half of the ATA staff is from Naples or Sicilian, more than half of the teachers are from the South, but you're always the "*terrona*". So, in short, feel like a real Paduan, never.

Subsequently relations with non-Southern Italian people were investigated. The interviewees were asked whether their origin emerges when they meet people from Veneto or Northern Italy. Five students declared that they are immediately recognized as Southerners by their accent and two mentioned that as soon as the others realize where they are from, they start making jokes. Franca considers these jokes a good way to play down, to laugh at a problem that actually existed in Veneto a few decades ago. She uses the past tense. Ermenegildo said that the main joke people told him is: "*Molise doesn't exist*" and that sometimes they call him Neapolitan even if he comes from Molise.

Margherita claimed that she often has to counter the many prejudices and misconceptions that people have about Naples: people who ask her whether she is afraid of people walking in the streets with a gun in Naples, whether it looks like the scenes in Gomorra. She told that she tried to explain to these people that those are only prejudices and that she feels a huge responsibility in these situations. The constant exposure to prejudices by other people is an element that can strongly influence the personal conduct of an individual. And this is clearly understood from Margherita's words.

[...] I sat down and answered calmly, reasoning and trying to debunk stereotypes, because then you feel the responsibility, you can't tell people to fuck off when they tell you things like this, because otherwise you're the usual touchy Southerner, who can't be addressed any critique, that has to defend the city to the sword without realizing the actual problems. Therefore, we take on a responsibility that in reality would not be ours. But many feel the same, also from the stories of my friends in other parts of the world, especially abroad. Anyways, this responsibility of having to represent the whole category to some extent, of having to have an impeccable behaviour to prevent perhaps one of my individual personal character flaws from affecting an entire region or maybe half of the country. It is something people feel strongly. So, I always was very moderate.

(Margherita)

She said that episodes of racism have also occurred within the university where Southern students are just a few and then she wondered why when certain types of

statements are addressed to Neapolitans people refuse to admit their racist essence. She told:

One of the funniest episodes in a class of comparative international relations which is my specialization, therefore, is with people who had studied languages in the three-year course, therefore they knew, they had the same linguistic competence as me, and one of my colleagues told me: "You speak English well to be Neapolitan". It was a particularly funny scene because it was a Sicilian girl's birthday party. So, there was the boyfriend of this Sicilian girl who is from Campania, from Avellino. And we looked at each other when this girl said this and meant it as a compliment, that is, she was serious, for her it was a compliment. Because we had had a presentation in the classroom and it was in English. She knows me, she had heard me speaking, she had heard my accent. I have a good language level, I mean I studied this, also having study abroad. And in any case, I obviously lose the regional accent when I speak in a foreign language that I have studied for 10 years of my life. And she was genuinely surprised by this thing and she said she turned to the guy who was sitting next to her, who is a friend of hers that I didn't know, when this thing happened (the presentation), and she said: "No, but I swear I know her, I talked to her out here, she's Neapolitan". So there the point is: are you surprised that an accent that you perceive as very intrusive can be hidden? Do you have some kind of bias according to which, in your opinion, a Southern person is not capable of understanding and speaking a foreign language at the same level you can? Is it that you're surprised because I'm just better than you expected? I don't know, I've never had the courage to elaborate on the discussion but that was one of the situations in which I felt that I can't make a scene because otherwise I'm the usual Neapolitan, but I would have done it. I mean, it's something I still talk about with my friends. We still joke about any context where someone tells me something like: "you speak English well" or whatever they say, they always add the "for being Neapolitan". Because now it's become a meme. But the problem for me in that case was that she has the same bachelor's degree as me. The girl who made this comment, she is Piedmontese, she has the same bachelor's degree as me, so we both studied general linguistics. Then you should know that accent and language proficiency are not the same thing. Because I try to imagine this scene, saying to a black person, "you speak Italian well for being black". Do you immediately realize some problems, because for the "to be Neapolitan" we have not yet arrived to understand how problematic it is? Why is it not socially perceived as a racist phrase? Like a phrase that gives biases from provenance to things that have nothing to do with provenance. I found myself in this beautiful situation.

(Margherita)

She told of another episode involving a professor, who during the lesson had said: *"If I go to Vienna and I throw something on the floor, they give me a fine; if I do it in Naples, they give me a round of applause"*. In this regard, Margherita underlined that if these types of comments that reproduce prejudgments are also made by professors, it is easy to imagine that then she would have faced the similar episodes also with colleagues. Gaia told of having had a very sad experience when, once in Venice, she met some guys, who were saying without any hesitation that they considered belonging to Italy only the

regions starting from Emilia-Romagna and above northwards. The geographical discourse was addressed by other interviewees as well. Franca, Alice and Gaia pointed out that the Southern territory is neither known nor often visited by a considerable part of Northern people. Most of the comments on the South are therefore not even supported by adequate geographical awareness and knowledge. For example, Ilaria, speaking of her pupils, said:

They really have no conception of the space. I think if you asked some people from the North to draw Italy, they would draw a huge North and a very small South, because they imagine it as a single indistinct region, let's say the edges are blurred... all the same, all together. So, there is also a bit of this second of not recognizing.

(Ilaria)

Rosamaria reported that she sometimes feels uncomfortable with local people or with work colleagues:

I always seem to be considered in a somewhat folkloric way, that is, as if I were a strange object to study. Even the way we speak or what we eat. I understand that often the many questions about how we live, what we do, what happens in Naples are linked to a genuine curiosity but sometimes this thing makes me feel a bit extraneous, that is, like something different that they have to study.

(Rosamaria from Torre del Greco, in the province of Naples, Campania)

Then the interviewees were asked to give examples of situations in which they felt particularly comfortable about their origin and, if it had happened to them, of situations in which they felt uncomfortable about it. Four of the participants said they feel more comfortable with a group of people they know well such as friends or roommates. Two of these four explicitly referred to be more at ease with Southern people and in the case of Maurizio with people generally coming from the Global South because he feels more similar with them in terms of problems, discrimination, and ways of living life. Four of the students said they do not feel bad about where their origin. Franca considers it anachronistic to feel uncomfortable about one's Southern origins. She reported that she has met only one girl who was openly anti-Southerners and that this was a consequence of having grown up in a narrow-minded small Venetian village. Livia explained that the environments she frequents are openly anti-racist and that, unlike her roommate Maurizio, she has never been told "*you are a good person for being a Southerner*". Furthermore, she argued that probably no one discusses the topic with her because she

proposes a critical version of the phenomena, she does not limit herself to exalting the city of her origin but rather identifies its strengths and weaknesses. She said:

But I repeat, in my opinion I've always been very lucky in the circles I've frequented, both at university and I never felt I had to prove something more because I was Sicilian. Then I repeat, I think I have been so lucky in life to have always lived in many concentric circles, in many protected bubbles. [...] but I've never even wanted to feed this rhetoric because I think people think I'm an intelligent person, so I guess people don't make me that discourses because of this, because I'm not just that.

(Livia)

But as we have seen and will see from other interviewers' experiences like Alice or Margherita, many comments and jokes are often unsolicited and do not originate from Southerners' speeches praising the South or anything like that. These comments are rather completely arbitrary and unmotivated. Reasoning of this kind could be seen as a kind of internalization of racist narratives whereby some accountability is partially sought on the part of some attitudes of racialized people instead of placing the blame exclusively on racializers.

Ilaria said she does not feel she has to prove something more for the mere fact of being Southerner but recognizes the attempt, especially by her students, to make people feel uncomfortable using the word "*terrone*" which appears in moments of tension to hit someone's "weak spot". She told:

It's clear that that word (*terrone*) is used to mark a difference between us and them. The term is used in this way, like the n-word and things like that, but not even with malice or something similar. They don't do it consciously, but it can be seen that they use it and identify you with it, that is, you are "la *terrone*", isn't it? That is, even if a friend of theirs has even just one parent from the South, he's "the *terrone*", he's "the other", he's different from me, isn't it? And in that "other" there is still that little sense of superiority, right? That is, "I'm in the right place; you are out of place", right? Because then what are SLURs? They are weapons when someone pisses you off or you don't agree with what someone does. So, I'm the wonderful teacher, their favourite teacher when I behave "well", but when they don't like what I do, obviously not in front but at my back (they say): "huh "the shitty *terrone* ", right? [...] That is, they use it in a calm way most of the time but then when they have to somehow find your weak point, that one is your weak point. I mean, so they see being Southern as a weakness.

(Ilaria)

She told another anecdote: after her wedding, a friend from Veneto who got drunk decided to go home with the shuttle that she and her husband had made available for their relatives

who, coming from the South, did not have their own car. This drunken man on the bus had started yelling: "*Can I say the word terroni?*", creating an unpleasant atmosphere among the other guests.

Alice said that she immediately felt uncomfortable in the workplace as she was not called by name but with the label "*la pugliese*" (meaning the girl from Puglia) or in some cases when their colleagues could not control themselves as "*la terrona*". Talking about jokes and derogatory comments, she said:

I often felt uncomfortable and very bad about it. In fact, sometimes I spent entire days at work being in anguish because I felt excluded. I didn't feel like one of them. Many times, I almost wanted to run away because I wondered why there must be this contempt, this detachment [...].

(Alice)

She said she tried to ask the reason of such attitudes and the answer she got from a colleague of hers was:

We all grew up with the belief that you Southerners are like this. So even if we don't think so, we simply grew up with the awareness that for us you are *terroni*, that we have to call you that. Various things have been instilled in us by our parents and without ever even asking us whether they were true or not, or maybe asking ourselves why we have to say these things.

(Alice)

She told other answers their working colleagues gave her:

The first thing I noticed in the company where I went to work, on the first day, was that there was no separate waste collection. And I immediately said: "Why don't you separate waste? You have one basket for everything." And there they all attacked me. Their answer was: "What do you know, you come from the South, you don't even know what separate collection is; you throw it in the middle of the street" and I said it was anything but that, instead, quite the opposite: in my hometown there is also door-to-door waste collection and in any case it has existed for many years. In reality, people respect it and I see that here it is rather the other way around. Or when I happened to tell them that we are very welcoming, that when we have guests, we tend to make them feel as if they were at home. I gave the example of the grandmother who starts cooking for an army even when there is only a single guest coming from a different place. And even there, instead of responding in a positive way, I was told: "Yeah, all the money you don't spend to pay taxes, you spend it that way". So, squandering on food. And so, I was a continuously receiving these digs. At first it was very difficult, even though they did it really automatically, without thinking about it because their intent wasn't to insult me because these people even became my friends. Then they maybe came to me saying: "No, no, I was joking", they hugged me, "I love you" and I also believed that actually maybe they really

loved me. But they do it automatically. They said: "Oh well, but we say these things as a joke".

(Alice)

Or sometimes she was said: "*you are not like others!*", where others" was meant as "Southerners".

Margherita said that she felt deeply uncomfortable having to speak during the lessons in Italian. She preferred doing it in English to avoid all the implications of her accent:

Having to intervene in class, I was much more comfortable having to do it speaking English than speaking Italian. Because I have no intention of voluntarily masking my accent. I'm able to do it; I have also been accused by other friends of mine, always from Campania, of masking my accent when I feel uncomfortable and I know it's something I can do, but it's not something I want to do, that is, I wish I could say one thing, whether it's right or wrong and that my accent was not tied to the rightness or wrongness of the statement made. But yes, surely having to intervene in class speaking Italian is something that has made me feel uncomfortable on several occasions.

(Margherita)

Regarding the word "*terrone*" the opinions were discordant. For Maurizio it is not an intrinsically derogatory word, it depends on how it is used. For Margherita and Alice, it is an offensive word that carries with it so many preconceptions. Margherita said that sometimes people believe they have the right to use it just because they have relatives of Southern origin, perhaps grandparents or a parent. She disagrees and sees it like the n-word and to use it one should be part of the community and have experienced the same kind of discrimination. Five of the ten interviewees reported that they have been called several times with that appellation but as a joke even though three among the five consider the word "*terrone*" potentially offensive. Gaia is the only one to say that the word has never been addressed to her personally, but she said that once she was sitting outside a bar with her friends who were speaking in dialect and two girls at the nearby table had started laughing and saying that word loudly. She said that many of her friends proudly use it as a form of re-appropriation. Ermenegildo interprets it as a word that indicates someone who is tied to the earth and thinks it represents the category.

The next question was intended to detect the perception of the interviewees about the changes that racism against Southerners in Italy has undergone over time. Nine out of

ten people said that if their grandparents or parents had moved north when they were young, they would have had far more problems than they are experiencing right now. Maurizio told of his grandfather who had moved to Veneto to work: "*My grandfather was the classic Southerner who comes here to work, who steals the job and the females, who lives in an attic with five packs of pasta in his hand and that was everything he had*". Livia has no doubts about the greater difficulties in the past but claims to know people who have lived in Turin for around forty years and who have not managed to integrate, people who may not have had the right tools and who have certainly met with hostility from the locals but who probably also closed in on themselves.

Franca and Rosamaria instead reflect on the fact that entering a working context would certainly have been more complex for their grandparents or parents while in a university context and therefore a cultural context of a certain type, probably it would not have been that different. The university environment is seen by most of the interviewees as an environment which is protected from the risk of racism. Yet we see that Battacchi's study (1959) was conducted among university students and Margherita's experiences also remind us that the university is not totally free from racist reasoning and comments.

Ilaria told of a Neapolitan uncle of her had moved to Veneto in the 80s and who became a Northern League supporter:

I have a Neapolitan uncle who moved to Selvazzano in the 80s or 90s, but he has never lost his Neapolitan accent. So, a true Neapolitan in a small town in the Veneto region and this uncle, who is actually my father's cousin, he's not even my uncle, he's a Lega supporter, but a super-Lega supporter since so many years. And in my opinion, I've always explained this to myself as a need to somehow survive, right? He came from the South and found order, cleanliness, work in Veneto, just like we did. And so that also sometimes makes you lenient with your haters, doesn't it?"

(Ilaria)

It seems to me that the same type of mechanism was adopted by Alice when at the beginning of the interview she told me that she had a great time in Padua, that she felt welcomed in the best possible way and then went on to tell me about the discrimination and exclusionary attitudes she suffered in the workplace, which somewhat contradicted the initial statements. It is almost as if Southerners who emigrated to the North have the duty to be "grateful" for the opportunity they received and must therefore "spend only positive words" for the city of arrival.

As regards the differences between Southerners and Northerners, five of the ten interviewed stated that there are cultural differences, two of them mentioned also historical reasons with respect to the pre-unification situation. Three of the interviewees explicitly referred to the economic gap, to a country traveling on two speeds both in terms of development and transportation. According to Alice and Gaia, there are no concrete differences but only traits created and fomented by the narrative.

There are differences, yes, but in my opinion these differences have been rather created, that is, paradoxically, if we wouldn't talk about so much, in my opinion they wouldn't be so marked. And this is exactly what I say to my native friends here. I tell them: "You see, in the end what is the difference between me and you?" And they themselves say: "Oh well, nothing, in short". We actually lead the same life without any difference. The difference therefore lies in society, what society thinks. And then perhaps the fact that the South has lagged behind in certain points of view, i.e. from the point of view perhaps of the way of approaching work life. I see that life is much more frenetic here, yes, it's much more focused on working without even looking around, a difference in the way of approaching life and people in general.

(Alice)

For Alice these differences are created by the narrative but, ultimately, she resorted to backwardness to explain the labour problems of the South. Gaia took up the idea of the narratives, however, underlining how much the place of origin affects them:

Do I think there are differences...? Maybe if we think about the stereotype, yes, that is the classic stereotype in the North they are much colder - in the South they are much warmer, kisses, hugs, much more. But in my opinion, it's because we are used to believing this thing, ok? Because the narrative is always the same, that is, it goes on over the years and the things that are said are always the same. Then it depends on the individual, I realize that the environment in which you live also matters a lot, the environment in which you grow up, that is, if you grow up with your parents, you don't have off-site experiences... for example, take a person who was born in Padua, raised in Padua, studies in Padua, lives with his parents, idk maybe there you should also reach a point where you detach yourself from the thought of the family and the people around you. But that doesn't always happen. And so I hear some speeches and when perhaps I try to ask for clarifications they tell me: "no, because my mother says that...no, because my father says that...".

(Gaia)

Margherita and Livia talk about subordination. Livia argues that the Italian past is beginning to be questioned to understand if any dynamics of a coloniality were adopted while Margherita has no doubts about it: she defines the situation of Southern Italy as semi-colonial by referring to an unequal distribution of resources, a poor government

representation and long-lasting difficulties that would find no other explanation otherwise. According to four of the ten interviewed, these differences would translate into generalized hatred, into a clear separation between the North and South of the country. Five of the interviewees also mention impacting effects of the North-South divide on the individual lives: in the South there are fewer opportunities which, Alice said, often force young people to emigrate and to think that "*if you don't move to the North, you are nobody*". Rosamaria complained about the discomfort of feeling "*different*" due to this lack of possibilities and about the existence of prejudices and differentiated treatments even in the workplace.

To investigate the type of narration built around the Southern regions, it was asked whether the Southern regions were spoken of in the same way and in equal measure. All the interviewees shared the perception that some regions such as Molise, Basilicata, for some Calabria, are totally absent in the public debate. The most discussed region is Campania and even more particularly Naples which, as Luca claims, seems to embody "*all the evils of the world*", especially regarding crime issues. Puglia and Sicily would be known for the good food and the beautiful sea. Interestingly, only two of the interviewees mentioned Sardinia. Franca argued that it should be included among the Southern regions but that no one considers it and that indeed, people almost do not even know that it is located in front of Campania and not in front of Tuscany. Rosamaria, on the other hand, included Sardinia in the list of the regions mentioned for their beautiful landscapes and touristic reasons. According to four of the interviewees, the word "*meridionale*", unlike the word "*terrone*", is associated with positive characteristics such as family ties, the sun, warmth. According to four other interviewees on the contrary, it would be strictly associated with negative stereotypes such as not wanting to work, being noisy, etc.

The next two questions intend to suggest to the interviewees to focus their attention on the feminist dimension and the intersection with other forms of racism. I thank Carla Panico for her precious suggestion to investigate the connections between the Southern Question and these two dimensions. As regards a possible differentiated perception and treatment on the basis of the gender of the Southern people, three of the interviewees did not detect an intersection between gender disparities and the person's origin. Four interviewees instead claimed that there are more prejudices against men, especially linked to an alleged inclination to crime because perhaps men speak more often

in dialect or have more evident attitudes than women and would therefore give a worst impression. According to Ermenegildo, on the other hand, it was a question of economic independence. When both a man and a woman from the South work in the North and are independent, they are treated on the same basis as all the other people in the city of arrival. For Alice, moving to the North is always considered as "*being in the vanguard*" and in particular the man who moves to the North is praised because he seeks his fortune while for a woman one almost feels a sense of pity or one wonders why she moved, thinking she was so desperate to search for better conditions or she moved for "love reasons".

Margherita instead remarks a certain fetishization of the Southern woman while an idea of rudeness surrounds Southern men. She then reflects on the fact that these types of perceptions that others have of Southerners are exactly the elements that turn out to be problematic at an identity level:

However, the perception they have is always the same and this is the reason why so many people, who were born in the South or with parents from the South, deny it tremendously. There is this perception of "yes, ok I was born in ... wherever it is ... but no, I've been here since I was two years old, so no, no, absolutely" (meaning they don't want to be labelled as Southerners), and these accents that are forcefully erased and you then hear when the accent some use it's not theirs, it's not their normal accent and it's a bit forced. And that's kind of a sad thing. If we were able to recover our identity without giving it a positive or negative connotation, one could easily say that one is second generation. Because this discourse is very similar to the colonial one, so it also makes sense to think of using the same terms as second generation, i.e. second generation Venetian.

(Margherita)

The last two reflections seem to retain elements of narratives about Southern women that circulated in particular in the 1970s. Carla Panico in *Le autonome*²⁰⁰, studies the intersection between autonomous movements, feminism and the Southern Question. While on the one hand, at certain times there was an attempt to suffocate every feminist claim by making power coincide with the management of domestic life through the ideological creation of a sort of all-Southern matriarchy, the main voice of the narrative was an "atavistic and colonial tale" of a South presented as a place of backwardness

²⁰⁰ Panico, Carla. *Le autonome. Storie di donne del Sud*, in Bove, Antonio & Festa, Francesco. *Gli autonomi. L'Autonomia operaia meridionale. Napoli e Campania – Parte seconda*, VOL. XI. DeriveApprodi. 2022.

marked by a pervasive patriarchy in which women could only be resigned, eternally not emancipated and not modern.

As regards the condition of non-Italian people in Italy, for three of the interviewees, immigrants would find better conditions in the South where the environment is more welcoming than in the North which would be more detached, sometimes indifferent but more prone in general to racist attitudes. Yet we can observe, as Carla Panico shows in *The re/production of a (white) people*²⁰¹, that hostile policies towards the Other have never ceased in Italy, affecting the whole of the nation. The Italian obsession with appearing white starts from the birth of the nation, from the attempt to whiten the South to shift the border southwards and include the African colonies. The internal other - Southern Italians - would have been incorporated to build whiteness as opposed to the external other - the colonised. Yet, in the 1900s when Italians migrated en masse to America, due to the "one drop blood" rule, they were considered "not white enough" as a people at the crossroads between Caucasian and Hamitic origins. Even today, the obsession with whiteness is reflected in the practices of controlling access to citizenship and in the *ius sanguinis*. Examples of this orientation are the 2016 political propaganda in which white Italian women were urged to procreate with an advertising image that was accused of racism and withdrawn shortly after release. A renewal of the citizenship law loudly demanded by second generations and activists continues to be rejected by various parties. Four of the interviewees recognized the greater warmth of Southerners but identified some problems that immigrants would have in the South: ghettoization and exploitation. According to Rosamaria and Livia, the country cannot be divided into two parts i.e., the welcoming and the unwelcoming one. It all depends on the specific context in which immigrants arrive and on the people they might encounter.

In the previous replies, racism against southerners in Veneto was often mixed with racism against foreigners. Maurizio, for example, while talking about his experiences, referred to his international friends and in particular to his flatmate Otman. For example,

²⁰¹ Panico, Carla. *The re/production of a (white) people: confronting Italian nationalist populism as a gender and race issue*. *European Journal of English Studies*, 25:2, p.133-153. 2021.

he referred to some episodes experienced by Otman in the workplace with his colleagues or with customers:

Customer come in and go straight because they can't talk to him, he is Arab. They say that if they need something, he wouldn't understand, how can they ask him? There are ladies who pretend not to listen. "Madame. Good evening, do you need anything?" They look straight ahead, do you understand? They go to another worker to say: "I need a pair of tights".

(Maurizio)

Alice, on the other hand, said that it was even harder for foreign people than for Southerners to find houses and that they are often forced to live all together because there are few houses with mixed ethnic groups and few owners that rent their houses to foreigners. Margherita mentioned slur words, for example "*ne*ro*", which is often used to refer to African people in Venice. Even this element alone was for her an indication of a much more discriminatory treatment of foreigners compared to Naples.

The last one was a projective question. These kind of questions, leaving room for the imagination of other possible worlds, provide information on what the interviewees like and what they do not like and on the points that are problematic for them. Interviewees were asked how they imagine a world in which there are no differences between North and South. Three of the interviewees do not believe it possible. Two feel it would be more boring and flatter. Three people see this absence of differences as a world in which everyone has equal opportunities, a more homogeneous world in which one is not forced to emigrate to survive. Ilaria imagines it not very different from the current world, racism would simply be focused on a different group, as in today's Italy it is no longer focused on Southerners but on immigrants. Instead, Gaia defines it as wonderful, a world in which diversity is preserved but in which it is not transformed into limits, a world without borders and without dividing lines.

Conclusions

This qualitative study intended to investigate whether a legacy of anti-Southern racism still exists in Italy and, if so, to study its patterns and characteristics. A qualitative method was adopted: dialogic interviews. The analysis calls into question the intersection between different themes: racism in Italy, the construction of the Italian national identity and the Southern Question. The study was anticipated by an initial research phase which investigated the vocabulary of the Southern Question, the pre-unification history of the South and how it was before the birth of the Question, the history of anti-Southern prejudices and its evolution into concrete forms of racism both at a sociological and at a social level and finally the intersection between postcolonial studies and the Southern Question. In particular, an attempt has been made to insert the Italian Southern Question within the wider context of the Global South. The research also drew extremely useful insights from some studies about the post-war period, when the great migrations of Southerners to the North took place. Between the 1950s and 1970s, Southerners in the North experienced discrimination in the social (Battacchi, 1959 and Anfossi, 1962), housing (Montaldi & Alasia, 1959), working (Curcio & Mellino, 2012) and educational (De Michele, 2023) fields.

The present study aimed at investigating the experiences of Southern students in Veneto. From a diachronic perspective, also comparing my results with post-war evidence, the manifestations of racism against Southerners today is less overt and mitigated in intensity. However, despite the tendency in Italy to remove the past racist discriminations both against Southerners and against the colonies, racism against Southerners cannot be considered archived. Four out of ten interviewed students had difficulty finding a house explicitly due to their origin. Two female students reported having had the concern to mitigate the accent to avoid situations of embarrassment or discrimination. Seven of the ten interviewed told of at least one episode in which they were discriminated against in a more or less direct way or made fun through the use of the pejorative word "*terrone*". The majority of students still complain of a strong gap that goes beyond cultural differences and which is mainly economic, showing a whole series of disparities and disservices in the South, allowing perhaps to provide an answer to the question "How does the Southern Question look like today?".

Although there may be a common tendency to belittle this type of discriminations in a colour blind-vision (where using whiteness studies terminology Northern Italians would identify as white and Southerners as black) or pass them off as jokes, most of the students felt unease due to these practices. This unease can become very problematic in the case of discrimination at work suffered by Alice or of the constant feeling of inadequacy and of non-belonging, which Gaia recounted when speaking of the bachelor years spent in Trieste. It can also take on more dramatic forms, for which one comes to hide one's origins, as observed by Margherita who repeatedly mentioned Capri as her place of birth, instead of mentioning Naples, the place where she had spent most of her life. It can even turn into a real rejection of one's hometown and origins as Ilaria said referring to herself in the past and to an uncle of hers. Racist practices have a concrete impact on people's lives, influencing their choices and personal well-being on social, psychological, work, economic and housing levels. Constant exposure to prejudices and to the external gaze can even influence people's ways of speaking and behaving as well as their own value judgments and their identity perception.

In some answers could be find the residues of an internalization of racist narratives i.e., the South and its inhabitants defined as coarse, ignorant, backward and a tendency to find possible fault in specific attitudes of the latter instead of attributing these dynamics to the racializers. Many of the experiences told by the interviewees had not been triggered by particular behaviours of Southerner people but were rather the result of arbitrary and unsolicited comments.

The question of the geographical division between North and South also emerges from the interviews with a South that is described as an indistinct mass "under Emilia Romagna", without precise borders or any specific internal differentiation but when negative images must be recalled Campania and, to be more precise, Naples is at the centre of these narrations with the whole series of criminality and backwardness stereotypes.

In the stories of the interviewees, racism against Southerners intersects with racism against foreigners and feminism. Even though in many of the answers the discriminations are more connected to the issue of gender than to the Southern origin of a women, differentiations of stereotypes still emerge. The narration concerning Southern

women still describes them as having emigrated out of desperation due to their context of origin or to follow their partner and looked almost with pity, unlike men. Concerning racism in Italy, all the interviewees claimed that although hostile and distrustful attitudes still exist, today Southerners are no longer the main racialized target. In their place there are immigrants who find themselves experiencing the same discrimination suffered by Southerners between the 50s and 70s.

Certainly, among the limitations of this study we can mention the small number of participants and the geographical delimitation of my research. It should also be emphasized that only 2 of the interviewees work and have therefore had contact with a context outside of the university one, but even between these two, one works in a school where most of the colleagues are Southerners. Five of the students attend courses with students from all over Italy and other 2 are enrolled in an international study course where most of the colleagues are foreigners. Therefore, due to the extremely variegated origins of people these contexts could be less exposed to racism. It would be interesting to conduct the same type of research on a larger sample and to include within the search scope other towns in Veneto and in other Northern regions. It would also be interesting to conduct the same type of research with different targets. This type of research could be interesting with Southern workers in the North as target, creating an overview on different areas of employment and different regions. A fertile ground for research could also be constituted by different types of research aiming at concretely measuring the impact of discriminatory practices against Southerners in terms of difficulty in finding accommodation, differential treatment in the workplace, social exclusion and many more.

Appendices

1. Interview outline

1. Da dove vieni? Se dovessi descrivere la tua città ad una persona che non c'è mai stata cosa diresti sugli spazi, le persone, i rumori, gli odori? E Padova invece? Se dovessi descriverla ad una persona che non c'è mai stata cosa diresti?
2. Hai qualche oggetto, qualche foto qui a Padova che conservi per ricordarti di casa tua?
3. C'è qualche canzone, qualche attività, qualche modo di dire che condividi volentieri con gli altri e che colleghi alla tua città d'origine?
4. Mi sapresti descrivere il momento in cui sei arrivato? Com'è stato? Quali sono stati i primi passi? Come hai trovato casa?
5. Da quanto tempo sei qui? Ti senti parte del contesto padovano? Hai conosciuto molte persone? Anche i tuoi amici sono studenti fuori sede?
6. Ti capita di interagire con persone venete o di altre parti dell'Italia settentrionale? Emerge in questi casi la tua provenienza?
7. Potresti farmi qualche esempio di situazioni in cui ti senti particolarmente a tuo agio e, se ti è capitato di situazioni in cui ti sei sentito a disagio circa la tua provenienza meridionale?
8. Ti hanno mai chiamato/a terrone/a? Cosa pensi di questa parola?
9. Immagina se i tuoi nonni o i tuoi genitori si fossero trasferiti al Nord alla tua età: sarebbe stato diverso?
10. Secondo te perché a volte si fa questa distinzione tra settentrionali e meridionali? Esistono delle differenze? Ma queste differenze a livello pratico in cosa si traducono?
11. Cosa si associa alla parola meridionale? Delle regioni meridionali si parla di tutte allo stesso modo e in egual misura?
12. Secondo te un uomo e una donna meridionale che si trasferiscono nel Nord Italia vengono percepiti in maniera diversa – l'uomo in quanto uomo e la donna in quanto donna? E invece una persona non italiana come viene percepita al Nord o al Sud Italia?

13. In un mondo in cui non esiste la differenza tra meridionale e settentrionale cosa cambierebbe?

2. Why do you call us “*terroni*”? Interview with Alice

Alice's interview turns out to be rather interesting because she is the only one of the interviewees to have recently finished her studies and to have remained in Veneto for work. Her words reveal the difficulties of fitting into a working environment of only natives, the "jokes" she had to endure, the offensive responses and attitudes that made her feel excluded and uncomfortable. Below is the full transcript of our interview with her.

- Da dove vieni e se dovessi descrivere a chi non c'è mai stato la tua città, cosa diresti degli spazi, delle persone dei rumori, odori?

Vengo dalla Latiano, un paese di 15000 abitanti in provincia di Brindisi, quindi in Puglia, Salento la parte alta del Salento. È un paese abbastanza tranquillo, davvero un paese più che una città perché appunto raggiunge sì e no i 15.000 abitanti. Molto tranquillo. Non ci sono tantissimi servizi. Infatti, per i servizi principali è necessario spostarsi nelle città limitrofe, per esempio anche a Brindisi proprio città. E non abbiamo quindi un ospedale, non abbiamo un ASL, però insomma il necessario c'è sicuramente. Si vive bene. Devo dire che si vive bene. Ovviamente ci sono problemi che vi sono un po' in tutti i paesini. Quindi il fatto di vivere un po' racchiusi in quel paese che ovviamente è vissuto soprattutto da persone anziane e infatti ci sono sempre meno giovani che, come me si sono spostati, chi per studio, chi per lavoro e questo fenomeno si verifica sempre di più. Le persone più anziane o comunque quelle di età media sono quelle che si trovano meglio perché hanno sempre vissuto lì e sicuramente a loro non manca nulla, ecco. Noi giovani invece abbiamo sentito la necessità di spostarci non perché non ci trovassimo bene, ma perché non offre chissà quanto. Sicuramente era meglio spostarsi. Però comunque io non escluderei un ritorno in futuro proprio perché ci sono molto molto legata. Quindi oltre alla famiglia, anche le amicizie coltivate da sempre e poi si respira una bell'aria, c'è un bell'ambiente, ecco. Ogni volta che penso al mio paese ci penso sempre con molta nostalgia perché è l'unico posto che chiamerò sempre casa.

- E invece di Padova? Se dovessi descriverla a chi non c'è mai stato, cosa diresti sempre di persone, spazi, odori, rumori?

Padova è una città che sin da subito mi è piaciuta tantissimo. Mi sono trovata molto bene. Mi ha accolto molto bene. Sono rimasta estasiata soprattutto dal punto di vista estetico. È una bellissima città, piena di storia, di cultura, di luoghi da scoprire. Continuamente scopro nuovi posti, segreti, nascosti, bellissimi. È una città in cui si vive molto bene. Ecco, appunto, a differenza del mio paese è appunto una città a tutto tondo dove non manca nulla e soprattutto comunque a misura d'uomo. Ecco non è né troppo grande né troppo piccola. Non mi piacciono le metropoli troppo affollate e credo che Padova sia il giusto equilibrio. Le persone, beh, ho sempre trovato gente che insomma mi piacesse, gente gradevole. Magari si nota un po' la differenza tra quello che è il paese di nascita in cui appunto ci si conosce con tutti. Invece qui vivere in una città è diverso. Ecco, questa è una delle differenze che ho notato fin da subito. Però non ho mai avuto problemi e noto appunto che sia una città molto accogliente, grazie soprattutto all'università di Padova che con i suoi 200mila studenti fa sì che sia una città multiculturale, multietnica e sicuramente all'avanguardia, anche molto aperta. E non ho nulla da aggiungere. Ho sempre avuto pensieri molto positivi verso questa città tant'è vero che ho deciso di rimanere qui anche dopo l'università.

- Hai oggetti o foto che ricordano casa tua qui a Padova?

Il mio paese proprio magari no, ecco però in generale della Puglia sì, sicuramente. Beh, il mare. Può sembrare ovviamente un luogo comune però è così, il mare della Puglia è ineguagliabile e mi manca sicuramente tanto. Ma anche le campagne. Ecco anche qui c'è un modo differente di pensare alle campagne. Viene vista qui al nord come periferia, quasi in maniera dispregiativa, no? Invece da noi c'è proprio il culto

dell'averne campagna, anzi è tutt'altra cosa, vieni visto proprio di buon occhio se ne possiedi almeno una. E quindi sì, ho foto che ricordano proprio i colori della le mie zone, della Puglia, che sono colori vividi. Quindi foto che mi sono sempre portata dietro e che mi porterò sempre perché davvero mi fanno sentire un po' più a casa oppure ovviamente foto che riguardano la mia famiglia, i compagni di scuola. Sono ancora molto legata a quella che era la mia scuola, i miei compagni di classe.

- Invece ci sono attività, canzoni o modi di dire che condividi qui, per esempio, che comunque rimandano alla tua regione o al tuo paese?

Canzoni sicuramente tante perché tanti sono gli artisti pugliesi. Ecco, non ti parlo nello specifico sempre della mia città perché non vengo da una grande città però magari del Salento in generale. Quindi sì, canzoni che cerco anche di insegnare agli altri, agli autoctoni di Padova o del Veneto in generale, e che rimarkano ovviamente quello che è il dialetto Salentino al quale sono molto legata nonostante io non abbia mai saputo parlare benissimo in dialetto perché comunque la nostra generazione purtroppo lo sta anche perdendo. Però sì, è normale che mi escano magari delle espressioni dialettali e ci tengo sempre a farle conoscere, anche i modi di dire. Beh, sono cresciuta con modi di dire nel mio paese, con mia nonna. La mia famiglia ne ha sempre fatto uso. Quindi credo che siano dei bei modi per portare avanti quella cultura del proprio posto. Quindi sì, assolutamente sono molto legata alle mie radici e quindi ci tengo proprio a farle conoscere a chi non le conosce.

- E quando sei arrivata a Padova, invece com'è stato? Come hai trovato casa? I primi passi insomma.

È stato molto difficile. Mi sono mossa ovviamente prima di trasferirmi, quindi in estate del 2021 e ho deciso poi di venire qualche giorno qui perché per fortuna avevo anche un appoggio: c'è un'amica di mia sorella che vive qui a Padova o anche i miei zii a Venezia. Quindi avevo preso un po' di appuntamenti e una volta sul posto sono andata a vedere queste case che mi ero segnata. Devo dire che già l'impatto è stato differente perché ho notato che i proprietari di casa tendono proprio fare una scelta, perché ovviamente ci sono tantissimi ragazzi e ragazze che vanno a visitare le case e quindi diventa un po' un colloquio di lavoro a tutti gli effetti. Quindi loro in automatico escludono già chi vuole vedere la casa solo in videochiamata per ragioni magari anche ovvie magari abitando appunto a tanti chilometri di distanza. E quindi già andando di persona è stato magari diverso. Per fortuna, sì. Comunque, in quei giorni che mi ero prefissata di stare qui a Padova per trovare casa l'ho trovata e mi sono trovato bene, non ho mai avuto problemi, in una zona molto tranquilla e residenziale di Padova. Però è stata dura, è stato molto stressante, anche frustrante molte volte perché davvero come fosse un colloquio di lavoro ti veniva detto: "Ti faremo sapere" e poi magari non mi avvisavano nemmeno oppure se mi avvisavano era brutto sentirsi dire: "Abbiamo scelto qualcun altro". Però al di là di quello poi sin dal primo giorno a Padova mi sono ambientata subito, anche perché io mi sono trasferita all'ultimo anno della magistrale. Il primo anno l'ho fatto in dad dalla Puglia però già le amicizie si erano formate grazie ai vari progetti universitari e ai lavori di gruppo, le videochiamate. E quindi dal primo giorno ci siamo ritrovate tutte insieme, il gruppetto della Puglia, eravamo tutte ragazze pugliesi che si erano conosciute tramite i progetti universitari e quindi siamo state insieme sin da subito e poi il gruppo è rimasto sempre quello.

- Ok, ma dicevi che di colloqui iniziali, di visite in presenza ne hai fatti tanti per le case?

Ovviamente più videochiamate. Quindi prima di venire su a Padova. Però in quei pochi giorni ho concentrato tantissimi appuntamenti.

- E, secondo te, in base a cosa sceglievano? Cioè, quali sono i criteri per scegliere un futuro inquilino o inquilina?

Sono tantissimi, purtroppo devo ammettere che sicuramente tendono a privilegiare un po' la gente del posto e mi è capitato proprio in particolare che un proprietario di casa mi stesse spiegando come fosse la casa con tutte le informazioni da dare a un certo punto mi ha chiesto di dove fossi e nel momento in cui ho detto che ero pugliese mi ha detto: "Ah, ma sei della Puglia? No, no allora no." e mi ha chiuso il telefono in faccia. Ha fatto proprio così. Anche altri, magari non l'hanno detto esplicitamente ma lo facevano capire che tendevano un po' a non gradire il fatto che provenissi dal Sud, in generale. Oppure altri criteri riguardano, secondo me, l'etnia. Non è il mio perché sono italiana. Però ho conosciuto tanti ragazzi stranieri che hanno avuto più difficoltà a trovare casa e spesso si sono ritrovati a trovare casa tutti insieme, a vivere tutti

insieme. Ho visto poche case miste dal punto di vista delle etnie. Oppure anche nel genere, tra maschi e femmine, tante differenze. Anche in questi casi ero un po' più privilegiata perché ci sono proprietari di casa che affittano molto più a persone di genere femminile che maschile. Oppure c'è chi addirittura richiedeva un garante oppure chiedeva che facoltà studiassi. Oppure, ecco, qua non parlo per me ma magari per altri, chiedevano che tipo di lavoro facessero. Insomma, tantissimi criteri, a mio avviso inutili. E poi anche tendevano a privilegiare chi si presentava con i genitori. Cosa un po' assurda perché comunque hai raggiunto un'età in cui dovresti essere abbastanza autonomo/a e quindi, anzi, dovrebbe fare più piacere se lo studente/la studentessa si presentasse da solo anziché con i genitori. E invece quando si vedevano figure adulte davanti a loro privilegiavano sicuramente loro perché era più difficile a loro dire di no.

➤ Da quando sei arrivata ad adesso diresti che ti senti parte del contesto padovano?

Sì, c'è un po' un distacco fra i padovani veri che ovviamente hanno un po' i loro giri, ecco diciamo. Forse potrei dire che sono un po' distaccati, diffidenti verso noialtri. Però non è tanto il caso dei giovani. Non ho mai avuto problemi con i miei coetanei. Quindi mi sento parte sicuramente però non al 100% perché sono comunque..., mi sento comunque un'ospite in un certo senso. Anche tutti i colleghi a lavoro che ho conosciuto, mi hanno ovviamente sempre ospitato benissimo però mi hanno sempre etichettato come "la pugliese" o "sei quella che è venuta a vivere qui da NOI", quindi tenendomi un po' fuori da loro.

➤ Quindi a livello di amicizie. Sono principalmente fuorisede o hai anche altre amicizie e conosci persone del posto?

Finché sono stata studentessa si può dire che il 90% erano persone fuori sede come me. Ho conosciuto pochi del posto. Però quelle pochissime poi sono diventate subito mie amiche e amici molto stretti. Invece la situazione si è completamente ribaltata nel momento in cui ho iniziato a lavorare dove invece era soprattutto gente del posto, anzi, in un'azienda in cui ho lavorato in particolare, io ero proprio l'unica non del posto, l'unica del sud. Ovviamente c'era sempre chi aveva origini...quindi non venete, non padovane però si ero l'unica. Quindi da quando ho iniziato a lavorare ho conosciuto molta molta più gente del posto.

➤ Quando ti capita di interagire con persone venete o settentrionali emerge il tratto della tua provenienza?

Sì, emerge subito. Al lavoro sono arrivata lì che già sapevano tutto di me, mi avevano fatto un identikit. Quindi io sono arrivata e mi hanno presentata proprio come "la pugliese", quindi già sapevano. Invece quando conosco gente nuova, che quindi non sa nulla di me, si accorge che non sono nel posto, nonostante mi venga detto che non abbia un accento molto marcato. Però ovviamente si accorgono che non sono di lì, quindi sì. Forse la prima domanda è "di dove sei?".

➤ Sapresti dirmi di situazioni in cui ti senti particolarmente a tuo agio riguarda la tua provenienza e se ti capita situazioni in cui ti senti a disagio per questa cosa?

Mi sento a mio agio, soprattutto quando sto con gente che ha la mia stessa provenienza oppure quando conosco gente della mia zona o comunque del sud. Infatti, penso sempre un po' alla Divina Commedia, l'abbraccio fra Virgilio e Sordello che si incontrano e si abbracciano proprio perché provengono entrambi dalla stessa zona. C'è sempre questa situazione tra un po' compaesani, che poi ci definiamo compaesani anche semplicemente se facciamo parte della stessa regione o se siamo proprio del Sud. Quelle sono le situazioni in cui più mi sento a mio agio oppure quando mi fanno sentire a mio agio. Cioè, quando conosco gente o sto con gente che apprezza la mia cultura e quindi ne parla solo in maniera positiva, dicendo le classiche frasi: "Ah, Beata te! Tu vieni dalla Puglia, tu vieni dal Salento". Invece a disagio quando, e mi è capitato spesso sempre appunto da quando ho iniziato a lavorare, di ricevere frasi negative, un po' dispregiative. Magari non propriamente verso di me, a volte anche sì, che in generale fossero rivolte a noi meridionali. E spesso mi è capitato di sentirmi a disagio, di rimanerci molto male, pensarci su. Certe volte infatti ho passato intere giornate al lavoro con l'angoscia addosso perché mi sentivo esclusa, non mi sentivo una di loro. Molte volte volevo quasi scappare perché mi chiedevo perché ci deve essere questo disprezzo questo distacco e più volte ho affrontato il discorso anche con loro, proprio con i miei colleghi, facendo notare che, secondo me, viceversa non c'è questa situazione. Cioè, dicevo, noi quando conosciamo voi, per esempio quando venite da noi a trovarci, vi accogliamo, secondo me, molto bene, abbiamo per voi solo parole positive. Non capita mai secondo me, ovviamente dipende, c'è chi lo fa ma è molto più raro, che ricevano parole dispregiative da parte nostra. E quindi mi chiedevo perché invece per voi è così normale?

E mi è stato risposto anche. Cioè, c'è un mio amico, un mio collega che è anche mio amico, che in particolare mi ha detto: “Guarda, in realtà mi hai fatto una domanda più che giusta perché noi siamo cresciuti tutti con la convinzione che voi del sud siate un certo modo. Quindi anche se noi non lo pensiamo, siamo cresciuti anche semplicemente con la consapevolezza che per noi siate terroni, che vi dobbiamo chiamare così. Varie cose ci sono state inculcate dai nostri genitori e senza mai chiederci neanche se fosse vero, se fosse no, oppure magari chiederci il perché dobbiamo dire queste cose.” Quindi lo fanno proprio in maniera automatica. Ecco la prima cosa che ho notato nell'azienda in cui sono andata a lavorare, il primo giorno, è che non ci fosse la raccolta differenziata. E io subito ho detto: “Ma perché non fate la raccolta differenziata? Avete un unico cestino per tutto.” E lì mi hanno attaccata tutti. Cioè, la loro risposta è stata: “Ma che ne sai tu che vieni dal sud, che non sai neanche che cos'è la raccolta differenziata, ma parli tu che la buttate in mezzo alla strada” e io ho detto che tutt'altro, invece, tutto al contrario. Da me esiste anche la raccolta differenziata porta a porta e comunque esiste da tantissimi anni. In realtà la rispettano e vedo che qui semmai è al contrario. Oppure quando mi è capitato di dire loro che appunto siamo molto accoglienti, che, quando abbiamo ospiti tendiamo a farli sentire davvero come se fossero a casa. Facevo l'esempio della nonna che si mette a cucinare per un esercito anche se c'è solo un ospite. E dicevo, soprattutto se viene qualcuno da fuori, quindi non del posto. E anche lì la risposta, anziché magari rispondere in maniera positiva, mi è stato detto: “Eh tutti i soldi che non spendete per pagare le tasse li spendete in quel modo”. Quindi sperperando per il cibo. E quindi è stato un continuo ricevere queste frecciate. All'inizio è stato molto difficile e nonostante lo facessero anche veramente in maniera automatica, senza pensarci perché il loro intento non era insultare me perché appunto queste persone sono diventate anche magari mie amiche, poi magari venivano da me dicendo: “No, no, scherzavo”, mi abbracciavano, “Ti voglio bene” e ci credevo anche che effettivamente magari davvero mi volessero bene. Ma lo fanno proprio in maniera automatica. Loro dicevano: “Vabbè ma noi queste cose le diciamo per scherzare” e io facevo capire che per noi non è uno scherzo e che veramente il cambiamento deve venire da loro perché, se fino ad ora le generazioni passate sono cresciute in questo modo e hanno inculcato quindi via via ai propri figli queste credenze, sta a loro cambiare un po' il modo di pensare. E devo dire che per fortuna lo stanno anche un po' facendo. Quindi la nostra generazione sicuramente è molto molto più aperta. Però forse dipende anche un po' sempre dalle zone. Secondo me in Veneto c'è ancora tanto lavoro da fare proprio su questo. E quindi ahimè devo dire che sono state forse più le situazioni di disagio che quelle in cui mi sono sentita a mio agio. Nonostante ci passassi magari anche su, che rispondevo magari anche in maniera ironica, proprio perché volevo far capire loro che stessero sbagliando però in maniera abbastanza tranquilla, insomma serena. Però noto che c'è quasi un muro, ecco. Oppure mi è capitato che chiunque io conosca qui, appena mi chiede quindi di dove sia e io dico che sono pugliese, soprattutto il Salento, tutti mi rispondono che ci sono stati in Puglia, in Salento, tutti sono andati a fare le vacanze. Però appunto al tempo stesso tutti la solita frase: “posti bellissimi, mare bellissimo, però la gente che vive...” cioè, hanno da ridire sulla gente che ci vive oppure in generale sui cani. Cioè, mi sono sentita dire che noi abbiamo un sacco di cani randagi perché li abbandoniamo, perché non li sappiamo tenere e quindi devono venire loro dal nord, prendersi i nostri cani per portarli su in modo tale che loro possano prendersene cura. Oppure proprio il fatto che dicono: “Eh, perché voi i cani li regalate e quindi li regalate a chiunque. Invece da noi si comprano e quindi c'è un modo diverso di pensarla...”. E vabbè, è sempre un po' il modo per puntare il dito su qualunque cosa in maniera non richiesta perché sicuramente non stavo lì a chiedere loro un parere soprattutto negativo su quella che è la mia terra. Proprio perché appunto a me non verrebbe mai da dire, cioè se qualcuno mi venisse a dire “io sono Veneto”, non lo so non mi verrebbe solo spontaneo dire “ok”. Va bene, cioè, ok, sei un cittadino italiano come me, bene, di qualunque parte tu sia insomma, cioè non starei lì neanche a parlare di luoghi comuni né positivi, né negativi però comunque avrei solo parole sicuramente belle da spendere proprio perché non vedrei il motivo di criticare la zona da cui provieni.

➤ E sul lavoro questi episodi in cui ti sei sentita a disagio sono capitato spesso?

Sì spesso, soprattutto all'inizio. Dopo hanno capito che dovevano evitare perché vedevano che ci rimanevo male all'inizio e poi ho iniziato anche proprio a rispondere. Un giorno ho avuto anche il coraggio di rispondere al mio capo dopo l'ennesima frecciatina. Mi ero veramente stancata.

➤ Cosa ti ha detto?

Lui mi ha sempre detto che la sua compagna è pugliese. E mi ha detto che appunto quest'anno passerà le ferie in Puglia. Allora vabbè io gli ho sempre detto: “Beh allora dai. Ci vedremo in Puglia. Ci vediamo in Puglia” e poi, questo comunque poco prima di andarmene da quell'azienda. Dissi: “Beh dai, allora ci vedremo alla Notte della Taranta.” E lui mi rispose: “Mai sia! Fosse l'ultima cosa che dovessi fare sulla faccia della terra, in mezzo a tutti quei terroni.” E io dissi: “Ma ti rendi conto di quello che mi stai dicendo? Perché?”. E anche là fa: “Vabbè no, ma sto scherzando!” E dissi: “Ma non stai scherzando. Ma non è vero. Ma che motivo c'è?” e insomma continuamente in realtà mi venivano dette cose del genere, guarda, ora neanche mi ricordo più di tanto bene perché me ne hanno dette talmente tante... ma i classici luoghi comuni che si pensano. Oppure magari mi veniva detto: “Ma tu non sei così, eh!” Classiche cose.

➤ E nella nuova azienda, invece va meglio da questo punto di vista?

Si, va meglio sicuramente perché appunto è un ambiente differente. No, qui non mi sono capitati episodi di questo genere. Quindi sì, dipende anche un po' sicuramente dall'ambiente però in generale appena abbiamo a che fare con gente del posto emergono inevitabilmente questi episodi ecco. Per esempio, qui il mio attuale capo, per quanto l'abbia fatto nel modo più ingenuo secondo me del mondo, però quando sono andata lì per fare il colloquio mi fece accogliere da una dipendente che lavora lì che è pugliese e lui mi disse proprio: “Guarda, ti ho fatto accogliere da lei per farti sentire un po' a casa, visto che tra di voi vi capite”. Ecco sono quelle frasi che, ripeto, secondo me anche un po' ingenuo, però subito, cioè la prima cosa è rimarcare questa differenza tra “ok, tu sei Pugliese quindi parli con le persone come te”. Cioè perché? Anche lì, che motivo c'è? Sono una persona come te, appunto al di là delle mie origini. Forse finché sono stata all'università ho vissuto in un mondo veramente diverso, quasi fatato in cui questi episodi non c'erano e anche un po' la mentalità dell'universitario in genere perché sì, secondo me è una mente molto più aperta proprio perché aldilà dell'istruzione e quindi della cultura personale, ho proprio avuto, secondo me, è molto più che fare con colleghi e colleghe un po' da tutta Italia e da tutto il mondo e quindi molto molto più aperto. Invece in altri campi chi si è sempre solo rapportato con gente del posto fa molta fatica in realtà a pensarla diversamente o a passarci sopra o a non cadere proprio in questi luoghi comuni.

➤ L'ambiente lavorativo attuale è a provenienza mista rispetto a quello precedente dove ti sei trovata male?

No, siamo comunque in minoranza. Siamo appunto io e questa collega pugliese, basta. Poi c'è appunto chi ha origini del sud. Però 100% del sud siamo solo io e lei. Comunque, sempre in prevalenza gente del posto.

➤ Ti hanno mai chiamata terrona? Cosa pensi di questa parola?

Sì, tantissime volte, sempre praticamente. Sono stata anche appunto etichetta come “la terrona”, poi si rendevano conto magari di averlo detto davanti a me e dicevano: “Scusa, la pugliese” e anche lì dicevo: “Vabbè, ho un nome. Mi chiamo Alice, chiamami Alice insomma”. Però sì, veramente tante tante volte e anche lì tutte le volte io ho sempre detto: “Ma perché dovete per forza chiamarci così? Ma lo sapete che noi appunto al contrario non lo facciamo? Non vi chiamiamo in un altro modo”. E loro hanno sempre risposto proprio con molta naturalezza che per loro comunque non è un insulto ma è proprio un appellativo che danno a noi non rendendosi conto che in realtà non è un nomignolo carino, insomma, che ci stanno dando ma sicuramente ha un'accezione dispregiativa. E poi appunto mi facevano notare i più giovani che sono cresciuti proprio con questa convinzione che noi siamo terroni; quindi, non si sono mai neanche posti il problema del perché ci stessero chiamando così. Cioè, per loro è proprio un sinonimo di meridionali, di gente del sud, 100% un sinonimo anche appunto con nota dispregiativa nonostante poi la maggior parte di loro poi non lo ammetta, ma solo per non farti rimanere male insomma, non per altro. Sono rare purtroppo devo dire le persone che non mi abbiano chiamata terrona una volta che hanno saputo di dove io fossi.

➤ Se i tuoi nonni e i tuoi genitori si fossero trasferiti al nord alla tua età, pensi che sarebbe stato diverso per loro il contesto? Come l'avrebbero vissuta?

Alla mia età...sì, secondo me sì, perché appunto erano altri anni in cui c'era molta molta più chiusura. Quindi sì, secondo me l'avrebbero vissuta in maniera diversa. E appunto c'è questa mia collega di lavoro che è pugliese. Lei è grande, ha una cinquantina d'anni e sin dal primo giorno mi ha raccontato che lei si è trasferita qui a Padova per studiare, per l'università e ha avuto molti problemi perché ha detto che lei non è praticamente mai riuscita a fare amicizia con gente del posto, se non appunto dopo svariati anni in cui ormai si era stabilita qui. E lei proprio mi ha sempre detto che c'è una differenza tra i giovani che si

trasferiscono adesso e i giovani che si trasferivano prima. Lei mi ha sempre detto infatti: “Tu sei stata fortunata, comunque sei più fortunata ad aver vissuto questa situazione adesso in questi tempi” proprio perché sì, noto, e penso notiamo tutti, comunque, tanta differenza fra ieri e oggi proprio nella nostra generazione. Quindi, secondo me, i miei nonni avrebbero avuto molti più problemi, molta più fatica ad ambientarsi e soprattutto sì, all'epoca dei nostri nonni in cui la gente del sud veniva vista come la feccia dell'Italia. Magari sarebbero scappati anche prima invece io non ho questa intenzione proprio perché appunto mi trovo bene aldilà di queste diciamo piccole problematiche. Però poi in generale mi trovo bene.

➤ Ma, secondo te, perché si fanno queste distinzioni tra settentrione e meridione? Esistono delle differenze?

Esistono le differenze, sì, però, secondo me, più che altro si sono create queste differenze, cioè paradossalmente se non se ne parlasse così tanto secondo me non sarebbero così marcate. Ed è proprio il discorso che io faccio comunque ai miei amici di qua autoctoni. Gli dico: “Vedete, alla fine che differenza c'è tra me e voi?” E loro stessi dicono: “Vabbè, niente, insomma”. Conduciamo la stessa vita veramente senza alcuna differenza. La differenza sta quindi nella società, cioè che pensa la società. E poi il fatto che magari... il fatto che il sud su certi punti di vista sia rimasto indietro, cioè dal punto di vista magari del modo di affrontare la vita, soprattutto magari lavorativa, cioè vedo che qui c'è una vita molto più frenetica, si è molto più improntati a lavorare senza guardarsi neanche attorno e anche un po' sì, una differenza proprio del modo di approcciarsi alla vita e alla gente in generale. C'è un atteggiamento differente, cioè ognuno pensa più al suo che agli altri. Invece al Sud è un po' al contrario, c'è molto più, secondo me, legame tra persone e quindi non si sta molto a pensare al proprio ma più a quello che è il contesto squadra secondo me. Però invece poi per altre cose, secondo me è il sud molto più all'avanguardia proprio nel modo di pensare. Siamo molto molto più aperti su vari aspetti attuali. Sì, queste sono, secondo me, le differenze. Però secondo me almeno ce ne sono tantissime. Molte sarebbero appunto evitabili se solo non ci pensassimo così costantemente, se la società non ci imponesse che queste differenze ci siano e ci debbano essere soprattutto.

➤ Quindi queste differenze che vengono create, secondo te, a livello pratico che tipo di conseguenza hanno? In cosa si traducono?

Si traducono in un distacco fra nord e sud e quindi il fatto che non ci sia unione, sicuramente. Nonostante magari dall'esterno sia anche visto come un paese molto unito l'Italia, alla fine, sì, chi non è italiano ci percepisce, cioè percepisce in generale l'idea dell'italiano, della persona italiana come una persona molto calorosa. Ecco sicuramente non sa le varie differenze che ci sono e non sta neanche lì ad interrogarsi magari se ci siano effettivamente differenze. Quindi sì, comunque se non ci fossero queste differenze saremmo molto più uniti secondo me. E quindi si traduce in questo e si traduce anche nel fatto che poi nord e sud magari non vadano avanti di pari passo perché ormai c'è l'idea che il sud sia arretrato e che quindi i giovani debbano spostarsi altrove, i cosiddetti “cervelli in fuga”, proprio per trovare nuove speranze. Sicuramente ci sono meno opportunità però è anche vero che ormai è diventato quasi un obbligo spostarsi senza neanche chiedersi realmente: “Occorre farlo o no?”. Magari non è neanche necessario però sembra quasi che, se non ti sposti al nord, non sei nessuno, proprio perché siamo cresciuti con questa consapevolezza che il nord sia più avanti che quindi per costruirti un futuro hai bisogno di trasferirti. E quindi anche al contrario ci viene quasi imposto che il sud rimanga indietro e che, se tu rimani lì ancorato alle tue radici, non andrai mai da nessuna parte. Cosa che appunto in realtà non è affatto vera. Anzi, secondo me, ci sono davvero centri di eccellenza e ci sono anche le opportunità, proprio perché ci sono tantissimi giovani che studiano per esempio al Sud. Anche questa è una differenza. Ecco, ho notato che, proprio perché viviamo quasi nella convinzione al sud che ci sia poco lavoro, siamo molto più portati a proseguire gli studi dopo la maturità e quindi la maggior parte di noi oramai si iscrive all'università. E invece viceversa al nord c'è questa consapevolezza che qualunque tipo di studi tu intraprenda alle scuole superiori troverai lavoro dopo il diploma e quindi molti meno giovani sono invogliati ad iscriversi all'università e quindi lavorano subito dopo il diploma. Ecco, ritorniamo sempre al fatto che in ambito universitario poi la maggior parte sono fuorisede perché ci sono tutte le persone del sud che si sono trasferite al nord per studiare all'università oppure per trovare lavoro dopo l'università.

➤ E, secondo te, di tutte le regioni meridionali si parla nello stesso modo e in eguale misura? E che cos'è che si associa alla parola meridionale?

No, ci sono delle differenze anche tra le varie regioni del meridione. Ci sono regioni che vengono viste sicuramente in maniera più dispregiativa e regioni per le quali quindi si hanno forse solo parole negative, senza realmente nemmeno conoscere poi come si viva, se ciò che ti pesa di quella determinata regione sia del tutto vero o no. Cioè, si sente molto più parlare di Calabria, Sicilia come le regioni più arretrate, più a rischio. Anche la Campania rientra comunque oppure viceversa sulla Puglia si hanno, secondo me, parole un po' più positive, perché appunto viene vista come la regione bella in cui fare le vacanze, in cui c'è tanto turismo. Quindi non viene disprezzata più di tanto. E poi regioni come la Basilicata che non vengono neanche considerate e la classica risposta "La Basilicata non esiste, dov'è la Basilicata?". Oppure molti mi hanno chiesto qui: "ma la Basilicata è in Puglia?". A questi livelli perché non si conosce assolutamente nulla. Infatti, anche questa è una differenza che ho notato. Noi tendiamo a conoscere davvero tutte le regioni italiane e sapere quasi di tutte, insomma, le caratteristiche di ogni regione. Invece loro qui al nord si fermano davvero al nord. Tutto ciò che è al di sotto è Sud in generale, senza soffermarsi sulle varie regioni e sulle varie caratteristiche. Però appunto, comunque fanno poi differenza fra le varie regioni del sud.

➤ E se si menziona la parola meridionale, quali sono le prime idee che si associano?

Vabbè la parola "terrone", appunto; il fatto che non ci sia lavoro oppure mafia; non sono viene detto che non sappiamo parlare in italiano perché parliamo solo in dialetto oppure ti facevo l'esempio della raccolta differenziata e quindi la spazzatura, c'è tanta spazzatura oppure sì, che abbiamo tanti cani e gatti randagi; la pulizia in generale delle strade; oppure il modo in cui si guida, tante ne vengono dette, che quindi: "chi vi dà la patente? Ma sapete guidare? Io non guiderei mai al sud", classica frase oppure "se hai imparato a guidare giù da te allora sai guidare ovunque"; oppure analfabetismo, il fatto che le vecchie generazioni soprattutto siano poco istruite oppure modi di pensare un po'; i paesi in generale vengono visti proprio come sinonimo di arretratezza: fanno vari esempi tipo mi viene detto "voi vi sedete in mezzo alla strada". Sì, è cultura. Invece per loro è un modo per dire non lo so, "siete dei poveracci, state lì in mezzo alla strada, a giudicare le persone che passano". Mi viene in mente questo ma guarda ci sarà sicuramente dell'altro che ora non mi viene.

➤ E invece un uomo o una donna meridionale che si trasferiscono al nord vengono considerati in maniera diversa?

Sì, perché vieni visto come una persona che si è allontanata dal sud. Quindi vieni visto più all'avanguardia. Quindi, secondo me, in un primo impatto in maniera positiva, però poi vieni etichettato anche come quella persona che è emigrata. Cioè, comunque sei un immigrato per loro perché sei andato nella loro terra al nord alla ricerca di qualcosa, quindi di lavoro. Infatti, ti viene comunque chiesto, penso che nessuno si faccia andar bene il fatto che tu ti sia trasferito punto. Ti viene comunque chiesto: "Ma perché? Per studio, per lavoro, per amore?" Quante volte pure senti dire "Ah, ma perché hai trovato il fidanzato qua?". Insomma, deve esserci per forza un motivo per loro e deve essere quasi un motivo giustificabile del perché tu stia entrando nella loro terra. Ecco, però in generale tu sei quello che ha avuto il coraggio di andare via per loro e infatti l'idea è "Ah, almeno tu sei andata via, sei andata via dal bordello", insomma, che è il sud per loro.

➤ E invece proprio una distinzione tra uomo donna che si trasferisce al nord? Vengono percepiti in maniera diversa o etichettati come meridionali e basta?

L'uomo, secondo me, viene visto in maniera migliore perché viene visto veramente appunto come un cervello in fuga a tutti gli effetti, ovvero colui che viene al nord per trovare una situazione lavorativa migliore. Ecco si dà praticamente per scontato che l'uomo quindi persona di sesso maschile, si sia trasferita al nord per lavoro. Punto. Non ci sono altri motivi. E quindi in realtà viene ben visto. La donna, viceversa, magari viene vista come colei che si è trasferita per amore. Questa è l'etichetta che si dà di più alla donna. Oppure comunque viene vista in maniera un po' più negativa quasi a far pena, si prova quasi pietà. "Ti sei trasferita qui perché poveretta volevi trovare una situazione migliore". Invece verso l'uomo c'è rispetto. Viene praticamente elogiato del fatto che sia venuto qui al nord da loro perché appunto "vieni a lavorare da noi" insomma.

➤ E invece la condizione di una persona non italiana è diversa tra nord e sud Italia?

Sì, cioè, quindi una persona straniera che si trasferisce in Italia. Sì, assolutamente viene percepita in maniera differente perché appunto lo straniero è colui che scappa dal suo paese in automatico per venire da noi,

Italia, quindi un paese “migliore” è che è un paese più avanti, quindi più all'avanguardia quindi, al di là del vero motivo per il quale si è trasferita questa persona straniera.

➤ E come viene percepita tra nord e sud?

Sì, anche si notano differenze: al sud la persona straniera viene accolta molto di più, secondo me. Ti faccio un esempio: a Latiano che è il mio paese c'è una grande comunità di persone marocchine, molto grande. Tanto è vero che ci hanno voluto ringraziare del modo in cui li abbiamo accolti fin da subito e ci hanno costruito una fontana stile marocchina, bellissima, per ringraziare la città di Latiano e quindi tutti i latianesi e i cittadini per come li hanno sempre accolti in maniera molto positiva e infatti fanno veramente parte della città. Io ho sempre avuto compagni di classe marocchini. Devo dire che non li abbiamo mai trattati in maniera diversa. Ecco siamo sempre cresciuti con la consapevolezza che nella nostra città ci fosse questa comunità. Quindi per noi erano cittadini di Latiano così come noi. E in generale, quando incontriamo degli stranieri, noi meridionali abbiamo un approccio differente. Tendiamo subito a fare amicizia, ad accoglierli, a anche prostrarci verso di loro, a dimostrare comunque quello che è il nostro appoggio, il nostro anche aiuto qualora ne avessero bisogno e tutta l'amicizia e la simpatia del mondo. Ovviamente, dipende, anche questo dipende molto perché c'è chi invece la pensa in maniera totalmente opposta; quindi, chi continua a disprezzare gli stranieri in quanto tali. Sì, ci sono tante persone così ma, secondo me, appunto sempre con la nuova generazione si va sempre più verso un'accoglienza generale. Al nord, invece, la gente è molto più distaccata da queste persone straniere. Credo sia davvero raro che riescano ad avere un rapporto proprio con loro. Cioè, vengono viste appunto come la feccia del loro paese, della loro regione, persone che vengono a stare lì tra di loro e non devono avere nulla a che fare con loro invece, vivere vite completamente distanti senza mai avere contatto con loro, senza mai avere a che fare. Dipende poi anche la provenienza straniera, ovviamente. Però ingenerale c'è molto distacco e quindi si nota la differenza. E poi in generale un po' la mentalità che è dell'italiano che forse si dimentica di quando ha vissuto la stessa condizione, di quando siamo stati noi gli immigrati e che abbiamo avuto gli stessi problemi e quindi non ripensa a questo. In automatico si disprezza solo perché non sei uno di noi.

➤ E dici che dipende dalla provenienza perché in base allo stato da cui lo straniero proviene c'è differenza?

Sì, sicuramente. Vabbè in generale, se sei uno straniero rimani tale secondo me. Però sì, ovviamente dipende da quale parte del mondo questo straniero provenga. Se viene da una zona ben vista, sviluppata, si è quasi orgogliosi del fatto che questa persona sia venuta qui in Italia da noi. Vengono anche un po' festeggiati diciamo, trattati come se fossero dei trofei. Cioè, mi viene da pensare quando viene gente dall'America per esempio. Gli americani sono sempre comunque ben visti solo per il semplice fatto di essere americani. Ovviamente parlo dell'America del Nord, America centrale. Non è la stessa cosa con le persone provenienti dall'Africa, invece, assolutamente, per vari motivi, vari aspetti, anche e soprattutto estetici, quindi l'aspetto esteriore. Oppure invece chi proviene in generale dell'Europa è ben visto, secondo me, perché ci sono molte poche differenze, ecco nonostante poi ci siano le varie dicerie su ogni stato. Oppure chi ne risente tanto sono anche gli asiatici, quasi al pari degli africani, perché comunque è considerata gente diversa da noi, sempre appunto anche per una questione proprio al primo impatto estetica e poi per vari altri motivi. Quindi sì, c'è differenza.

➤ Ultimissima domanda: come te lo immagini un mondo in cui non esistono differenze tra settentrionali e meridionali?

Sarebbe un mondo impossibile, secondo me. Una cosa che non accadrà mai perché è sempre stato così nonostante ci siano dei miglioramenti però appunto non è escluso che poi si vada sempre a ritroso. E comunque sono cambiamenti, miglioramenti molto molto lenti quindi si vedono ma a lungo andare e che appunto fanno parte di tanti anni, anni magari di lotta che proviene da noi giovani, dai giovani di ogni generazione. Però ecco, più andiamo avanti più queste lotte magari sono più forti, più agguerrite verso i pari diritti fra cittadini. Però ecco, sì, secondo me sarebbe impossibile raggiungere un mondo in cui non vi siano differenze. Sarebbe sicuramente un mondo ideale, un mondo molto più sereno, vivibile, pacifico. Non esisterebbero praticamente guerre. Non esisterebbero quindi tutti i problemi che ne derivano, appunto il fatto di volersi spostare da una zona all'altra, di entrare in contatto con gente del posto. Ci sarebbe un mondo praticamente privo di problemi quasi perché i problemi che rimangono sarebbero comunque magari

meno gravi. Anche perché, se non ci fossero differenze tra le varie etnie, non ci sarebbero magari anche tutte le varie differenze tra generi, sì tutto ciò che appunto ne deriva. Sarebbe un mondo privo di differenze e quindi un mondo perfetto, ecco. Lì si raggiungerebbe la perfezione che tanto decantiamo e che praticamente non esiste.

- Allora io ho finito con le domande. Hai qualcosa da aggiungere che magari ti è venuta in mente dopo, qualche riflessione sull'intervista?

No, tutto chiaro. Ritengo che sia un'intervista molto utile. Ti ringrazio per avermi chiesto di essere intervistata. Sono molto contenta, grata ed orgogliosa di averne preso parte proprio perché sono convinta che questo cambiamento debba iniziare da noi e proseguire anche. E quindi ben venga, sono sempre molto disposta, ecco, a richieste genere. Ti ringrazio per il lavoro che stai facendo e stai portando avanti. Ti auguro davvero il meglio e che possa comunque servire non solo a te ma a tutti, a noi che ti diamo un appoggio perché stiamo dalla tua parte, la pensiamo come te e a tutti coloro che la pensano invece in maniera totalmente opposta, che possa servire loro da esame di coscienza, che possa smuovere in qualche modo il loro animo per cercare di cambiare qualcosa nel loro pensiero.

Summary in Italian

Questa ricerca si propone di indagare se l'eredità del razzismo antimeridionale persista ancora oggi in Italia e sotto quali vesti. A tal fine è stata condotta una ricerca qualitativa in Veneto impiegando il metodo delle interviste dialogiche. Queste interviste offrono un quadro interessante dell'Italia contemporanea dal punto di vista sociologico mostrando la percezione dell'esistenza di due parti ben differenziate all'interno del paese: la parte meridionale e quella settentrionale. Nella discussione dei risultati si sostiene che esistono ancora forme di discriminazione contro i meridionali in Italia, sebbene sotto forma e in intensità diverse.

Il primo capitolo della tesi si concentra sul vocabolario legato alla Questione Meridionale. Si sottolinea l'importanza del linguaggio in quanto capace di riflettere le dinamiche di potere, plasmare le percezioni e costruire un discorso che perpetua gli stereotipi sulle regioni meridionali d'Italia. Vengono analizzati i termini "*Meridione*" e "*Mezzogiorno*" come sinonimi della parte meridionale della penisola italiana. Tuttavia, questi termini presentano connotazioni più profonde, che esulano dai riferimenti geografici. Negli studi italiani, vengono spesso utilizzati per riferirsi non solo alle regioni meridionali, ma includono anche le isole, l'Abruzzo e talvolta la parte più meridionale della regione del Lazio. Il termine "*meridionalismo*" viene analizzato nelle sue due accezioni: dal punto di vista linguistico, si riferisce a parole prese in prestito dai dialetti meridionali che diventano parte dell'italiano standard mentre, dal punto di vista storico ed economico, comprende gli studi e i dibattiti legati ai problemi derivanti dall'annessione dei territori meridionali al Regno d'Italia dei Savoia. Viene analizzato il termine dispregiativo "*terrone*", usato dalle persone del nord Italia per riferirsi ai meridionali. Esistono varianti di questo termine in diversi dialetti. Viene esplorata l'etimologia di "*terrone*", con possibili origini che vanno dai riferimenti alle regioni meridionali a connessioni con lo status di contadino o proprietario terriero. Il significato dispregiativo del termine come indicatore di inferiorità sociale e culturale si è sviluppato nel XX secolo.

Infine, il capitolo introduce la Questione Meridionale stessa, le specifiche problematiche affrontate dalle regioni meridionali d'Italia e gli stereotipi e le discriminazioni che attorno a questa sono stati costruiti. Jane Schneider descrive la Questione Meridionale come evocante un'immagine di povertà storica, sottosviluppo economico, politica clientelare,

relazioni di genere patriarcali e criminalità organizzata. Il discorso che circonda la Questione Meridionale è contraddistinto da generalizzazioni, stereotipi e una dicotomia polarizzata tra un Sud negativo e un Nord positivo. I tratti attribuiti ai meridionali, come l'esplosività emotiva e la mancanza di senso civico, sono visti come ostacoli allo sviluppo capitalistico industriale.

La creazione della narrazione della Questione meridionale può essere analizzata in chiave diacronica. Dopo l'indipendenza dalla Spagna nel 1734, il Regno delle Due Sicilie attuò varie riforme per modernizzare l'economia e la società. Dopo la breve esperienza della Repubblica Partenopea nel 1799, il dominio dei Borboni fu ripristinato con una dura repressione. Nel XIX secolo, il regno affrontò sfide come la mancanza di industrie, infrastrutture carenti, povertà e analfabetismo. Questi problemi erano attribuiti a un'amministrazione inefficiente e richiedevano miglioramenti nell'industrializzazione, nell'istruzione pubblica e nella legislazione. Dopo gli eventi del 1848, con la promulgazione di una Costituzione seguita da una dura repressione, si è sviluppata una rappresentazione negativa del Sud. Questo ha contribuito a seminare le basi per il futuro "discorso" sul Sud descritto come inferiore e irredimibile.

Antonino De Francesco in *La palla al piede*, esplora lo sviluppo e la diffusione dei pregiudizi nei confronti del Sud Italia concentrandosi sulla loro origine politica. De Francesco respinge un'interpretazione semplicistica della Questione Meridionale e del pregiudizio antimeridionale, sostenendo che questi siano principalmente radicati nella politica anziché nella pura discriminazione etnica. De Francesco cita il lavoro di Giuseppe Galasso, che sottolinea il ruolo subordinato dell'etnia nella formazione degli stereotipi sul Sud. La sua analisi si limita principalmente agli stereotipi che riguardano i napoletani e i siciliani (menzionando talvolta i calabresi per i discorsi sul brigantaggio), in quanto questi ultimi rappresentano in modo esaustivo i luoghi comuni sul Sud. Gli stereotipi hanno cominciato a circolare nel XVIII secolo, alimentati dalla crescente influenza dei regni meridionali nel Mediterraneo e dalla fascinazione europea per le rovine greche e romane. I resoconti di viaggio del Grand Tour hanno contribuito a diffondere rappresentazioni stereotipate del territorio. Il ricordo dei lazzari, popolani pigri e vestiti di stracci che parteciparono alle rivolte perlopiù uniti al versante reazionario, rafforzarono gli stereotipi negativi di inattività, inaffidabilità, violenza e tendenze realiste. La percezione dei napoletani è cambiata nel corso del tempo, alternando ammirazione e critiche, a seconda

del loro sostegno o resistenza alla monarchia e ai movimenti liberali. Allo stesso modo anche la valutazione dei siciliani mutò nel tempo in base alla loro resistenza contro i Borboni e alle successive rivolte contro il Regno d'Italia. De Francesco sostiene che questi pregiudizi mutevoli non possano essere attribuiti unicamente a pregiudizi etnici ma che abbiano origini politiche. Sottolinea il ruolo di varie fonti tra cui: giornali, letture popolari, opere teatrali, canzoni, foto e film, nella diffusione e perpetuazione degli stereotipi. Queste fonti influenzarono la percezione pubblica e crearono un'immagine distorta del Sud. La prosa giornalistica spesso si basava su generalizzazioni e stereotipi per catturare l'attenzione dei lettori riciclando luoghi comuni e rafforzando le immagini negative dell'alterità meridionale. Da un punto di vista politico, il Sud era stato visto come un baluardo reazionario e una minaccia all'unità nazionale. Era considerato un ostacolo al progresso e incolpato per la stagnazione economica. La rappresentazione dell'economia e della cultura meridionale venne plasmata da considerazioni politiche anziché da una comprensione approfondita della complessa Questione Meridionale stessa.

Nel corso del XX secolo, la Questione meridionale è stata affrontata anche dal punto di vista delle scienze sociali, in particolare della psicologia e dell'antropologia. Alcuni studiosi collegarono l'ipotetica arretratezza del Sud a tratti caratteriali dei meridionali e basarono le loro teorie su stereotipi preesistenti e credenze razziste. Il razzismo di quel periodo si basava principalmente su due idee diffuse: la prima consisteva nel considerare i tratti fisici e psicologici come stabili e trasmessi direttamente di generazione in generazione, e la seconda consisteva nel distinguere le persone in base alla loro razza. La divisione in razze creava una gerarchia, in cima alla quale si trovavano le popolazioni del Nord Europa seguite da quelle del Mediterraneo meridionale e infine dalle popolazioni africane. Il tratto di superiorità o inferiorità poteva essere chiaramente derivato dal "livello intellettuale e morale" e dal grado di civilizzazione raggiunto da una determinata popolazione o gruppo. Se il Nord Europa era superiore e più avanzato, il Sud era di conseguenza arretrato e inferiore. I pregiudizi più comuni dell'epoca erano diffusi anche dai giornali conservatori del Regno d'Italia, che usavano espressioni come "Italia barbarica" o "Africa italiana" per parlare della terra dei briganti e descrivevano gli abitanti del Sud come "aggressivi e ribelli" (e quindi potenzialmente più inclini a commettere reati), "individualisti e asociali" (e quindi meno capaci di costruire una società civile) e, in definitiva, "più primitivi e meno evoluti".

Nel XIX secolo iniziarono a svilupparsi l'antropologia e la psicologia positivista ed evolucionista. Alcuni degli scienziati positivisti cercarono di dare una base scientifica all'idea dell'inferiorità della razza meridionale, considerata la causa del loro arretramento. Alcuni studiosi decisero di effettuare analisi dei tratti somatici e psicologici di alcuni individui mediante misurazioni quantitative (craniometria e psicommetria) per creare categorizzazioni più generali. Cesare Lombroso, antropologo italiano e fondatore dell'antropologia criminale, fece ampio uso della teoria dell'inferiorità dei meridionali nei suoi studi. Come giovane ufficiale medico, partecipò alle campagne del regno in Calabria contro il brigantaggio. Questa esperienza sarà il punto di partenza della teoria che formulò nel 1876 nel libro *L'uomo delinquente*. Secondo la sua teoria dell'atavismo lo sviluppo della psiche dei criminali si fermava a uno stadio primitivo. L'individuo criminale fin dalla nascita non aveva possibilità di mutare o migliorare la sua condizione e doveva per questo motivo essere isolato dalla società o addirittura eliminato quando colpevole per evitare che i suoi geni potessero diffondersi tramite riproduzione. Le indagini di Lombroso consistevano nell'individuare i segni fisici che contraddistinguevano gli individui "atavici" per poterli riconoscere e trattare di conseguenza. Lombroso applicò questi studi anche al meridione d'Italia, ritenendo che la criminalità italiana fosse concentrata in Calabria e in Sicilia. Un altro noto studioso positivista fu Alfredo Niceforo. Niceforo utilizzò teorie razziste per spiegare le differenze tra il Nord e il Sud d'Italia e suddivise gli italiani in due categorie principali: gli "ariani" del Nord e i "mediterranei scuri" del Sud. Secondo la sua teoria queste due categorie presentavano differenze psicologiche che spiegavano le disparità di sviluppo tra il Nord e il Sud. I "mediterranei scuri" del Sud erano considerati più inclini all'eccitabilità e meno adattabili alla società moderna, il che giustificava il loro arretramento. Tuttavia, alcuni studiosi si opposero alle teorie di Lombroso e alle idee razziste ad esse associate. Napoleone Colajanni, studioso siciliano, criticò le teorie di Niceforo e sostenne che le cause della criminalità in Sardegna e nel Sud erano radicate nelle condizioni economiche e politiche piuttosto che nella razza. Colajanni sottolineò l'influenza della povertà sulla mancanza di istruzione e sui tassi di criminalità presentando dati statistici a supporto delle sue argomentazioni.

La Questione meridionale viene poi approcciata nella sua intersezione con gli studi postcoloniali. I, *Il rovescio della nazione* Carmine Conelli cerca di discostare la sua riflessione dalla tradizionale dicotomia Nord-Sud. Conelli investiga l'influenza del

colonialismo nella formazione della Questione Meridionale e sottolinea il ruolo delle élite meridionali in questo processo. L'autore inizia discutendo gli sviluppi recenti della Questione Meridionale, inclusa la migrazione interna, lo sfruttamento lavorativo, le ribellioni della classe operaia e l'ascesa di una retorica antimeridionale ad opera della Lega Nord. Questi fattori hanno scatenato una riscoperta culturale e identitaria nel Sud, portando a una riappropriazione positiva dell'identità meridionale. Tuttavia, ciò ha anche dato origine a una mitologizzazione selettiva di un glorioso passato distrutto dall'annessione al Regno d'Italia. Conelli si basa sulle idee di Antonio Gramsci, che si è distaccato dall'analisi dualistica della Questione Meridionale e ha enfatizzato le dinamiche di potere tra le regioni. Nelle teorie di Gramsci il materialismo geografico delle relazioni di potere ritrae il Nord come una città dominante e il Sud come una campagna subordinata. Conelli esplora anche i lavori di Stuart Hall e Edward Said, che hanno ampliato le idee di Gramsci, evidenziando gli aspetti ideologici e culturali dell'egemonia e la costruzione dell'Oriente come creazione subordinata allo sguardo occidentale. L'autore traccia lo sviluppo dell'identità nazionale italiana e i suoi legami con l'archivio coloniale. Sostiene che le rappresentazioni del Sud utilizzano immagini e linguaggi tratti dall'archivio coloniale che hanno influenzato il processo di costruzione dell'identità italiana sia prima che dopo l'unificazione. Il linguaggio della colonialità (Quijano) dominato dall'eurocentrismo e dall'idea di razza venne adottato dalle élite meridionali e nazionali per allineare l'Italia alla comunità europea e ai suoi ideali di modernità. Conelli sottolinea la persistenza della logica colonialista e delle sue rappresentazioni, nonostante il colonialismo come fenomeno storico sia terminato. Discute il concetto di colonialità, che comprende l'eurocentrismo e la codificazione delle differenze per legittimare le relazioni di dominio. La spazializzazione del potere all'interno dell'Europa è evidente nell'asse Nord-Sud, dove le aree periferiche, tra cui l'Italia, sono state declassate rispetto al centro del progresso nell'Europa nord-occidentale. Nel corso della storia, le rappresentazioni del Sud sono state plasmate dagli eventi politici e dallo sguardo degli intellettuali e dei viaggiatori, portando a stereotipi e narrazioni esotizzanti. La mitologizzazione della nazione durante il Risorgimento e dopo l'unificazione ha escluso ulteriormente il Sud dalla comunità immaginaria italiana che mirava a raggiungere lo status europeo.

Il primo capitolo si chiude con una riflessione sulla questione sarda attraverso gli studi di Leopoldo Ortu. Ortu traccia la storia della Sardegna in modo critico sostenendo che la storia della regione è stata spesso mal rappresentata, romanzata o cancellata, facendola iniziare solo a partire dalla dominazione sabauda. Tuttavia, secondo l'autore, la dominazione sabauda segna l'inizio della Questione sarda. Ortu esamina le problematiche politiche, sociali ed economiche che hanno afflitto la Sardegna dopo il Risorgimento, con particolare attenzione alla sua situazione svantaggiata rispetto al resto dell'Italia. Analizza le politiche protezionistiche, le leggi speciali e la situazione di sfruttamento dei lavoratori nell'isola. Il collettivo Filosofia de Logu si inserisce in questa riflessione sottolineando l'importanza di una prospettiva decoloniale per ridefinire l'identità sarda liberandola dai miti coloniali e dai pregiudizi per costruire nuove vie di riflessione e emancipazione per la Sardegna.

Il secondo capitolo analizza le discriminazioni subite dai meridionali durante le grandi migrazioni tra gli anni Cinquanta e Settanta. Si esplorano le discriminazioni abitative, lavorative, sociali e nella sfera dell'istruzione. Stereotipi e pregiudizi sulla Questione Meridionale costruiti da intellettuali e diffusi dalla stampa e dalla fotografia hanno contribuito a creare un'immagine negativa dei meridionali. Nel dopoguerra l'Europa assistette a una rinascita del nazionalismo, che portò a definire confini interni agli stati sulla base del genere, della classe sociale, della razza e dell'etnia.

Grazia De Michele si occupa di colmare una lacuna nella storiografia italiana moderna riguardo le emigrazioni interne e l'istruzione, in particolare nel periodo fascista e nel dopoguerra. La scarsità di studi sull'emigrazione interna non è casuale. Rispetto ai nuovi flussi migratori gli italiani si presentano come un modello di modernità, di successo, senza zone grigie. Questa presunta modernità contrasta con le tendenze che trasformarono gli immigrati meridionali e i loro figli in un problema nelle città del Nord-Ovest italiano tra gli anni Cinquanta e Settanta sia a livello sociale che educativo. Attraverso un parallelismo tra la legge proposta nel 2008 su suggerimento del leader della Lega Nord, Roberto Cota, riguardante le "classi di inserimento" per i figli degli immigrati che non superavano il test di ammissione alle scuole italiane e le "classi differenziali" create per i figli dei meridionali emigrati al Nord dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, De Michele evidenzia come la mancanza di riflessioni sulla classificazione razzista dei meridionali negli anni Cinquanta, sulle sue conseguenze e implicazioni abbia portato a una nuova

versione modificata dello stesso fenomeno. Per analizzare la sfera dell'istruzione in Italia tra gli anni Cinquanta e i primi anni Settanta, De Michele ha analizzato soprattutto i registri di due scuole primarie a Torino (Margherita di Savoia e Gian Enrico Pestalozzi) e periodici educativi. Nonostante le scarse condizioni degli archivi italiani, secondo De Michele le scuole sono un ottimo campo di indagine e non devono essere considerate "separate dal resto della società, bensì come luoghi in cui i conflitti sociali e le stratificazioni trovano espressione". Negli anni del dopoguerra l'istruzione costituiva un enorme problema in Italia. La preoccupazione principale era eliminare ogni traccia dell'ideologia fascista da qualsiasi campo d'azione dello Stato e soprattutto dall'istruzione. Le riforme scolastiche che avrebbero dovuto essere alla base della ricostruzione morale e materiale del paese non andarono nella direzione di un effettivo cambiamento sociale: il sistema rimase in gran parte di classe, il personale scolastico e i libri di testo rimasero in gran parte gli stessi del periodo fascista, l'influenza della Chiesa divenne più forte attraverso il Partito Democratico. Il mondo idilliaco filtrato dal libro fascista e l'educazione cristiana rigida mettevano la famiglia al centro dell'universo educativo. All'interno di questo quadro macro, la situazione micro nel Sud appariva drammatica. Al momento dell'Unità d'Italia, tre quarti della popolazione sopra i 5 anni era analfabeta. L'equivalenza tra istruzione e progresso, a lungo affermata, ha rafforzato lo stigma dell'arretratezza nelle regioni meridionali. Inoltre, le scuole avevano il compito di "modellare gli stili di vita" con l'obiettivo di civilizzare il Sud e formare il "nuovo uomo meridionale". I figli degli emigrati meridionali, poi, erano considerati incapaci di adattarsi al nuovo contesto settentrionale e quindi vennero istituite classi differenziali, un primo tentativo di trovare una soluzione all'incapacità scolastica dei meridionali. Queste classi furono viste come una soluzione al problema della "inferiorità culturale" dei meridionali e come un modo per modernizzare i figli degli immigrati meridionali. Le classi differenziali, pur essendo considerate uno strumento per modernizzare i figli degli immigrati meridionali, hanno finito per essere un modo per escludere i bambini meridionali dall'istruzione obbligatoria.

Per quanto riguarda le discriminazioni abitative, viene analizzato il quadro delle migrazioni durante gli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta a Milano. Milano era una delle tre città del triangolo industriale e fu per questo tra le più colpite dalle migrazioni interne. A differenza di Torino e Genova, dove veniva esplicitamente dichiarato che gli

appartamenti non erano disponibili per i meridionali, a Milano si sviluppò una situazione particolare. Gli immigrati meridionali costituivano la classe sociale più bassa, erano sfruttati nel lavoro attraverso il sistema di cooperativa e discriminati nella ricerca di alloggi a causa della speculazione edilizia e delle discriminazioni razziali. Si svilupparono dunque nuovi insediamenti chiamati "Coree", lontano dalla città e privi di servizi. Queste aree rappresentavano una soluzione abitativa di emergenza per gli immigrati meridionali. Non essendoci abitazioni pubbliche disponibili la speculazione edilizia aveva campo libero. Le abitazioni a Milano erano troppo costose e anche la costruzione di una casa di fortuna nella periferia era problematica a causa delle multe. Le poche case disponibili erano sovraffollate. Gli immigrati si stabilirono a nord di Milano, in comuni ben collegati alla metropoli. I controlli in questi villaggi erano meno rigidi rispetto alla città, e si poteva ottenere una residenza anche vivendo in una cantina, anche se non venivano garantite le condizioni igieniche minime.

Per quanto riguarda le discriminazioni sociali sono state studiate le ricerche condotte sulla struttura del pregiudizio etnico in Italia negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta da Battacchi con test psicologici somministrati a studenti universitari del Nord e del Sud. Lo studio rivelò un atteggiamento polarizzato e pregiudizievole tra i due gruppi. Gli studenti del Nord rifiutavano qualsiasi forma di assimilazione con i meridionali, mentre gli studenti del Sud mostravano una volontà di adattarsi ai valori del Nord, rinnegando i propri. Le attitudini dei settentrionali e dei meridionali sembravano mantenere una struttura polarizzata del pregiudizio. Anfossi invece si concentrò sui principali stereotipi attribuiti ai meridionali dai piemontesi nel suo studio condotto a Torino.

Il terzo capitolo analizza la creazione del concetto di Sud a livello europeo e globale e propone un modello per comprendere il razzismo nel mondo. La storia del Sud globale inizia con la conquista dell'America da parte di Spagna e Portogallo che diedero inizio a pratiche di dominazione e rappresentazione che hanno alimentato il concetto di "superiorità europea". Tuttavia, nel XIX secolo, altri eventi hanno cambiato questa narrazione. Gli Stati dell'Europa nord-occidentale grazie a movimenti come la Riforma, l'Illuminismo e la Rivoluzione francese sono diventati protagonisti della modernità mentre altre regioni come la penisola iberica, il sud della Francia, l'Italia, la Grecia e l'intera area mediterranea, sono state considerate marginali e arretrate rispetto all'Europa nord-occidentale. Ancora oggi, questi paesi sono talvolta etichettati in modo dispregiativo

con l'acronimo PIGS (Portogallo, Italia, Grecia, Spagna). La "differenza coloniale" e "differenza imperiale" guidarono la creazione di nuove rappresentazioni e gerarchie di potere. Gli imperi coloniali britannico, olandese e francese costituivano la prova della superiorità di queste nazioni mentre i popoli delle colonie americane e del Mediterraneo erano considerati inferiori a causa della loro lingua, cultura e organizzazione sociale. Si arrivò così, nell'economia politica internazionale, al declassamento del Mediterraneo le cui coste erano state completamente colonizzate dagli europei. La nozione di Sud globale si riferisce in generale alle regioni dell'America Latina, dell'Asia, dell'Africa e dell'Oceania che sono per lo più a basso reddito e spesso politicamente o culturalmente marginalizzate. Questo termine si è sviluppato come una delle molte espressioni, insieme a "Terzo mondo" e "Periferia", utilizzate per indicare le regioni al di fuori dell'Europa e del Nord America. L'uso del concetto di Sud globale sottolinea l'attenzione alle relazioni geopolitiche di potere spostando l'attenzione dallo sviluppo o dalle differenze culturali. In sintesi, il concetto di Sud globale si inserisce nel contesto più ampio della creazione di una gerarchia globale in cui l'uomo bianco europeo è stato posto al vertice della società. Questa narrazione ha influenzato anche il sud Italia e può contribuire alla comprensione della Questione meridionale. Si sottolinea l'importanza di decolonizzare il sapere, di non incappare nelle mistificazioni delle teorie del colour-blindness che propongono descrizioni di stati in cui la razza non sembra più un elemento strutturale nei rapporti sociali, di rivalutare in questa ottica le discriminazioni contro i migranti, le violenze sessiste legate al colonialismo e i processi di sbiancamento o di marginalizzazione interni ai vari stati.

Il quarto capitolo descrive il processo che ha portato alla creazione di uno studio qualitativo sulle esperienze e i vissuti degli studenti meridionali in Veneto. La prima sezione si apre con una riflessione sull'uso linguistico dei termini "terrone" e "meridionale", mostrando i contesti in cui questi termini compaiono e i preconcetti che sono correlati al loro uso. Nel secondo paragrafo viene presentato il metodo dell'intervista dialogica in cui si incoraggia l'intervistato a narrare liberamente le proprie esperienze. Le interviste sono state condotte seguendo il metodo del "centrato e aperto" illustrato da Salvatore La Mendola. Secondo questo metodo, l'intervista è un particolare tipo di ascolto che mira a raccogliere e accogliere le rappresentazioni delle esperienze e delle relazioni del narratore (l'intervistato). Lo scopo dell'intervistatore non è raccogliere dati

individuali, ma comprendere i quadri di significato attraverso i quali l'intervistato dà senso agli eventi che ha vissuto. Nell'intervista dialogica, vengono identificati alcuni punti chiave per aprire percorsi narrativi adeguati rispetto al campione di studio. Gli intervistati sono studenti e studentesse provenienti dal Sud Italia che si sono trasferiti in Veneto per iscriversi all'Università di Padova e, in un caso, all'Università di Venezia. La ricerca mira a indagare le esperienze personali di questi studenti in Veneto, andando a individuare eventuali discriminazioni razziali, internalizzazione del razzismo e possibile riproduzione di stereotipi nei confronti dei meridionali. Sono state evitate domande informative, tipizzanti ed espressive in favore di richieste di esempi e aneddoti per approfondire la prospettiva degli intervistati.

Gli studenti non vengono indicati con i loro veri nomi ma con degli pseudonimi. Segue la discussione dei risultati della ricerca. La prima domanda era molto generica: ai partecipanti veniva chiesto di descrivere la loro città natale, concentrandosi in particolare sulle persone, gli spazi, gli odori, i rumori. Lo scopo di questa prima domanda era mettere i partecipanti a loro agio e creare le condizioni per farli parlare liberamente, cercando di evitare l'imbarazzo del silenzio iniziale o la paura di non sapere cosa dire. Questa domanda aveva anche lo scopo di individuare l'opinione che i partecipanti hanno sulla loro città natale, al fine di fornire alla ricerca una migliore comprensione della loro attitudine e delle loro affermazioni. Nella maggior parte dei casi, i partecipanti hanno descritto la loro città natale in modo positivo, condividendo il ricordo di alcuni odori particolari, di alcune feste patronali e di altri elementi che ricordano. Diversi partecipanti hanno sottolineato un leggero fastidio per il fatto che nei piccoli paesi tutti si conoscono. Due dei partecipanti hanno criticato in modo piuttosto duro i loro concittadini con descrizioni che recuperavano alcuni elementi delle narrazioni sui meridionali.

Successivamente è stato chiesto ai partecipanti di descrivere la città di arrivo, che è Padova per tutti tranne che per Margherita che ha studiato a Venezia. Padova è descritta come una città molto attiva dal punto di vista sociale e culturale, dove i giovani hanno varie possibilità di svago e dove è facile spostarsi, soprattutto in bicicletta, poiché non è una città eccessivamente grande. Alcuni studenti menzionano anche l'inquinamento dell'aria. Venezia, invece, è descritta come un palcoscenico in cui, a causa dell'eccessiva interferenza del turismo, tutto è in qualche modo falso e creato appositamente per i visitatori.

La questione del razzismo viene affrontata da Maurizio e Margherita. Maurizio definisce i suoi amici come provenienti dal "Sud Globale" e afferma di aver fatto amicizia con pochi locali, spesso avvertendo da parte loro un atteggiamento di superiorità soprattutto quando esce con la sua ragazza iraniana. Racconta di un episodio in cui, mentre si stava recando a una festa, un uomo si è affacciato dalla finestra e ha urlato loro: "Perché non ve ne tornate al paese vostro a parlare in quel modo? Qui si parla italiano!". Anche Margherita, mentre descrive i veneziani come particolarmente introversi e attenti a difendere la propria identità dall'invasione dei turisti afferma di aver subito discriminazioni razziste. Ad esempio, dice che per un po' ha chiesto alla sua coinquilina veneta di comprare tabacco e sigarette per lei perché le è capitato di pagarle a prezzi diversi nello stesso negozio quando veniva scambiata per "straniera".

I dieci studenti intervistati hanno condiviso le loro esperienze riguardo al modo in cui vengono percepiti e trattati a causa delle loro origini. Molti di loro hanno raccontato di episodi di discriminazione e pregiudizi che hanno affrontato, sia nella ricerca di alloggio che nell'interazione con persone locali. Alcuni proprietari di case hanno rifiutato di affittare loro una stanza o appartamento semplicemente perché provenivano dal Sud. Altri hanno dovuto affrontare commenti offensivi sul loro accento o stereotipi negativi sulle loro città di origine, come la presenza di criminalità o l'arretratezza. Questi studenti hanno sottolineato come spesso si sentano estranei al contesto veneto. Una delle studentesse ha anche condiviso il senso di responsabilità che sente nel dover contrastare i pregiudizi e rappresentare positivamente la regione di origine. In generale è emerso che l'accettazione e l'inclusione nella società veneta sono spesso limitate e che esiste una mancanza di consapevolezza geografica e conoscenza del Sud da parte di alcune persone del Nord.

Alice ha raccontato il suo disagio sul posto di lavoro dove veniva chiamata "la pugliese" o "la terrona". Quando ha cercato di chiedere spiegazioni le è stato risposto che i pregiudizi erano radicati nella cultura del posto e che determinati termini anche offensivi venivano utilizzati senza una vera riflessione. Margherita si sente a disagio nel parlare italiano a causa dell'accento e preferiva i corsi in cui poteva intervenire in inglese. Sul termine "terrone" ci sono opinioni discordanti: per Maurizio diventa offensivo in base al contesto, mentre Margherita e Alice lo considerano intrinsecamente offensivo. Alcuni intervistati legano l'uso dello slur a momenti scherzosi e alla propria cerchia di amicizie. Si discute anche delle differenze tra Nord e Sud, che alcuni considerano principalmente

culturali o economiche, mentre altri vedono una disparità di risorse e una subordinazione del Sud al Nord. Si rileva che il dibattito pubblico spesso si concentra solo su alcune regioni del Sud, prima tra tutte la Campania e Napoli in particolare, mentre altre come Molise e Basilicata sono totalmente assenti. Riguardo alla dimensione femminista, alcune persone non rilevano un trattamento differenziato in base alla provenienza meridionale ma esclusivamente in base al genere, mentre altri ritengono che gli uomini siano soggetti a più pregiudizi, spesso legati all'associazione con la criminalità. Si riflette anche sulla feticizzazione della donna meridionale. Infine, si sottolinea la necessità di recuperare un'identità meridionale libera dallo sguardo esterno. In conclusione si sostiene che, nonostante ci sia stato un miglioramento rispetto al passato, nell'Italia contemporanea esistano ancora pregiudizi e forme di discriminazione nei confronti delle persone italiane di origine meridionale. Gli studenti meridionali nel Veneto hanno sperimentato discriminazioni verbali attraverso l'uso di termini dispregiativi, nella ricerca di una casa, in un caso in ambito lavorativo. Viene problematizzata una disparità economica e sociale tra Nord e Sud che precludendo molte opportunità costringe spesso i giovani meridionali a emigrare al Nord. Nell'ultima parte delle interviste si sonda anche l'intersezione tra antimeridionalismo, razzismo contro gli stranieri e femminismo. La quasi totalità degli intervistati rivela di aver vissuto situazioni di disagio. Questo disagio si traduce in forme diverse: nella rinnegazione delle proprie origini in base al contesto, in un odio nei confronti della propria terra, in un tentativo di limare la cadenza dialettale in un senso di inadeguatezza e non appartenenza.

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