Annual Conference of the European Network on Gender and Violence (ENGV)
Faculty of Education Health and Wellbeing University of Wolverhampton
21 - 23 June 2023

Networking in the fight against male violence against women.

Anna Gadda, Alice Mauri, Francesca Proia, Maria Dentale, Pietro Demurtas.
National Research Council - Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies and Institute for the Study of Regionalism, Federalism and Self-Government (ITALY)

Introduction

VIVA – Analysis and assessment of the measures to prevent and fight violence against women is realized as part of a partnership agreement signed between the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers Department for Equal Opportunities (DEO) and the National Research Council – Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies (CNR-IRPPS).
Outcomes of the research, conducted in the first phase of the project (2017 - 2021), have described the anti-violence system as a complex, diversified and heterogeneous system, inhabited by actors working in different capacities to prevent and combat male violence, to support women in situations of violence, their daughters and sons.

The metaphor of multiverse

To capture the complexity of the system, the metaphor of the multiverse was used, where:
- different forms and ways of connections and relations between anti-violence centres (AVC) and general services take place
- policies arising from below (grass-roots feminist movements) meet/clash with regulatory processes
- there is a combination of governance arrangements at different levels of government (national, regional, local)
- there are a clash of cultures and organisational routines of AVC and general services
- there is a great heterogeneity of practices and interventions activated in the territories among AVCs

Within the anti-violence multiverse, networks are both a product and a factor of system complexity.
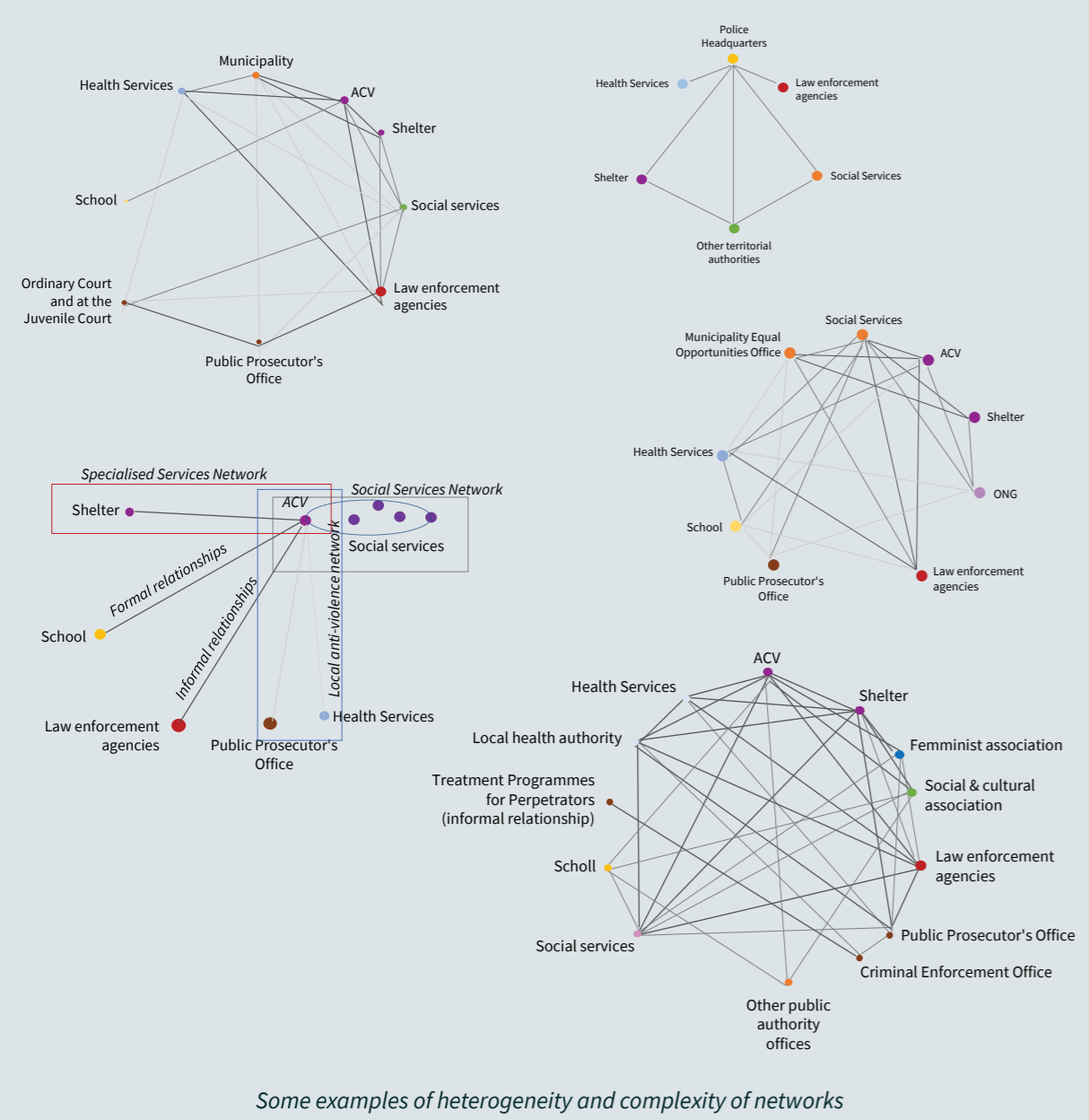
Methodology
A mix of qualitative & quantitative methods

- Analysis of Governmental instruments (i.e .National and Regional Laws, Planning Acts, organisms of governance)
- Survey to AVCs (2018)
- Interviews to AVCs and focus groups with actors involved in the networks in some territorial contexts (2019-2020)

Immersion in territories

= A perspective that allowed us to observe different forms of networking as the outcome of tensions between vertical drives (along the national>regional>local axis) and horizontal dynamics occurring in the territories

Some examples of heterogeneity and complexity of networks

The space for action varies from territory to territory and depends on the interactions between national and regional regulatory frameworks, the role of local institutions, the role, rooting and recognition of AVCs, as well as the power dynamics observed in the interactions between the various actors of the network.

Governmental instruments
The network as an instrument and not as an objective of policies

Legislation at national level - Law No. 77/2013, Ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Istanbul, 11 May 2011 - Article 5 and 5bis of Decree-Law No. 93/2013 - Law No. 119/2013 Urgent provisions on security and to combat gender-based violence, as well as on civil protection and the commissioning of provinces
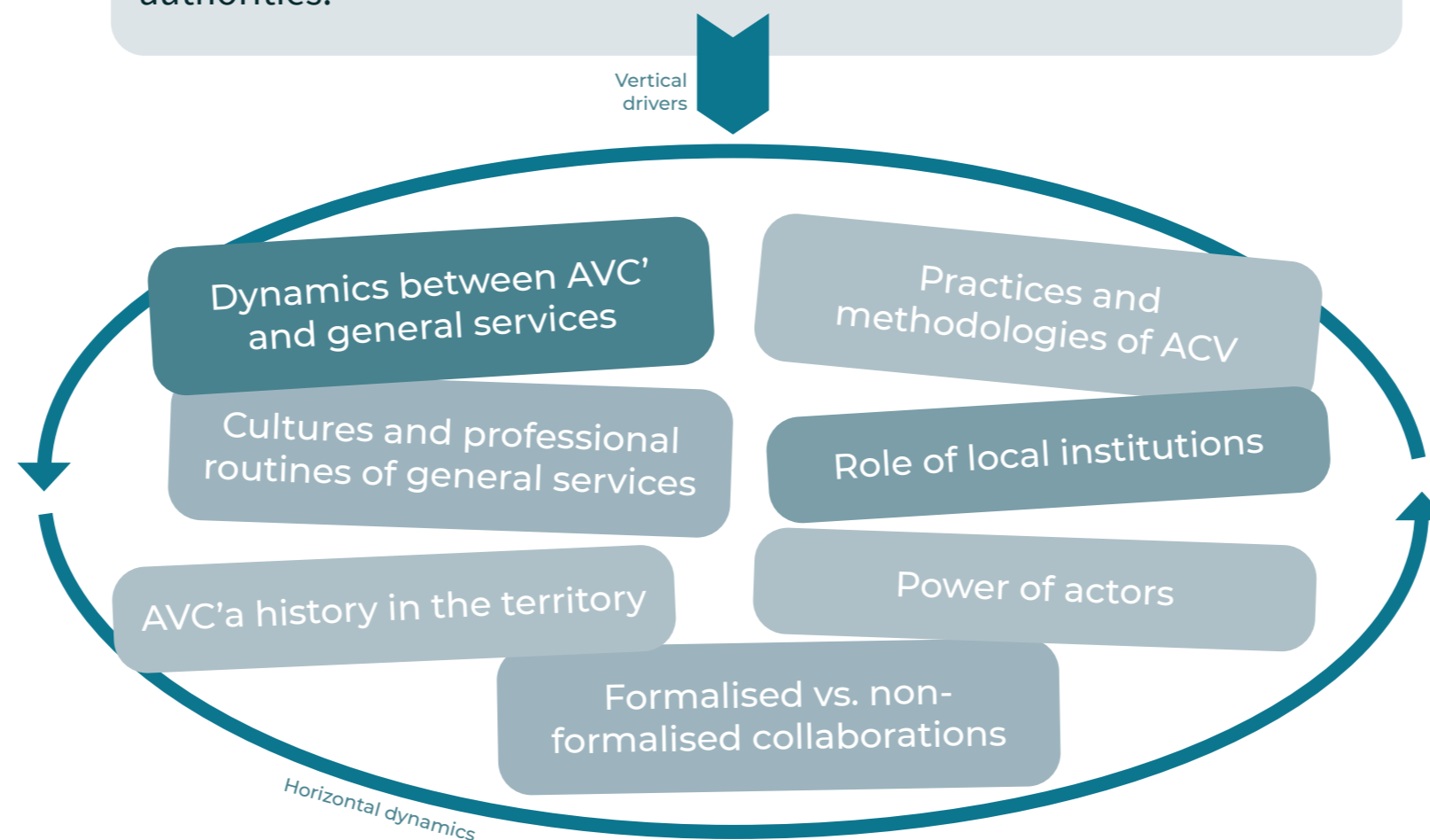   Implementation tools - Decree of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers on AVC standards – 24th July 2014 & 14th September 2022; National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women 2017-2020 & 2021-2023
   Guidelines - National Guidelines for Health Authorities and Hospital Authorities were issued on the subject of rescue and social-health assistance to women victim of violence – 24th November 2017
   Legislation at regional level - ever since the first regional laws (late 1980s early 1990s) to combat male violence against women, the Regions have identified the network as a necessary tool to combat violence against women

Goal: strengthening the network of inter-institutional territorial services and the integration of specialist and non-specialist services in order to enhance assistance and support to women victims of violence and their children.

Actors: Anti-Violence Centres, Shelters, Health Services, Social and Health Services, Local police and Law enforcement agencies, Public Prosecutor's Office at the ordinary Court and at the Juvenile Court, Courts, territorial authorities.

Vertical drivers

Dynamics between AVC' and general services
Practices and methodologies of ACV
Cultures and professional routines of general services
Role of local institutions
AVC'a history in the territory
Power of actors
Formalised vs. non-formalised collaborations

Horizontal dynamics

Quantitative analyses
A snapshot of the heterogeneity of networks

AVCs in the networks:
More than 80% of AVCs are involved in anti-violence network. The 50% of the AVCs that do not join any network are in territories that have not established local networks, the remaining 50% do not join for other reasons such as: lack of recognition and legitimisation of the work in the territory by the general services; regional provisions that may limit participation e.g. due to the way funding is allocated; constraints and obligations in the case of membership.

Territorial fragmentation:
Even if there are no Regions without any territorial anti-violence network, there are territorial differences in the spread of anti-violence networks: 2/3 of the ACVs in areas where no networks have been established are in the South of Italy.

Most networked AVCs:
However, there are territorial differences, historical and feminist AVCs dealing exclusively with violence and public AVCs are more networked.

Network composition:
Where AVCs are in networks, it is with:
☑ municipalities (96.7% of cases)
☑ local health authorities (95.8%)
☑ hospitals (91.1%)
☑ law enforcement agencies (91.1%)
☑ others (social and socio-health planning areas, voluntary associations, schools, public prosecutors' offices, territorial authorities).

Thanks to the field-work, it was possible to grasp the dynamics of 'symbolic challenge', i.e. the dynamics of encounter/clash between practices, methodologies of ACVs and cultures and professional routines of general services.

The issues at stake

- The transformative potential of ACV practices
- The centrality of the gender dimension in the construction of interventions
- The construction of integrated interventions based on a holistic and intersectional approach

Some considerations.
Building networks: an opportunity among many threats?

Focus on managing network interventions at the loss of cultural change
«Over the years, the network has become much stronger and more institutionalised. [...] The problem is that all the work on culture and changing the point of view has 'fallen behind'. So there is a great professionalisation in management, but culture, cultural change remains behind. Change that feminist associations can make» (AVC 1_South)

Women's paths conditioned by rigid procedures and protocols, accountability logic and achievement of standards
«We need to network. It doesn't all end within an AVC. If networking means offering opportunities or resources to women, pooling good practices, that makes sense. If we go in the direction of constructing protocols that become rigidity, just to say I did it, then no. (...) Today there is a bureaucratic perspective (...) At the centre are the network and the resources, and the woman comes next» (AVC 2_North)

Risk of prevalence of a matrix of 'domestic' and 'familistic' agency defined in moralising terms and centred on the responsibilisation (and in some cases even the blaming) of women
Reporting is considered as 'proof of responsabilisation', of 'deservingness' *«By reporting, you show us to what extent you are willing to say "no, I don't want to be with a person like that any more, because he hurts me or my children» (Cr_3_Centre)*

Risk of reproducing practices by general services interventions not in line with the field of male violence against women, also within networks.
«There is a growing confusion between violence and conflict: violence is treated as conflict. [...] The [social welfare] services, while admitting the existence of psychological violence, often when dealing with situations of father-son relationships tend not to recognize the psychological violence on the woman and the consequent witnessing violence suffered by the daughter or son» (AVC 28_North)

References:
Demurtas P., Misiti M. (a cura di) (2021), VIVA. Violenza contro le donne in Italia. Orientamenti e buone pratiche, Guerini Scientifica, Milano, ISBN: 9788881074457
Gadda A., Mauri A., 2021, Fare rete nel contrasto alla violenza maschile contro le donne, in "Rivista delle politiche sociali", 3-4, pp. 69-86.
Pasian P., Proia F., 2021, I centri antiviolenza nelle politiche regionali: eterogeneità e prospettive, in "Rivista delle Politiche Sociali", 3-4, pp. 55-68.
Toffanin A.M., Pietrobelli M., Gadda A., Misiti M. (2020), «VAW policy regimes in Italy: an analysis across regional governments and women's centres»,
Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge, 5.1, pp.47-72, DOI:10.26409/2020JMK5.1.03