

panel discussed spaces that can serve to emancipate subjectivities marginalised in hegemonic institutions marked by indifference towards the situation of the subaltern. Martyna Miernicka from the University of Wrocław discussed gendered practices and the possibilities of capturing the gendered memory of Polish literary institutions through the essential practices of telling and rewriting history. Her presentation was followed by Suzana Milevska's (University of Skopje) contribution, 'Do Archives Have Gender? An Archiving of South-East Archives from a Feminist Perspective'. Her work deals with the 'competition of different memories', deconstructing how the archives have been complicit with other patriarchal institutions in ignoring and overwriting gender differences. Barbara Schnalzger from Leipzig University presented her paper "'Haunting the Ruler's House": Women's Lesbian Libraries and Archives as an Interface between Academia and Social Movements'. Its focus was on German-speaking lesbian archives from the 1970s and 1980s as carriers of precarious knowledge. It dealt with the practices of archives and how and who defines what knowledge is worth preserving.

The fifth panel, 'Media and Truth', concluded the conference with three presentations dealing with the issue of gender and its media representation. In 'Woman's Metaphor and Universal Truth: On One Episode in Poland's Interwar Intellectual Life', Ksenia Shmydkaya from Tallinn University reflected on three Polish women writers and their conception of femininity, which oscillated between an emphasis on gender difference on the one hand and the rejection of gender as a universal category on the other. Lisa Fuchte from the University of Leipzig presented the paper 'Who Put the Object in Objectivity? Gender and Visual History of Care Work in the Soviet Union', in which she discussed the role of gender in Soviet posters. Bernhard Kleeberg and Dietlind Hüchtker concluded the conference with some final reflections and evaluated the potential of developing new methods to grasp the assumptions of political epistemologies.

Translating Research Findings into Operational Tools in the Context of a Crisis: the RESISTIRÉ Approach

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The relationship between research and its potential to create real-world impact is an important topic within the social sciences and first and foremost in the debate concerning the 'action-research' approach. In recent years, this debate has also been enriched by reflections arising from the world of design, integrating approaches aimed at the construction of artefacts and services with traditional sociological research

methods. In this report, we will present an example of this kind of interaction adopted within the framework of the RESISTIRÉ¹ project.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a health and socioeconomic crisis of unprecedented magnitude. While, to some extent, everyone experienced the negative impacts of the pandemic, it has disproportionately affected women and further widened gender+ inequalities all over the globe (Strid, Schrodi and Cibirin 2022). For this reason, the goal of the RESISTIRÉ project is not only to better understand the unequal impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable populations across Europe but also to develop rapid and sustainable operational solutions that would help to mitigate those impacts. To this end, RESISTIRÉ combines public policy mapping and quantitative and qualitative evidence with co-creative, action-oriented methods to produce knowledge as well as policy recommendations, research agendas, and pilot projects.

RESISTIRÉ looks into the diverse experiences of COVID-19 that were shaped by the intersection of different inequality grounds (sex and/or gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, nationality, class, age, religion/belief, disability, gender identity) with specific domains of gender inequalities (work and the labour market, the economy, the gender pay and pension gap, the gender care gap, gender-based violence, decision-making and politics, human and fundamental rights, and environmental justice). This gender+, intersectional approach (Verloo 2013) allows for capturing the full complexity and depth of the crisis.

The project is divided into three cycles that together add up to a 30-month-long research period. Each cycle builds on the insights deriving from the preceding one and leads to the production of operational results. This step-by-step three-cycle design process, inspired by the double diamond² methodology, is presented in Figure 1.

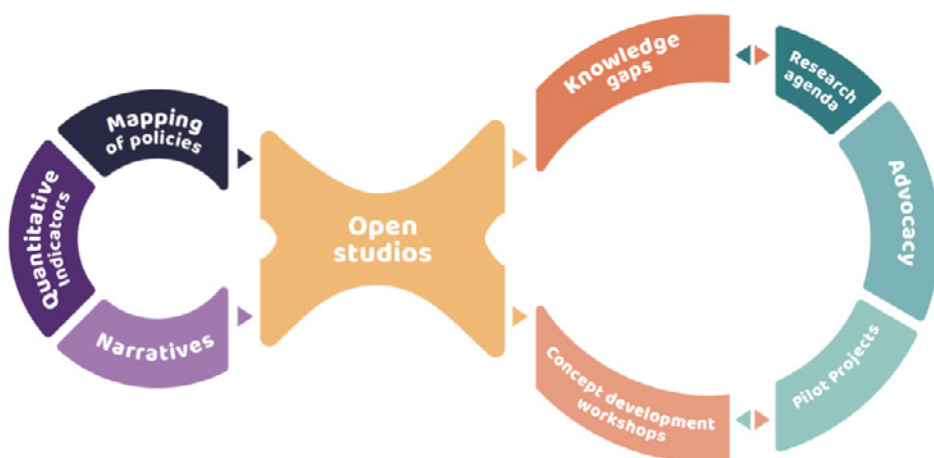
First, the process of data collection involves the implementation of three different research methods running along parallel lines: the mapping and analysis of policy and societal responses to COVID-19; an analysis of quantitative indicators of inequalities derived from national and European-level surveys; the collection of qualitative evidence through workshops with civil society, interviews with public authorities, and individual narratives of members of vulnerable groups. Second, following the data collection, the insights gathered are translated into operational tools in a co-creative, multidisciplinary process of ideation workshops called Open Studios. The Open Studios approach (Boyer, Cook and Steinberg 2011) is a technique developed to design policies in a participatory way, bringing together stakeholders with diverse

¹ <https://resistire-project.eu/>

² <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/skills-learning/tools-frameworks/framework-for-innovation-design-councils-evolved-double-diamond/>

expertise. Within the RESISTIRÉ framework, the proposed creative workshops are spread out over two full days. The process starts with a brainstorming session, a free exploration of presented issues and ideas (divergent thinking), and is followed by the creation of concrete concepts of possible actions (convergent thinking). Finally, in each cycle, the results of the Open Studios are taken up for the development of concrete outputs. These operational outcomes are divided into the categories of Pilot Projects, Operational Recommendations, and the Agenda for Future Research, which will be described in greater depth in the paragraphs below.

Figure 1: RESISTIRÉ's methodological step-by-step three-cycle process



Pilot Projects are a selection of action-ideas that have been developed into project concepts based on the inputs of the Open Studios. Once the concepts are refined, a public call is launched, giving various stakeholders an opportunity to express their interest in leading the projects. Throughout the three cycles, RESISTIRÉ funded nine Pilot Projects aiming to reduce the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups (for more details, visit the RESISTIRÉ website).

Operational Recommendations, which take the form of RESISTIRÉ factsheets, are prepared in collaboration with knowledgeable experts during concept development workshops. In each cycle of the project, a minimum of six topics relating to specific domains of gender inequalities are chosen and discussed with selected specialists in carefully designed workshop sessions. The external experts are usually representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), activists, street-level bureaucrats, or medical workers. Owing to their direct interactions with vulnerable groups, the experts are an invaluable source of information on the needs and challenges faced

by those most vulnerable. Building on the insights gathered from the workshop, RESISTIRÉ consortium partners develop a set of recommendations to various types of stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, trade unions, employers, civil society) on how to effectively address inequalities created or exacerbated by the crisis. The factsheets provide a brief overview of how COVID-19 has made visible or reinforced inequalities in a given context, present the personal stories of people affected by them, and give examples of inspiring policies or social initiatives aimed at mitigating those inequalities. In the first two cycles, RESISTIRÉ produced 14 recommendation factsheets covering a broad variety of topics, such as gender-based violence during crises, the consequences of remote work and online education, pandemic and gender mainstreaming, women's representation in decision-making, or the lack of attention to gender+ inequalities in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs). In the third and final cycle of the project, the focus of the Operational Recommendations falls on the issues of: inequities in access to health care, mental health in times of crises, inclusive digitalisation, sustainable and resilient long-term care, poverty, the lack of European-level intersectional data, and the need for more secure, flexible, and sustainable funding schemes for CSOs.

Finally, the Agenda for Future Research produced in each cycle of the project identifies knowledge gaps and formulates research questions that should be addressed in future studies. It does so by carefully monitoring and analysing the quantitative and qualitative data collected in each research cycle.

The operational outcomes of the RESISTIRÉ project have been developed from an analysis of various materials and resources: nearly 900 interviews with individuals across Europe and representatives of public authorities and civil society; 14 Pan-European workshops with 200+ participants; 329 policies; 326 civil society initiatives; 316 Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS) in 30 countries; 16 Open Studios; 3 concept development workshops. RESISTIRÉ Operational Recommendations have been taken up by the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth and the Education Committee, a Council preparatory body. The project's analysis of the impact of the NRRPs on gender equality has also been presented to and discussed with the Equality Team of the RECOVER Task Force – the main body monitoring the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). Four webinars addressing the issues of gender-based violence, online gender-based violence, inclusive education and care were held and drew a large number of participants from all over Europe, allowing for the creation of long-term European collaborations and partnerships.

Despite the successful outcomes of the project, the chosen research methodology has some trade-offs that need to be considered. First, in an attempt to adequately respond to the rapidly changing situation concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, we

divided the data collection process into three fast-paced research cycles addressing a broad variety of topics. While this rapid research approach allowed us to quickly gather answers to the most pressing issues arising from different phases of the pandemic, it limited our capacity to conduct a detailed, in-depth analysis of the problem. As a consequence, the operational outcomes produced on the basis of our research findings are not exhaustive and could most certainly be enriched by further investigations. Second, the multi-method approach incorporating the parallel collection of different types of data on the one hand provided a multidimensional understanding of the societal challenges we had been facing, but on the other hand led to an oversupply of data that cannot be fully exploited due to the short duration of the project. Last but not least, the cross-national analysis conducted by RESISTIRÉ presented some challenges. The risk of trying to formulate general European-level policy recommendations without taking into account differing national contexts (e.g. the quality of democracy, ideology of the ruling party, etc.) is that the proposed solutions could end up being superficial and not specific enough. However, RESISTIRÉ circumvents problems of this kind by adopting the concept of *Better Stories* (Georgis 2013) and therefore acknowledging that while the proposed solutions are not a perfect fix, they can still serve as a signpost to a more equitable and inclusive society. Furthermore, we rely on the experience of each consortium partner to adopt the advocacy plan for the promotion of RESISTIRÉ policy guidelines to fit the specific national context.

The operational outcomes of RESISTIRÉ were presented and discussed during the project's final conference held on 20–21 June 2023 in Brussels. The aim of the event was to bring together researchers, policy makers, and CSO representatives to collectively reflect on how the European crisis response can be improved in future emergencies, so as to ameliorate, not exacerbate, social inequalities.

References

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