



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche Geografiche e dell'Antichità

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in
Lingue Moderne per la Comunicazione e la Cooperazione Internazionale
Classe LM-38

Tesi di Laurea

Smart work and home-work in historical perspective: a gender analysis

Relatore
Prof. Andrea Caracausi

Laureando
Concetta Rotundo
n° matr.1241532 / LMLCC

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	1
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER ONE: <i>Pandemic and work from home</i>	9
1.1 <i>What is home work</i>	10
1.2 <i>Home-work in pre-pandemic period (2019)</i>	12
1.3 <i>Home-work in pandemic (2020)</i>	17
1.3.1 <i>Work. What happened</i>	19
1.3.2 <i>Most affected sectors</i>	26
1.3.3 <i>Telework</i>	28
1.4 <i>States' intervention. Italy and other EU members compared</i>	32
1.4.1 <i>Italy. Worker and family support policies in the Covid-19 crisis</i>	34
CHAPTER TWO: <i>The early home-work in Italy</i>	42
2.1 <i>The building of the woman figure in the early Republic</i>	42
2.2 <i>Home-work in italian legislation</i>	50
2.3 <i>Women's labor market</i>	57
2.4 <i>What triggered home-work</i>	65
2.5 <i>Home work in Italy</i>	69
2.6 <i>Home-work related problems</i>	75
2.6.1 <i>The houses</i>	76
2.6.2 <i>Health risks</i>	80
2.6.3 <i>The timing</i>	83
2.6.4 <i>Social services</i>	87
2.6.5 <i>Union between workers</i>	91
2.6.6 <i>Isolation at home: reiteration of gender roles and emancipation</i>	93
2.7 <i>Testimony</i>	99
CHAPTER THREE: <i>Some things never change. Wage discrimination</i>	111
3.1 <i>The wage of the home-worker</i>	111
3.1.1 <i>Equal pay legislation in the early Republic</i>	112
3.1.2 <i>The real situation</i>	117
3.2 <i>Discrimination of the female workforce</i>	124
3.3 <i>Gender pay gap</i>	127
3.3.1 <i>What influences the gender pay gap</i>	130
3.3.2 <i>The role of education in determining the gender pay gap</i>	134
3.4 <i>Gender pay gap in Italy today</i>	137
CONCLUSION	143
BIBLIOGRAPHY	149
SUMMARY	160

ABSTRACT

The crisis induced by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has forced so many to work from home. Smart work is a solution that has made it possible not to lose a job at a time when it was essential. On the other hand, the reversion to working within the domestic walls has re-evoked that phenomenon that burst out in the post-World War II era known as home-based work. Through primarily institutional and statistical sources, the present paper aims to display how the return to work at home is particularly dangerous for women. In the 1950s they were the ones working at home, in 2020 they are still the ones staying home to work, due to a series of coincidences and constraints. The intent of this paper is to compare the assumptions and conditions underlying these two historically relevant events. The analysis starts with the most recent of the cases, to then go back in time. Major prominence is given to the home-based work of the 1950s-60s, which can be argued to be the ancestor of the modern form of smart work. The key tenet of this study is that gender roles are still as well entrenched in Italy today as they were in the 1950s, as evidenced by, *inter alia*, data on wages. The final part of this work focuses on this very theme, taken as a symbol of the injustice and inequality that afflicts women in the world of work, the influences of which spill over into the family sphere.

INTRODUCTION

Simone de Beauvoir in her celebrated essay «The second sex» defines the condition of TOFFANIN, Tra integrazione e seclusione: alcune note di riflessione sulla regolazione del lavoro a domicilio in Italia, the woman as slaves to the species. This status affects her in every aspect of life: couple, family, work, sociality. The most common expectation one has of a woman is that she will marry, have a family and some children. There is less expectation that she works than a man. Her ideal place is the home, the family environment. Many girls, still today, are raised this way, mainly in those areas where religion and traditions are still very heartfelt. It can be argued that the chains for women are those beliefs, who see women as weak but evil – as many biblical statements put it – or confine her in the sphere of the family – as patriarchal society wants. It is not easy to get rid of these concepts, especially if they are imparted by authoritative voices such as family or school.

Though times are changing, it is still evident how women are seen: they are expendables and most of all ‘fragile’. This was made very clear from the response to the COVID-19 crisis. The loss of jobs, the confinement in the house, in some cases teleworking made life difficult for many women, less than for men. It is not a mystery that today the larger part of housework and childcare are carried out by women – as heritage of their formation. And it is well-known that men are much less engaged in those activities that are seen as feminine and would undermine masculinity in a sense. Pandemic blurred the lines between social and private life, leaving no space for privacy, depressing people. The space that is created outside the house, is of paramount importance to those who have fought to get it. Work has long been denied to women and when it was granted it became the first symbol of their early independence. Being deprived of this means losing a harm: the ability, the possibility to create one’s own future. Having to work inside the home, as the pandemic has “conceded”, also presents its shadowy spots.

The topic was chosen because it is of utmost importance today that – due to the challenges imposed by the pandemic – the world of work is changing. Not only that, the

pandemic has accustomed people to living more isolated, more in solitude, synonymous with ‘safety’ until recently. Now that Covid-19 seems to have become part of everyone's life as normality – and so that phase where major changes needed to be made to everyone's lives has passed – work life has not as much returned to normal. On the contrary, it seems that the pandemic has given an additional boost, as it already existed, to the phenomenon of home-work. Work from home is an old, outdated form of labor that preceded and accompanied the rise of industrialization. It was with the rise of industrialization that home-based work became more and more widespread, until the twentieth century, and particularly the mid-century, when it would experience its greatest expansion. The characteristic feature of home-based work is that the work done in the house should normally be carried out in the factory, to ensure safety standards, healthiness of the work environment, suitability of the environment, adequate means of production and so on. Working at home is not the same as working outside the home, even if it is a paid job. Working at home means becoming invisible, not being recognized as a worthy worker. In the case where it is a woman who works at home – as was the case in the 1960s – this situation is made even worse when one considers all the care work to which the woman is assigned in the household. The home-based worker of the 1960s is a testament to how women are subjected to double exploitation, that of work inside the home that is not recognized in fact taken for granted, and that of the work they always do inside the home that is poorly paid, not guaranteed, and precarious.

Bearing this in mind, this work seeks to explore and compare two exceptional moments in the history of Italian women's work: the explosion of the home-working phenomenon and the consequent battle for its formal recognition, and the very timely return to the forefront of work from home in the form of teleworking due to the response to COVID-19 pandemic. What these moments have in common is the position of the woman, who finds herself doing her job plus all the unpaid care work within a single territory: her home. Italian women have fought a long battle for their right to work, to have a life outside the home. “A casa non si torna”¹: so reads the title of an article of one of the most famous Italian magazines during the 60s. With this motto in the background,

¹ CASTELLINA, *A casa non si torna*, in “Noi Donne”, n. 48 (1964), p. 16.

this research aims to show how a return home for women can pose a huge risk, that is destroying years of struggle. Mary Chinnery-Hesse also expresses this risk: «My own fear is that the COVID-19 pandemic will reverse some of the gains that we have made over the last 25 years. I fear that the loss of jobs because of the crisis will ignite the ‘male breadwinner syndrome’, which may push women out of the workplace».² The purpose of this paper is to show the risks involved when a woman works at home, specifically using the phenomenon of home-based work in the 1950s-60s as an illustration.

To carry out this research, a number of works and some specific organizations and institutions were of paramount importance. Regarding data and information on European states, which do not directly or necessarily recall that of Italy, sources from the International Labor Organization (ILO) were invaluable. Mainly with regard to the first part of the paper, ILO sources served to give an insight into the present labor situation in Europe. Therefore, contributions on the topic of teleworking and work from home in general served in the first part of the paper. In the second and third chapters, on the other hand, reference will be made to the Conventions, Recommendations, and direct actions undertaken by the ILO, which have been of no small relevance in influencing the Italian world of work.

To derive the information and data referring to the Italian State, it seemed worthwhile to consult the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). In particular, the consultation of the Annual Report 2021 and the Labor Market Report 2020, served to highlight the changes undergone by the Italian labor market in the aftermath of the pandemic outbreak. Among Italy's institutional sources is the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic,³ the official source of regulations in force in Italy and a means of disseminating, informing and officiating legislative texts, public and private acts. Existing even before the republic as the Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Italy,⁴ this quite rich archive has served as a primary source for this paper. This support was crucial both for the discussion on the more recent period on which this work focused and for the analysis of the period between the 1950s and 1970s. For both chapters, in fact, it was necessary

² CHINNERY-HESSE Mary, All women are working women, ILO BLOG, 2020, p. 2.

³ «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana».

⁴ «Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia».

and necessary to refer to the Italian legislative situation in the two periods. In the first chapter it served to present the laws passed in 2020 in aid of families and workers in general. For the second chapter, on the other hand, it served to refer to the laws concerning home-based work, enacted between the late 1950s and the 1970s.

To discuss the topic of home-work in the early period of its major diffusion, have been used the Reports of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the conditions of workers in Italy,⁵ the ones carried out in 1958 and 1962. A few words about the importance of this source. In 1954 a proposal was put forward to set up a parliamentary inquiry into the conditions of workers in Italy, to tie in both with previous parliamentary inquiries about misery and unemployment and to respond to the growing pressure for workers' rights. The purpose was twofold: to conduct a comprehensive inquiry on workers' conditions and accordingly suggest measures to Parliament and the government to improve these conditions.⁶ In three years of activity (1955-1958) this Commission published 25 volumes organized in the series of Reports and Papers.⁷ Two Relations will be used in this paper. The first Report deals with special labor relations, with particular reference to fixed-term contracting, contracted work, home-based work, apprenticeships.⁸ The second parliamentary report useful for this discussion was: "investigations into the employment relationship" (vol. VII) tome III "worker qualifications and careers, treatment and protection of female workers".⁹ Both reports were crucial for understanding the phenomenon of home-based work but also for enabling an understanding of the dynamics of the Italian labor market affecting women.

⁵ «Relazioni della Commissione Parlamentare d'Inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia».

⁶ BETTI Eloisa, *Precari e precarie: una storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, Carocci editore, Roma, 2019, p. 60.

⁷ Ivi, p. 63.

⁸ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro: contratti a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, Segretariati generali della Camera dei deputati e del Senato della Repubblica, Roma, 1958.

⁹ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VII, *Indagini sul rapporto di lavoro*, Tomo III *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, Segretariati generali della Camera dei deputati e del Senato della Repubblica, Roma, 1962.

To talk about home-based work, its characteristics and problems, a milestone work was Maria Rosa Cutrufelli's "Workers without Factories".¹⁰ This work represents a landmark in the discussion of this topic. In this small book, the author recounts of the beginnings of this form of work, its causes and effects. Even more valuable is the section devoted to the Conference on Home-Work organized by the Union of Italian Women (UDI), in which the voices of women who worked at home speak directly, giving a unique and privileged view on the issue. In addition, the book includes a survey conducted on home-based female workers in the province of Bologna, who were subjected to a questionnaire. The topics covered are diverse: health, spaces, relationship with family, absence of rights, relationship with employers, and so on.

Another key source that has helped offer an alternative view on women's work is UDI's magazine "Noi Donne". Originally distributed since 1937 in Paris by female anti-fascists who had emigrated to France, "Noi Donne" is a magazine notable for its continuity. From 1944, at the height of the Resistance, it was published and circulated clandestinely; after liberation it became the official organ of the UDI until 1990, when the magazine assumed its autonomy.¹¹ The magazine deals with diverse topics, from politics to fashion, from literature to directly conducted surveys. It proves to be an extremely useful source for investigating the conditions of women in Italy during the period covered in the second chapter. Many are the testimonies, reflections and calls to action that come up. There are discussions about home-based work, conditions of women workers in factories, domestic life and marriage, health and rights.

A reference is due to the contribution of Eloisa Betti, whose work has served to map the history of Italian labor, the legislative processes that have affected the most important years of labor regulation in Italy. Last but not least, as will be evident at every point of the treatment, "The second sex"¹² by Simone de Beauvoir was the pivot, the philosophical and conceptual reference, the foundation of many arguments, the solution to many doubts, the inspiration for many reflections and, undoubtedly, one of the reasons that contributed

¹⁰ CUTRUFELLI Maria Rosa, *Operaie senza fabbrica. Inchiesta sul lavoro a domicilio*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1977.

¹¹ NOI DONNE, *Chi siamo*, noidonne.org.

¹² DE BEAUVOIR Simone, *Il secondo sesso* (1949), Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1961.

to the choice of the topic of this paper. Godmother of feminism and undisputed voice of the literature of the XX Century, Simone de Beauvoir's thought remains current and avant-garde.

This writing is organized into three chapters. At first, the focus will be on the most current moment of research: the phenomenon of work from home as a response to the pandemic. The time frame in question is the last three years, the focus will be first on 2019, which will serve as a basis of comparison for 2020, the central year of this discussion because of its exceptional nature. It will be seen how the pandemic, particularly the lockdown, has affected the labor market, with specific repercussions for women. The chapter will conclude by showing how European States first, and Italy later, dealt with the crisis from covid-19. In detail, it will be worth exploring the support measures that some European states have provided for their citizens in order to compare them with the Italian ones.

The central part of the paper, both in position and importance, is devoted to the analysis of the phenomenon of home-based work in Italy. A return to the past then to those years between 1950 and 1970 that meant for Italy a period of great economic growth: the so-called "economic boom". Behind the beautiful façade of the boom, however, several shadows were hidden, made up of clandestinity and exploitation. A symbol of these shadows is undoubtedly home-based work. The second chapter will initially tackle the cultural environment as well as the female labor market, two closely related elements. In particular will be observed: the construction of the figure of women through censuses, constitutional principles and laws protecting women and their work, the women's labor market, laws regulating home-based work and their long gestation, and then coming to observe the phenomenon of home-based work closely. It started from the causes, from what triggered the mechanisms for the spread of home-based work, to get to its effects – which mainly are problems. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a section devoted to testimonies drawn from various sources. The phenomenon of home-based labor is a complex moment in the history of Italian labor, made up of clandestinity and exploitation: this makes it a mysterious phenomenon, with wide areas of shadow, difficult to contour and define. Women who worked at home were forced to do so almost secretly,

they did not declare their work or income, which is why it is still an insidious subject today: many institutional sources are distorted by false declarations, estimates are downward, some areas of the country cannot be analyzed for lack of data.

The last chapter will deal with the issue of wages, or more accurately the wage differential between men and women, as a common element in the two periods in question. This chapter will open with an analysis of the wages of female home-workers. In fact, this last topic is one of the issues on which homeworkers have struggled the most. The work of these women was devalued both by their families but especially by their employers. Homeworkers worked all day long for starvation wages. They came to earn more than half the wages of female factory workers, who in turn took half the wages of a male colleague of theirs. The wage discrimination of the female home worker is part of a larger discrimination affecting the entire female workforce, yesterday as today. To understand this, will be presented the theory that the female workforce is historically discriminated against. Widening the lens, it will then be discussed wage discrimination (Gender Pay Gap) as a general phenomenon, then in relation to Italy and the present historical moment.

The theme that will underlie this research concerns one of the most underrated women's works: care work. Inevitable fate of every woman in the home, care work represents the "second" job - unpaid - on top of the "first" job - the salaried one. Both, in the cases in question, take place in the same environment. It will leap out at any time, throughout the discussion, that the effects of this forced cohabitation can become unbearable.

FIRST CHAPTER

PANDEMIC AND WORK FROM HOME

COVID-19 pandemic forced people to change habits, reorganize spaces, renounce public life. It gathered all the family members under the same roof, different people with different needs and wants. It is not easy to manage this situation and is even more so if one of the parents works from home. Some say that it's easier to control everything from home, but what one should consider is the total detachment from life outside the house. This is not new for women, who for an indefinite period have played the role assigned to them: "the hearth angel"¹³ – as it is said in a way dear to fascist propaganda. Thankfully, these times are gone, women have managed to carve out a place for themselves in society through, mainly, work. Nevertheless, most working women do not break out of the traditional female world; they do not receive from society, nor from their husbands, the help that would be needed to become concretely equal to men¹⁴, or even better, the woman who acquires economic independence is not for this reason in a moral, social, psychological situation identical to that of the man¹⁵. The position of women in society is still too weak, many times they find themselves dependent on their husband, children, confined to housework. In no way is it meant to say that women lack agency. Rather, they are forced by circumstances. They have options: they choose to rely on their husbands because of the insecurities they face in the world of work. It is worth noting that,

¹³ "L'angelo del focolare".

¹⁴ DE BEAUVOIR Simone, *Il secondo sesso* (1949), Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1961, p. 474.

«La maggior parte delle donne che lavorano non evadono dal mondo femminile tradizionale; non ricevono dalla società, né dal marito, l'aiuto che sarebbe necessario per diventare concretamente pari agli uomini».

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 475.

«la donna che acquista l'indipendenza economica, non è per questo in una situazione morale, sociale, psicologica identica a quella dell'uomo».

according to a recent study, one of the characteristics that would put a worker at risk of poverty is precisely being a woman.¹⁶

The emphasis will be primarily on Italy, more in detail on working women who have both family and children, for the reasons stated before. This could be an interesting area of research because it helps to understand where we are with women's empowerment in Italy, using the privileged observatory of the pandemic, which has brought out all the deficiencies at the State level but also at the family level.

Kicking off with an overview of the world of home work, the work will focus on the working conditions faced by female workers since the outbreak of the pandemic. To understand this phenomenon even better, before that, there will be a section dedicated to the data recording the homeworkers' conditions before 2020, precisely in 2019. This will serve to compare the data, in order to be able to record the change, if any. It is crucial, in this discussion, to name the aid provided by the Italian State in support of workers with children. This will help to understand whether or not the State intervention is effective, also making a comparison with other EU States' measures.

1.1. What is home work

To technically define what homework is, it can be helpful to look at the definition given by ILO (International Labour Organization). In the Home Work Convention (No.177) the first article reads:

a) the term home work means work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a homeworker, (i) in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer; (ii) for remuneration; (iii) which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used, unless this person has the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker under national laws, regulations or court decisions;¹⁷

¹⁶ SALMIERI Luca - VERROCCHIO Ariella (a cura di), *Di condizione precaria. Sguardi trasversali tra genere lavoro e non lavoro*, Trieste, EUT, 2015 p. 48-49.

¹⁷ ILO, C177 - Home work Convention, No.177, 1996, p.6.

According to ILO, a homemaker is either employee or self-employed, the definition does not apply to the employer or to independent workers. This is the first distinction. Secondly, this is not free work, homework is just like all the other work, it involves a retribution. Moreover, it is not considered a homemaker a worker who only occasionally works from home, it is necessary that the work is on a permanent basis carried at home. To conclude, care work either done in one's own home or in someone else's is not considered as home work: colfs, caregivers are not included in this category.¹⁸

«Homeworkers are a subset of home-based workers who do not have the “degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered as independent workers” in national law».¹⁹ Another distinction is made here between home-based workers, who can be an independent worker, and homeworkers who cannot be independent in order to be considered so. Home-based work includes both self-employed workers, dependent and independent, and employees who telework from home only on a permanent basis. Precisely, it is in the employees category that telework is found, meaning that a self-employed worker, even if working from home, is not teleworking. An employee who telework only occasionally is not considered either homemaker or home-based worker.²⁰ To differentiate these forms of work, will be used the distinction made by ILO:

industrial home work, which is defined broadly to include all goods production undertaken by homeworkers for local and international markets.[...] telework, which is when employees use ICT tools to perform their work remotely.[...] home-based, digital platform work, which refers to service-sector tasks performed by crowdworkers according to the specifications of the employer or intermediary.²¹

These three forms of work cover a large spectrum of workers: industrial home workers present the lower level of education and wage, mostly found in third world countries; teleworkers, since they are able to use ICT technology, represent the upper step of education, with decent wages and more decent working condition in relation to industrial home worker; finally, home-based, digital platform workers, white collars with

¹⁸ ILO, *Working from home. From invisibility to decent work*, Geneva, ILO, 2021, p. 19.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ivi, p. 21.

²¹ Ivi, p. 24.

managerial tasks, with high income and highly-educated, mostly present in high-income countries.

The reason why industrial home workers are mainly found in low-income countries, i.e. developing countries, goes back to the development of global value chains (GVC). This new way of production does not contemplate the creation of goods within the same establishment or country (fordism model), rather it involves many different firms all over the world who work to produce components of the same goods. In other words, large companies outsource their production, meaning they move a stage of manufacturing where the costs are minimum, with respect to wages, raw materials costs and energy costs. Furthermore, the absence of environmental protection laws allows entrepreneurs to evade many of the obligations that should be met in their countries of origin. Among the above categories, industrial home workers experience the worst working conditions: doing industrial work in one's own home can cause illness due to the materials used, is highly underpaid and mostly informal. As a matter of fact, «in low-income and middle-income countries, almost all home-based workers (90 per cent), comprising both homeworkers (87 per cent) and other home-based workers (93 per cent) worked informally.»²² «Informality was the lowest in Europe and Central Asia, where “only” 63 percent of home-based workers were not registered».²³ The informal nature of this kind of job contributes to make it invisible: «home work has always existed, but because it takes place in someone’s private home and is carried out disproportionately by women, it has long been invisible»²⁴.

1.2. Home work in pre-pandemic period (2019)

Before continuing, it is necessary to identify who works from home, in which sector they are working, how much they work in terms of hours and in what condition. «Home work has always existed, but because it takes place in someone’s private home and is

²² Ivi, p. 54.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Ivi, p. 20.

carried out disproportionately by women, it has long been invisible».²⁵ Indeed, it is difficult to count the number of home workers, due to the fact that they are mostly women, who in the census are reported to only be housewives: «in a sense, any criterion to distinguish “working” women from housewives is “ideological”».²⁶

«According to ILO estimates based on 118 household surveys, 147 million women and 113 million men worked from home in 2019, so that women represented 56 per cent of all home-based workers. [...] The propensity of women to work from home (11.5 per cent) is so much higher than that of men (5.6 per cent)».²⁷ This figure is certainly affected by the gender division that afflicts women: women would be more likely to work from home because it allows them to balance paid work and unpaid care and domestic work, which is known to be only their responsibility. «While there has been progress in terms of laws in many parts of the world, it has not changed the mindset about how women are expected to behave and what their role is in society».²⁸ For this, and other cultural reasons, women come up against major difficulties: when choosing a job, they prefer it to be a work from home job, thus sacrificing a potential career. In order to avoid the costs of daycare or domestic help, many women choose to reduce their wages and work hours, or even quit their job, to perform the additional work of caregiving themselves.

Before showing more detailed data, it is worth to note that «7.9% of the world’s workforce worked from home on a permanent basis prior to the COVID-19 pandemic».²⁹ The following figure goes into specifics, discerning between country-income levels it helps understand the share of homeworkers in relation to not-homeworkers.

Figure 1. *Number of women working from home against number of women who don’t work from home.*

²⁵ Ivi, p. 30.

²⁶ SARTI Raffaella - BELLAVITIS Anna - MARTINI Manuela (ed. by), *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, Beghahn Books, 2018, p. 200.

²⁷ ILO, *Working from home. From invisibility to decent work*, p. 44.

²⁸ CHINNERY-HESSE, *All Women Are Working Women*, p. 2.

²⁹ ILO. *Working from Home : a Potential Measure for Mitigating the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Geneva, ILO, 2020, p. 2.



30

Source: ILO, *Working from home. From invisibility to decent work*, p. 46

This figure shows the ILO calculations based on household surveys in 118 countries in 2019. It reports the percentage of women who are home-based workers and those who are not, differentiating between types of working relationships. It appears immediately clear that the home-based share is higher than that of the not-home-based across all country groups. The biggest gaps fall in the low-income countries, as in the middle-income countries with more incidence in the first three columns. The last column shows the slighter gaps: this could suggest that, in any case, women contribute to maintaining the family, that is why there is no relevant gap between home-based and not-home-based. However, even there, home-based workers represent the greater share. This last evidence could also suggest that, perhaps, home-based work allows women to work more and earn more, thus to contribute more to the maintenance of the family.

For the purposes of this work, only the first, the second and the fourth column will be useful. Moreover, since this study is addressed to Italy, only the data regarding the high-income States will be taken into consideration.³¹ The high-income countries row

³⁰ ILO, *Working from home. From invisibility to decent work*, p. 46.

³¹ According to the World Bank estimates, Italy falls within the band of the high-income countries, defined “as one with a gross national income per capita exceeding \$12,056.”; source: WORLD POPULATION REVIEW).

shows the minor differences compared to the others, but that doesn't make it any less interesting to investigate. Probably, what makes these differences lighter is that in high-income countries women are freer to leave the house in order to work. The reason is quite simple: these countries are, with few exceptions, mainly democratic, where human rights are respected and recognized to everyone. This made life easier for women, who were able to gain an economic independence and, more importantly, the status of citizen. However, this subject will be addressed later, with reference to the Italian experience.

Considering more specifically Italy, in the pre-pandemic period of 2019 the number of dependent workers working from home was very little.³² Since the study investigates the working conditions of the teleworkers, which are found within the dependent workers, only the data concerning these workers will be taken into consideration. Primary resource of this specific scan will be ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica) data referring to 2019.

Following this research, which offers sex-disaggregated data, 90,4% of women used to work at the employer's premises against the 75,4 of men.³³ This gap might depend on the fact that 12,3% of men worked at customers' premises against 6,2% of women.³⁴ As a matter of fact, 10,8% of men reported that they didn't have a fixed working place against 2,0% of women.³⁵ Going into specifics, 0,9% of women against 0,7% of men worked from home as their main job site and 3,4% of women against 2,2% of men worked from home as their second job site.³⁶ These evidences may suggest that women tend more to work in the same place compared to men.³⁷ They can also depend on the type of job performed: possibly, women are overrepresented in static jobs, keyboard jobs, which impose her to not leave the chosen work space.

One more interesting data: 1,5% of workers with a university degree or higher used to work from their own home.³⁸ It is clearly significant to also examine data with respect

³² ISTAT - EUROSTAT, *L'organizzazione del lavoro in Italia. Orari, luoghi, grado di autonomia*, 2020, p. 7.

³³ *Ivi*, tab.10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ivi*, tab. 13.

³⁷ *Ivi*, p. 8.

³⁸ *Ivi*, tab. 10.

to the type of work targeted. Among dependent workers, 85% used to work at the employer's premises, 0,2% reported that they worked at home and 6,3% had no fixed working place.³⁹ In reference to the profession, are the qualified ones to work more from home: 1,7% against 0,3% of blue collars and executive professions.⁴⁰ It is relevant to see how Of the 408,000 employees who, in 2019, use their home as their main or secondary place of work [...] 8.2 percent have a telecommuting agreement (0.2 percent of the total number of employees) and 20.2 percent have a smart working agreement (0.5 percent of the total).⁴¹

Looking at the sectors, the services one shows the biggest number: 1,0% worked from home, with 6,9% having no fixed working place. The types of services that are performed more from home are: business support with 2,8% and information and communication with 3,6%.⁴²

Moving on to working hours, it isn't surprising that for the 85,0% of dependent workers the hours are set by the employer, whereas autonomous workers are freer to decide their working schedule.⁴³ On average, 71,1% of workers have no power over the choice of working hours against the 16,4% that decide autonomously.⁴⁴ Employers, many times, use various systems to record attendances and hours. Nevertheless, on average, 20% of the interviewed reported that neither attendance nor hours are recorded⁴⁵, incurring the risk of never finishing work or not being recognized for the hours actually worked. A larger share (46,0%) instead reported that the hours are recorded using an automated system, while it is not the same for the attendances, which are, in any case, poorly recorded.⁴⁶

³⁹ Ivi, tab. 11.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ ISTAT, *L'organizzazione del lavoro in Italia*, p. 9.

«dei 408 mila lavoratori dipendenti che, nel 2019, utilizzano la propria abitazione come luogo principale o secondario di lavoro [...] l'8,2% ha un contratto di telelavoro (lo 0,2% del totale dei dipendenti) e il 20,2% un accordo di smart working (0,5% del totale)».

⁴² Ivi, tab 11.

⁴³ Ivi, tab. 2.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ivi, tab.6.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

The question of working hours in relation to teleworkers raises an important issue: the so-called “right to disconnect”. This particular issue has assumed importance in the very last few years, and will be addressed later in reference to the period of the outbreak of teleworking in response to the pandemic. Since telework was a very little phenomenon before 2020, it is difficult to find relevant data preceding this date, for this reason it will be useful for the following research, dedicated to the pandemic period.

1.3. Home work in pandemic (2020)

The previous paragraph showed data on homeworkers with reference to 2019, in order to compare them with those to follow. This section will focus on the change in terms of working conditions faced by female workers right after the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in February 2020. Before that, a quick glance at the overall change that all workers had to cope with.

COVID-19 crisis hit everyone, in each life sphere. In the early stages of the pandemic, people have been forced to stay home in order to contrast the diffusion of the virus. Many lost their jobs, others were able to keep theirs under some conditions, kids stopped going to school, universities closed, States’ borders closed. Life as we knew it no longer existed. Fortunately, life has adjusted to change. People started working from home, mainly teleworking, and kids were able to continue school using digital platforms. «Although the COVID-19 pandemic has extended teleworking to more workers, including those not previously teleworking, many workers remain excluded from it»⁴⁷, as well as for kids lacking the resources to keep studying remotely. As far as workers are concerned, those who remained excluded are likely to be those whose work is not teleworkable: blue collars, artisans, builders and so on. «Teleworkability is higher in ICT and knowledge-intensive sectors, and for high-skilled workers generally. Telework is more widespread in countries where knowledge and ICT-intensive service sectors

⁴⁷ EIGE, *Gender equality and the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic*, Luxembourg, Publication office of the European Union, 2021, p. 28.

account for a larger share of total employment»⁴⁸ As far as gender is concerned, «men [are] over-represented in sectors with limited teleworkability potential [...] and women [are] over-represented in occupations with a lower share of physical handling tasks»⁴⁹, meaning they are more likely to telework.

«The number of people who can work from home, however, is likely to be much larger than the number of people who were working from home previous to COVID-19».⁵⁰ Indeed, telework represented a big opportunity for both employers and employees: they had been able to keep their jobs. Moreover, people have been able to stay home and handle their families and houses, for which it is usually difficult to find time. Workers «reported that they appreciated the absence of time and stress of commuting to the office; spending more time with their children and spouses; and also the flexibility of the working hours».⁵¹ Actually, if it is true what Zygmunt states, that today's liquid society imposes a continuous race, otherwise one is 'discarded', the return to a family dimension must have meant a breath of fresh air for all those people who find themselves on the 'global runway' of daily competition. Not surprisingly, it was initially a pleasure for everyone to devote themselves to all those activities that one ends up forgetting in daily lives: hobbies, personal care, the pleasure to cook a meal - more purely Italian phenomenon.

But there is also the other side of the coin. “Home is not always a safe place” as the slogan of the international organization “Not one woman less”⁵² recites. All those people who are victims of abuse and violence in the family know it well. Istat reports that «le forme più gravi di violenza sono esercitate da partner, parenti o amici. Gli stupri sono stati commessi nel 62,7% dei casi da partner, nel 3,6% da parenti e nel 9,4% da amici».⁵³ During the lockdown period calls to anti-violence numbers increased dramatically, as it appears in a survey by Istat: The number of valid phone calls and chat messages received

⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 27.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ ILO, *Working from Home : a Potential Measure for Mitigating the COVID-19 Pandemic*, p. 2.

⁵¹ ILO, *Teleworking During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond: a Practical Guide*, [1st ed.], Geneva, ILO, 2020, p. 20.

⁵² ‘Ni una menos’ is the cry against gender violence that was born in Argentina in 2015 and gave birth to the transfeminist organization, which fights since then in a lot of Countries; in Italy it is called “Non una di meno”.

⁵³ ISTAT, *La violenza sulle donne. I numeri e le forme della violenza*.

between March and October 2020 increased significantly compared to the same period the previous year (+71,7%).⁵⁴ As this quote reports, these figures refer to the ‘valid’ calls, suggesting that there are certainly numbers missing: those who didn’t call or report the abuses. Living the lockdown with one's tormentor is a reality that many have been forced to experience. However, this is just one of the aspects that made life tougher.

Moving the focus to the working front, it is evident how the situation doesn’t improve. “La Repubblica”⁵⁵ reports that three out of four people who have lost their jobs in 2020 are women. The worst month for female employment was December 2020: ninety-nine thousand women lost their jobs, against two thousand men. The overall number of women who lost their jobs in 2020 is three-hundred-thousand. The reason lies in the over-representation of women in jobs related to services, those that have suffered a stronger setback. Losing their jobs for many women has meant having to become dependent on their husbands, again risking economic violence, one of the most subtle and destructive forms of violence.

The family aspect is not to be overlooked. As previewed, as schools closed, families with children had to deal with remote learning, thus providing the means to carry it out: computers, wi-fi access, tablets, headphones. Even more difficult was finding a space for everyone in the house, compounded by the likelihood of having a cohabitant with the virus, who needed to be isolated.

In the following sections will be explored these phenomena closely, with a particular emphasis on the working side.

1.3.1 Work. What happened

Monthly employment estimates indicate substantial stagnation in the first two months of 2020, a sharp fall especially in March and April, signs of recovery starting in July and still present in November, albeit weak, probably due to the lighter form of

⁵⁴ ISTAT, *Il numero di pubblica utilità 1522 durante la pandemia (periodo marzo-ottobre 2020)*. «il numero delle chiamate valide sia telefoniche sia via chat nel periodo compreso tra marzo e ottobre 2020 è notevolmente cresciuto rispetto allo stesso periodo dell’anno precedente (+71,7%)».

⁵⁵ GRION Luisa, *Otto marzo, il lavoro perduto delle donne. Oltre 300 mila hanno perso il lavoro*, in “La Repubblica”, 8 marzo 2021.

lockdown measures.⁵⁶ Moreover, the loss of employment recorded between February and June 2020 (-542 thousand) was half recovered between July and November with an overall balance of 300,000 fewer employed than in February.⁵⁷ It is important to note how from the data it appears that the most drastic reductions occurred in the area of hours worked rather than in employment or GDP. In Italy, there is already a 0.7 percent decline in hours worked in the last trimester of 2019, which worsens in the following trimester by 7.7 percent. Relative to the latter, the second trimester of 2020 sees a further decline of 15.1 percent, and a recovery of 21 percent in the third one. This latest leap forward, however, is still not enough to close the gap with the previous year (-5.2).⁵⁸ In the Euro area, only Spain recorded more negative data than Italy, whilst Germany recorded the best data. It is now quite relevant to explore this dynamic a little closer. In the first quarter of 2020, the total loss of 834 million hours worked is attributable almost 94 percent to the reduction in hours per capita (52.8 percent related to salaried positions and 41.1 percent to self-employed positions) and marginally to the reduction in the stock of labor positions (3.6 percent for salaried positions and 2.5 percent for self-employed positions).⁵⁹

From these data emerges that in some ways, employers - also supported and directed by the State - managed to reduce the working hours, avoiding dismissal. Fun fact: in the Eurozone, countries with high rates of hours worked per capita (Italy, Spain, U.K.) experienced the largest reductions. But this has only brought these countries back within the European averages.⁶⁰ Using numbers: the trend reduction in hours per capita was

⁵⁶ ISTAT, *Il mercato del lavoro 2020. Una lettura integrata*, Roma, 2020, p. 9.

«Le stime mensili degli occupati indicano una sostanziale stagnazione nei primi due mesi del 2020, una forte caduta soprattutto a marzo e aprile, segni di ripresa a partire da luglio e ancora presenti a novembre, benché deboli, dovuti probabilmente alla forma più leggera delle misure di lockdown».

⁵⁷ Ibid.

«la perdita di occupazione registrata tra febbraio e giugno 2020 (-542 mila unità) è stata per metà recuperata tra luglio e novembre con un bilancio complessivo di 300 mila occupati in meno rispetto a febbraio».

⁵⁸ Ivi, p. 11.

⁵⁹ Ivi, p. 18.

«Nel primo trimestre 2020 la perdita complessiva di 834 milioni di ore lavorate è attribuibile per quasi il 94% alla riduzione dell'orario pro capite (52,8% relativi alle posizioni dipendenti e 41,1% a quelle indipendenti) e in misura marginale alla riduzione dello stock delle posizioni lavorative (3,6% per le posizioni dipendenti e 2,5% per quelle indipendenti)».

⁶⁰ Ivi, p. 20.

around 20-25% compared with a eurozone average of 15%.⁶¹ Anyway, this is a short-term process that has been reabsorbed, levels are back to pre-crisis levels.

In comparison, on the employment side data are more comforting: there are much smaller losses. Again, the last trimester of 2019 already shows a reduction of 0.4 percent compared to the preceding trimester. Add to this a further decrease of 0.5 percent in the first trimester of 2020 and 2.4 percent in the following trimester, a very slight increase of 0.9 percent is recorded in the third trimester. Compared with the previous year, there was a 2.4 percent decline in employment, 0.1 percent higher than the European average.⁶² Compared with the data on hours worked, the latter are much lower. This suggests that policies have succeeded in targeting losses in one direction rather than another, allowing people to maintain, at least, their jobs. The most widely used tool was definitely the layoff, evidenced by the fact that it has been allocated two-thirds of the funds provided by the State.⁶³ Between March and September, more than 6 million workers had at least one layoff treatment, with an average number of integrated hours of 263.⁶⁴ This issue will also be addressed later in the context of aid provided by the State.

Anyway, it would be incorrect to say that losses in employment are to be glossed over. Speaking with numbers, 2020 is characterized by an unprecedented decline in employment: -470 thousand (-2% in one year). The following table (figure 2) shows what's most stunning in this context: in contrast to the crisis period 2009-2013, which in the presence of sharp declines in employment had seen a concomitant growth in unemployment, in 2020 the sharp decline in employment is associated with a high reduction in the number of unemployed (-304 thousand, -11.8%) and a robust growth in inactivity among the population aged 15-64 (+621 thousand +4.7%).⁶⁵ This crisis indeed is not comparable with previous ones, it is unique. What these data reveal is that people, perhaps after losing their jobs, stopped looking for ones, as did those who were already

⁶¹ Ibid.

«la riduzione tendenziale delle ore pro capite è stata intorno al 20-25% a fronte di una media della zona euro del 15%»

⁶² Ivi, p. 11.

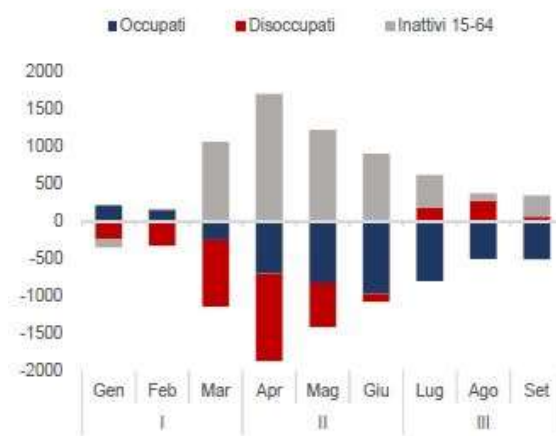
⁶³ Ivi, p. 103.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ivi, p. 26.

unemployed. As shown in the table above, this dynamic occurs mainly in the second trimester of 2020, particularly in April. The third trimester, on the other hand, shows signs of recovery, with more people returning unemployed as job seekers.⁶⁶ Actually, as already anticipated, 241,000 jobs were recovered from June to November, slightly less than half the loss triggered by the pandemic, with an overall balance of 300,000 fewer jobs than in February.⁶⁷

Figure 2: *Population by employment status. January-September 2020 (absolute changes*



in thousands).

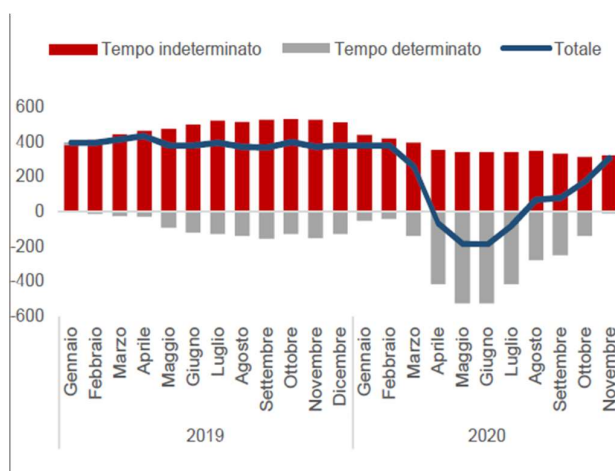
Source: ISTAT, *Il mercato del lavoro 2020*, p.27.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ivi, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Ivi, p. 27.

Figure 3: *Trend changes in the balances annualized activations and terminations of dependent employment positions by type of contract. Years 2019-2020 (absolute values in thousands)*



Source: ISTAT, *Il mercato del lavoro 2020*, p. 13.⁶⁹

This table shows that this recovery mainly interests permanent workers and the self-employed, while fixed-term dependent workers continued to suffer losses, on which has been unloaded more than half of the employment losses observed between March and June: fixed-term employees decreased by 332,000 between February and November.⁷⁰

Going beyond these general dynamics, it is of greater interest to this study to investigate the situation of women within this context. Women are more than men, they

⁶⁹ Ivi, p. 13.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

study more and often have better educational achievements than their peers, so much so that they now constitute a preponderant slice of the country's intellectual capital; but they work less and, above all, are less valued in the workplace: their talents are therefore mortified, with consequences that weigh on the lives of individual women but also on society as a whole, which finds itself having to do without valuable resources.⁷¹ As if that wasn't enough, the effects of the pandemic on labor market participation show how the most fragile groups (young people, women, foreigners), once again, are the ones most exposed to the effects of crises, with non-negligible repercussions on the social structure.⁷² Once again women fall into the category of 'fragile'. Unfortunately, not only in the case of labor, women, as well as children and the elderly are those categories that need to be protected and kept safe. Needless to say, how outdated and degrading this paradigm has become for the woman who sees herself equated with an infant or an infirm. What makes a woman fragile in the world of work? The risk that she may have a family to think about,⁷³ that she may become pregnant leaving her position vacant, that she may be a distraction,⁷⁴ that she may be less educated or less resourceful than a man. She is not even given a chance to redeem herself; her position is quintessentially 'fragile'. Not to mention how, at convenience, the image of women is exploited: image girl, 'pretty presence required', 'send photos in bikini', 'minimum height 170cm'. These are the job proposals one reads daily, which leave no room for doubt: the job market is highly sexualized. So rather than claiming that the woman is fragile, one should say that the treatment of her reduces her to fragile. Clearly, a woman without great educational qualifications who needs to work finds herself having to accept unsatisfactory positions (as those mentioned above), which she will inevitably abandon after a short time to seek

⁷¹ CENSIS WEB-BOOK SICUREZZA E CITTADINANZA. *Il talento femminile mortificato*.

«Le donne sono più degli uomini, studiano di più e spesso hanno risultati scolastici migliori dei loro coetanei, tanto da costituire oggi una fetta preponderante del capitale intellettuale del paese; ma lavorano di meno e, soprattutto, sono meno valorizzate sul posto di lavoro: il loro talento è dunque mortificato, con conseguenze che pesano sul vissuto delle singole donne ma anche sull'intera società, che si trova a dover fare a meno di risorse preziose».

⁷² ISTAT, *Il mercato del lavoro 2020*, p. 25.

⁷³ To name one: in May a shopkeeper was fined for posting a position advertisement requesting girls who were '18 years old' and 'free from family commitments.' (source: "Il fatto quotidiano").

⁷⁴ A teacher is chased down school hallways by a school employee who hands her a sweater to cover her shoulders. (source: "ELLE magazine"). Not even girls at school are spared: a Roman classical high school bans miniskirts because 'male teachers get distracted'. (source: "Corriere della Sera").

others more suitable. The constant change of employment is what makes her unstable and therefore fragile. Those who need to work, in order to support the family, do not get lost in talk, they accept what is offered, accepting that they may also be exploited or discriminated against. Perhaps this is the fragility that is being talked about, the need that leads to submission. Is thus not her inherent fragility, but rather the fragility of the world of work reserved for her. This triggers a knock-on reaction:

«If the economic consequences of independence, largely defined by social institutions and practices outside the individual family, are quite gloomy, their bargaining power within the family is quite limited. On the other hand, as economic independence becomes more viable, they may choose to exercise their enhanced bargaining power to *change* the pattern of distribution within the family, rather than simply deserting the family altogether».⁷⁵

This concept recalls what women have fought for over time: a space outside the ‘individual family’ where they could develop their independence, source of power. The icon of this space is precisely work. If they are deprived of the means to achieve their independence they become alienated, as Kain argues:

for alienation to be affected in the family, women must remain more or less in the family, isolated from the other spheres that arise and come to have a life and a dynamic of their own that is independent and autonomous, that largely excludes women, which therefore women do not adequately understand and certainly do not control, and which thus gives rise to a power that comes to oppress and dominate women.⁷⁶

Numbers first. Affecting women's employment is the number of children they have, and if they have them.⁷⁷ In the EU in 2019, the employment rate for women without children is 67 percent, while it is 75 percent for men. With one child, the rate increases to 72 % for women and 87 % for men. For women with two children, the rate remains almost unchanged at 73%, while the rate for men increases to 91 %. For people with three or more children, the employment rate decreases to 58 % for women and 85 % for men.⁷⁸ As the number of children increases, male employment increases, while female employment appears to remain stable. The second trimester of 2020, the hardest trimester of the year,

⁷⁵ FOLBRE Nancy, *Exploitation Comes Home: A Critique of the Marxian Theory of Family Labour*, in “Cambridge Journal of Economics”, vol. 6, no. 4, 1982, pp. 317–29, p. 324.

⁷⁶ KAIN Philip J., *Marx, Housework, and Alienation*, in “Hypatia”, vol. 8, no. 1, 1993, pp. 121–44, pp. 128-129.

⁷⁷ ISTAT-EUROSTAT, *La vita delle donne e degli uomini in Europa. Un ritratto statistico*.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

compared with the same quarter of 2019, shows a change of -4.7 percent in female employment, compared with a change of -2.7 percent in the male case.⁷⁹ If the same ratio is applied to the third quarter, there will be a change of -3.5 percent for the female case versus a change of 2.0 percent for the male case.⁸⁰

1.3.2 Most affected sectors

Unlike previous economic crises, which had mainly affected manufacturing and construction, this time services have been most affected. [...] These sectors-characterized by a strong presence of women and modestly educated workers-concentrated about 93 percent of the overall employment loss in 2020.⁸¹ Women's job loss is particularly large in the hotel and restaurant sector and in family services, where the presence of foreign women is very strong.⁸² As ISTAT here suggests, in the case of family services (domestic helpers, caregivers) the women mentioned are mainly foreigners, a fact not to be underestimated. In Italy this sector has grown a lot in recent decades by putting cheap "foreign" female laborers to work. Among them are numerous "off-the-books" or semi-regular contract workers employed as domestic helpers and family assistants.⁸³ Here one enters the delicate mass of bureaucracy that comes between foreigners and access to work in Italy: on the subject of racial discrimination of immigrant workers in Italy, one should recall the poor recognition of educational qualifications and the process of systematic under- and de-skilling; wage disparities, more accidents, fewer protections, and, finally, 'starvation pensions.'⁸⁴ All this is nothing but the work of the State, of political

⁷⁹ ISTAT, *Il mercato del lavoro 2020*, p. 29

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ ISTAT, *Rapporto annuale 2021. La situazione del paese*, Roma, 2021, p. 138.

⁸² Ivi, p. 141.

⁸³ FRISINA Annalisa, *Razzismi contemporanei. Le prospettive della sociologia*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 2020, p. 156.

«[delle] responsabilità politiche che indeboliscono sistematicamente la voce dei lavoratori migranti, che nella precaria condizione legale in cui si ritrovano tendono ad agire come attori economici interessati primariamente a restare a galla, accettando qualsiasi tipo di lavoro pur di restare in regola. La cosiddetta "legge Bossi-Fini" [...], infatti, vincola in modo rigido il permesso di soggiorno al contratto di lavoro».

⁸⁴ Ivi, p. 157.

responsibilities that systematically weaken the voice of migrant workers, who in the precarious legal condition in which they find themselves tend to act as economic actors primarily interested in staying afloat, accepting any kind of work in order to stay legal. The so-called "Bossi-Fini law" [...], in fact, rigidly ties the residence permit to the labor contract.⁸⁵

Add to this perspective the further variable of being a woman, which, as mentioned earlier, is already subject to differential treatment. As Sarti points out: growing demand for services would indeed even result in a feminization of migration flows and survival strategies. This is precisely why the rights accorded or denied to migrants inevitably condition the rights that domestic workers enjoy or lack of which they suffer.⁸⁶ It should be noted that, under popular pressure, the Italian state has had to soften immigration policies for domestic workers⁸⁷, applying its classic: double standards. This reflects nothing more than the attitude of the Italian towards the immigrant: there is the immigrant of A-series and the immigrant of B-series, those who do have the right to emigrate and those who don't. In the case of domestic workers, the elderly took to the streets to defend their caregivers from the State's plans to repatriate them.⁸⁸ The mismatch between anti-immigration rhetoric and the growing presence of immigrants in our most intimate sphere has at times taken on paradoxical traits, as for foreign domestic helpers and 'caregivers' the doors of our homes have almost always remained open.⁸⁹ But don't be fooled: these workers accept sub-standard conditions, low wages, and archaic working conditions such as cohabitation, thus explaining this supposed openness.⁹⁰ In fact, the Italian State closes the ports to those 'economic' migrants, exclusively those coming from the global South, forgetting its past as a country of emigration. Indeed, it is nothing new that Italy suffers from forgetfulness when needed. The pandemic has further aggravated the fragile position

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ SARTI Raffaella (a cura di), *Lavoro domestico e di cura: quali diritti?*, Roma, Ediesse, 2010, pp. 75-76.

⁸⁷ Ivi, p. 104.

⁸⁸ Ivi, p. 96.

⁸⁹ Ivi, p. 104.

«La sfasatura tra la retorica contro l'immigrazione e la crescente presenza di immigrati nella nostra sfera più intima ha assunto in certi momenti tratti paradossali, visto che per colf e 'badanti' straniere/i le porte delle nostre case sono rimaste quasi sempre aperte».

⁹⁰ Ibid.

in which domestic workers find themselves.⁹¹ First, Covid-19 mainly affected the elderly, that is, their employers. Many became jobless during the biggest crisis since 1929. Looking for new ones in this framework was not feasible. Second, many of these workers provide support for a family member, if not the whole family, in their home country. Third, for non-cohabiting domestic workers, the pandemic has signified a complete halt to their work: lockdown, limited travel, measures of social distancing and so on. Plus, as much as one may have permanent clients, this work is always subject to demand. Families, during the pandemic, had less need for helpers as they could take care of them themselves, given the greater presence at home. Finally, as is easy to understand, these types of workers have not been able to benefit from the great opportunity represented by smartworking.

1.3.3 Telework

One of the biggest revolutions that pandemic has brought about is surely the (forced) reevaluation of remote work. It actually existed before the outbreak of the pandemic, it was just very rare and sectorized. At the end of 2019, about 5 percent of the employed worked remotely, with a strong prevalence of the self-employed, while in the second quarter of 2020 the incidence exceeded 19 percent, reaching 23.6 percent for the female component, with a strong increase in the share of employees. Thereafter, the incidence of remote work declined, in line with the evolution of counter-emergency measures, standing at 14 percent on average for the year.⁹² Unfortunately, though, not everyone was able to enjoy this advantage, for various reasons. In addition, those who have been able to benefit have had to adapt their home to a permanent place of work, with no small consequences.

⁹¹ As Sarti claims in “Lavoro domestico e di cura”, legislation on migrant domestic labor has aimed to bring about a more asymmetrical labor relationship than that reserved for Italians, creating slave/master-style labor relationships.

⁹² ISTAT, *Rapporto annuale 2021*, p. 151.

First, there is the issue of ‘teleworkability’ to be considered: not all jobs can be carried out from home. «teleworkability is defined as ‘the technical possibility of providing labour input remotely into a given economic process»⁹³. Based on this definition, jobs have been divided into three categories: non teleworkable, partially teleworkable, fully teleworkable. The teleworking measure has enabled so many people not to lose their jobs, in fact «the most severe declines in hours worked and employment level were recorded in non-teleworkable occupations».⁹⁴ As in the case of domestic workers, physical contact work could not be performed, «the key determinant of teleworkability, therefore, is the absence of physical handling tasks».⁹⁵

As previously anticipated,

According to the estimates of Sostero et al (2020), the share of women in teleworkable occupations in the EU was 45%, compared to 30% for men. The gender difference in teleworkability relates, in part, to patterns of sectoral segregation. Men are overrepresented in sectors with limited teleworkability potential [...] where tasks involving physical handling are prevalent. However, even in these male-dominated sectors, the teleworkable share of female employment tends to be high.⁹⁶

The jobs that could be done from home were those that had long relied on the use of ICT tools, this means office jobs, desk jobs. As a matter of fact, the increase in telework mainly affected the female dependent workers, those who held these kinds of jobs.⁹⁷

Working from home has definitely been a relief, but also a burden. Doing work from home involves having a suitable space and environment. Those who do not have a studio at home, or those who have had to share available space with partners who were also teleworking, have had to compromise. The space issue in the house is also of great importance for those who have children, or people to care for. In fact, school-age children and young people, too, had to do their ‘telework’. In this regard, it is also important to remember the issue of the availability of computer facilities with which to both work and study. Not every household in fact has one computer or tablet per person.

⁹³ EUROFOUND AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE, *What just happened? COVID-19 lockdowns and change in the labour market*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, p. 53.

⁹⁴ Ivi, p. 57.

⁹⁵ Ivi, p. 53.

⁹⁶ Ivi, p. 49.

⁹⁷ Ivi, p. 58.

Moreover, «the COVID-19 measures adopted to contain the epidemic have massively increased the amount of housework and childcare that must be done».⁹⁸ «In normal times, “smart working” [...] leads to increased participation of males in domestic work. Interestingly, this increase is seen more in childcare than housework in almost all cases. However, the distribution of the extra work within the couple appears to be highly unbalanced. The extra work is a burden mainly borne by women».⁹⁹ This is hardly surprising, on a regular basis women spend more time on housework than men. In 2016 in the EU, 93% of women aged 25-49 (with minor children) take care of their children on a daily basis, compared to 69% of men. Regarding household activities and cooking, the differences are even wider. In 2016 in the EU, 78% of women cook and/or perform household activities on a daily basis, compared to 32% of men. The widest differences between women and men are in Greece and Italy (81% women and 20% men).¹⁰⁰

This gap is absolutely in line with the education one receives in Italy from an early age: girls are taught to cook and clean, while boys are exempted. home.

For men working from home, the invisible labour of childcare and housework may be newly noticeable. Fathers cannot as easily ignore the demands of childcare when day care and schools are cancelled and one’s temporary office also serves as children’s play space and virtual classroom. Among those who remain employed during the pandemic, this may lead to greater equality in work hours. The increased visibility and the heightened childcare demands brought by school and day care closures may lead men to make greater contributions to family labour¹⁰¹.

Despite this, «previous research has shown that women and men equally perceive domestic tasks needing to be done, but men are more likely to ignore these responsibilities, leaving them to be done by women partners. From this perspective, the increased visibility of care work and housework may do little to motivate men’s contributions to family labour»¹⁰², ending up always putting the responsibility on the wife. In the context laid out, the woman had to divide her home space between work and

⁹⁸ DEL BOCA Daniela - OGGERO Noemi - PROFETA Paola - ROSSI Mariacristina, *Women’s and men’s work, housework and childcare, before and during COVID- 19*, in “Review of Economics of the Household”, Vol. 18, 2020, pp. 1001–1017, p. 1005.

⁹⁹ Ivi, p. 1006.

¹⁰⁰ ISTAT-EUROSTAT, *La vita delle donne e degli uomini in Europa. Un ritratto statistico*.

¹⁰¹ COLLINS Caitlyn - LANDIVAR Liana C. - RUPPANNER Leah - SCARBOROUGH William J., *COVID-19 and the gender gap in work hours*, “Gender Work Organ”, 28(S1), pp. 549-560, 2021, p. 550.

¹⁰² Ibidem

normal daily life, the responsibilities of which continued to fall on her. Not only spaces, but also time, a central theme in the discussion of smart work, had to be rationed. «The fact that the wife has less time to do housework, can do it less economically and less efficiently, means that she will also be alienated in the sense that she will lose control over her own activity. Her activity will be more frustrating and, since it is expected of her, will feel more coerced. She will be alienated in the process, the activity of housework».¹⁰³

Talking about this and the poorly distributed burden of house chores, «when both partners work at home, 65% of women increase their housework versus 40% of men. The corresponding percentages for childcare are 77% for women and 60% for men».¹⁰⁴ As claimed by EIGE: «Women are thus more likely to be engaged in supplementing care work as a result of the closures of and restrictions in care services during the pandemic. As a result, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to aggravate gender inequalities in unpaid care (Blasko et al., 2020), reinforce traditional gender roles and derail the modest progress achieved so far».¹⁰⁵ Consider the case of workers in the health sector, whose composition is highly feminized with a share corresponding to 70 percent of the workforce, for example, has been under tremendous strain both from the standpoint of increased demand for work hours and from the standpoint of managing care needs, which have increased due to confinement measures and the closure of educational and care facilities.¹⁰⁶

The picture that comes out by combining all these variables is quite daunting. A high number of women found themselves having to do double work (their own employment and unpaid domestic work), simultaneously, within the same space. As we are increasingly hearing, the impact of this type of work from home has, most obviously, eliminated the separation of private and work/public life, consequently also changing the family balance. The burden that women have had to bear is nothing more than the result of our cultural heritage. Hartmann, re-reading Engels, maintains that «in our society,

¹⁰³ KAIN, *Marx, Housework, and Alienation*, p. 131

¹⁰⁴ DEL BOCA-OGGERO-PROFETA-ROSSI, *Women's and men's work, housework and childcare, before and during COVID- 19*, p. 1006

¹⁰⁵ EIGE, *Gender equality and the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic*, p. 35

¹⁰⁶ INAPP, *Le policy europee di contrasto alla crisi Covid-19. Una lettura di genere*, Esposito M. - Rizzo A. (edited by), Roma, 2022, p.38

which is organized by patriarchy as well as by capitalism, the sexual division of labor by gender makes men primarily responsible for wage labor and women primarily responsible for household production». ¹⁰⁷ So, no matter what, even if a woman works and earns her own money, her place will always remain at home. The words of Simone de Beauvoir recalled at the beginning of this writing come in handy here: women are slaves to the species, to the reproduction of it. «Housework and child care can be unalienated, meaningful, satisfying, and enjoyable. But if they are *expected* of a housewife, if they are her *duty*, if she is coerced into doing them, if it is her *role*, her *destiny*, then they become slavish and oppressive». ¹⁰⁸

What is even sadder is that one cannot even hope that everything will return to the way it was, since it was already not working before. What one should hope instead is that things will change, for the sake of everyone.

1.4 State's intervention: Italy and other EU Members compared

Before proceeding to an observation of Italian legislative processes, a quick overview of the policies of some European countries regarding employment and family support and smart work measures. In France, there has already been a law called "Loi Travail" since 2017, which introduced the possibility of telework (in French *télétravail*) for everyone, without any change in the labor contract, but simply through oral or written communication between the parties involved. ¹⁰⁹ In France then, reference was made to the existing legislature. The percentage of workers from home in 2019 in France was 7, in 2020 it goes up to 15 and in 2021 to 17. ¹¹⁰

Netherlands represents a headline case. Even before 2019, the rate of home-based workers was very high compared to the European average (around 5 percent): from 2015 to 2019, the percentage remained constant at around 12 to 13, in 2020 it arrived at 17.8

¹⁰⁷ HARTMANN Heidi I., *The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework*, "Signs", vol. 6, no. 3, 1981, pp. 366–94, p. 373.

¹⁰⁸ KAIN, *Marx, Housework, and Alienation*, p. 128

¹⁰⁹ FORUM PA, *Covid-19 e smart working: uno sguardo all'Europa*, December 3, 2020.

¹¹⁰ EUROSTAT, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status*.

and in 2021 at 22.5.¹¹¹ Indeed, as BBC reports: «thousands of workers in the Netherlands benefit from the country’s astonishingly flexible work culture. [...] The Netherlands has long led the global shift toward remote work, with only Finland catching up in recent years while other countries lag behind».¹¹² The reason for its primacy is to be found in the working culture of the Netherlands, and that of society in general. To be more clear, a home-based Netherlands worker responding to an interview says: «managers place more trust in their workers than elsewhere in the world. [...] For example, ING bank (an influential Dutch company based in Amsterdam) now has a policy on unlimited holidays implemented for pilot groups of workers, who can take as much holiday as they want as long as their tasks do not suffer».¹¹³

On the opposite side is Spain, whose percentage of home-based work before 2019 was below the European average, standing at around 4 percent. Here telework (in Spanish “teletrabajo”), until now was regulated only by Article 13 of the Spanish Workers' Statute. The new Royal Decree-Law of September 22, signified a momentous change for a Country that, similar to Italy, is characterized, especially when it comes to PA, by a deep distrust of workers' independence and an obsession with control.¹¹⁴ And in fact, in 2020 the percentage of home-based workers was 10.9, which goes down to 9.5 in 2021.¹¹⁵ What the Spanish unions have demanded is an attendance quota to ensure that the worker does not become isolated, coming very close to Italian 'agile work'. This norm, however, doesn't apply to public workers, who are under a special type of regime, unlike Italy.

Finally, as for Germany, In addition to the special loan program of the state development bank (KfW), the program includes tax deferrals, an expanded short-time work allowance, and a billion-dollar package of direct subsidies for small companies with up to ten employees - which often cannot get loans or have no collateral.¹¹⁶ In addition, the German Minister of Labor Hubertus Heil, stated in an interview with “Bild am

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² BBC Homepage, *What the Dutch can teach the world about remote work*.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ FORUM PA, *Covid-19 e smart working: uno sguardo all'Europa*.

¹¹⁵ EUROSTAT, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status*.

¹¹⁶ TAGESSCHAU, *Weiteres Hilfspaket für Mittelstand geplant*.

Sonntag” his willingness to pass a smart work law. Specifically, the law should provide for 24 guaranteed days per year of smart work for teleworkable jobs. This law, however, to date, has not yet been enacted. In Germany since 2017, the rate of home-based workers has conformed to the European average, surpassing it in 2020 by reaching 13.6 percent, to grow again in 2021 to 14.9.¹¹⁷

European leaders in smart work include Ireland and Finland. Ireland in 2019 had a rate of 7 percent, which soars in 2020 to 21.5 percent and reaches 32 percent in 2021.¹¹⁸ Finland, on the other hand, has a steady rate of about 12 percent from 2014 to 2019, when the rate is at 14 percent. In 2020 with 25.1%, it is the EU State with the highest percentage of workers from home.¹¹⁹

Generally, measures taken by European States to support employment include, almost all of them, smart-work, quarantine paid sickness and reduced hours regime.¹²⁰ Significant variety is noted in the form and intensity of state financial contributions related to the costs of sick leave [...]. Payment of 100% compensation is provided in Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Italy, and Portugal.¹²¹

1.4.1 Italy: worker and family support policies in the Covid-19 crisis

In the context just outlined it becomes crystal clear how difficult the pandemic period and more particularly the lockdown period was for families. It was in effect necessary for the State to intervene on their behalf. This section will be devoted precisely to the economic aid given by the Italian state to families, in order to understand whether it has been enough, also in comparison with the measures taken by other EU member States. The focus is on the year 2020, the most complicated year, which saw the first lockdown measure.

¹¹⁷ EUROSTAT, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status*.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ INAPP, *Le policy europee di contrasto alla crisi Covid-19*, p. 37.

¹²¹ Ivi, p. 39.

In detail, European states have favored a specific set of measures by opting for different types of measures, grouped below in the types ‘leave’, ‘alternatives to leave’, and ‘other modes of support’.¹²² As far as Italy is concerned, on the subject of leaves, it is worth mentioning the Decree-Law No. 34 of May 19, 2020: “urgent measures on health, support for labor and the economy, and social policies related to the epidemiological emergency from COVID-19” also known as “Relaunch Decree”¹²³, within which are the first measures in support of working parents. This Decree already contains modifications to the Decree-Law “Cura Italia” (18/2020), which already provided parental leaves that are now prolonged. Article number 72.1.a of this decree-law reads as follows: for the year 2020 from March 5 until July 31, 2020, and for a continuous or fractionated period, however, not exceeding thirty days, parents who are employed in the private sector are entitled to take, pursuant to paragraphs 10 and 11, for children up to the age of 12 years, subject to the provisions of paragraph 5, a specific leave, for which an allowance equal to 50 percent of the salary is granted.¹²⁴

A maximum of 30 days were granted to private workers with children under 12, which in Italy, were all in remote teaching. Specifically, Italy closed all schools on March 4, 2020, not to reopen them again for the 2019/2020 school year.¹²⁵ Since March, Italian youngsters have been unable to attend schools and universities, thus forced to flock to homes. Note that this decree comes two months after schools closed, so the only useful period that parents could use these leaves was only June, a period when school activity decreases and then ends in early June. For many parents to assist their children during this period of distance learning was therefore complicated: for those who were already at home teleworking, the addition of one or more members using wi-fi or a computer meant

¹²² INAPP, *Le policy europee di contrasto alla crisi Covid-19*, p. 60.

¹²³ «Decreto-legge 19 maggio 2020, n. 34: Misure urgenti in materia di salute, sostegno al lavoro e all'economia, nonché di politiche sociali connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19», also known as «Decreto Rilancio». (source: GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Decreto Legge 19 maggio 2020, n. 34, “Decreto Rilancio”).

¹²⁴ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Decreto Legge 19 maggio 2020, n. 34, “Decreto Rilancio”.

«Per l'anno 2020 a decorrere dal 5 marzo e sino al 31 luglio 2020, e per un periodo continuativo o frazionato comunque non superiore a trenta giorni, i genitori lavoratori dipendenti del settore privato hanno diritto a fruire, ai sensi dei commi 10 e 11, per i figli di età non superiore ai 12 anni, fatto salvo quanto previsto al comma 5, di uno specifico congedo, per il quale è riconosciuta una indennità pari al 50 per cento della retribuzione».

¹²⁵ INAPP, *Le policy europee di contrasto alla crisi Covid-19*, p. 59.

changes in the organization of space and time. On the other hand, those who had to continue to travel to the workplace had to leave their children at home, maybe alone, since external help was not an option due to the containment measures. Clause 72.1.b is in this regard: parents who are employed in the private sector with children under the age of 16, provided that there is no other parent in the household who is a beneficiary of income support instruments in the event of suspension or termination of employment or that there is no other parent who is not a worker, have the right to abstain from work for the entire period of suspension of educational services for children and educational activities in schools of all levels, without payment of allowances or recognition of figurative contribution, with prohibition of dismissal and the right to job retention.¹²⁶ In this case, unlike the previous one, there is no compensation, meaning that one gives up salary, but has the right to keep the job, even without exercising it.

Within the “Cura Italia” Decree-Law (18/2020)¹²⁷, article 46 stipulates the freeze on firings, first for 60 days, then, with the amendments of the subsequent Decree-Laws it is prorogued until 2021 for some kind of working categories. The layoff freeze measure is only an Italian phenomenon. In fact, other European countries have not adopted this but other measures to counter job loss. The EU has spoken out on the matter, arguing that «policies such as the general dismissal ban (“blocco dei licenziamenti”) tend to influence the composition but not the scale of the labour market adjustment».¹²⁸ It means that this measure primarily benefits ‘insiders’ or employees with open-ended contracts, at the

¹²⁶ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Decreto Legge 19 maggio 2020, n. 34, “Decreto Rilancio”.

«i genitori lavoratori dipendenti del settore privato con figli minori di anni 16, a condizione che nel nucleo familiare non vi sia altro genitore beneficiario di strumenti di sostegno al reddito in caso di sospensione o cessazione dell'attività lavorativa o che non vi sia altro genitore non lavoratore, hanno diritto di astenersi dal lavoro per l'intero periodo di sospensione dei servizi educativi per l'infanzia e delle attività didattiche nelle scuole di ogni ordine e grado, senza corresponsione di indennità né riconoscimento di contribuzione figurativa, con divieto di licenziamento e diritto alla conservazione del posto di lavoro».

¹²⁷ Article 46 of the D.L. 18/2020 reads: «sospensione delle procedure di impugnazione dei licenziamenti. A decorrere dalla data di entrata in vigore del presente decreto l'avvio delle procedure di cui agli articoli 4, 5 e 24, della legge 23 luglio 1991, n. 223 e' precluso per 60 giorni e nel medesimo periodo sono sospese le procedure pendenti avviate successivamente alla data del 23 febbraio 2020». (Source: Gazzetta Ufficiale).

¹²⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, *In-Depth Review for Italy, in accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances*, p. 18.

expense of temporary and seasonal workers.¹²⁹ «Moreover, a comparison with labour market developments in other Member States that did not introduce such a measure suggests that the dismissal ban was not particularly effective and proved redundant in view of the extended use of job retention schemes [...] The dismissal ban might even prove counterproductive, the longer it is in place, as it hampers the necessary adjustment of the workforce at the firm level».¹³⁰

The EU, among other things, has provided for 19 of its member States the SURE fund, namely “Temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency”, designed to protect jobs and incomes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the 19, Italy received the most funds to date, specifically receiving 27 billion. The SURE fund provides financial support, in the form of loans granted on favorable terms by the EU to member states, to finance national working time reduction schemes, similar measures to preserve jobs and support incomes, particularly for the self-employed, and some health measures.¹³¹ The EU, with these funds, wanted to direct these member States toward a certain kind of management of the employment crisis, with the reduction of working hours for example. For that and other reasons the EU Commission disagrees with the dismissal ban, which is also considered counterproductive, *inter alia*, because it ties the hands of employers.

Another important intervention was the one introducing smart work as an alternative way of performing work. The Prime Minister’s Decree dated March 1st 2020, provides, in Article 4.1.a, the guidelines for introducing so-called ‘agile work’: the modality of agile work governed by Articles 18 to 23 of Law No. 81 of May 22, 2017, can be applied, for the duration of the state of emergency referred to in the resolution of the Council of Ministers January 31, 2020, by employers to any subordinate employment relationship,

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *SURE: Report confirms instrument's success in protecting jobs and incomes*, Press Release, Brussels, September 22, 2021, p. 21.

in accordance with the principles dictated by the aforementioned provisions, even in the absence of the individual agreements provided for therein.¹³²

Later, in the “Cura Italia” Decree, the norms were broadened: disabled workers or workers who have a disabled person in the household are entitled to perform their work in agile mode, provided that such mode is compatible with the type of work;¹³³ agile work is the ordinary form of work in public administration, in order to reduce people in public offices, where it cannot be applied past vacations, leaves, etc. are used.¹³⁴ Finally, within the D.L. 34/2020 “Decreto Rilancio”, Article 90.1 states: until the termination of the state of epidemiological emergency from COVID-19, working parents employed in the private sector who have at least one child under the age of 14, provided that there is no other parent in the household who is a beneficiary of income support instruments in case of suspension or termination of employment or there is no non-working parent, are entitled to perform work in agile mode even in the absence of the individual agreements.¹³⁵

To conclude, with the Act 52/2022, the regulations set forth in DL. 34/2020 Art. 90, concerning working parents with under-14 children, are extended to July 31, 2022. The Italian legislature has slowly expanded the cohort of workers targeted by this measure to include the category of parents. Thus, an attempt has been made to combine labor policies with family policies, which is of great relevance in this crisis context.

¹³² GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, DECRETO DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI 1 marzo 2020. *Ulteriori disposizioni attuative del decreto-legge 23 febbraio 2020, n. 6, recante misure urgenti in materia di contenimento e gestione dell'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19.*

«La modalita' di lavoro agile disciplinata dagli articoli da 18 a 23 della legge 22 maggio 2017, n. 81, puo' essere applicata, per la durata dello stato di emergenza di cui alla deliberazione del Consiglio dei ministri 31 gennaio 2020, dai datori di lavoro a ogni rapporto di lavoro subordinato, nel rispetto dei principi dettati dalle menzionate disposizioni, anche in assenza degli accordi individuali ivi previsti».

¹³³ Decreto Legge 17 marzo 2020, n.18 “Cura Italia”, *Misure di potenziamento del Servizio sanitario nazionale e di sostegno economico per famiglie, lavoratori e imprese connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19.*

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, D.L. 34/2020 “Decreto Rilancio”, Art. 90.1.

«Fino alla cessazione dello stato di emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19, i genitori lavoratori dipendenti del settore privato che hanno almeno un figlio minore di anni 14, a condizione che nel nucleo familiare non vi sia altro genitore beneficiario di strumenti di sostegno al reddito in caso di sospensione o cessazione dell'attivita' lavorativa o che non vi sia genitore non lavoratore, hanno diritto a svolgere la prestazione di lavoro in modalita' agile anche in assenza degli accordi individuali».

Now, thus, it is worth referring to some of the most important measures in support of families launched by the Italian government in the midst of the very first pandemic wave.

Article 105 of the DL. 34/2020 “Decreto Rilancio” increased the ‘Family Policy Fund’ by 150 million euros for the year 2020, in order to allocate a share of resources to municipalities for the strengthening of summer day centers, territorial socio-educational services and centers with an educational and recreational function, during the summer period, for children aged between zero and 16 years.¹³⁶ For those who have toddlers but need to travel to the workplace, as an alternative to parental leave, there is an option to choose the payment of a bonus for the purchase of baby-sitting services. Still alternatively, DL. 34/2020, broadening the latter bonus, introduces the bonus for proven enrollment in summer centers and supplementary childcare services for the period from the closure of school educational services to August 31, 2020.¹³⁷

The 2020 Budget Law (Art. 1, paragraphs 343 and 344, of Law 160/2019) amended the regulations regarding the Daycare Bonus and forms of support at home (so-called Daycare Bonus).¹³⁸ The "Daycare bonus" is an economic support measure, introduced in 2017 with the aim of encouraging the use of public and private daycare by providing an annual contribution.¹³⁹ As of 2020, when the rate of daycare enrollment hit a standstill, the Bonus has been reshaped and increased based on differentiated ISEE thresholds: it remains equal to 1.500 euros for households with a minor ISEE value of more than 40.000 euros; for households with a minor ISEE value of up to 25,000 euros it reaches the amount of 3.000 euros per year (250 euros per month).¹⁴⁰ Despite the bonus, the primary problem of daycare accessibility remains: supply is still below the EU standard of 33 percent coverage of places compared to children (standard that should have been achieved in 2010).¹⁴¹ Another important gap is between Northern and Southern Italy. Both the Northeast and Central Italy consolidate coverage above the European target (34.5 percent

¹³⁶ Ivi, Art. 105.

¹³⁷ Ivi, Art. 72.

¹³⁸ CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI, *Politiche sociali per fronteggiare l'emergenza coronavirus - Welfare*.

¹³⁹ ISTAT, *Nidi e servizi integrativi per la prima infanzia - Anno educativo 2019-2020*, Roma, 2021, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI, *Politiche sociali per fronteggiare l'emergenza coronavirus - Welfare*.

¹⁴¹ ISTAT, *Nidi e servizi integrativi per la prima infanzia - Anno educativo 2019-2020*, p. 2.

and 35.3 percent, respectively), against the South (14.5 percent) and the Islands (15.7 percent).¹⁴² In 2020, including considering the decline resulting from the pandemic, about 18,000 less children have enjoyed the bonus than in the previous year, but even here, territorial differences remain. In the South the number of bonus users almost always reaches the level of available places, therefore, the further increase in the number of bonus recipients would require a greater receptive capacity of the supply system. The poor spread of services in the territories is thus a main reason why the bonus cannot be enjoyed by everyone who needs it.

Bonus on the side, the attendance of kindergartens in Italy is very low. Here, the children under the age of 3 attending any educational facility are 26.3 percent in 2019, a value lower than the European average (35.3 percent).¹⁴³ Factors affecting this figure certainly include the cost of services, accessibility as has just been clarified, and parents' work commitments. To be favored are households in which both parents work, in order to facilitate time balancing, as a matter of fact attendance rates increase as the income bracket of households increases.¹⁴⁴ Who are left out are low-income households, which are mainly found in southern Italy, where they also have to deal with the availability of places. Sometimes it is also unwise for the other parent to work, as all or a large part of his or her salary would go to pay for daycare services. When faced with these choices, it is usually the mothers who decide to give up work and raise their children personally.

Lastly, with regard to electronic equipment needed to carry out smart work but also distance learning, the Italian government has decided to provide a bonus to be dedicated to the purchase of precisely PCs and tablets but also to internet services. The bonus is in fact divided into two parts, one for the device and one for the Internet connection. It can be applied for by companies but also by households with an ISEE not exceeding 50.000 euro per year. The bonus amounts to 500 euros for isee below 20,000 and 200 euros for isee above 20,000.¹⁴⁵ To this we must also add the many admirable initiatives of private and public entities. The University of Padova has given free wi-fi modem and a 60

¹⁴² Ivi, p. 6.

¹⁴³ Ivi, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Decreto 7 agosto 2020, *Piano voucher sulle famiglie a basso reddito*.

GB/month data SIM card for one year, to help students struggling with the new distance learning modes.¹⁴⁶

The primary purpose of this bonus, which came when the lockdown was already over, is to push Italians to go digital. Actually, «Italy ranks 20th out of 27 EU Member States in the 2021 edition of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)».¹⁴⁷ In almost all indicators Italy is far below the European average, especially in human capital, where Italy ranks 25th out of 27.¹⁴⁸ «Only 42% of people aged 16-74 years have at least basic digital skills (56% in the EU) and only 22% have above basic digital skills (31% in the EU)».¹⁴⁹ In Italy, «legislation adopted in 2020 provides for reforms to speed up broadband rollout – including 5G – and to simplify and accelerate the digitalisation of public services. During 2020 and 2021, there was a sharp acceleration in the adoption of major enabling platforms for digital public services by public administrations».¹⁵⁰ Despite this, the pandemic has not triggered a real digital revolution in Italy, attempts to do so instead the Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)¹⁵¹: twenty-five percent of its funds are in fact dedicated to the digital transition.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA, *Online la piattaforma per le richieste di contributi straordinari 2020-21*.

¹⁴⁷ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021, Italy*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Ivi*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ivi*, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ The 13th of July 2021 was officially approved the “Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR)”. It envisions a package of investments and reforms dedicated to: digitalization, ecological transition, sustainable mobility, education, inclusion, health. (Source: Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico).

¹⁵² *Ibid*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EARLY HOME-WORK IN ITALY

Working from home, before the latest smartwork revival, already existed, just in different forms, for different reasons but with very similar consequences. The so-called ‘lavoro a domicilio’ - which in this paper will be addressed as ‘home-work’ or ‘home-based work’ - will be the focus of this second chapter. The debate on home-based work in Italy experienced three crucial milestones: the first in the early 1900s, when at the same time as legislative initiatives to protect factory workers, discussions began on the regulation of this form of work; the second in the early 1950s when unions and legislators, faced with the glaringly exploitative conditions of home-based workers, pressed for decisive protective action; and finally in the late 1960s and early 1970s, during the so-called ‘hot autumn’ of mobilizations that led to the passage of the Home-based Work Law in 1973.¹⁵³ In this paper, the main interest falls on the last two stages above: from the 1950s to the early 1970s. The first period is of double interest in that it is the same period in which the Republic and its Constitution were born. The chapter opens precisely with an observation of the Constitutional Charter because of its importance in determining the rights and duties of the new citizens of the Republic.

2.1. The building of the woman figure in the early Republic

Before analyzing the specific case of home-based work, it is good to know the cultural and legislative basis in which women in Italy stood, particularly with reference to the Italian Constitution, which entered into force January 1st, 1948. Generally speaking, the Italian constitution is referred to as a wide-ranging charter, written and

¹⁵³ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio in Italia*, in “Genesis. Rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche”, n. 2 (2016), Roma, Viella, 2016, pp. 127-145, p. 127.

agreed upon by all political forces, which is why it is said to be fair and impartial. Nevertheless, it is the child of its time, reflecting the morals and the values of those years. It is interesting to take a look at some of its articles, which have been the topic of controversy in recent years especially.

«The paradox of wanting to found a democratic state on work while a large share of the population - some men and the vast majority of women, according to the notion of work of the time - did not work has represented a bias with far-reaching consequences».¹⁵⁴ These are the words of Sarti concerning the first article of the Italian constitution, that reads as follows: «Italy is a democratic Republic founded on labour».¹⁵⁵ Sarti, commenting on this very point, claims that «it created a kind of overlap between being a worker and being a citizen».¹⁵⁶ If that were the case, Sarti argues, three-quarters of Italian women back in the day would not have had to consider themselves citizens:

According to the data issued from the population census that took place a few years later (on 4 November 1951), only 24.3 percent of women of working age were economically active, i.e. fewer than one in four. [...] Among men, the proportion was reversed: fewer than one in four was registered as economically inactive; as many as 77 percent resulted economically active. Such an imbalance announced a blatantly gender-biased citizenship at the expense of women.¹⁵⁷

These data, however, have a very specific motivation, namely, the way the censuses worked. In particular, the way housewives were categorized. This problem has ancient roots, even before the birth of the republic. On this specific occasion «“women attending to domestic tasks are included in the non-professional condition even though they occasionally or sporadically perform a working activity” the notes to the census explicated».¹⁵⁸ Moreover, «“as for women attending to domestic tasks, it has to be noted that have been considered as such even those who, though carrying out a profession, craft or job, mainly carry out their activities in the home”».¹⁵⁹ These are those processes that

¹⁵⁴ SARTI, *Toiling women, non-working housewives, lesse citizens*, in *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, p. 210.

¹⁵⁵ Senato della Repubblica, *La Costituzione, principi fondamentali*.

«L'Italia è una Repubblica democratica, fondata sul lavoro».

¹⁵⁶ SARTI, *Toiling women, non-working housewives, lesse citizens*, in *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, p. 207

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

have contributed to what could be defined as “delaborization” of home-based work.¹⁶⁰ In particular, work from home has been established as another kind of work, different from that which gives Italian citizenship.

Even if part of those “housewives” certainly carried out some paid activities, in most cases they surely performed irregular, precarious, casual activities that were not considered proper work (by the census, their husband, or the women themselves) and consequently were not recorded. In any case, the activities of such women - though unquestionably important or even vital for their families and the nation as a whole - were something different from the work assumed by the constitution as the very foundation of citizenship and rights.¹⁶¹

This very phenomenon is by no means to be underestimated. The missed or improper framing of a large part of the population is not just a mistake that remains on paper, based on this data the state promoted its initiatives, directed its funds. In addition, «censuses not only offer a representation of society, they also contribute to shape it».¹⁶² In a sense it can be said that the housewife who does not work is all a fabrication at the hands of the State. «In the tables of the 1861 census there was no specific data about housewives: only by reading the comments could one learn that the so-called *donne di casa* (another way to describe *housewives*, which literally means “women of the house”) were included among people without a profession».¹⁶³ Something, however, changed in the 1881 census, in fact, in these tables the category of “people attending to domestic tasks” is added.¹⁶⁴ The criteria adopted in this census included women performing multiple activities in the category of workers. On the contrary, in the 1901 census, «the criteria adopted then represent an excellent demonstration of how ideas on the proper roles of men and women and their changes over time affect the representation of socioeconomic reality provided by censuses».¹⁶⁵ The criterion adopted in this census was to categorize people by their occupation, not by status.¹⁶⁶ But here again it shows the application of double standards against women. «The women who besides attending to their families performed some paid work at home, in a factory or as a servants had been classified not as workers but in

¹⁶⁰ Ivi, p. 190.

¹⁶¹ Ivi, p. 207.

¹⁶² Ivi, p. 190.

¹⁶³ Ivi, p. 191.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ivi, p. 192.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

the category of “People supported by the family” (*Persone mantenute dalla famiglia*)»,¹⁶⁷ thus, their occupations fell under ‘ancillary activities’.¹⁶⁸ Here lies the application of a double standard:

When people could be classified by condition or by profession, men were always classified by profession, whereas in the case of women an ambiguous distinction was introduced, hitherto unknown, between accessory activities and major activities. [...] for women, carrying out other activities, even paid ones, besides care and domestic work, was no longer enough to avoid being classified as housewives, who were included among the economically passive population.¹⁶⁹

So it seems that from 1881 to 1901 there were steps backward in terms of recognition of women's work. Yet, another aspect of this matter should be considered.

Being a housewife and “not to work” was presented as an ideal to pursue, as if - for women - work were still as debasing as it had been for centuries for the élites. [...] inasmuch as some women became convinced that being an housewife and “not to work” was a privilege, they were likely to hide their occupations to census officers and to declare themselves as housewives, thus contributing to the statistical overrepresentation of housewives.¹⁷⁰

While for men, therefore, working was a source of pride and especially rights, for women it was almost a shame, a guilt to be hidden, especially from prying eyes.

The special apprehension toward women's labor is demonstrated, among other things, by a 1902 law¹⁷¹ concerning, together, the regulation of certain aspects of women's and children's labor.¹⁷² In particular «it established twelve years as the minimum age to start working and did not allow women of any age to work underground or minors (later all women) to work overnight. The maximum workload was established to be twelve hours a day for six days a week, with one rest day weekly; compulsory (but unpaid) maternity leave was introduced».¹⁷³ This law is mainly known precisely for the introduction of maternity leave for the first time in Italy. In addition to being unpaid, it

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ivi, pp. 192-193.

¹⁷⁰ Ivi, p. 201

¹⁷¹ Act July 19th, 1902, n.242 “disposizioni circa il lavoro delle donne e dei fanciulli negli opifici industriali, laboratori, ecc”, also known as “Legge Carcano”. (Source: Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia, Legge 19 luglio 1902 n. 242, *disposizioni circa il lavoro delle donne e dei fanciulli negli opifici industriali, laboratori ecc.*)

¹⁷² Ivi, p. 203

¹⁷³ Ibidem

provided only four weeks of leave after delivery, not during the actual pregnancy.¹⁷⁴ What is disappointing about this law is that it puts an adult woman and a child on the same equal footing, as Sarti rightly claims:

such measures associated adult women and children, contributing to represent females as minors and weak creatures. At the same time, they aimed at protecting and encouraging working women's maternal and family function. [...] they ended up by strengthening the centrality of women's maternal and family duties, which had been so often invoked to justify their exclusion from political rights.¹⁷⁵

The failure to differentiate between adult women and children is at the root of this protective attitude developed toward women, as Sarti says, seen as weak creatures to be protected, clearly by their fathers and later by their husbands, and eventually also by their children once they have grown up. It is as if it passes in custody from father to husband, but its functions remain the same, from caring for one family to another. Engels, as a matter of fact, talking about the monogamous family, clarifies: «it appears to be the subjection of one sex by the other, as the proclamation of a conflict between sexes entirely unknown hitherto in prehistoric times».¹⁷⁶ But there's more, «the first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamian marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male»,¹⁷⁷ «thus, monogamy does not by any means make its appearance in history as the reconciliation of man and woman, still less as the highest form of such a reconciliation».¹⁷⁸ Rather, it introduces what today we call “gender roles”.

Gender roles are well defined, without a veil, by the Italian constitution. In this regard, Article 37 express that:

The working woman has the same rights and, for equal work, the same wages as the worker. Working conditions must enable the fulfillment of her essential family function and ensure special adequate protection for the mother and child. The law establishes the minimum age limit for wage labor. The

¹⁷⁴ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE DEL REGNO D'ITALIA, Legge 17 luglio 1902, n.242, *disposizioni circa il lavoro delle donne e dei fanciulli negli opifici industriali, laboratori, ecc.*

¹⁷⁵ SARTI, *Toiling women, non-working housewives, lesse citizens*, in *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, p. 203

¹⁷⁶ ENGELS Friederick, *Engels on the origin and evolution of the family*, in “Population and development review” Vol.14 n.4 (Dec. 1988), pp. 705-709, p. 720.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Republic shall protect the work of minors by special regulations and guarantee to them, for equal work, the right to equal pay.¹⁷⁹

Once again, female and child labor are treated in the same context, regulated within the same article. For the Italian lawmaker they are interrelated. Once again, women's family function is essential; it must be guaranteed in spite of paid work, which takes a back seat, further demonstrating the tendency of censuses to put domestic functions before actual work activities in defining the status of women. Claiming that women's role is essential to the family accomplishes nothing more than justifying their exclusion from the labor market. «The adjective ‘essential’ attached to ‘women’s role in the family’ clearly explains and suggests both a necessity and a predetermination. This formulation is the result of a compromise between the Catholic, and conservative, forces and the leftist, and secular parties, but it also reflects an ambivalence inside the labor movement itself».¹⁸⁰ Despite the fact that Article 3 of the constitution guarantees equal social dignity for men and women, the old inequality remains.¹⁸¹ What's more, as many prominent voices argued at the time, this article of the constitution alone was not enough to guarantee those rights. Congressman Di Vittorio (CGIL Secretary General), in an interview with “Noi Donne” about Article 37 of the constitution, goes on to say:

It is quite another thing, however, to move from words to deeds; from abstract statements to concrete achievements. And it is on this ground that the retrogressive forces in society, represented mainly by the big industrial monopolies and the big agrarians, put up the most tenacious resistance. [...] All this shows that the preconceived hostility against equal economic treatment, are not so much due to "stupid prejudices," as to the sordid selfishness of the big patronage, which feeds those "prejudices" in order to find an additional source of profits in subjecting women to a more intense and ruthless exploitation than the already harsh exploitation of men. It is, therefore, against this exploitation of women's labor that we must aim, in order to obtain the effective application of Article 37, of which the employers take no account; exactly as if it did not exist.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ SENATO DELLA REPUBBLICA, *La Costituzione*, Parte I, Titolo III, Articolo 37.

«La donna lavoratrice ha gli stessi diritti e, a parità di lavoro, le stesse retribuzioni che spettano al lavoratore. Le condizioni di lavoro devono consentire l'adempimento della sua essenziale funzione familiare e assicurare alla madre e al bambino una speciale adeguata protezione. La legge stabilisce il limite minimo di età per il lavoro salariato. La Repubblica tutela il lavoro dei minori con speciali norme e garantisce ad essi, a parità di lavoro, il diritto alla parità di retribuzione».

¹⁸⁰ GISSI, *The home as a factory. Rethinking the debate on housewives wage in Italy, 1929-1980*, in *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, p. 143.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸² *Le donne e l'art. 37*, in “Noi donne”, 1951 n. 45, pp. 4-5, p. 4.

As this interview demonstrates, the fear that arose was mainly about whether the principles laid down in Article 37 were actually being enforced. This was not just a fear, but a reality, as Hon. Teresa Noce claims: «the constitution is a dead letter especially with regard to economic and social problems because the right to work does not apply, the right to rest does not apply, the protection of maternity and childhood does not apply, and, of all, the least applied is precisely Article 37, which enshrines the same rights and equality of labor with the worker».¹⁸³ To remedy this problem, many were proposing a law to implement those principles, among them Deputy Bianca Bianchi (Italian Workers' Socialist Party) and Deputy Ester Colini Lombardi (Christian Democracy).¹⁸⁴ This law came, with considerable delay in 1977: Act No. 903 of December 9, 1977 «Equal treatment of men and women in employment matters».¹⁸⁵ This bill merely reiterates what is contained in Article 37 of the Constitution, for instance:

Discrimination on the basis of sex is prohibited with regard to access to employment; The female worker is entitled to the same pay as the male worker when the services required are equal or of equal value; In manufacturing companies, including artisanal ones, it is forbidden to employ women from midnight to 6 a.m.; The right to be absent from work and the economic treatment provided for by Article 7 and the second paragraph of Article 15 of Law No. 1204, are also granted to the working father, even if he is an adoptive or foster father pursuant to Article 314/20 of the Civil Code, as an alternative to the working mother or when the children are entrusted to the father alone.¹⁸⁶

«Altra cosa, invece, è passare dalle parole ai fatti; dalle dichiarazioni astratte alle realizzazioni concrete. Ed è su questo terreno che le forze retrive della società, rappresentate principalmente dai grandi monopoli industriali e dai grande agrari, oppongono la più tenace resistenza. [...] Tutto ciò dimostra che l'ostilità preconcepita contro l'uguaglianza del trattamento economico, non sono tanto dovute a «stupidi pregiudizi», quanto all'egoismo sordido del grande patronato, che alimenta quei «pregiudizi» allo scopo di trovare una fonte supplementare di profitti nel sottoporre le donne ad uno sfruttamento più intenso e spietato di quello già duro che si esercita sugli uomini. E', dunque, contro questo sfruttamento del lavoro femminile che bisogna puntare, per ottenere l'applicazione effettiva dell'art. 37, del quale i datori di lavoro non tengono nessun conto; esattamente come se non esistesse».

¹⁸³ *Le donne e l'art. 37*, in "Noi donne", 1951 n. 46, pp. 10-11, p. 11.

«la costituzione è lettera morta soprattutto per ciò che riguarda i problemi economici e sociali perché il diritto al lavoro non si applica, il diritto al riposo non si applica, la protezione della maternità e infanzia non si applica e, fra tutti, il meno applicato è proprio l'art. 37 che sancisce gli stessi diritti e parità di lavoro con il lavoratore».

¹⁸⁴ *Le donne e l'art. 37*, in "Noi donne", 1951 n. 45, p. 5.

¹⁸⁵ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 7 dicembre 1977 n.903, *parità di trattamento tra uomini e donne in materia di lavoro*.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

«E' vietata qualsiasi discriminazione fondata sul sesso per quanto riguarda l'accesso al lavoro; La lavoratrice ha diritto alla stessa retribuzione del lavoratore quando le prestazioni richieste siano uguali o di pari valore; Nelle aziende manifatturiere, anche artigianali, e' vietato adibire le donne al lavoro dalle ore 24 alle ore 6; Il diritto di assentarsi dal lavoro e il trattamento economico previsti rispettivamente

The novelty, on the other hand, introduced by this law concerns the very last article mentioned (Art. 7): fathers are also entitled to family leave, the family therefore ceases to be the sole responsibility of women. Access to these permits, however, is constrained: the father can only use them if the mother does not, and vice versa. In addition, excluded from this right are home-workers and those employed in domestic and family services.¹⁸⁷ Considering that the vast majority of home-workers were women [see 2.2], the outcome is easily predictable. In short, the Italian government enacted a law designed to implement an article of the constitution that went into effect twenty-nine years earlier. This can mean that the Italian constitution is not fully respected anyway, so much so that it is necessary to pass an ad hoc law. Moreover, this is a special case, which has enjoyed a great deal of consideration, thanks mainly to the participation of civil society in the political debate. It is probably because of all this concern that the State felt the need to enact an additional law, because it was crystal clear that women were suffering a special discrimination in the work field. Thus, if a state law is worth more than a constitutional principle, how many other constitutional rights have been forgotten because they did not have a law to enforce them? But also, on the other hand, is the enactment of a law sufficient to remedy a felony now repeated over time and well established? How Betti observes: throughout the 1950s, and in some ways until the passage of the Workers' Bill of Rights in 1970, the Constitution was the model for modernizing labor legislation.¹⁸⁸ Moreover,

the years of the economic boom also saw at the international level a reflection on the need to increase the stability and security of workers, by the International Labour Organization, which promoted conventions and recommendations [...] going so far as to propose a real employment policy (Convention 122, 1964) which, however, was ratified by Italy in 1971, in the political climate that followed the approval of the Workers' Rights Statute.¹⁸⁹

dall'articolo 7 e dal secondo comma dell'articolo 15 della legge 30 dicembre 1971, n. 1204, sono riconosciuti anche al padre lavoratore, anche se adottivo o affidatario ai sensi dell'articolo 314/20 del codice civile, in alternativa alla madre lavoratrice ovvero quando i figli siano affidati al solo padre».

¹⁸⁷ Ivi, Art. 7.

¹⁸⁸ BETTI Eloisa, *Precari e precarie: una storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, Roma, Carocci editore, 2019, p. 59.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Act May 20th, 1970, n. 300, "Norme sulla tutela della liberta' e dignita' dei lavoratori, della liberta' sindacale e dell'attivita' sindacale, nei luoghi di lavoro e norme sul collocamento" is also known as the "Workers' Statute" and mainly renowned for its Article 18, which meant a real earthquake for labor

Article 37 is not the only one that deals with the rights of the woman. Article 31 in fact is expressed as follows: «the Republic facilitates by economic measures and other provisions the formation of the family and the fulfillment of related tasks, with special regard to large families. It shall protect maternity, childhood and youth, fostering the necessary institutions for this purpose».¹⁹⁰ Evidently, when it comes to the family, it is automatic for the Italian lawmaker to refer to the woman, thus to motherhood and its protection. Forgetting that the family, as the State itself conceives it, is composed of two parents, who should enjoy the same protections and respond to the same duties. For that matter, Article 29 of the Constitution, which guarantees the rights of the family, states that the one is founded on marriage between two legally and morally equal persons.¹⁹¹ In the words of the constitution, motherhood is to be protected, instead, the word paternity (which appears in Article 30) is found in the sentence “the law dictates the rules and limits for the search for paternity”.¹⁹² These statements, placed at the basis of Italian culture and society, have carried forward the image of the family on the shoulders of women.

The picture of the women according to the Constitution is now evident: from voluntary ‘exclusion’ from citizenship because they are drawn as non-workers, to justifying this attitude because their essential function is that of the family. Access to work is guaranteed for her if she agrees not to neglect her main job, that within the home.

Thus while on the one hand the lawmakers aimed to limit those types of work that, being performed outside the home, patently came into competition with women’s domestic roles, on the other they ignored those types of work that, although performed within the domestic sphere, could have disastrous consequences for pregnancy, childbirth, and the baby. At the same time, such measures implied recognition by the state of the importance, for the nation, of maternity and therefore women, although these measures chained females more closely to their alleged “natural” role as mothers.¹⁹³

relations. (source: GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 20 maggio 1970 n. 300, *Norme sulla tutela della liberta' e dignita' dei lavoratori, della liberta' sindacale e dell'attivita' sindacale, nei luoghi di lavoro e norme sul collocamento*)

¹⁹⁰ Senato della Repubblica, *La Costituzione*, Parte I, Titolo II, Art. 31.

«La Repubblica agevola con misure economiche e altre provvidenze la formazione della famiglia e l'adempimento dei compiti relativi, con particolare riguardo alle famiglie numerose. Protegge la maternità, l'infanzia e la gioventù, favorendo gli istituti necessari a tale scopo».

¹⁹¹ Ivi, Parte I, Titolo II, Art. 29.

¹⁹² Ivi, Parte I, Titolo II, Art. 30.

¹⁹³ SARTI, *Toiling women, non-working housewives, lesse citizens*, in *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, p. 203.

All those jobs that were performed inside the houses were invisible to the State, and consequently so were the workers. However, this has not prevented the knock-on spread of those forms of work carried out in the home mainly by women.

2.2. Home-work in Italian legislation

In order to understand the characteristics of this first type of work from home, it is necessary to refer to the Italian jurisprudence of the epoch. In Italy, homework legislation does not coincide with its inception; it took years before homeworkers' rights were recognized. The economic boom years meant a turning point for all those workers employed with a labor relationship defined 'particular',¹⁹⁴ among these there were homeworkers.

The negative assessment of home-based work—seen as a phenomenon essentially halting or distorting economic development and based on illicit forms of cost-cutting to the detriment of workers—justified, for a long time, delays in enacting protection.¹⁹⁵ The state thus tried to cover its eyes in the face of a phenomenon it had grossly underestimated. In the early part of the 1900s, the phenomenon was now too great, so during the discussions of the 1902 and 1909 laws on women's and children's work [see 2.1], the debate on home labor was also opened.¹⁹⁶ The speeches that accompanied that debate initially confirmed the political will unfavorable to the legal regulation of the phenomenon: the figure of the home worker remained outside any legal assessment, the only worker working outside the home was the recipient of protective measures.¹⁹⁷ The very 1902 law protecting women's and children's labor did not apply in any way to home labor, but only to factory labor.¹⁹⁸ Due to World War I, the debate had to stop, though the war had given

¹⁹⁴ The so-called "rapporti particolari di lavoro" are employment relationships with specific characteristics on a case-by-case basis.

¹⁹⁵ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, Musso Stefano (ed. by), Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 2006 p. 132.

¹⁹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 133

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

a further boost to home-based work, using it extensively.¹⁹⁹ In 1921 the discussion could no longer be postponed, so it was decided to take action: a draft bill was tabled that, by first, defined who was the home worker, rather than who was not.²⁰⁰ Although this proposal did not come to pass into law, it reopened the debate.

In truth, the path chosen was the extension or exclusion from applicability to this labor sector of the measures gradually adopted in the field of subordinate labor. It is the 1923 regulations on working hours (Royal Decree No. 692, March 15), on compulsory insurance against disability or old age and against involuntary unemployment (Royal Dec. 30, No. 3158 and No. 3184), and the subsequent executive regulations, that bring out a configuration of home-based work that is less indefinite than in the past, with an attempt to specify its contours.²⁰¹

Further steps forward came in 1927 with the Labor Charter, in which the collective bargaining agreement was extended to home-based workers, attempting an equalization between this and the other forms of labor defined as ordinary.²⁰² However, because home-based work has unique characteristics, the lawmaker decided to equalize but also to enact ad hoc regulations for this type of work, for example, special regulations on safety and cleanliness of the premises where people work.²⁰³ These norms landed in the Civil Code of 1942 in Article 2128, which extended the common rules of labor law to home-based workers.²⁰⁴ The interpretations that followed went in the largely agreed direction of understanding home-based work as a marginal form of subordinate employment, thus related to it.²⁰⁵ And that's exactly what happens with the 1958 law.

The law that inaugurated the set of measures concerning particular labor relationships is precisely that on work from home. The Act dated March 13th, 1958²⁰⁶,

¹⁹⁹ Ivi, p. 136.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ivi, p. 138.

²⁰² Ivi, pp. 138-139.

²⁰³ Ivi, p. 139.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ivi, p. 140.

²⁰⁶ This law had been on the table for years. Already in 1950 a law was proposed for the protection of home-work signed by the syndicalists Di Vittorio and Pastore. Several discussions followed, from which emerged the difficulty of defining this two-sided phenomenon: home-work related either to traditional craft or to the industrial type. There was also a double will behind these legislative proposals: to protect and combat at the same time a phenomenon that was spreading like wildfire and that presented working conditions not protected from any point of view. Although it was approved in 58, it entered into force only in 60. in this period of time union activists and feminists mobilized to inform all home workers of the existence of a new law to protect them. As was to be expected, employers, who saw their profits reduced under the new law, adopted threatening attitudes towards workers, who were forced to become artisans in

number 264 “Tutela del lavoro a domicilio” defines what is meant by ‘home-worker’. In particular, Art. 1 reads as follows:

For the purposes of this law, home-based workers are considered to be those persons of either sex who perform in their own homes or on premises to which they have the availability - including with the help of family members, but excluding waged labor - subordinate work however paid, on behalf of one or more entrepreneurs, using raw or ancillary materials and equipment of their own or provided by the entrepreneur.²⁰⁷

Home-based work would imply actual subordination, which is, on the other hand, to be ruled out when the worker directly supplies the raw material and works for a plurality of consumers with direct peddling of the product, thus assuming the figure of a small artisan.²⁰⁸ The important point of this definition lies in the words "on behalf of one or more entrepreneurs", that is the trait that also distinguishes home-workers from craftsmanship, the home worker is distinguished because he does not produce for the market – that is, for the undifferentiated and eventual consumer – but for a certain and identified principal or for more than one.²⁰⁹

Art. 5 says that workers performing home-based work shall be paid at full piecework rates resulting from collective bargaining agreements or, in the absence thereof, from prior agreements between the parties, approved by the provincial commission referred to in Article 3.²¹⁰ As is shown in this article, object of the contractual

order not to lose their jobs. The law has thus turned out to be ineffective, not fighting against clandestine activity or exploitation that characterized home-work. In fact, in 1973 a new law which revised the previous one was enacted. (Source: BETTI Eloisa, *Precari e precarie: una storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, pp. 69-72)

²⁰⁷ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 13 Marzo 1958 n. 264, *Tutela del lavoro a domicilio*.

«Sono considerati lavoratori a domicilio agli effetti della presente legge, le persone di ambo i sessi che eseguono nel proprio domicilio o in locali di cui abbiano la disponibilita' - anche con l'aiuto dei familiari, ma con esclusione di manodopera salariata - lavoro subordinato comunque retribuito, per conto di uno o piu' imprenditori, utilizzando materie prime o accessorie ed attrezzature proprie o fornite dall'imprenditore».

²⁰⁸ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE DI INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, Relazioni della commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, Segretariati generali della Camera dei Deputati e del Senato della Repubblica, Roma, 1958, p.289-290.

²⁰⁹ Ivi, p. 346.

²¹⁰ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 13 Marzo 1958 n. 264, *Tutela del lavoro a domicilio*.

«lavoratori che eseguono lavoro a domicilio dovranno essere retribuiti con tariffe di cottimo pieno risultanti da contratti collettivi di categoria o, in mancanza di questi, da pattuizioni preventive fra le parti, approvate dalla Commissione provinciale di cui all'art. 3».

relationship is not the performance of work, but the finished product, as committed by the contractor,²¹¹ another trait that distinguishes home-work from craftsmanship.

It is, in other words, a relationship that has the characteristic of full piecework paid by measure rather than by time. And such a type of counter-performance does not fall within the schemes of true subordinate employment, which makes the worker's working energies available to the entrepreneur and commensurate the counter-performances with the time during which such energies have been available to the entrepreneur.²¹²

It is not the work performance, during a certain period, of a given person that is taken into account, but the result of the work.²¹³ In fact, more often than not, the work is done with the help of family members, so much so that it could be called 'family work'.²¹⁴ Article 1 of this Law, previously shown, indeed contemplates the assistance of family members in the performance of work. But to be paid is not the person, since doing so should provide a salary for each person who lends his or her energy, but the object resulting from this work. What is surprising is that one cannot use help from outside the family option that was instead provided for in the regulation August 28, 1924 No. 1422²¹⁵. The rationale for excluding this possibility is that it would complicate an already complicated picture, with very weak lines of demarcation that would thus become even more pronounced.

Finally, a last aspect worth noting concerns the continuity of the employment relationship, which in the case of the subordinate employee is guaranteed while

In the case of home-based work, continuity may be there, but it is not characteristic of the relationship, which arises, is maintained, suspended, interrupted, and resumed according to the production needs of the entrepreneur, who also has a choice from time to time among the various home-based workers he usually employs.²¹⁶

²¹¹ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE DI INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, Relazioni della commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato* p. 348.

L'oggetto del rapporto contrattuale non è la prestazione di opera, ma il prodotto finito, così come è stato commesso dall'imprenditore.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ivi, p. 349.

²¹⁴ Ivi, p. 348

²¹⁵ It is the "R.D. 28 agosto 1924, n. 1422, *Approvazione del regolamento per la esecuzione del R.D. 30 dicembre 1923, n. 3184, concernente provvedimenti per l'assicurazione obbligatoria contro l'invalidità e la vecchiaia*. Article 4, expresses the possibility for the home-worker to hire wage workers from outside the family, thus acting as an employer.

²¹⁶ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE DI INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, Relazioni della commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia,

This element is certainly an omen of precarity, of the absence of insurance.

Finally, it should not be overlooked that home-based workers tend to remain alien to any form of union organization, which finds its natural element of polarization in the coexistence of workers in companies.²¹⁷ When there is a lack of relationship between co-workers, confrontation, sharing, it is much easier to suffer exploitation from the employer, whose interest is to split the workforce by putting it into conflict.

Home-based work has often been represented as a ‘phenomenon’ contingent in nature, entirely dependent on economic cycles. It has withstood, on the contrary, to three industrial revolutions, demonstrating great capacity of adaptation to various national contexts and technological changes and proving to be a foundational part of the Italian economy.²¹⁸ This premise is essential to deconstruct the narrative hegemonic about the forms of production defined as ‘non-standard’. If by ‘nonstandard’ or ‘atypical’ is meant all the forms of contractualized employment that are not full-time or indefinite, within a subordinate employment relationship should be included: fixed-term work (seasonal, intermittent), contracted work, dependent self-employment, and part-time work. In fact, the history of labor globally demonstrates that these forms that today are defined as ‘nonstandard’ and ‘atypical’ are the most common and typical forms that have characterized the unfolding of paid work activity. At this point, it is the experience of ‘standard’ and ‘typical’ work that is the exception.²¹⁹ Nevertheless, the capitalist norm assigns only permanent employment the label of ‘standard’, relegating all other forms of work to non-standard. Moreover, with industrial development the term ‘labor’ has been assigned a specific characterization reducible to only paid work activity performed in another place than that of habitual residence.²²⁰

vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 350.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ TOFFANIN Tania, *Tra integrazione e seclusione: alcune note di riflessione sulla regolazione del lavoro a domicilio in Italia*, in *Le frontiere del contratto: status, mobilità, dipendenza (XIX-XX secolo)*, Bernardi – Ferruccio (ed. by), Palermo, New Digital Frontiers, 2021, p. 64.

²¹⁹ Ivi, p. 65.

²²⁰ Ivi, p. 69.

From all this, there are consequences regarding the content of the subordination bond, remaining almost excluded or at least greatly attenuated, the disciplinary power.²²¹ Indeed, the misunderstandings that caused this law, its insufficient applicability, that led to its revision, were partly due to the fact that the professional position of the homemaker has many of the characteristics of the self-employed worker; but, on the other hand, given the nature of his socio-economic position, profoundly reflecting on his legal position as well, there is a need for protection on a par with the employed worker.²²² On the inadequacy of this law, the Hon. Giacomo Brodolini (Socialist Party) speaks out in an interview for “Noi donne”:

The Home Labor Law certainly does not represent the best that could have been expected to ensure a serious discipline capable of eliminating the serious forms of exploitation and serious irregularities found in this particular sector of labor relations. [...] Law and regulation should, however, be considered, even with their deficiencies and limitations, a useful tool at the disposal of the trade unions, whose task it is to urge their application. It should be recalled that the fundamental requirement to which there is a permanent need to conform in order to ensure an effective improvement in the conditions of homeworkers and to free them from exploitation that is in many cases shameful, is that of maximum unity among trade union organizations.²²³

As a matter of facts, Law No. 264 of March 13, 1958 on home-based work does not define an independent case of home-based work, as has been the case in other systems, but merely institutes forms of control to reduce the irregularities present.²²⁴ This law represents the legal framing of the home worker that will apply throughout the 1960s, until 1973, when it is revised. Yet, it should also be dutifully mentioned that the Act 264/1958 though with all its flaws and limitations, represented an achievement; it was the

²²¹ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE DI INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, Relazioni della commissione parlamentare d’inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 348.

²²² Ivi, p. 346

²²³ *Si è fatta adulta la legge sul lavoro a domicilio*, in “Noi donne”, n.20 (1960), p. 11.

«La legge sul lavoro a domicilio non rappresenta certamente quanto di meglio sarebbe stato lecito attendersi per garantire una seria disciplina capace di eliminare le gravi forme di sfruttamento e le gravi irregolarità che si riscontrano in questo particolare settore dei rapporti di lavoro. [...] Legge e regolamento vanno considerati tuttavia, pur con le loro deficienze e con i loro limiti, un utile strumento a disposizione delle organizzazioni sindacali, alle quali compete il compito di sollecitarne l’applicazione. Va ricordato che l’esigenza fondamentale alla quale occorre permanentemente adeguarsi per garantire un effettivo miglioramento delle condizioni dei lavoratori a domicilio e per liberarli da uno sfruttamento in molti casi vergognoso, è quella del massimo di unità fra le organizzazioni sindacali».

²²⁴ TOFFANIN, *Tra integrazione e seclusione: alcune note di riflessione sulla regolazione del lavoro a domicilio in Italia*, p. 76.

result of the struggle of the women workers who organized mass demonstrations and strikes especially in Emilia and Tuscany. And, soon after, it was still they who moved for the enforcement of the law, for an agreement on full piecework rates.²²⁵ From 1959 and 1960 in fact, particularly in Tuscany and Emilia, where home-based work was pervasive [see 2.2], major struggles were organized: women workers organized pickets in factories and stopped people in the streets carrying the “fagotto”, that is work to be carried out at home.²²⁶ These working women were trying to bring their working conditions to the attention of everyone, especially the labor movements. They needed everyone's participation, as Josette Lupinacci, president of the National League of Italian Women, argues: “joint action should gather not only women belonging to every party, every social category, but also men, this being not a question of mere women's claims, but a question of morality in work”.²²⁷

Even after the enactment of Law 264/1958 in the early 1970s, the struggle resumed with the establishment of “territorial leagues” which were to be a contractual instrument, but also with the commitment of political and social forces.²²⁸ It is thanks to these struggles that the law n.877 of december 18th, 1973 finally came. There is no doubt that it was the expression of changed times. The homeworkers themselves had become aware of group solidarity and belonging and had taken to the streets in struggle, led by the unions that had taken charge of their problems.²²⁹ With this law, home-based work is interpreted as a form of productive decentralization, in which work is outsourced by assignment.²³⁰ The priority points of this law were: the protection of the worker (recognizing the worker's dependent and not autonomous character), the control of labor by commissions, the prohibition of decentralization during restructuring, and the prohibition of intermediation.

²²⁵ CUTRUFELLI Maria Rosa, *Operaie senza fabbrica. Inchiesta sul lavoro a domicilio*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1977, p. 96.

²²⁶ Ibidem.

²²⁷ Noi donne, *Le donne e l'art.* 37, p. 4.

«L'azione comune dovrebbe raccogliere non solo le donne appartenenti ad ogni partito, ad ogni categoria sociale, ma anche gli uomini, non essendo questa una questione di semplici rivendicazioni femminili, ma una questione di moralità nel lavoro».

²²⁸ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 97.

²²⁹ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 141.

²³⁰ Idib.

The main innovation was definitely the establishment of supervisory bodies, which, however indispensable they were, proved to be ineffective.²³¹

It is now necessary to set the real situation in the country: who the home-workers are, under what conditions they work, whether their rights are respected, as well as the laws just set forth.

2.3 Women's labor market

To understand the data on home-based work, it is necessary to identify what the job openings were for women, to understand whether home-based work is a free choice or the only option available to bring home some money. Section 2.1 and 2.2 examined the legal basis on which women live, now it is important to understand whether those principles are being applied, whether women are truly guaranteed labor equality. It is necessary to understand the numbers, however difficult it may be to identify them as mentioned in 2.1. Indeed, the sources are, among others, those censuses that have more than once failed to identify the proportions of women's work.

The entry of female labor into the Italian labor force must be framed historically in the economic phenomenon of the rise of industry and the further spread of wage labor in the agricultural sector.²³² The doors of the factories were opened to women, but under conditions of severe inferiority to their male colleagues, in terms of pay above all and protection. The possibility of paying them less, guaranteed by competition laws, prompted their mass hiring.²³³ The wars were two other decisive inputs for women's employment. With the absence of the men deployed to the front, women filled their jobs in almost every national productive sector and did not abandon them once the war ended. However, between the wars, during the fascist regime, women's employment was greatly hindered if not completely banned.²³⁴ After World War II, with the birth of the Italian

²³¹ Ivi, p. 97-98.

²³² COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 191

²³³ Ivi, p. 192.

²³⁴ Ibid.

Republic as well, women re-entered the labor market, this time also driven by pressing family needs.²³⁵ The Parliamentary inquiry Committee notes how, by the time it writes, women's employment no longer depends on whether female workers can be paid less, but on their actual worth.²³⁶

“Rassegna sindacale” reports that between 1881 and 1951, although the population of women doubled, the employment rate fell by leaps and bounds, from 40.2 to 20.3 percent. In absolute figures, employed women fell from 5.7 to 4.9 million, such a large figure on which it is not possible that only the mode of census taking could influence.²³⁷ While female employment declined in the first fifty years of the century, from 1954 to 1961 it began to grow again, rising from 24 to 30.5 percent, a percentage very close to the levels in other European states (32.7 percent in the United States of America, 25.6 percent in Belgium, 24.3 percent in the Netherlands).²³⁸ As the “Rassegna sindacale” reports:

After World War II, however, the developmental trends in women's work changed substantially or, at least, there was a clear upswing in the rate of women's activity : that is, there was a reversal in the quantitative aspect, while from the qualitative point of view, the gradual spread of women's non-domestic and paid work became decidedly more pronounced, and above all, there loomed an ever-increasing qualitative enlargement of the tasks performed by women.²³⁹

Going more closely to look at this data shows that:

Moreover, the female activity rate is found to be higher for women under the age of 20, decreases for those from 20 to 65 years of age, and is lowest for women over the age of 65. [...] This

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ivi, p. 193.

²³⁷ FEDERICI, *Dimensioni, struttura e tendenze dell'occupazione femminile in Italia nel periodo 1954-1962*, in “Rassegna Sindacale” n. 55-56 (1962), pp. 7-19, p. 7.

²³⁸ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 199.

²³⁹ FEDERICI, *Dimensioni, struttura e tendenze dell'occupazione femminile in Italia nel periodo 1954-1962*, in “Rassegna Sindacale”, p. 8.

«Dopo il secondo conflitto mondiale, comunque, le tendenze evolutive del lavoro femminile mutano sostanzialmente o, quanto meno, si assiste ad una netta ripresa del tasso di attività femminile : si ha, cioè, una inversione di tendenza sotto l'aspetto quantitativo, mentre dal punto di vista qualitativo la progressiva diffusione del lavoro femminile extra-domestico e retribuito si accentua decisamente, e soprattutto si profila un allargamento qualitativo sempre maggiore delle mansioni svolte da donne».

phenomenon is largely a consequence of women entering marriage leaving the workplace - either voluntarily or forced.²⁴⁰

About this figure, Cutrufelli notes how, while in other countries women re-enter 'official' employment once they have passed the age of greatest fertility and 'family burden' in Italy the expulsion seems permanent.²⁴¹ For foreign women then, there is a second 'peak' around the age of forty. As for Italian women of the same age, they mainly pour into home-based work, thus into informal, unprotected and underpaid work.²⁴² Indeed, it should not be forgotten that although times were changing, there were still many prejudices about women working outside the home, coming mainly from their husbands. The no to non-domestic work is explained irrationally, confusingly, often resentfully "he would like to have me always there at his beck and call"; "He is jealous. He doesn't want to send me to work outside out of jealousy. That's just the way he is".²⁴³ So Cutrufelli reports the words of some of the women interviewed in the area of Bologna, a highly industrialized area where there was great union and political consciousness, paradoxically.

Until 1961, women's employment had experienced a substantial increase for a few years. In 1962, it can be seen from survey data that this growth began to suffer increasing losses. Stable female employment declines to 5,395 thousand units, a loss of 316 thousand units over 1961 and an increase of only 14 thousand units over 1960; this reduction is accompanied by an even stronger one in the figure for casual female workers, which falls to 565 thousand units (down from 843,000 in 1961 and 770,000 in 1960).²⁴⁴ What is surprising about these data is that, in the face of all these reductions, the female

²⁴⁰ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 199.

²⁴¹ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 14.

²⁴² Ivi, p. 13.

²⁴³ Ivi, p. 75.

"Vorrebbe avermi sempre lì a portata di mano ai suoi ordini"; "è geloso. Non vuole mandarmi a lavorare fuori per gelosia. E' fatto così, lui".

²⁴⁴ FEDERICI, *Dimensioni, struttura e tendenze dell'occupazione femminile in Italia nel periodo 1954-1962*, in "Rassegna Sindacale", p. 16.

«L'occupazione femminile stabile scende a 5.395 mila unità, con una perdita di 316 mila unità rispetto al 1961 ed un aumento di sole 14 mila unità rispetto al 1960; a tale riduzione se ne accompagna una ancora più forte nella cifra delle lavoratrici occasionali, che scende a 565 mila unità (contro le 843 mila del 1961 e le 770 mila del 1960)».

unemployment rate remains unchanged from 1961. It can be inferred that 600,000 women have disappeared from the labor market, leaving no traces.²⁴⁵ As Federici notes, this decline in part may result from a return to a more regular evolutionary rhythm after the exceptional increase recorded in 1961, in fact, since 1959 the situation has begun to stabilize:²⁴⁶ the female activity rate at 21.8 percent in 1959-60, declined slightly in 1962 to 21.5 percent, against a much steeper decline for the male labor force (-1.1 percent); the proportion of women among stable employment remains constant at around 27 percent; the crisis in agriculture sent home many workers - male and female - who then could not find a job replacement due to lack of alternative opportunities in the tertiary or industrial sectors.²⁴⁷

The crisis of 1963-64 will permanently interrupt the growth registered during 1959-61. Indeed, it severely and irreversibly affected women's employment: there was a mass expulsion from the agricultural sector, while the tertiary sector remained stable.²⁴⁸ At the same time, more and more women are employed in "marginal" sectors such as home-based work.²⁴⁹

Donatella Turtura, head of the confederal women's Office, in an article devoted to women's employment in "Rassegna Sindacale", reports the following data:

there was a decrease from July 1963 to July 1964 of 283,000 employed women, of whom 238,000 were female employees. Of these, the decrease is 122,000 in agriculture, 107,000 in industry and 9,000 in the service sector. With the current decreases and on the total figure of 2,253,000 employed women, the structure being set up is: 18.55 percent in agriculture, 50.47 percent in industry, and 30.98 percent in the tertiary sector. In the white-collar sector, on the other hand, the increase of women is steady and considerable, in the order of several thousand.²⁵⁰

As pointed out later in the same article, however, unemployment in recent years also affects men, it simply affects them in different sectors. For women, the most affected branches are textiles, agriculture, and electromechanics. For men, on the other hand, the

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 17.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 11.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ RASSEGNA SINDACALE, *Dibattito registrato sull'andamento della occupazione femminile*, n. 18-19 (1964), p. 7.

affected sectors are construction and metallurgy.²⁵¹ Although the crisis exists for both labor markets, what changes instead are the repercussions. Specifically, in the case of men, there has been a sudden increase in self-employment in these years.²⁵² As Turtura notes, this difference finds justification precisely in the inherent difference between the male and female labor markets: the former notoriously more consolidated, stable, and better structured, the latter more concentrated in certain sectors, for certain segments more prone to instability, more used - in part - at unsatisfactory levels of productivity.²⁵³ The phenomenon of industry restructuring [2.4], which began in 1966, is accompanied by a phenomenon of labor selection: in industry and agriculture, male labor is increasingly favored. These are the sectors that are restructured in a capitalist sense, that is, those sectors that are more modern and advanced. Women are instead confined to the peasant sector (backward agriculture) and to seasonal and precarious activities.²⁵⁴ Thus in 1969, while the male working class within the factories manages to win for itself conditions of 'rigidity', the female labor force, even the 'regular' one within the strong area of the labor market, remains in fact 'fluctuating', mobile.²⁵⁵ In addition, the restructuring of the textile industry, which was coping with the crisis [see 2.4], meant further retrenchment: early retirement, voluntary resignations and even the disappearance of women from some traditionally female processing stages.²⁵⁶ The decline in female employment in this sector - mainly occurring in large companies - drops by 5 points, from 73 percent to 68.²⁵⁷ The reorganization of the industry has also brought with it a change in jobs and qualifications: if before only experience was enough now it is necessary to have attended a school.²⁵⁸ Weavers both young and old are kicked out of the factories: for women over 40, some companies opened voluntary resignations, considering them now too old for sufficient

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

il primo notoriamente più consolidato, stabile e meglio strutturato, il secondo più concentrato in certi settori, per certe fasce più soggetto a instabilità, più utilizzato - in parte - a livelli di produttività insoddisfacenti.

²⁵⁴ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 16.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ivi, p. 17.

²⁵⁷ RASSEGNA SINDACALE, *Dibattito registrato sull'andamento della occupazione femminile*, p.8.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

production. Young women, too, in the absence of professional training were driven out.²⁵⁹ On this mobility of the female labor force will be based the revival in the 1970s of home-based work. The decrease in female factory employment may in fact turn into total unemployment, but much more frequently into underemployment (home-based work) or precarious employment (small businesses and handicrafts).²⁶⁰ The so-called ‘dualism’ of the Italian industrial labor market ultimately consists of a separation and increasingly sharp contrast between ‘strong labor-power’ (corresponding to the adult male labor-power) and ‘marginal labor-power’ (the female labor-power in general). Division of the labor market means, simply put, shattering the unity of the working class to unprecedented levels. It also means, from a social point of view, accentuation of the rigidity of family roles.²⁶¹

The division of the labor market is also demonstrated by the high sexualization of labor supply. Indeed, the employment sectors are significantly different between male and female labor.²⁶² The labor market in these years is thus highly gendered. With reference to the 1951 census, the sector in which the female employment rate (is highest (37 percent) is trade and service activities. Within this sector are domestic services, where female labor is in absolute predominance.²⁶³ Next follows public administration, where women make up one-third of total employment (33 percent), whereas in the agricultural sector they drop to one-fourth (25 percent).²⁶⁴ In the industrial sector, on the other hand, they reach 20 percent of the total. Regarding this figure, it must be considered that some stages of production, if not entire chains and industries were completely forbidden to women, such as the mining industry for example.²⁶⁵ In fact, the labor force survey conducted by ISTAT in 1960 shows that 30 percent of the female working population is employed in the manufacturing industry, only 0.5 percent is employed in the construction

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, pp. 17-18.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D’INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d’inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 200.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ivi, p. 201.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

industry and 0.3 percent in extractive ones.²⁶⁶ According to the 1951 census, moreover, within industry, women made up 26 percent of white-collar workers (5 percent in the first category, 19 percent in the second, 40 percent in the others), 25 percent of special categories, and 28 percent of blue-collar workers.²⁶⁷ In conclusion, the picture that arises from the 1951 census is the following: out of 4,914,000 active women, 2,033,000 - that is, more than two-fifths - belong to the sector of agriculture; 1,377,000 to industry, 881,000 to transportation and communications, and 26,000 to credit and insurance.²⁶⁸

Equally diverse is currently the participation of the woman in productive activity according to professional positions and different hierarchical levels.²⁶⁹ According to the ISTAT's 1960 labor force survey, women constituted 18.8 percent of the self-employed, 23.7 percent of employees, 52.9 percent of auxiliaries, 9.9 percent of the entrepreneurs and freelancers, 33.2 percent of managers and clerks.²⁷⁰ Aldo Bonaccini, secretary of the Milan confederal chamber of labor, uses the term “closed garden” to refer to the women's labor market, particularly the occupational distribution of women.²⁷¹ With these words Bonaccini confirms what the national picture is: women are relegated to certain jobs deemed “feminine”, have no access to education, and therefore cannot perform more important tasks, they are thereby in a cage. The affirmation of women in the various productive activities of the country led, often, to the typification of certain work services to which female personnel habitually – and, sometimes, precisely because of their greater suitability – are assigned.²⁷² Women's professional education was talked about as early as 1945 in “Noi donne”. Professional education is indeed a hot-button issue for women's employment. Generally speaking, people were against women's education in general, including schooling and women were preferred to stay at home and perform their natural function. Thus, starting from the second half of the 1960s, a “double marginalization” of

²⁶⁶ Ivi, p. 202.

²⁶⁷ Ivi, p. 201.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ RASSEGNA SINDACALE, *Dibattito registrato sull'andamento della occupazione femminile*, p. 9.

²⁷² COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 195.

working women is outlined. First, the expulsion of a significant share of the female labor force from the stable labor market and its transition to the area of marginal and precarious work. Secondly, the condition of women in the regular and non-clandestine labor market is also becoming increasingly heavy and “peculiar”.²⁷³

Faced with all these difficulties, women are left with few choices: return to their husbands' dependencies, or continue to work off the books from home. To understand this phenomenon well, the next section will cover the reasons that brought home-based work to the forefront.

CAUSE	EFFECT
Entrepreneurs' determination to avoid laws and taxes	Moon-lighting and precariousness No work protection No social services
Rising foreign competition	Wage decreases
Lower costs of female workforce	Starvation wages
The dispersion of housing and production settlements promoted by Fascist government	No control on houses' conditions Lack of union between workes
The high decomposability of the production processes of the fashion industries	Piece-work payment system
The backwardness of company machinery	Entrepreneurs sold machinery to women Women get in debts to buy machinery
The crisis and the re-organization of the textile industry in the early '50s	Production decentralization Birth of thousand of small handicraft enterprises
Stereotypes and gender roles	Forced cohabitation of work and family Health risks related to houses' condition Reiteration of gender roles Lack of time
The need of a lot of women to earn a little money	
The necessity to conciliate work and home duties	

Figure 4: *Causes and related effects of home-work.*

²⁷³ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 12.

2.4. What triggered home-work

There are several reasons why employers choose home-work as an alternative to industrial work. The main reasons are: to circumvent laws and contracts, high unemployment, rising competition, lower production costs, lack of skilled workers, lack of company machinery.²⁷⁴ Among the reasons that led to the widespread diffusion of home-based work we must add: the importance in the Italian economy of sectors such as textiles clothing and footwear, characterized by the high decomposability of the production process that lends itself easily to decentralization; the entrenchment of patriarchal culture that found fertile ground in Italy and helped to feed the ideology of domesticity and the stereotypes associated with it; and the dispersion of production and housing settlements promoted by the Fascist regime first and the Republican government later.²⁷⁵ Some of these reasons will be explored below.

At the dawn of the economic boom, home-based work, traditionally considered one of the most backward forms of labor, appeared to be widespread in Italy's cities and countryside, and was present on a very large scale in some regions of central and northern Italy with a high rate of multi-activity, primarily Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna.²⁷⁶ This suggests how established and widespread this form of work was by then. As highlighted by Rina Picolato in 1957: home-based work in our country has roots and traditions dating back to the last century. Thus we find for decades in Florence flask makers, straw hat makers, embroiderers of luxury garments; we find raincoat makers in Empoli, lace makers in Cantù,²⁷⁷ and the list goes on. There is a reason why all these jobs are expressed in the feminized form. In the year Picolato spoke the estimate of home-workers reached 800,000 units, 80 percent of whom are women and most of whom are former factory workers.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 323.

²⁷⁵ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, in "Genesis. Rivista delle Società Italiana delle Storiche", n. 2 (2016) Roma, Viella, 2016, pp. 127-145, p. 129.

²⁷⁶ BETTI, *Precari e precarie: una storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, p. 48.

²⁷⁷ PICOLATO Rina, *La piaga sociale del lavoro a domicilio* in "Rinascita", 6 giugno 1957, pp. 283-286, p. 283.

²⁷⁸ Ivi, p. 284.

However, this is a rough estimate, resulting from the calculation of the percentage incidence of home-based workers in total industry employment combined with data provided by labor organizations.²⁷⁹

To explain the dynamic behind this figure, the post-war labor and economic situations must be analyzed. Industrialists had made large profits from war production. At the end of the war, however, they found themselves with backward machinery, stifled by anti-monopoly policies and facing much more advanced foreign competition. The goal of these industrialists was to continue to keep profits high. To do this they would have to either invest in renovating their factories and machinery, or save money on the labor side by resorting to home labor, which allowed them to cut costs in half and evade taxes. Not surprisingly, many of them turned to the second path.²⁸⁰ There are industrialists today who organize their production almost entirely through this form of labor, demobilizing part of the company, and sometimes entire departments, laying off workers, giving up old looms and machines for pay, and commissioning them to do the same work as when they were in the factory.²⁸¹ This led to a numerical decrease in the number of workers employed at some firms, at which, however, there was no proportional decrease in production.²⁸² Home-work has been a way for many industrialists to keep their workforce at low prices, becoming competitive and thus increasing their profits, at the expense of workers.

In the postwar Italian economy, home-based work became the real external lung of the factory, if not the actual instrument of a policy of industrial restructuring.²⁸³ As anticipated, due to rising labor costs and competition, entrepreneurs increasingly relied on labor outside the factory, there was thus a phenomenon of decentralization of enterprises, and many workers who would have had no problem going to the factory were forced to work at home, making do with lower wages and fewer benefits, and without any

²⁷⁹ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 131.

²⁸⁰ PICOLATO, *La piaga sociale del lavoro a domicilio*, p. 284.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 334.

²⁸³ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 142.

form of protection.²⁸⁴ The decentralization of production was also realized through the establishment of very small businesses, including handicrafts. Small crafts, small businesses in general mean first and foremost precarity. There is an attempt to hide, behind a fictitious craftsmanship, processes of production decentralization or even the organization of home-work networks.²⁸⁵

The advantages for employers can be summarized as follows: cost and risk offloading to the smaller enterprise, enjoyment of the tax and credit facilities provided for “true” artisans and especially application of more backward or hardly renewable contracts for workers, facilitation in the use of apprenticeship (i.e., lower-cost labor force), and greater possibility of individual and “unquestionable” layoffs.²⁸⁶

Thus, two types of decentralization are becoming established: in backward areas, home-based work is spreading; in more advanced areas, the number of small businesses is increasing.²⁸⁷ Home-work thus began to expand like wildfire, at an abrupt speed, from 1951 to 1957 units doubled from 400,000 to 800,000, as reported earlier.²⁸⁸

In addition to the above reason, there is also another one responsible for this dramatic increase: the crisis of the textile industry in the early 1950s. Workers' discontent had already dealt a blow to industry; this was followed in 1952 by the collapse of exports, not matched by domestic demand leading to the crisis breaking out.²⁸⁹ The unemployment in the textile industry continued to increase until 1955, when there was a slight recovery. Clearly, many among them, in order not to remain inactive, chose home-work.²⁹⁰ These are the two main causes of production decentralization. This *modus operandi* is by no means new to Italy, it has always accompanied the transformations of the manufacturing industry, aiming to contain costs. In the 1970s it took on unprecedented proportions, becoming the mainstay of the ongoing transformation.²⁹¹ Home-work thus ceases to have the connotation of backwardness and marginality, to become the preferred way to

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 46

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ivi, p. 49.

²⁸⁸ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 142.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 18.

restructure production.²⁹² Despite this essential function, its renewed importance, nothing was done to regulate this form of labor. It is no longer “backward”, but it still has the characteristics of backward labor. And in the same way workers were treated.

As reported, the choice to work at home was not always a free choice but most of the time it was a forced choice, under blackmail. This is further demonstrated by the tricks put in place by the entrepreneurs even after the birth of the Home-Work Protection Act in 1958. In order to evade the imposed obligations, blackmailing action was taken in many territories against homeworkers, effectively forcing them to become artisans or or else lose their jobs.²⁹³ The law did, in fact, exclude from protection those who performed work at the entrepreneur's premises and registered artisans.²⁹⁴ So many entrepreneurs forced their home-workers to take on a work profile that did not belong to them, excluding them from the few rights they had just won and what's more, they would have had to pay the taxes expected of employers.²⁹⁵ Moreover, this form of work for the first few months or years could also be profitless for the worker. In fact, they had to buy the machines from their employer, which were very expensive. Thus, those who could not afford to pay the full amount (between 600,000 and 800,000 lira) had to use their earnings to pay the bills of exchange.²⁹⁶ If for some women the purchase of the machine represented a step toward their economic and labor independence, for others the entry of the machine turned into a kind of perverse mechanism, an additional cog destined to absorb them totally.²⁹⁷ And this is just one of the many limitations of this law. Employers had quickly found ways to evade the obligations imposed by this law, thanks also to the few controls: employers are required to keep a ‘record book’, the worker, on his side, had to keep a checkbook where he or she noted the work done. It is clear that such initiatives may be useful only for the purpose of control, but they do not exhaust the legislative framework, for which substantive rules of protection are required.²⁹⁸ This degree of autonomy reserved for both

²⁹² Ivi, p.19.

²⁹³ BETTI, *Precari e precarie: una storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, p. 72.

²⁹⁴ Ivi, p. 69.

²⁹⁵ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 153.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, *Relazioni della commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*,

worker and employer then gave rise to the inconsistencies, the failure to identify the actual workers and thus the inability to frame them in a reliable job profile.

2.5 Home-work in Italy

As maintained by Toffanin, home-based work is based on an employment relationship with the entrepreneur on one side and the worker on the other, bound by a subordination to the performance of the agreed tasks. The labor force: is employed in industrial processing and manufacturing, is highly skilled, trained almost exclusively on the job, consists mainly of women over 25, with young children in extended families, residing in suburban areas.²⁹⁹

Home-based work is seen by women as the best possible compromise between the priority of the domestic role and the need (but also the desire) to earn money.³⁰⁰ It should also be noted, however, that home-based work may become a forced choice when one finds the domestic workload increased without the possibility of external support.³⁰¹ This is the fundamental aspect of this kind of work, which is not even considered as such at times. The cultural environment, in fact, saw women primarily as household workers, caregivers of children and their husbands, and this was their main job. The paid work they were doing in their homes was secondary, it was to fit in with the former in a way that did not take too much of their time away from them, as was enshrined in the Constitution. Not infrequently, home-based work is frowned upon in the family, both because it takes time away from domestic care and because of other aspects directly related to its 'industrial' character (noise of machines, etc.), and women find themselves forced to defend this work of theirs even in the family sphere.³⁰²

vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 353.

²⁹⁹ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 137.

³⁰⁰ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 62.

³⁰¹ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 137.

³⁰² CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 63.

Given its “off-the-books” characteristic, home-based work is largely out of control, despite the fact that regulations exist. It is very difficult for this reason to calculate the number of people employed in this type of activity.³⁰³ This is an old problem, one that has always affected home-work since the late 1800s. Now, some characteristics of home-workers.

The mass of home laborers has different characteristics and varied is its social origin. They devote themselves to this type of work in addition to traditional women workers or those laid off from the factory, women from artisan families, family members of white-collar workers, and, during lulls in field work, sharecroppers and laborers.³⁰⁴ The phenomenon is widespread, home-work is used by both small and large companies. So while on the one hand, in these companies, the work is done according to modern techniques and machinery, on the other hand some of the work is done outside the factories, in workers' homes, with backward techniques and machinery.³⁰⁵ Home-workers are employed by these companies mainly for repair and mending of cloth pieces, but also for weaving work itself. These female workers then gather in premises run by ACLI, CIF, parish priests and nuns who take over the work from the factories and have girls under the age of 14 do the work. In case they work in church-run settings, they must then deduct from their meager salary a fee for rent, heating and electricity.³⁰⁶

One way to study the home-worker is to distinguish whether his or her activity is professional or marginal. Marginal nature performances usually concern housewives, the disabled, the very young and the elderly. The same category includes seasonal and precarious workers.³⁰⁷ Here, in this regard, is what the Milan C.I.S.N.A.L.³⁰⁸ reports that another consequence of home labor practiced in this way is the lack of continuity in the work, which is given to a particular worker until a batch of manufactured goods is

³⁰³ Ivi, p. 21.

³⁰⁴ PICOLATO, *La piaga sociale del lavoro a domicilio*, p. 285.

³⁰⁵ Ivi, p. 284.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 307.

³⁰⁸ “Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Nazionali Lavoratori”, born in Naples in 1950.

finished; thereafter the same worker must take on work from other firms.³⁰⁹ It is therefore an occasional job, dependent on market demand, on the season. Furthermore, as the Salerno C.I.S.NA.L. points out, it is a purely family situation in that all family members contribute to it.³¹⁰ Generally the entrepreneur makes arrangements with a contractor, who hires workers under the so-called corporal system. Of course, the profit these workers manage to make is anything but what is provided for in labor contracts.³¹¹ The employment relationship is thus mediated by an additional agent that skews workers' wages, as in the case of workshops run by Catholic associations. On the other hand, professional-type services mainly concern textile workers: following the 1950s crisis, companies began to hand over looms - rented or sold - to workers gathered in their own homes or in rooms also belonging to companies. Below are some of the cases in which a violation of the normal professional working relationship looms up.

Many employers give looms either under a regular contract of sale or under the form of renting, to workers who retire. Of course, the employer makes these workers continue to work, taking the loom home, without compliance with any of the laws on home labor. [...] Some textile companies have even transferred the loom to the worker's home, entering into a fictitious contract to rent the machine. All this, for the sole purpose of not paying insurance contributions and setting wages, in the form of pieceworks, inadequate, and in any case, below those set by labor contracts. [...] Mention should be made of contracts for the rental of looms in the same factory premises; that is, the worker performs his work in the factory with a loom of which he is a tenant. [...] In small and medium-sized textile mills there is, even, the use by the enterprise of advancing money for the purchase of a loom. [...] One woolen mill intends to lay off workers in the weaving department and deliver looms to their homes while retaining 25 percent for payment of the loom itself.³¹²

³⁰⁹ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro, Contratto a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 307.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ivi*, p. 308.

³¹² *Ivi*, pp. 308-309.

Molti datori di lavoro danno i telai o con regolare contratto di vendita o con la forma dell'affitto, ai lavoratori che vanno in pensione. Naturalmente, il datore di lavoro fa continuare a lavorare questi lavoratori, che si portano il telaio a casa, senza l'osservanza di nessuna delle leggi in materia di lavoro a domicilio. [...] Alcune aziende tessili hanno addirittura trasferito a casa del lavoratore il telaio, stipulando un fittizio contratto di affitto della macchina. Tutto ciò, all'unico scopo di non pagare i contributi assicurativi e di fissare retribuzioni, sotto forma di cottimi, inadeguate, e comunque, al di sotto di quelle fissate dai contratti di lavoro. [...] Si debbono ricordare i contratti di affitto di telai nello stesso locale della fabbrica; cioè il lavoratore presta la sua opera nella fabbrica con un telaio del quale risulta affittuario. [...] Nelle piccole e medie aziende tessili c'è, perfino, l'uso da parte dell'impresa di anticipare i soldi per l'acquisto di un telaio. [...] Un lanificio intende licenziare gli operai del reparto tessitura e consegnare i telai a domicilio trattenendosi il 25% per il pagamento del telaio stesso.

It seems then, that there is not too much difference between marginal and professional service in terms of welfare, rights, in one way or another the worker is exploited, cheated, underpaid. In conclusion, the worker loses his or her social security benefits, that is, all the victories achieved up to now (disability pensions, old-age pensions, sickness assistance, etc.), in exchange for an insensitive little advantage of the moment..³¹³ It becomes clearer and clearer how home-work benefits, and by a great deal, the employer, as he tries in every way to evade the law in order to take advantage of it. As argued by different union voices, generally, people resort to home-based work when, in one way or another, whether on the economic side or otherwise, they want to shirk their responsibilities.³¹⁴ The employer is clearly also driven by the low cost of home labor, so it can evade taxes, contractual and insurance obligations, once again. Whether marginal or professional, women home workers are thus subject to the dictatorship of the employer, its demands, and its timetable.

To study home-work, it is also necessary to understand the sectors in which it is spreading, as a very pronounced division of the labor market is again looming. Since the problem of reliability of sources remains, reference will be made to research conducted particularly in Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna, the regions most affected by the phenomenon and on which interviews, surveys, have been carried out. The textile and garment sector are those most impacted by the phenomenon - also as a result of the massive restructuring undergone - the jobs related to them are: magic needle, knitters, stitchers, ironers, braiders, plastic flower makers, embroiderers, shirt makers, raincoat makers.³¹⁵ Most of them have no contract, so no guarantee of either payment or much less protection. The paradox lies in the fact that this sector, among other things, has experienced a strong expansion, and female workers play a function that is not at all ancillary and complementary, but decisive, irreplaceable and of growing importance in production."³¹⁶ Regarding the composition of the industry, of 180,000 workers, 80,000

³¹³ Ivi, p. 309.

³¹⁴ Ivi, p. 326.

³¹⁵ NOI DONNE, *Prigioniere nelle proprie case*, n. 8 (1958), pp. 13-15, p. 15.

³¹⁶ RASSEGNA SINDACALE, *Per liquidare il sottosalario "strutturale", e per fondare valori professionali nuovi nel settore delle "calze e maglie"*, n.55-56 1962, pp. 62-66, p. 62.

are employed in factories and 100,000 at home.³¹⁷ Of total employees in hosiery factories, the incidence of female employment is 90 percent, rising to 98 percent in the case of knitting mills.³¹⁸ Women in these jobs are very young, up to the age of 20 generally, before marriage and before having children, when it is required her total dedication to the care of the family. As if it were not already precarious work, without protection, very often off the books, not to mention the physical wear and tear, add to that the scourge of under-wages for young workers. Youth employment is all but marginal in these years, when it reaches 30-35% as a percentage of total employment.³¹⁹ However, this is not a problem that affects only home-workers and youth: the condition of "under-wage" is found in the overall situation of workers in the sector, precisely in relation to the predominantly female and youth composition of the workforce, on which weighs a double discrimination, that resulting from being female rather than laborers and from being, moreover laborers, labor force with age under 18.³²⁰

There is thus systematic discrimination, between men and women first of all, but also between age groups: the younger people are the less they are paid, as if the work they do is worth less because of their young age. The topic of wages, however, will be dealt with later.

At the time these categories of home-work were identified, the number of workers was around one million.

The "weight" of home-based work is proportionately high both when compared to the total number of employees (men and women) in the manufacturing industry (who, according to 1951 census data, numbered 3,370,172), and -- and even more so -- when compared to "female employees" (1,134,423 including intermediates, factory workers, apprentices and custodial staff, again according to 1951 data). Considering that home-based work essentially affects the manufacturing industry (200,000 in the garment industry but also reaches significant peaks in glass and ceramics, papermaking and wood, while almost no sector is immune today), it follows that we have in Italy today two-thirds female factory workers inside factories and one-third outside.³²¹

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ RASSEGNA SINDACALE, *Che fare per il lavoro a domicilio?*, n. 18-19 (1959), p. 773.

Il "peso" del lavoro a domicilio risulta proporzionalmente elevato sia se paragonato al totale dei lavoratori dipendenti (uomini e donne) dell'industria manifatturiera (che secondo i dati del censimento 1951 risultavano 3.370.172), sia — ed ancor più — rispetto alle "lavoratrici dipendenti" (1.134.423 tra intermedie, operaie, apprendiste e personale di custodia, sempre in base ai dati del 1951). Considerando

So it is clear from the numbers that the phenomenon of home-based work is not going to be reabsorbed, as those who took 10 years to enact the law expected. Rather the opposite was the case, in 1937 there were 85,000 home-based workers, while already in the late 1950s the one million mark was touched.³²² A monitoring, albeit disorganized and unofficial, of home-based work has been carried out since 1969. In that year, registered home-based workers numbered less than 60,000. Through later estimates, it was projected that 34 percent of national unemployment reported in 1972 was attributable to the presence of undeclared homeworkers. While in 1973 there were an estimated 1,600,000 home-based workers.³²³ The absence of a timely definition of the number of workers employed at home has been a formidable alibi for the maintenance of an enduring informalization of working conditions since the early twentieth century.³²⁴

2.6 Home-work related problems

The home-worker is, compared to other Italian laborers, doubly exploited, because in addition to selling her labor power, she has to pay those machines through which her labor power is used.³²⁵ As anticipated, in fact, it is a common practice of so many industries to sell or lease the machines to the woman worker [see 2.4]. In 1957, it was estimated that the turnover of home knitting machines was around three billion lira.³²⁶ If behind her the woman has a husband - or father - who buys the machine for her, then this may not become a problem (except being somewhat “indebted” to her family members). If, on the other hand, the woman does not have a family behind her who can give her the full amount, she will have to go into debt to her employer, or even to a third party. Today

che il lavoro a domicilio interessa essenzialmente l'industria manifatturiera (200.000 nell'abbigliamento ma raggiunge punte sensibili anche nel vetro e ceramica, nella cartotecnica e nel legno, mentre quasi nessun settore ne è rimasto oggi immune), ne consegue che abbiamo oggi in Italia due terzi di operaie dell'industria dentro le fabbriche ed un terzo fuori.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 131.

³²⁴ TOFFANIN, *Tra integrazione e esclusione: alcune note di riflessione sulla regolazione del lavoro a domicilio in Italia*, p. 73.

³²⁵ RASSEGNA SINDACALE, *Il lavoro a domicilio nei programmi dei padroni e in quelli del Sindacato di classe*, n. 57 (1962), pp. 53-59, p. 59.

³²⁶ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, pp.152-153.

(2022), getting into debt with a precarious job is not only not possible but not even desirable. That source of autonomy thus becomes a source of stress, of unfulfillment. The employer knows well that this practice gets the worker into a vicious cycle, she does not earn but works until her body breaks.

One aspect not to be forgotten in this discussion is definitely the quality of home craftsmanship. It is mistakenly thought to present a backward level of technology. In reality, since it is a work in close relationship with the production complex on which it depends, the level is very high and of quality, suitable for market needs. «From the technological point of view, decentralization did not represent a backward shift: home-based workers made increasing use of machines, and even complex machines. From the traditional sectors, home-based work extended to some branches of the chemical industry, in plastics, in the mechanical industry.³²⁷ As home-based work invested much of the industry, becoming crucial to the country's entire production structure,³²⁸ production and working hours accordingly, need to follow the rhythms of the factory: being outside the factory, in fact, does not change what the entrepreneur expects of the worker. The philosophy behind this treatment of workers is always that of maximum exploitation of the workforce, through under-wage and extended working hours.³²⁹ Therefore, on the one hand demanding production as if one were in a factory, on the other treating the worker as a slave, modernity and backwardness come into contrast territory. If industrial production is demanded of a home worker, its consequences must be considered.

2.6.1 The houses

Since the place of work is precisely the private home, it is necessary to know the condition of these houses. The home worker generally worked in the kitchen, over the years the workshop move to other rooms in the house due to events such as the marriage of a child, the death of a family member, which leave vacant rooms. The home, however,

³²⁷ Ivi, p. 155.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ivi, p.150.

is a private place, and therefore precluded from inspection by inspectors.³³⁰ Homes in the 1950s-60s were certainly not modern homes. People generally lived in a single room, separated roughly between sleeping and living areas. Clearly these were poor families, with many members. Living together was in fact already complicated without industrial work machines entering the house. Thanks to the 1964 television survey «la casa in Italia»³³¹ some characteristics of Italian houses at that time can be discovered.

First, after the war it was necessary to rebuild all those destroyed or semi-destroyed houses. In addition, these years saw the great migration from the south to the north, of all those families who were leaving the countryside to go to the city to work in the factories. The workers' houses stood near the factory where they worked, thus far from the city, in a kind of ghetto. These houses, then, had the bare minimum for a family, very few square meters and a few rooms to divide into. The crowding index in Italy is 1.06 per room, which means 18 million rooms are missing. Of these, 7 million are completely in need of redoing, so the number rises to 25 million. Many are the families who adapt to live in shacks, hovels, basements, and very old neighborhoods. The percentages of housing without the conditions required by the hygiene regulations are very high especially in southern Italy. In these housing defined as improper live 130,000 families, that is, 450,000 people. In Turin, a destination for large numbers of southern immigrants, the housing density per room (even very small ones) averages 2.5, while the optimal condition would be 1. Given this density, people try to recreate a kind of privacy in these dwellings, with blankets, boards, tents. As some interviewees report, despite being dilapidated houses without any services, prices are high, even if the factory pays well. Thus, these families find themselves making trade-offs between having a job and having a decent home. This problem does not only affect the big cities where immigrants arrive en masse. Even in the South the situation does not change, in Palermo the crowding index is 1.36, among the highest in Italy. Of the 550,000 inhabitants of the city, 200,000 live in precarious

³³⁰ TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 138.

³³¹ YOUTUBE, *La casa in Italia (1964)*. This is the first episode of the series “Un mondo provvisorio”. An investigation of Liliana Cavani's house conducted in 1964 on the situation of southern immigrants in Turin, the inhabitants of the Naples slums, the urban development of Palermo in the suburbs, the slum dwellers of Rome, with interviews with some people about their situation. The series is being aired in episodes on Rai2.

conditions. The latter live in dwellings of no more than two rooms, without toilets, water and sometimes even without electricity: it is estimated that out of 100 dwellings, 1 has toilets. These dwellings are commonly called “catòì”. Depending on the neighborhoods, 6 to 8 people live in these rooms, which reach a maximum of sixteen square meters. Families living in these conditions, according to regional estimates, number 36,000. In Naples, the province's crowding index is among the highest in Italy, 1.64. Poor families here live in so-called “bassi” if on the ground floor, or in “quarti” if on higher floors: both are rudimentary rooms, sometimes without windows, with only an often cramped door, in which a maximum of 10 people live. There are 50,000 people living in these conditions.



Figure 5: the interior of a Neapolitan “basso” (source: YouTube, *La casa in Italia* (1964)).

In Rome, meanwhile, people cluster in suburban areas in shacks poorly constructed. The style is the same as the previous ones, small ten-square-meter rooms in which entire families live, dirt roads, common if not nonexistent toilets, water from the fountains, in short, misery. These squatter houses are even sold, as stated by many respondents who try to sell these shacks in order to move to more decent houses. Usually in fact, immigrants stop in Rome before moving North permanently, but some end up staying. The population of Rome thus, since the end of the war has tripled. These miserable clusters of housing, for one reason or another, are also often cleared for municipal needs, such as building aqueducts, roads. Those who are forced to leave even what little they have managed to build, have nowhere left to go. Municipalities solve the problem by

cramming thousands of evicted families into makeshift dormitories: abandoned schools, old barracks, disused hospitals and so on. Situations are created where five or six families live in one hall. A young girl interviewed tells about the time she and her family entered the dormitory: it was supposed to be a solution for only 6 months, they stayed 13 years. Life here was a «baraonda»: crying children, screaming people, no privacy, «I wanted a room for myself even if it was just to be quiet alone» she says, «When we first entered the government house, I was moved and cried».³³²

What is surprising about this survey is that female respondents often state that they do not want to leave these homes, «here I was born and here I want to die»³³³, says a Neapolitan woman. The reason is that an "alley economy" - mainly carried out by women - is created in these neighborhoods, a mutual aid among all the families that makes life less miserable. Everyone has a support network made up of customers who buy, barter from door to door. Leaving this place means losing a major source of livelihood. But in truth, even in the dormitories, cooperation among families remains strong. Among those interviewed, one family of 7 decides to take in two more people: a woman with her child. The whole thing is explained very naturally, «I could not leave her in the street, the soup as there is for my children there is also for her»,³³⁴ says the interviewee.

Behind all these difficult situations, lie complex historical and economic mechanisms. On the one hand, the presence of depressed and underdeveloped areas, with a still feudal legacy of labor, and on the other hand, the rapid transformation of a predominantly agricultural society into the modern urban industrial civilization. These are the two poles within which Italy is moving in these years. The picture that comes out of this survey is quite bleak: the homes of 'poor' Italians lack everything they need to live decently. Space is millesimal among family members and beyond. There are no services, only solidarity among neighbors who find themselves sharing a life lived by the day. That's why they were called 'industrials' because they were 'industrious' about living by the day.

³³² «Volevo una camera per me anche solo per stare in silenzio da sola»; «quando siamo entrati nella casa popolare mi sono commossa e ho pianto».

³³³ «Qua sono nata e qua voglio morire».

³³⁴ «Non potevo lasciarla in mezzo alla strada, la minestra come c'è per i miei figli c'è anche per lei».

As much as they could adapt, however, these living conditions become unsustainable in the long run. The one that people miss the most is privacy, both within the family (between parents and children but also between siblings) and for the family itself (in the case of emergency dormitories). Having to share a single environment with the whole family at all times of the day is the greatest burden that people bear. Especially the children and young people interviewed express the desire to have their own room and one for their parents. Imagining having to work in this environment, having deadlines and not being able to put them off also because there is a need for money in the house, always. Women are at the center of the household: on the one hand, they have to take care of their children - often numerous - and the home, and on the other hand, they have to devote time and concentration to the work they do in their own homes. These women have to carve out time according to the needs of the family, based on when their husbands or children are away so as not to disturb them with the noise of the machines they work with. Another factor comes into play here: how healthy is the presence of industrial machinery in homes for the whole family? The next section will attempt to answer this question.

2.6.2 Health risks

Bearing in mind what has just been said about the conditions in homes, add to this the need to work in these environments with dangerous machinery and products. In the case of home-based work, the problem of harmfulness arises with more dramatic urgency than in the factory, precisely because it does not affect the worker alone, but invests the entire household, children especially, who play and live breathing toxic fumes, touching the harmful products used by their mothers..³³⁵ As anticipated, in fact, many chemical industries outsource work to home-based workers. But not only that, in knitwear, for example, the dangerous processes are cutting and ironing. In the former case, the shedding of the cut fabric often causes allergies; in the latter, boiling steam can cause reactions in artificial fibers in the form of extremely toxic fumes. With regard to the metal-mechanical sector, the decentralization strategy has resulted in the expulsion from the factories of the

³³⁵ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 25.

least skilled and harmful processes: painting, carpentry, welding, foundry and heat treatment. Many of these processes are transferred to small companies or artisans, which makes it difficult to control the harmfulness.³³⁶ A survey conducted by the municipal administration of S. Giovanni in Persiceto in June 1971 shows that out of 978 home-based workers surveyed, as many as 469 work in the kitchen, 180 in the dining room or a room, 60 in the garage and only 21 in a special room. The fact that the work environment in most cases coincides with the home contributes to the reduction of an already usually small space.³³⁷ Houses are in fact already too small to live in decently, the spaces are not well divided and one ends up breathing the same air all the time. These women often suffer from dietary deficiencies. The ‘diseases of poverty’ are thus compounded by the specific harmfulness of the factory..³³⁸

A survey conducted on polyneuritis³³⁹ in shoe factories in the province of Arezzo showed the full gravity of this phenomenon: rooms without windows, ventilation, small, with kerosene stoves contributing to making the air even more unbreathable.³⁴⁰ Until then, polyneuritis was treated by improvisation. Less severe cases are diagnosed as nervous breakdowns and treated with valium.³⁴¹ What makes it even more difficult to treat these diseases is that it only manifests itself at the end, when nothing can be done and the patient is almost paralyzed. The disease broods underneath, without conspicuous manifestations, then when it explodes it is unstoppable. It must be prevented, avoided because it cannot be cured when it has already attacked a defenseless organism.³⁴² Inhalation of the toxic elements contained in solvents leads to various disorders: miscarriages, premature births, underweight infants, anemia and leukemia.³⁴³ At home these effects are even more emphasized, as shown below. In the factory, it is relatively easier to organize around these

³³⁶ Ivi, p. 26.

³³⁷ Ivi, p. 25.

³³⁸ Ivi, p. 28.

³³⁹ Polyneuritis is almost always localized in the limbs, with symptoms being numbness in the arms and legs, and distortions of tactile sensitivity such as hyperesthesia (excessive sensitivity) and anesthesia, which are associated with tingling, asthenia, and pain that is now dull and chronic, now sudden and stabbing. (source: Wikipedia).

³⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 27.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² NOI DONNE, *Il benzolo l'ha uccisa a domicilio*, n. 15 (1963), pp. 7-9, p. 7.

³⁴³ TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 139.

issues; for home-based workers, however, it is more complicated, but that does not stop them from taking action. In 1973, in Naples, a committee of the families of the girls paralyzed by the glues is first formed, which files a complaint against unknown persons with the Naples Magistrate's Court and begins to mobilize area councils and workers on the problem. In 1975, a Democratic Workers' and Technicians' Committee was formed to ask for INAIL recognition of occupational disease.³⁴⁴

What aggravates the use of these harmful products is precisely that they are used in homes. In factories, if there are adequate protective facilities, adhesives, solvents, etc., can also lose much of their harmfulness, while in homes they pose a continuing danger both from fumes and high flammability.³⁴⁵ Moreover, it should be added that at home working conditions are not supervised, so the risk is permanent. It is also on this transfer of risk from enterprise to worker that the great fortune of home-based work has been played out.³⁴⁶ "Noi donne" provides a list of dangerous jobs that involve the use of glues, varnishes or dyes that are carried out at home. The following are some of them: wire mounting and winding, ceramic mosaic gluing on paper, print development and photo retouching, detergent powder canning.³⁴⁷ Assembly operations are the most common, processing steps where one has to be bent over the work table breathing in all the fumes from the products that are used for gluing, welding, etc. "Noi donne" recounts the case of a woman who died precisely because of prolonged exposure to benzol, which she used to glue coils for a radio manufacturing company. Her name was Anna Franchini and for 5 years she had performed the same job. Her first complaints were dizziness and headaches, but blood tests were negative for the disease. When she found out she was sick, in two months she died.³⁴⁸

Since the home worker is mainly a housewife who does additional work in her 'free' moments, it is also necessary to remember the work-related illnesses of housework. Ever since women entered the factories, a lot of people have been scrambling to prove that

³⁴⁴ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 27.

³⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 28.

³⁴⁶ TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 139.

³⁴⁷ NOI DONNE, *Il benzolo l'ha uccisa a domicilio*, p. 8.

³⁴⁸ Ivi, p.7.

only extra-homework is unhealthy and that homework is not unhealthy at all.³⁴⁹ Thanks to the action of AIDM (Associazione Italiana Dottoresse in Medicina), a survey was conducted on the health conditions of housewives.³⁵⁰ This survey shows that while there is no specific pathology of housework, it turns out a number of diseases to which the woman housewife is more prone than others. First and foremost are nervous disorders.³⁵¹ The root cause of these disorders: the constant struggle with lack of time, the consciousness of always being late, a nagging that results in a continuous state of anguish and chronic irritability.³⁵² The woman at home is indeed the focus of household activities, she cooks, looks after the children, does laundry, tidies up, washes, irons and so on. Not to be forgotten, in this regard, are skin diseases (eczema especially) resulting from washing dishes, laundry, tending the garden, contact with corrosive liquids.³⁵³ In addition, continuous hand contact with water leads to arthritis, rheumatism. Housewives' eyes also get sick: too much strain, fumes, poor lighting, smoke and dust lead to cataracts and even vision loss.³⁵⁴ Last but not least, the labors of gestation and breastfeeding, which are in addition to all the previous ones and the jobs that women do on a daily basis: going to the market, bringing groceries home, fetching water from the public fountain, taking care of other children, and so on.³⁵⁵ These excessive efforts, the unhealthy environments of the homes of the time, lead to emaciation, anemia that also prevented the nursing of children.

To the illnesses caused by the waged labor that takes place in the homes of one million Italian women, there are also the typical illnesses of housewives. Doubly affected, then, are the homeworkers, who find themselves having to play the dual role of housewife and worker in the same environment, having to constantly switch from one to the other. The timing of the woman home worker is thus another typical home-work related problem.

³⁴⁹ NOI DONNE, *Le malattie professionali della casalinga*, n. 14 (1955), pp. 6-7, p. 6.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ NOI DONNE, *Le malattie professionali della casalinga*, p. 6.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

2.6.3 The timing

L'orario giornaliero medio di una casalinga che si alza alle 7 e si corica alle 23, comprende 14-15 ore di lavoro che in una famiglia di 5 persone, abitante in 3 vani e accessori, sono così ripartite: preparazione della colazione pranzo e cena 3 ore; tempo impiegato per fare la spesa 1 ora; rigovernatura dei piatti e della cucina 2 ore; rifare i letti, spazzare, spolverare, ordinare la casa 2 ore; vestire, lavare, pettinare, accompagnare i bambini a scuola, seguirli nei compiti e accudirli se neonati 3 ore; bucato, lavatura panni di colore, stiro, rammendo, lavoro a maglia e di cucito 3 ore. Totale 14 ore

The average daily schedule of a housewife who gets up at 7 a.m. and goes to bed at 11 p.m. includes 14 to 15 hours of work, which in a family of 5, living in 3 rooms and accessories, is broken down as follows: preparation of breakfast lunch and dinner 3 hours; time spent on grocery shopping 1 hour; redoing dishes and kitchen 2 hours; making beds, sweeping, dusting, tidying the house 2 hours; dressing, washing, combing, taking children to school, following them in their homework and caring for them if infants 3 hours; laundry, washing color clothes, ironing, mending, knitting and sewing 3 hours. Total 14 hours.³⁵⁶ The article from which this list of housework was taken is actually titled: «la prima ad alzarsi e l'ultima a coricarsi» (“the first one to get up and the last one to go to bed”), because her activity is continued from the morning just after waking up to just before going to bed. There is no time off for the housewife, except when children go to school and husbands to work; but even then she is not necessarily free, because she can take advantage of these times to work. Being a wife, and even more so being a mother, beyond idealization, impose in contemporary daily life a continuity, assiduity, ineluctability of tasks that leave little room for ‘choices’ or other needs. This is why non-domestic work resolves itself more into double work than into ‘emancipation’.³⁵⁷ The stress the working woman is under is so amplified that it leaves no room for social and political maturation.³⁵⁸ In fact, Baraldi believes that this is an objective brake on the emancipatory function of labor.³⁵⁹

The difference between the two types of activities (domestic and non-domestic) that have psychological repercussions on the woman should not be forgotten. On the one hand,

³⁵⁶ NOI DONNE, *La prima ad alzarsi e l'ultima a coricarsi*, n. 13 (1955), pp. 8-9, p. 9.

³⁵⁷ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 81.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ivi, p. 82.

non-domestic work alienates (no career, uncertain). On the other hand, domestic work gives a different satisfaction to the woman: she here controls the product of her labor, and produces for others who benefit from it. For this reason, women were more likely to do repetitive and monotonous work so that they could devote all their energies to caring for the home and family.³⁶⁰ The dominant value of the family, and of one's role within it, thus hindered then (at the time of the inquiry) an awareness of one's own exploitation.³⁶¹ The woman was so embedded in this mechanism that she did not realize it. The family role imposed on her, she embraced it self-sacrificingly and identified it as a place of maximum fulfillment. In fact, it is not the extra-domestic work that gives her satisfaction, but the domestic work, to which she devotes all her physical and mental energies. If a woman puts together the drudgery of the factory and the home, she consumes 3,200 to 3,400 calories from Monday to Saturday, and if she still takes care of the house on Sunday, she again consumes more than three thousand. It is forcing the limits, it is running on the edge, it is wearing out the body.³⁶²

The issue, however, changes when it comes to home-workers. She experiences her work as embedded in domestic activity, with no break between one and the other. Because there is no separation between one job and another, work activity is experienced with resignation as part of domestic activity; the physical and mental stress of work spills over into the family, domestic work is experienced with annoyance and intolerance.³⁶³ The constraints imposed by working hours not only make it more difficult for women to reconcile domestic and non-domestic work, but also objectively complicate personal relationships. The mere fact of working is thus charged with dramatic meanings at the individual level.³⁶⁴ The system of piecework pay, by the way, did not feature fixed working hours, as in the factory for example. The need to earn pushed women workers to work at every 'free' moment; the workday thus never ended.

According to most sources, these women worked an average of up to 12 or even 14 hours a day, and were forced to accept truly miserable wage conditions, made even worse by the high availability of

³⁶⁰ Ivi, p. 83.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² NOI DONNE, *Tra lavoro e famiglia, il primo incubo: il tempo*, n. 22 (1960), pp. 16-19, p. 18.

³⁶³ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 84.

³⁶⁴ Ivi, p. 82.

female labor, which generated latent downward competition among the homeworkers themselves. It therefore frequently happened that the machines in the homes of the homeworkers did not even stop at night, as in the work at the sewing machine, at the "cut and sew," several women from the family or, in the areas of greatest labor scarcity, even men and even teenagers took turns, in order to ensure sufficient income for both sustenance and payment for the machines.³⁶⁵

The average daily schedule of the home worker is therefore no different from that of the factory worker, the home worker is no less pressed than the factory worker. The production rhythms are also binding on her: elasticity of schedule does not mean possibility of absolute self-determination of product completion time. The problem of delivery of finished work is a kind of daily nightmare.³⁶⁶ The alleged organizational autonomy enjoyed by home-based workers is thwarted by the employer's determination of delivery times. This is not work that can be freely organized by the worker.³⁶⁷ The autonomy of the home-based worker becomes a double-edged sword: she can decide when to work, but the work she has to accomplish is always the same. Moreover, if the factory worker screws up a piece and undoes it thus losing an hour, she will get paid for this hour. If the home worker makes a mistake and has to undo the product, the hour she loses will never be paid.³⁶⁸ It is much easier for a woman who works at home to make mistakes, caught up as she is with all the commitments that loom over her during the day. The intertwining of housework and domestic work makes a laborer's day far more 'neurotic' than that of a factory worker. For the latter, in fact, the two jobs and their respective times of performance are quite distinct, and the anguish of not getting the work done in time does not, as it does for the laborer, add up at all times of the day to the anguish of the domestic work to be done anyway.³⁶⁹ Having to divide herself between work and family care continuously leads to the dilation of working hours, the home worker's work is distributed throughout the day in such a way as to keep the woman busier.

I stay five minutes at the machine, then I have to get up to check that the baby doesn't get hurt. It's all stop and go again: I leave the shirt I'm sewing hanging and take a look at the ragout. Then my

³⁶⁵ BETTI, *Le ombre del fordismo. Sviluppo industriale, occupazione femminile e precarietà del lavoro nel trentennio glorioso (Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italia)*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2020, p. 137.

³⁶⁶ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 66.

³⁶⁷ TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 139.

³⁶⁸ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 66.

³⁶⁹ Ivi, pp. 67-68.

husband comes home, we eat, then I resume work. In the evening I realize I haven't done enough work and need to stay up a little longer to finish. My husband is maybe at the television quietly, because for him the work day is over.³⁷⁰

As many female respondents claim, factory work (like that of husbands) is preferable to working at home because at least it allows for fixed working hours, and in case of overtime one gets paid. Working at home becomes almost all overtime, as women have to work any available time, including evenings, nights, and Sundays.³⁷¹ Surveys carried out in the municipality of Bologna show that 77.6 percent of home-based workers work after dinner, while 49.5 percent also work on Sundays.³⁷²

Another characteristic of home-based work is that it was precarious: it depended on market fluctuations, on demand; it was seasonal work in its own right. There were times of the year when hardly any work was done, others when the whole family had to be engaged because of the high amount of work required of the woman. These women work practically six months out of the year, and when there is work they get obsessed because they have to do so much of it and fast too.³⁷³ The worst repercussions of these alienating rhythms are felt on the worker's health: the problem of the working woman's health presented specificities related to the dual role of the woman, who was forced between an alienating work rhythm, a work schedule of up to 48 hours per week (including Saturdays), and the difficult management of care duties arising from caring for children and performing household chores.³⁷⁴ The woman was thus forced to rhythms not only of work but also of existence that were particularly hectic and that could be further aggravated by the eventual status of a working mother.³⁷⁵ Women like this never stop working, they never have a free moment to devote to themselves, their life is completely committed to their family, children and husband. In fact, no woman is able to escape completely from the 'profession' of housewives, as it is this condition that constitutes an

³⁷⁰ Ivi, p. 68.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ivi, p. 69.

³⁷³ BETTI, *Le ombre del fordismo. Sviluppo industriale, occupazione femminile e precarietà del lavoro nel trentennio glorioso (Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italia)*, p. 137.

³⁷⁴ Ivi, p. 45.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

inalienable, fixed point of the capitalist system of production in Italy and the resulting social organization.³⁷⁶

2.6.4 Social services

Let now look at how and how much the woman home worker was supported when it came to pregnancy, sickness, day care, etc. Protection of the worker has until now meant discrimination against the worker precisely because she is a woman, that is, a potential future mother. The only valid protection, unions and women's organizations rightly argue, is that which protects the pregnancy, the gestation period. But the child, once out of the mother's belly, should no longer be an exclusively female problem, if it is true that motherhood is a social value.³⁷⁷

Act 264 of 1958, on the subject of social services says: «all social insurances in place, which by law or collective agreement are enjoyed by in-house workers in the same industry, shall be extended to home workers».³⁷⁸ Remember, however, that the problem of the home-worker, is precisely that of not being recognized as such, but framed as a housewife mainly or forced to identify themselves as artisans. What emerges from the surveys is that more and more women workers are leaving their jobs because they become pregnant. On the one hand, therefore, it is a matter of self-expulsion: out of fear for the health of the child and the woman herself, but also because of child rearing, which is entirely on the woman's shoulders. On the other hand, however, pregnant women are not hired and very often are fired for this reason.³⁷⁹

It is precisely on the issue of dismissals of female labor force that it is important to pause, as here resides one of the main means of employment discrimination. In 1950, Law

³⁷⁶ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 89.

³⁷⁷ Ivi, p. 85.

³⁷⁸ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 13 marzo 1958 n. 264, *Tutela del lavoro a domicilio*.

«Tutte le assicurazioni sociali in atto, delle quali per legge o per contratto collettivo usufruiscono i lavoratori interni della stessa industria, dovranno essere estese ai lavoratori a domicilio»

³⁷⁹ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 84.

No. 860 was passed “physical and economic protection of working mothers”.³⁸⁰ The provisions of this title are applicable to pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth who are employed by private employers, including agricultural workers (wage-earners, farmhands, and sharers), as well as to those employees of public bodies and Cooperative Societies.³⁸¹ This law, which does not apply to female home-workers, provides, pending a special law, in the third title principles of protection and welfare dedicated to them. To female home workers who perform paid work in the employ of others and to family service workers is owed, in the event of childbirth, a maternity allowance of 12,000 lire.³⁸² Employers are required to pay to I.N.P.S. the contributions: in the case of home workers they will have to pay 10 liras per week. To sum up, working women, according to this law, cannot be fired during gestation and until the child is 1 year old.³⁸³ Despite the fact that there was thus a law protecting working women, employers always found a way to evade the obligations imposed. The parliamentary committee of inquiry notes how the fixed-term contract is, at times, adopted by entrepreneurs, not for reasons inherent in the productive and functional organization of the company, but with the intention of evading the constraints and burdens, which derive from the open-ended contract, considered the normal form of employment relationship.³⁸⁴ These are, therefore, employment relationships that, by their nature, should be of indefinite duration, and for which there would be no reason to provide for their termination at a given time, but to which the term is affixed for evasive purposes.³⁸⁵ Law 860/1950 does not apply in fact, in case the employment contract naturally ends within the stipulated time.³⁸⁶ Another tactic used by employers is the so-called bachelorette clause (“clausola di nubilitato”). With this, real discrimination is implemented between

³⁸⁰ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 26 Agosto 1950, n.860, *Tutela fisica ed economica delle lavoratrici madri*.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D’INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1958), Vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro: contratti a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, p. 106.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 26 Agosto 1950, n.860, *Tutela fisica ed economica delle lavoratrici madri*.

single and married female workers. The methods followed are different. Recourse is made, at the time of hiring of the female employee, and also during the constancy of the employment relationship, to the signing of a blank resignation letter, which the employer uses at the time of the worker's marriage, or more simply to the notification of the letter of dismissal, before or immediately after the marriage, without any specification of the reasons for it. There are, finally, many company regulations that provide for the termination of the employment relationship when the employee gets married.³⁸⁷ The problem of the dismissal of the woman who marries is part of the larger problem of so-called *ad nutum* dismissals, that is, dismissals without justification. To make up for this specific problem in 1963, the law "prohibiting the dismissal of female workers for cause of marriage" was passed. The law prohibited dismissals for marriage and declared null and void bachelorette clauses in contracts. The prohibition extended from the request for publication of the marriage to the year following its celebration and resulted in the nullity of any dismissal that occurred during this period. In addition, the dismissed worker acquired the right to be readmitted and to the pay she had not received during the period she had been unfairly dismissed.³⁸⁸ But what scared employers so much? Certainly the fact that once married, the woman could become pregnant and thus be absent from work for long periods. «We used to think that, under the Christian Democrat regime, the biblical 'grow and multiply' was even a watchword, and as such, the first to respect marriage were the bosses. We cannot understand what could there be in a marriage that conflicts with work, to the point that an employee who gets married should be fired».³⁸⁹ In this article, "Noi donne" reports the bleak story of a woman employed in a newsroom: immediately after her marriage, among other things to one of her newspaper colleagues, the young bride received a letter of dismissal. After 18 years of working at the same place, one could not think of dissatisfaction on the part of the employer. It was not even a reduction in staff since another male employee was hired in her place shortly thereafter. Her fault was that

³⁸⁷ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA (1962), Vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 256.

³⁸⁸ BETTI, *Precari e precarie: una storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, p. 81.

³⁸⁹ NOI DONNE, *Sposarsi è un reato?*, n. 21 (1954), p. 6, p. 6.

she had gotten married. Continuing at this rate, the status of ‘single’ or ‘married’ will be placed not on the ID card but on the criminal record»,³⁹⁰ comments “Noi donne”.

The issue of social services is absolutely fundamental to guaranteeing women the right to non-domestic work. Better quality, rather than quantity, of services would be enough to remove women from their subordinate status in the home and in society. One can no longer separate the problem of family, household management, ‘private’, from the problem of work.³⁹¹ If the woman is called upon to replace social services, she certainly cannot be expected to pursue a job or career at the same time. On the other hand, if she is also doing this work she will be alienated from both, having no time or way to devote herself satisfactorily to one and the other equally. The woman is once again forced to choose between work and family, private and public. And almost always finds herself at home, caring for her husband, children and home. In this environment, the man is in fact absorbed, obsessed with his function as a ‘procurer of income’, which drives him many times to accept in his ‘free’ moments subsidiary work..³⁹² The real earner in the family is the man, the woman just does a job that allows the family to ‘round up’ income. It follows that her work is secondary, not as important as that of her husband, as is her income. Finally, the woman, the worker, loses value; her efforts are minimized, unnecessary. Sometimes husbands try to dissuade their wives from bargaining for income, the important thing is that they supplement the family income, not to work on fair terms.³⁹³ If we do not come to terms with family organization, beginning with its function as a substitute for social services, the conquest of non-domestic work, and even the control of home-based work or ‘black’ work in general, becomes problematic.³⁹⁴

2.6.5 Union between workers

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 91.

³⁹² Ivi, p. 90.

³⁹³ Ivi, p. 90-91.

³⁹⁴ Ivi, p. 92.

Another dangerous element for home-based work is the total absence of union among workers, there is no meeting and no exchange of ideas, no confrontation, and exploitation takes more and more hold. Major labor rights battles were won thanks to everyone's participation, thanks to unions that were able to draw all workers to the streets. Home-based work, because it takes place precisely in the private homes of citizens, does not involve meeting with co-workers, who rather than co-workers in this context are competitors. The case of homeworkers, however, is very complicated. Even in the case of the battle over the new 1973 law: the battle to pass the law was the battle of the homeworkers not of the movement as a whole, a battle supported by women and almost solely by clothing..³⁹⁵ The exploitative conditions of these female workers failed to involve too many people, they were invisible in the eyes of civil society, as Cutrufelli says: «when female exploitation is hidden by domestic walls, it is no longer perceived as such».³⁹⁶ What makes communication and connection between home-based workers and between union and workers even more difficult is that the latter were difficult to track down, most for example were registered artisans. The only way to find them was to look for companies that decentralized work.

Moreover, even between workers inside and outside the factory there is no unity and communication, rather competition is created. As one home-based worker reports:

It all started because the female workers had internal problems because of us. When they were on strike, for example, the company sent out the work that was done by the female workers, so their strike was worthless. I attended two works councils and tried to explain that it is not easy for us to go on strike. Even if I go on strike one day, for example, the next day I have to work twice as hard to deliver everything on the given date. No one knows that I went on strike that day. [...] The first relations with the workers were a bit rough, but since we had a clarification and a moment of struggle together things have changed. The contacts though are too few and you always have to start all over again. But contracts with other homeworkers are even more scarce, because they really depend only on each one's good will. [...] Contacting homeworkers is like contacting a housewife: there is a homogeneity, locked as we are in the house by four walls. [...] We do not work in the belief that we are doing something constructive. We feel marginalized, we see that in the home we have to think about everything, and then...³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Ivi, p. 103.

³⁹⁶ Ivi, p. 91.

³⁹⁷ Ivi, pp. 109-110.

«Tutto è iniziato perché le operaie avevano dei problemi interni per causa nostra. Quando loro erano in sciopero, ad esempio, la ditta mandava fuori il lavoro che veniva fatto dalle lavoranti, e quindi il loro sciopero non valeva niente. Io ho partecipato a due consigli di fabbrica e ho cercato di spiegare che per noi non è facile fare lo sciopero. Anche se io faccio sciopero un giorno, ad esempio, il giorno dopo devo lavorare

As this interviewee says, relationships are even more difficult among home-based workers: among the reasons for this situation was also the inability, or impossibility, of these workers to recognize themselves as a group: each worked in their own homes, often in the countryside; many were women, numerous were minors.³⁹⁸ This isolation of the home-based worker is used by the boss to put her in competition with the others, to push her to produce more. So one worker reports that when they come to pick up the work they count it piece by piece and then the comments come in like: “another worker has more children than you and can produce more”, «I say they do it on purpose, so we hate each other, we feel like rivals».³⁹⁹ The home-worker is thus increasingly isolated, unable to find solace in her colleagues, nor in her family where home-work is viewed with impatience.

The absence of a union among these female workers prevents the claiming of rights and collective agreements is what makes them even more invisible. The women who do this work are left to their own devices, they have to carve out time to work, have it accepted by the family, take care of the family as well, only to be unrecognized in one effort or the other. Women therefore not only have to conquer non-domestic work, but even work at home. And they experience this work as 'loneliness' not only because it must be done by each in the isolation of her own home, but because it dramatically divides the woman from the rest of the family.⁴⁰⁰ Quite different from the urban and factory reality where workers had long since formed mutual aid societies, cooperatives, resistance societies, etc., and where riots were multiplying.⁴⁰¹ Despite this, factory workers also had to fight for a long time, often to no avail. If the industrial wage-earner had no rights in bargaining over working conditions and in determining their duration and compensation,

il doppio per consegnare tutto alla data stabilita. Nessuno così viene a sapere che quel giorno ho fatto sciopero. [...] I primi rapporti con le operaie sono stati un po' scabrosi, ma da quando abbiamo avuto un chiarimento e un momento di lotta in comune le cose sono cambiate. I contatti però sono troppo pochi e devi sempre ricominciare tutto da capo. Ma i contratti con le altre lavoranti a domicilio sono ancora più scarsi, perché in realtà dipendono solo dalla buona volontà di ciascuna. [...] Contattare le lavoranti a domicilio è come contattare una casalinga: c'è un'omogeneità, chiuse come siamo in casa da quattro mura. [...] non si lavora nella convinzione di fare qualcosa di costruttivo. Ci sentiamo emarginate, vediamo che in casa dobbiamo pensare a tutto e allora...»

³⁹⁸ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 121.

³⁹⁹ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 67.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ivi*, p. 63.

⁴⁰¹ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 121.

even less listened to were the home-based workers, throttled in the network of middlemen and subcontractors.⁴⁰² It is no coincidence that the first signs of organized intolerance in this sector had the characteristic of ancient revolt, rather than strike, and were mainly against low wages, never with the purpose to define the characters of this work.⁴⁰³ In fact, the home-based worker, more blackmailed and disarmed, could hardly find the collective moment for organizing and striking. Because left alone, home workers could only extinguish themselves in industrial work or lock themselves into a helpless, passive defense of their minimal living circumstances; by organizing themselves, they could have retrained.⁴⁰⁴

2.6.6 Isolation at home: reiteration of gender roles and emancipation

On March 8th 1972 feminists took the street for the first time to celebrate International Women's Day. They circulated a flier, almost a manifesto, whose beginning defined women as the slave of housework. The flier reads as follows:

The woman is still a slave! 90 or 40 hours a week of unpaid work at home and the woman is still a housewife. IF YOU ARE A WORKER tired of being the last to be hired and the first to be fired, relegated to unskilled and low-paid jobs, IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYEE, tired of being a typist, the secretary of the boss, constantly forced to be "good looking", IF YOU ARE A TEACHER and you have realized that a career in education is the only one offered to women who have studied IF YOU ARE UNEMPLOYED maybe with a degree or a diploma and for survival are forced to do casual work such as selling detergents and baby-sitting etc. IF YOU ARE A STUDENT and understand that it is futile to think that your life will be different from that of a mother, IF YOU ARE A MOTHER not out of your own choice and you want to decide if and when to become a mother again, IF YOU HAVE REALISED THAT YOU ARE A SEX OBJECT to men and instead you want to live your sexuality in a free and satisfactory way, IF YOU ARE FALLING into the trap of marriage because you believe that a husband can give you a financial security and social prestige, IN ONE WORD: IF YOU ARE A WOMEN, let's fight together for our liberation!⁴⁰⁵

Woman is still a slave, her role remains the one defined as 'essential' by the Italian constitution, although she has gained a kind of freedom, this is not recognized, she is still a housewife. Being a housewife is not a bad thing in itself, having to care for the family

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ivi, p. 122.

⁴⁰⁵ GISSI, *The home as a factory. Rethinking the debate on housewives wage in Italy, 1929-1980*, in *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, p. 146.

is not the woman's fault, simply the woman is more than that, she wants to be recognized as a human being, citizen, worker, woman and then mother and wife. Identifying women as only mothers and wives frames them within the four walls of the home, her role in society is nonexistent, or rather, that is how they want to make it. Educated by women, in a feminine world, they are commonly destined for marriage, which in practice still subjugates them to men; the prestige of manhood is far from waning: it always has solid economic and social foundations.⁴⁰⁶ Marriage is not only an honored and less strenuous career than many others: it is the only condition that allows women to achieve complete social dignity and fulfillment as mistresses and mothers. It is unanimously admitted that winning a husband-or in some cases a protector-is the most important enterprise.⁴⁰⁷ Thanks to this education, women do not seek work as a means of social emancipation and personal prestige but rather marriage as the guarantor of these. The mother is deafeningly hostile to her daughter's freedom and, more or less blatantly, does everything she can to torment her; while the adolescent's effort to become a man is respected and he is already given great freedom. The girl is forced to stay at home; she is guarded when she goes out: she is not encouraged to have fun, to seek recreation.⁴⁰⁸ Her destiny is already marked: she must find a husband as soon as possible, and just as quickly have children, and then devote her entire life to them. But what meaning does marriage take on for man and woman? Beauvoir answers:

On the whole, marriage today is a survival of defunct customs, and the bride's situation is far more ungrateful than it used to be since she still has the same duties, which, however, no longer give her the same rights; she still has the same tasks without drawing from their execution either reward or honor. Man today marries to anchor himself in immanence but not to close himself in it; he wants a hearth but remaining free to escape from it; he stops often but remains a wanderer; [...] he seeks novelty, risk, resistance to overcome, acquaintances, friendships that take him away from the loneliness of two. The children even more than the husband desire to transcend the limits of the hearth: their life is elsewhere, before them; the child always desires something else. The woman seeks to construct a universe of permanence and continuity; husband and children want to transcend the situation she has created that is for them but a given. [...] Thus the work that woman performs within the hearth does not give her autonomy; it is not directly useful to the community, it does not flow into the future, it does not produce anything.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ DE BEAUVOIR, *Il secondo sesso*, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁷ Ivi, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁰⁸ Ivi, p. 80.

⁴⁰⁹ Ivi, pp. 220-221.

Therefore, while the woman is scrambling to create the ideal environment in the home, her family members are scrambling to escape, to always have a reference outside the home: a job for example. Something to take them out of the house on a regular basis, a place where they can realize their persons, where they can realize themselves as individuals. The woman, on the other hand, locked in the home, finds her greatest fulfillment in housework, in cleaning, which she experiences as an obsession⁴¹⁰, as a rejection of the decadence of life; she creates an immanence that is very tight for the members of her family who try in every way to escape. Her efforts are thus unacknowledged, seen as taken for granted and due, because this is the task of the mother/wife. One must now ask who created this myth: the family can be defined as a social construction historically founded precisely on the concealment of the distinction between nature and culture, that is, on the naturalization of cultural and social conventions constructed according to temporal and territorial needs. Society therefore intervenes in the family at the moment it presupposes a model of it and passes it off as 'natural'.⁴¹¹ This naturalization has long remained the basis of the norms that have developed since 1948 and has innervated social policies despite the processes of women's emancipation, Italian society, like that of many other countries with advanced economies, still appears deeply post-patriarchal.⁴¹²

With the advent of the machine and industry at last women no longer suffer from the physical inferiority that characterized the agricultural era. With the machine these differences are nullified, even women can maneuver them without problems. The XIX Century opens up new opportunities for women's liberation, industrialization overturns

«Nell'insieme il matrimonio oggi è una sopravvivenza di costumi defunti e la situazione della sposa è ben più ingrata di un tempo poiché ha ancora gli stessi doveri, che però non le conferiscono più gli stessi diritti; ha ancora gli stessi compiti senza trarre dalla loro esecuzione né ricompensa, né onore. L'uomo oggi si sposa per ancorarsi nell'immanenza ma non per chiudersivi; vuole un focolare ma restando libero di evaderne; si ferma spesso ma rimane un vagabondo; [...] cerca la novità, il rischio, le resistenze da vincere, conoscenze, amicizie che lo sottraggono alla solitudine a due. I figli più ancora del marito desiderano oltrepassare i limiti del focolare: la loro vita è altrove, davanti a loro; il bambino desidera sempre dell'altro. La donna cerca di costruire un universo di permanenza e di continuità; marito e figli vogliono superare la situazione da lei creata che non è per loro che un dato. [...] Così il lavoro che la donna esegue all'interno del focolare, non le conferisce un'autonomia; non è direttamente utile alla collettività, non sbocca nell'avvenire, non produce niente.»

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ SCIURBA, *La cura servile, la cura che serve*, Pisa, Pacini editore, 2015, p. 70.

⁴¹² Ivi, p. 71.

the condition of servitude and slavery in which women but also the worker find themselves.⁴¹³ Woman won her dignity as a human being through labor, but it was an extraordinarily hard and slow conquest. At the beginning of the 19th Century woman was exploited more shamefully than workers of the opposite sex. Home labor constituted what the British called the ‘sweating system’: although working all day long, the worker did not earn enough to live on,⁴¹⁴ to such an extent that, as Derville says: «maintained by man when she is not working, she is maintained by him even when she is slaving to death».⁴¹⁵ The ‘conquest’ of work for many women only meant a double slavery, that of housework however her responsibility, and that of the new job paid a pittance, which gave neither satisfaction nor remuneration.

The lives of men and women, based on these assumptions, emerge as very different from each other. The woman's entire world lies within the home, while the man finds society, new relationships everywhere. She is nothing without the family. And the family oppresses her; all its weight is on her.⁴¹⁶ Men, on the other hand, find their world, their fulfillment outside the home: they meet each other in the real world, which they own.⁴¹⁷ They are allowed, indeed it is an obligation, to leave the house to work, as the male-breadwinner philosophy dictates. The more he affirms by action and work his ‘hold’ on the world, the more he manifests his manhood; in him human values and merely vital values mingle; where women's autonomous achievements contradict their ‘womanhood’, because they still want from the ‘real woman’ to become an object, to be the Other.⁴¹⁸ Thanks to Beauvoir's observations, it becomes clear how this world forbidden to women is a world created by men for men, granting him supremacy over women and the family in general. He owns it as he owns cattle or land; he disposes of it as he pleases.

Another important issue in understanding the disparity between men and women is that of Marxian reproductive labor. In short, Marxian philosophy holds that there are two

⁴¹³ DE BEAUVOIR, *Il secondo sesso*, p. 154.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *Ivi*, p. 155.

«Mantenuta dall'uomo quando non lavora, è mantenuta da lui anche quando si ammazza di lavoro».

⁴¹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 324. Beauvoir reports these words by Michelet.

⁴¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 325.

⁴¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 313.

types of labor: productive labor, which uses labor power to produce goods for the capitalist market, and reproductive labor, which is capable of reproducing the labor power needed by the capitalist to produce goods. In the Marxian view, however, the latter is not productive labor, because it does not directly produce goods. This dichotomy has been critiqued and revised, reproductive labor has been reinterpreted as the work done by the worker's wife in the home, all the work she does to ensure the family a meal, clean clothes, a livable home. But, as anticipated, when exploitation occurs within the walls of homes, it becomes invisible. The responsibility for this treatment of the woman is no longer the man, the husband: «he is absent in representations and recalls an abstract figure of a mediator between capitalism and reproduction. [...] The master of the housewife is not the husband. It's the State, the economic power», says an interviewee,

The State does not organize kindergartens, and women take care of children. There are no centralized social services, and the labor of women must replace them. There are no retirement homes for the elderly, and women must take care of them. There are not enough hospitals, and women have to cure the less serious diseases at home. The State saves billions on the skin of women. Let the State pay, then. Let the industrialists pay.⁴¹⁹

When asked if the industrialist should pay for work that does not produce goods, she replies: «the commodity produced by women is a human being: the worker. [...] When an industrialist hires someone, he does not only take a worker: he hires a couple».⁴²⁰ Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) strongly believed in this principle, so much so that they campaigned for wages for housewives, «given its strategic importance to the capitalist economy through the reproduction of the next generation of workers and the care of the current generation with no direct cost for the State or the market».⁴²¹ Thanks to the contributions of Mariarosa dalla Costa and Selma Jones, the debate on the actual productivity of domestic work performed by women was opened.

Domestic work was analyzed and revealed to be a hidden phase of capitalist accumulation; it was divulged that behind the closed doors of their homes, women were working; the house was a production center, the housewife was its worker. To generate and reproduce itself, the workforce,

⁴¹⁹ GISSI, *The home as a factory. Rethinking the debate on housewives wage in Italy, 1929-1980*, in *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, p. 149.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ivi, p. 147.

the most precious commodity for capital, required the labor of women: the realization of workers' consumption entailed female labor.⁴²²

Even in later debates this broad principle is confirmed and the very dichotomy of production and reproduction work is further explored to understand what their characteristics are. Marxian theory holds that: «the productive dimension of work was in the public sphere, while the reproductive one was in the private realm. The sphere of social reproduction was not considered “labor”, but care».⁴²³ Feminist critique, on the other hand, affirmed that reproductive work is not only a private business, rather «the foundation of the economic order».⁴²⁴

By stating that reproductive labor is a ‘private affair’, a very large responsibility is taken off the shoulders of the State. Moreover, this dichotomy is one that goes to mark gender roles: woman is suited to reproduction, man to capitalist production. «The sexual division of roles indeed originates from the ‘natural’ fact that it is the production of human being: the fact that, ultimately, the woman is a producer of labor power, and therefore her work changes precisely in relation to the production and reproduction of this very specific commodity. But this production and reproduction work is invisible».⁴²⁵ Since it is a natural event for the woman to give life, it is not seen as an effort, an action that requires time, patience and pain. This is her natural function, which takes place in her private life, in the home. The point made by many feminists in the 1970s was that women were doing these work for, what's more, free, as work was understood to be only outside the home.⁴²⁶ The wage movement for housewives argued precisely that a monetary income for housewives would snatch them from the invisibility they were suffering from.⁴²⁷

«What we are shown, therefore, is two separate worlds: the totalizing and alienating world of the house, and the outside one».⁴²⁸ To each of them respectively belong the woman and the man. «The housewife operates in a totally anonymous space, which is empty and bereft of any references and objects, apart from a threatening clock and a radio

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ivi, p. 148.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ivi, p. 149.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid..

that brings home the news from the world in addition to advertising. [...] The domestic sphere is deprived of any reference to emotions or natural inclinations». ⁴²⁹

From this brief and quick analysis, it emerges how gender roles are necessary for the survival of the capitalist system, they are almost its foundation. Capitalism needs a labor force to exploit in order to perpetuate itself and continually refuel the market. But this labor force in turn needs a matrix, an energy to be born, nurtured, reproduced. As is evident, this is a unique process, one is complementary to the other. However, because they occur in different spaces and times from each other, it is preferred to identify them as two separate processes, where the first is the one truly indispensable to capitalist society, and therefore recognized and remunerated, the second is a private affair, not pertaining to the real process of capitalist production, and therefore misrecognized, indeed forgotten. Their protagonist actors suffer the same end: the man is the worker, producer, the earner and has a place in the public sphere; the woman is the housewife, who performs only her natural function, and for this reason not part of the economic system, thus invisible.

2.7 Testimony

So far, sources have been used that have helped to understand the characteristics of the phenomenon of home-based work. Thanks to the contributions of Pescarolo and Ravenni, and Cutrufelli, direct testimonies of women who experienced this form of work in the 1960s-70s will be reported.

Going in order, Alessandra Pescarolo and Gian Bruno Ravenni in their «Il proletariato invisibile» ⁴³⁰ (“the invisible proletariat”) address home labor from the perspective of straw braiders in Tuscany. These home-based workers made hats, both for the middle class and for workers. Everyone in the late 1800s and early 1900s wore a hat, as the fashion of the time dictated. The "invisible proletariat" referred to in this volume

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ PESCAROLO Alessandra – RAVENNI Gian Bruno, *Il proletariato invisibile. La manifattura della paglia nella Toscana mezzadrile (1820-1950)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 1991.

are precisely the Tuscan women braiders who worked at home even before the arrival of machines. The stories they report in their volume are of women from different historical periods, two older and two younger. For the purposes of this paper only the stories of the youngest will be reported, as they were adults during the period of interest to this study.

The first story is that of Alba Caparrini, class of 1920. She tells of leaving school after the second grade, at that time they had neither aprons nor shoes, which were sewn with makeshift materials, and on rainy days they got soaked making the children who wore them sick. Pneumonia, says the interviewee, was not treated, not even the doctor was called. One would just get into bed and wait. Also, if mother needed help finishing a hat, the daughters stayed home to help her to afford bread.⁴³¹ The braiders' work was daily, counting how many hats they made per day: «It was done day by day, to go to buy bread the same day with the hat that was finished the night before»,⁴³² «Many times my mom needed to finish this hat, so we would stand next to her and as we were braiding it she would sew it, to go and bring back this hat, to finish it, to collect, and go shopping». ⁴³³ The interviewee reports that making a hat certainly took a whole day. Since the pay was a pittance, women like her mother would sew extra hats to sell them clandestinely to tourists who, passing through the streets of Tuscan villages, would admire the women in the doorways sewing these little braids to make beautiful hats. The girls helped the mothers a lot in this work, making braids for them that, sewn together, would form the hats.

As little girls, but really little girls, five or six years old, even less, we began to learn how to braid at thirteen: we played, as children, however, my mother would tie a string in our belts, a string and put a cane torch on it, so that this braid that we made would come straight. We would go around and wrap this reed. In the evening he would give us a task that you had to bring that much braid. [...] under one's arm one kept a bunch of wet straw strands rolled up with a rag, because, the straw needed to be always damp.⁴³⁴

⁴³¹ Ivi, p. 213.

⁴³² Ivi, p. 207.

si faceva giorno per giorno, per andare a comprare il pane il giorno stesso con il cappello che s'era finito la sera prima».

⁴³³ Ibid.

«tante volte la mi' mamma l'aveva bisogno di riportare questo cappello, allora ci si metteva accanto a lei e via via che noi si faceva la treccia lei la lo cuciva, per andare a riportare questo cappello, per finirlo, per riscuotere, per andare a fare la spesa».

⁴³⁴ Ivi, p. 206.

Alba says she has worked many jobs, both as a child and as an adult (she says she retired in 1975). «When I was a child, I remember, a lot of work was done piecework. In the winter I had chilblains, with certain swollen hands... We worked with benzoyl and mastic, then the master, Pasi Antonio, who died, would tie a brush to my hands so I could work. So many little girls». ⁴³⁵ From her testimony one also understands how quickly the Italian industrial market was changing, especially in the postwar period. First socks, then bicycle tires, then shoes, and finally the processing of rubber to make various products. The latter was particularly harmful: «look I had all my hands you could see my bones... then you always had your hands in the water, you would go through a conveyor belt this burning rubber and afterwards you would go through a tub of ice water. I had all my hands split up, just nothing was enough to spill blood. So many people got sick with silicosis, and they were even recognized». ⁴³⁶ Finally, Alba reports a particularly serious event. «One time they asked us if we could go to work on a Sunday morning because they had to do some testing, this morning, I remember, while we were working, there started to be nosebleeds all over, all of us: then they made us stop working, because it was a product that was not for this work». ⁴³⁷ To conclude, she is asked how she managed to regulate factory life and home life. Alba says she was widowed at age 25 with two very young children. Her husband died in a work accident; he was a laborer in Turin. When the children were young she left them with her neighbor sisters. Now her daughter lives in Florence with an aunt, and her 13-year-old son works in a ceramic factory. ⁴³⁸

Da bambine, ma bambine proprio, cinque o sei anni, anche meno, s'incominciava a imparare a fare la treccia a tredici: si giocava, da figlioli, però, noi bambine, la mi' mamma ci legava un filo in cintola, uno spago e ci metteva un cannello di canna, perchè questa treccia che si faceva la venisse dritta. S'andava in giro e si avvolticciolava a questa canna. La sera ci dava un compito che si doveva portare quel tanto di treccia. [...] sotto il braccio si teneva un mazzetto di fili di paglia bagnata rinvoltata con uno straccio, perchè, la paglia bisognava fosse sempre umida.

⁴³⁵ Ivi, p. 210.

Quando ero bambina, mi ricordo, molto lavoro si faceva a cottimo. D'inverno ciavevo i geloni, con certe mani gonfie... si lavorava col benzolo e col mastice, allora il padrone, il Pasi Antonio, che l'è morto lui, mi legava un pennello alle mani perchè potessi lavorare. Tante bambine, tutte bambine s'eramo.

⁴³⁶ Ivi, p. 211.

guardi io avevo tutte le mani che mi si vedeva l'ossa... poi s'aveva sempre le mani nell'acqua, si passava da un nastro trasportatore questa gomma che bruciava e dopo si passava in una vasca d'acqua ghiacciata mi s'era spaccato tutte le mani da far paura, bastava un nulla mi spillava sangue. Tanti si sono ammalati di silicosi, e sono stati anche riconosciuti.

⁴³⁷ Ivi, p. 212.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

The other story is that of Alba del Fante, class of 1917. Alba has a very special story. She was orphaned by her mother when she was only a few months old and was forced to live with her very elderly aunt and uncle. At 13, she dropped out of school because she was forced to work to support her aunt and uncle, who were now unable to work as well. But in reality, she recounts, she has always worked:

We worked even when we came back from school because they put the braid in our hands from a very young age, even a seven or eight year old girl; [...] I don't remember when I started braiding, because in the beginning it was quite a fun job because you put the straw under your arm and went for a walk, you could work and chat here, it was quite a nice job, there were women in herds walking around with the straw under their arm and the braid in their hands.⁴³⁹

At the age of 13, she entered the factory, or rather went from one factory to another, almost always in the sphere of straw, straw hats. An event he often reports in the interview is when Mussolini in 1929 raised the lira to 90, raising the currency Americans no longer bought Italian straw hats, sending an entire industry into crisis. During the war in Africa, she ended up making helmets for the military. Again, she has something to share about it. For every dozen helmet nets they obtained one lira:

So you come one day, without saying anything, you find a nice sign, saying that they were paying us instead of one lira eighty cents, they were the usual helmets, nobody said anything, we were all women and there were few who understood, then on another day to seventy, and silence, another day to fifty. Then there came an explosion...and at that time it was the time of fascism, it was the time of the war in Abyssinia, we were very young; around '36 we revolted, it must be said, we went to the unions.⁴⁴⁰

Alba insists a lot on the submissiveness of her work colleagues, both men and women, even those who have studied, she says. In fact, she says she will not go to work unless she is guaranteed insurance, a right she does not want to give up. Many others, on the

⁴³⁹ Ivi, p. 201.

si lavorava anche quando si tornava da scuola perché ci mettevano fin da piccole la treccia in mano, qui anche una bambina di sette otto anni; [...] non me ne ricordo quando ho cominciato a fare la treccia, perché da principio era un lavoro piuttosto divertente perché ci si metteva la paglia sotto il braccio e s'andava a spasso, si poteva lavorare e chiacchierare ecco, era un lavoro abbastanza simpatico, c'era le donne a branchi che andavano a spasso con la paglia sotto il braccio e la treccia in mano.

⁴⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 203.

sicché s'arriva un giorno, senza dir niente, si trova un bel cartello, con scritto che ce lo pagavano invece che una lira ottanta centesimi, erano i soliti caschi, nessuno disse nulla, s'era tutte donne che s'era poche che si capiva, poi in un altro giorno a settanta, e zitti, un altro giorno a cinquanta. Allora venne un esplosione...e a quell'epoca era tempo del fascismo, era l'epoca della guerra in Abissinia, s'era giovanissime, verso il '36; ci si rivoltò bisogna dire, allora dice, si va ai sindacati.

other hand, are content, not even thinking about it, as she says «they let it go... they are scared».⁴⁴¹ Alba tells of working even 12 hours and even on Saturdays, without recognized overtime, of course. She is now retired and has been able to tour Europe.⁴⁴²

Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, in «Operaie senza fabbrica»⁴⁴³ (“workers without factory”) reports on the Home-work Conference organized by the UDI in S. Giovanni in Persiceto on April 5, 1966. There are many women's voices reporting their experience with home-based work, some of which are particularly interesting.

Giglia Tedesco, who served as UDI president at the time, touches on key issues.

First of all, what are we proposing, to overcome, maintain or eliminate home-based work? The problem must be seen in its immediate concreteness, and that is to see how the homemaker can get paid more and be better protected today and not tomorrow. Why do employers give you home-based work? Maybe because they are humanitarian? There have been those who have said, to justify home-based work, that the industrialist does humanitarian work because it allows mothers to stay home near their children. It almost seems that their main problem is our family unit.⁴⁴⁴

In her speech she insists on a fundamental point, which is the one that could snatch these women out of the miserable condition in which they work, that is, union among workers.

You have to unite because, as you all said, principals play mostly on division, on isolating women workers. And that's also why homework is more convenient, because lowering a rate in a factory with 1,000 workers means having a collective response, whereas bargaining with the homemaker today is mostly done individually, so blackmail becomes easier.⁴⁴⁵

Diana Sabbi, provincial secretary of the clothing union, doesn't mince words: «secondo me deve essere chiara una cosa: che il lavoro a domicilio, e voi lo sapete, è stato

⁴⁴¹ Ivi, p. 204.

⁴⁴² Ivi, p. 205.

⁴⁴³ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*.

⁴⁴⁴ Ivi, p. 138.

Innanzitutto, che cosa ci proponiamo, di superare, mantenere o eliminare il lavoro a domicilio? Il problema va visto nella sua immediata concretezza, e cioè si tratta di vedere come la lavorante a domicilio può ottenere di essere pagata di più e di essere tutelata meglio oggi e non domani. Perché i datori di lavoro vi danno il lavoro a domicilio? Forse perché sono umanitari? C'è stato qualcuno che ha detto, per giustificare il lavoro a domicilio, che l'industriale fa un'opera umanitaria, perché consente alle mamme di restare a casa vicino ai loro bambini. Sembra quasi che il loro problema principale sia la nostra unità familiare.

⁴⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 139.

Bisogna unirsi perché, come tutte voi avete detto, i committenti giocano soprattutto sulla divisione, sull'isolamento delle lavoratrici. Ed anche per questo il lavoro a domicilio fa più comodo, perché abbassare una tariffa in una fabbrica con 1.000 operai significa avere una risposta collettiva, invece la contrattazione con la lavorante a domicilio è fatta oggi in prevalenza individualmente, quindi il ricatto diventa più facile.

inventato esclusivamente per pagare meno il lavoro umano». ⁴⁴⁶ She points out several problems that need to be carefully analyzed.

Hourly wages have been reported here that are an indecent thing. You have talked about health insurance, you have talked about social security, but I could talk about vacations, the maternity law, unemployment. Next to the money to depreciate the machines, there are all these other things that you don't have: so the wage is no longer even 90 liras an hour, if you put in all these things it decreases even further. ⁴⁴⁷

What she proposes is, like the previous testimony, unity among women workers, create a movement, address the situation. In fact, she argues: «I would like to say that I am against home-based work, because it is an inhumane form of exploitation. But I also say: today we are faced with this reality, so let us start from this reality, setting those goals that I was saying before». ⁴⁴⁸

Giovanna Biavati, 22 years old, laborer and home worker in Bologna province. She works at home in the winter, and when it is the season she works in the fields, both of which allow her to barely support herself and her family. «I try to supplement, in the winter months, with housework and some other work to make a 1,000 lira day. My mother helps me a little bit and sometimes my father too, but you work not 8 but 10-12 hours. With campaign work with 8 hours of work you exceed 2,000 liras, but it is only partial employment». ⁴⁴⁹ She claims to have looked for work elsewhere, in factories, but was told she is old now. ⁴⁵⁰

Gina Betti, home worker in Bologna province. To pack garments she has already purchased two moped machines. «Having a family, I work on the machine 8 to 9 hours a day, but to these hours I have to add the others to take care of the house: so my day sometimes reaches 15 hours. Monthly I earn 25 to 30 thousand liras, but with this I also

⁴⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 130.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

Qui sono stati denunciati salari orari che sono una cosa indecente. Voi avete parlato della mutua, avete parlato della previdenza sociale, ma io potrei parlare di ferie, della legge di maternità, di disoccupazione. Accanto ai soldi per ammortizzare le macchine, ci sono tutte queste altre cose che non avete: quindi il salario non è più neanche 90 lire all'ora, se ci si mette dentro anche tutte queste cose diminuisce ulteriormente.

⁴⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 131.

⁴⁴⁹ Ivi, p. 126

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

have to depreciate the machine capital.⁴⁵¹ «But then I ask myself, do I work for myself or for the machine manufacturers? Of course it would be better to go to work in the factory, although for a woman who has a family it is a big sacrifice.»⁴⁵²

«All the women who were asked the question state flatly that they hate working at home and ‘prefer’ the factory because, at least, it gets them out of the house..⁴⁵³ The following are some testimonies from women who worked at home before factory work.

I got to a point where I hated home-based work. I started when I was eight to nine years old and finished when I was thirty. I had really come to hate my job. I was always alone and had no satisfaction: the more time passed, the more there was to work and the less there was to earn. No contributions, no pension book, always busy house, always full kitchen table. The work then was little recognized by my husband, by family members, while I had to work even ten hours a day and on Saturday afternoons. They did not recognize it, I think, precisely because I was working at home. My husband would say, well, leave it there if you can't do it. Men when they work overtime they get paid, everything they do over 8 hours they get paid. Whereas if I work more than eight hours at home, that is not considered overtime, that is a normal ‘more’.⁴⁵⁴

Another woman states: «For me it was a dream to go to work outside. I was already 41 years old and at home I felt ignorant, excluded from everything in short. I was just listening to the radio. Because when a woman is busy nine to ten hours what time can she have to do other things.»⁴⁵⁵ And yet another one:

I've been living here for eleven years, but it is three years that I've actually been living my life. Before I was always at home. Since I have been working outside I have become interested in many problems. I had spent seven hundred thousand liras when I worked at home on the knitting machine. Now I have it down in the basement and I can't even find anyone to pick it up for me. In a way I'm

⁴⁵¹ Ivi, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁵² Ivi, p. 133.

Avendo famiglia, lavoro alla macchina 8-9 ore al giorno, ma a queste ore devo aggiungere le altre per accudire la casa: così la mia giornata raggiunge, alle volte, anche le 15 ore. Mensilmente guadagno dalle 25 alle 30 mila lire, ma con questo devo anche ammortizzare il capitale macchine. Ma allora io mi chiedo, lavoro per me o per i costruttori di macchine? Certo sarebbe meglio andare a lavorare in fabbrica, anche se per una donna che ha famiglia è un grosso sacrificio.

⁴⁵³ Ivi, p. 69.

⁴⁵⁴ Ivi, pp. 69-70.

Ero arrivata a un punto che odiavo il lavoro a domicilio. Ho cominciato a otto-nove anni e ho finito a trenta. Ero arrivata veramente a odiare il mio lavoro. Ero sempre sola e non avevo nessuna soddisfazione: più passava il tempo, più c'era da lavorare e meno da guadagnare. Niente contributi, niente libretto della pensione, casa sempre impegnata, tavolo di cucina sempre pieno. Il lavoro poi era poco riconosciuto da mio marito, dai familiari, mentre dovevo lavorare anche dieci ore al giorno e il sabato pomeriggio. Non lo riconoscevano, io penso, proprio perché lavoravo in casa. Mio marito diceva: beh, lascia lì se non ce la fai. Gli uomini quando fanno lavoro straordinario vengono pagati, tutto quello che fanno in più delle 8 ore gli viene pagato. Invece se io lavoro in casa più di otto ore, questo non è considerato come straordinario, è un “di più” normale.

⁴⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 70.

sorry, because I worked on it to pay for it, however, I have no use for it. In the factory, if nothing else, I have my books, my health insurance, all that stuff. I want to fight to make them count and to keep them. But at home it's better that it doesn't come to that anymore. When I think of those unfortunate women who are forced to stay there or return!⁴⁵⁶

Very interesting is what these female workers tell about the relationship between home-based work and family balance. A woman shares her experience:

You work at home to keep up with the family, and you actually end up that you are neither a wife to your husband nor a mother to your children. This job creates an anguish, a nervousness for you. The nervousness because you make little money, having to stop to make food, the little girl saying, mommy come play with me, and you get up, and if you have an elderly person in the house you have to be careful, have a certain delicacy, and instead you have a nervousness on you that sometimes you can't hold it and you put that elderly person in distress, you make them feel more.⁴⁵⁷

While the worker's husband tries to help her, the home worker's husband is more demanding, as if he should be 'compensated' for the woman's use of the home, of his 'private'.⁴⁵⁸ As one interviewee recounts: «When my husband stops work at noon and comes home for lunch, he demands to find everything cleared out, everything clean. Nothing must let him know that the kitchen is also used for my work. I have to hide everything, tidy everything up. And woe if he finds something out of place. Or if he doesn't find the food ready».⁴⁵⁹ Another one instead tells:

Domestic work was also heavier when I worked at home. I used to say to my husband: I'm so tired, I couldn't do this, I couldn't do that, because I can't do it anymore. And he: but never mind, do whatever you want. But he never helped me, because I was at home and I had to do it. Since I started

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

sono undici anni che abito qui ma sono tre anni che vivo. Prima ero sempre in casa. Da quando lavoro fuori ho cominciato a interessarmi a tanti problemi. Avevo speso settecentomila lire, quando lavoravo in casa, per la macchina da magliaia. Adesso l'ho giù in cantina e non trovo neanche chi me la viene a prendere. In un certo senso mi dispiace, perché ci ho lavorato sopra per pagarla, però non me ne faccio niente. In fabbrica, se non altro, ho i miei libretti, la mutua, tutte quelle cose lì. Voglio lottare per farle valere e per mantenermele. Ma in casa è meglio che non ci si arrivi più. Quando penso a quelle disgraziate che sono costrette a rimanerci o ritornarci!

⁴⁵⁷ Ivi, p. 77.

Si lavora a casa per tenere dietro alla famiglia, e si finisce in realtà che non si è mogli per il marito né madri per i figli. Questo lavoro ti crea un'angustia, un nervoso. Il nervosismo perché guadagni poco, dover smettere per far da mangiare, la bambina che ti dice: mamma vieni a giocare con me, e tu alzatai, e se hai un anziano in casa devi stare attenta, avere una certa delicatezza e tu invece hai un nervosismo addosso che certe volte ti scappa e metti in difficoltà quella persona anziana, la fai sentire di più.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

Quando mio marito, a mezzogiorno, smette di lavorare e torna a casa per il pranzo, pretende di trovare tutto sgombro, tutto pulito. Niente deve fargli capire che la cucina è servita anche per il mio lavoro. Devo nascondere tutto, riordinare tutto. E guai se trova qualcosa fuori posto. O se non trova il mangiare pronto.

going to the factory, he comes home and sets the table, he asks me: what should I do, do I help you make food? Things that I would never have hoped for before.⁴⁶⁰

It is evident how the man's attitude changes according to the work done by his wife, in this context, the husband's help is seen as a recognition of the toil and dignity of non-domestic work, and thus is an 'achievement' of the female factory worker.⁴⁶¹ It must be remembered, in this regard, that home-based work for a long time was presented as one of the easiest ways of reconciling care duties and paid work, one of the main reasons why women chose this work. The falsity of this belief is clear from the vivid descriptions of women engaged in a continuous and whirling slalom between household chores and productive work.⁴⁶² In the words of Lola Grazia:

The home is becoming, for our homeworkers in Emilia, a factory [...]. Home-based work isolates the woman, makes her a closed and enclosed being, makes her a robot, who devotes her every moment within the home to work, no longer able to distinguish between the home-factory and the home-workplace. Home-based work also conditions any associative drive, limits any creative and cultural interest.⁴⁶³

In fact, the testimonies show how this proclaimed reconciliation is done on the backs of the woman, on her mental health. Rather than improving the relationship between work and family obligations, it exacerbates one and the other in the woman's perspective. Some testimony on the subject: «When my husband is at home, I can't work. He says the noise of the car bothers him. Like it's music to me instead»;⁴⁶⁴ «I had to move to the basement, because the children have to study, the husband has to rest, and they also couldn't stand the kitchen being cluttered with things all the time, and the noise of the machine then...

⁴⁶⁰ Ivi, p. 78.

Anche il lavoro domestico era più pesante quando lavoravo a domicilio. A mio marito dicevo: sono tanto stanca, non ho potuto fare questo, non ho potuto fare quello, perché non ne posso più. E lui: ma lascia stare, fai quello che vuoi. Però lui non mi aiutava mai, perché ero in casa e dovevo farlo io. Da quando ho cominciato ad andare in fabbrica, viene a casa e apparecchia la tavola, mi chiede: cosa debbo fare, ti aiuto a far da mangiare? Cose che io prima non avrei mai sperato.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² BETTI, *Le ombre del fordismo. Sviluppo industriale, occupazione femminile e precarietà del lavoro nel trentennio glorioso (Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italia)*, p. 180.

⁴⁶³ Ivi, p. 152.

La casa sta diventando, per le nostre lavoranti a domicilio dell'Emilia, una fabbrica [...]. Il lavoro a domicilio isola la donna, ne fa un essere chiuso e rinchiuso, ne fa un robot, che dedica ogni suo momento nell'ambito della casa al lavoro, senza più riuscire a distinguere la casa-fabbrica e la casa-luogo di lavoro. Il lavoro a domicilio condiziona inoltre ogni spinta associativa, limita ogni interesse creativo e culturale

⁴⁶⁴ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 63.

as if it were a tractor»;⁴⁶⁵ «Is a job I hate. I never see anybody, I never talk to anybody. I work from morning to night. When I hear the alarm clock in the morning I say to myself “oh my God, another day to spend like this!”».⁴⁶⁶ It is evident even from these few sentences that housework rather than keeping the woman close to her family, distances her both physically and affectively, caught up as she is in the work she must complete within a certain time. Family members resent the fact that the home becomes a factory, they tend to hate women's work because it takes time away from caring for the family and because it is an element of disturbance in the home-an issue on which one could agree with these remonstrances.

It is not only support in the family that is lacking, but also support for the family, namely social services, which would be a real help especially if one has children.

The problem is especially when they get sick. The company gives you leave only up to a certain point. But what if the children have to stay home from daycare for more than 40 days, because of infection for example? I had to pay for a woman to care for my child, since I have no one. Whereas if society were organized differently, I don't know, with social workers for such cases, then the woman would not have to pay so dearly for her autonomy. It is not fair. You try to get busy, you try to get a job, you sacrifice yourself, and then you have to give up everything because there is a lack of social services.⁴⁶⁷

Thanks to the documentary film “*le lavoranti a domicilio*”⁴⁶⁸ (“the homeworkers”) shot in Carpi, the voices of women tell of their living conditions come out. The film's images-selected and edited by Guido Albonetti-are part of a larger material shot by Bernardo and Giuseppe Bertolucci in Carpi in 1971, kept in the archives; this material was to become an investigative film on the condition of home-based laborers, which never aired. The filming takes place during an assembly specifically called by the union for the purpose of taping the documentary film. There are many women who take the floor, many factory workers and many home workers who bring testimony of their plight. One particular home-worker women recounts her typical day:

In the morning I get up at 7 o'clock, and then I call the boy who goes to work in the factory. And then I make breakfast, then I call the kid to go to school, get him ready. Then after that I go to make the beds, and then I go to work a little bit on the machine, I work for two or three hours, then when

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ivi, p. 65.

⁴⁶⁷ Ivi, p. 92.

⁴⁶⁸ Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico, *Le lavoranti a domicilio*.

it's 11 o'clock, I have to get up to make food, make groceries. But there to get groceries I go to the store twice a week and I take a lot of stuff home so I don't go every day to get groceries because there is no time. Then afterwards I get up at half past eleven, I make food, and then these men come home, "but there's ready, there's not ready," you run, it's always like that, a traffic. While I'm eating I'm always standing, because one guy wants salt, the other guy wants vinegar, the other guy wants a drink, it's always a movement, you're always eating while you're digesting. And then, after the chores, I go to work again, I work until six o'clock in the evening, they come at seven, I get up, and dinner, then there is the child that there is to be taught how to do the homework, that there you never get with the teachers. [...] And then I make dinner, and when we have dinner, at eight o'clock I'm sitting still until eleven o'clock at night, and then at eleven o'clock I go to bed, so that's sixteen hours every day, in my house. And as my house I think they are like that in all houses. Sixteen hours a day, and on Sunday, if I don't go away, I'm sitting still, did the chores, did the cleaning, which I finish around four o'clock in the afternoon, then I sit again because I don't know what to do.⁴⁶⁹

Factory workers also tell of frictions with home-based workers regarding their competitiveness in price, their invisibility, the system created to keep them that way. There is widespread awareness among many, both factory workers and homeworkers, of the lack of unity among homeworkers, their main handicap in the struggle for legality.⁴⁷⁰

The evidence reported here served as an empirical demonstration of what was stated and argued in the previous section (2.6), namely, all those problems that have always characterized home-based work that not even laws have been able to curb. The woman home worker has suffered from an invisibility that, while it has allowed her to eventually work, has relegated her to the background of society. Behind the domestic walls often hid a small factory, constantly churning out, never closing, even at night. Yet no one saw it as productive work, as physical and mental effort. Woman, if she works inside the home, it is as if she does not work at all. This is evidenced, too, by all the care work she does

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

Al mattino mi alzo alle 7, e poi chiamo il ragazzo che va a lavorare in officina. E poi preparo la colazione, poi chiamo il bambino per andare a scuola, lo preparo. Poi dopo vado a fare i letti, e poi mi metto a lavorare un po' a macchina, lavoro per due o tre ore, poi quando sono le undici, mi devo alzar su per far da mangiare, far la spesa. Ma lì per far la spesa vado in bottega due volte alla settimana e mi porto a casa un bel po' di roba per non andare tutti i giorni a far la spesa perché non c'è tempo. Poi dopo mi alzo su alle undici e mezza, faccio da mangiare, e poi arrivano a casa questi uomini: "ma c'è pronto, non c'è pronto", si corre, è sempre così, un traffico. Mentre mangio sto sempre in piedi, perché uno ci vuole il sale, quell'altro ci vuol l'aceto, quell'altro ci vuol da bere, è sempre un movimento, si mangia sempre mentre si digerisce. E poi, dopo le faccende, mi metto a lavorar ancora, lavoro fino alle sei di sera, loro arrivano alle sette, mi alzo su, e la cena, poi c'è il bambino che c'è da insegnargli come si fa il compito, che lì non ci si prende mai coi maestri. [...] E poi faccio la cena, e quando abbiám cenato, alle otto sono a sedere ancora fino alle undici di sera, e poi alle undici vado a letto, in modo che sono sedici ore tutti i giorni, a casa mia. E come casa mia penso che siano così in tutte le case. Sedici ore al giorno, e la domenica, se non vado via, sono a sedere ancora, fatto le faccende, fatto le pulizie, che finisco verso le quattro del pomeriggio, poi mi metto a sedere ancora perché non so cosa fare.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

without pay or recognition. Domestic work is not work either; it is only her duty, which is not matched, however, by rights. The woman who works in the home, or the housewife, due to these misrecognitions, is also theoretically excluded from Italian citizenship, since she does not do any kind of work, which is what the Italian Republic is based on.

To conclude this chapter on home-based work, Toffanin's reflection comes in handy. The author invites reflecting on how while home-based work was spreading and taking root in Italy, in the rest of Europe women were entering the employment system full-time and outside the home.⁴⁷¹ The high prevalence of home-based work in the 1970s clashes with expectations of women's emancipation but not with the needs of business, the State and patriarchy.⁴⁷² The gendered occupational segregation experienced by women after World War II leads one to argue that the alliance between business, the state, and patriarchy enjoyed solid backing from forces traditionally close to working-class interests (politics and labor unions).⁴⁷³ In these terms, the phenomenon of home-based work testifies to the perennial and shared indifference to reproductive labor and work-life balance. To understand the phenomenon of home-work, Toffanin warns, it is precisely necessary to start from the node of reproductive labor.⁴⁷⁴ And that's what this work aimed to do.

⁴⁷¹ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 145.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE: WAGE DISCRIMINATION

The first two chapters showed two distinct and distant historical periods. From the 1960s to 2020, in 60 years of history, Italian society has changed, but not too much. Women's work has increasingly expanded to involve a large proportion of women. Many rights have been won, both at work and socially. What, on the other hand, often remains the same is the discrimination of women in the labor field, in all aspects affected by it.

3.1 The pay of the home-worker

Maria Rosa Cutrufelli goes straight to the sore point, pointing out that the family has become a center for aggregating resources that are later turned into services to meet a variety of needs. This transformation is by the housewife, a profession to which all women are destined in order to maintain the capitalist system of production and the resulting social organization. Just as there is a need for her work inside the home, so there is a need for her to work outside the home to increase the family income. This contradiction is resolved by moonlighting, primarily home-based work, which reconciles the need to supplement male income with the need to intensify domestic activity.⁴⁷⁵ This shaping of roles and expectations certainly has costs and repercussions.

First and paradoxically, the marginalization of the man from an 'active' family life. He is in fact absorbed, obsessed with his function as "income procurer," which drives him many times to accept in his 'free' moments subsidiary work. For the working woman, the suffering and anguish of 'double work'. For others, the humiliation of unrecognized domestic work and the savage exploitation of 'black' labor.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁵ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 90.

Innanzitutto, e paradossalmente, l'emarginazione dell'uomo da una vita familiare "attiva". Egli è infatti assorbito, ossessionato dalla sua funzione di "procacciatore di reddito", che lo spinge molte volte ad accettare nei momenti "liberi" un lavoro sussidiario. Per la donna lavoratrice, la sofferenza e l'angoscia del "doppio lavoro". Per le altre, l'umiliazione del lavoro domestico non riconosciuto e lo sfruttamento selvaggio del lavoro "nero".

Indeed, the impact that this family organization has on the adult male is not to be underestimated. Men in fact have to deal mainly with having a job to support the family financially. The work they do outside the home, however, is recognized, paid work that is protected by unions, which ends the moment they return home. Inside the home they no longer have responsibility, only authority, which they are entitled to because they bring money home. In this context, women's wages are understood as “support” to men's wages, what allows them to “round up”. For this reason, women did not immediately make demands for better pay, driven also by their husbands to “settle for”.⁴⁷⁷ Nonetheless, Maura Palazzi argues, these wages, though paltry, in times of crisis could give the family an otherwise more uncertain ability to survive.⁴⁷⁸ On the low wages of female workers, De Beauvoir believes that women were unable to adequately defend themselves against their exploiters, against the external and internal competition arising among them.⁴⁷⁹ They also failed to organize themselves into unions; the “women's associations” had a very hard time expanding and date back to the mid-1800s.⁴⁸⁰ Employers savagely exploited women's labor, both in factories and in the home, forcing women to work even 17 hours a day, with in return a starvation wage. A great number of employers had recognized the frailty – suitable for exploitation – of women's workforce, especially of married women with children, who felt the burden of having to support the family heavier on them, unlike unmarried women who showed less docility and care.⁴⁸¹ «Woman won her dignity as a human being through labor; but it was an extraordinarily hard and slow conquest»,⁴⁸² confirms De Beauvoir, «It is a tradition of weakness and subjugation, a lack of solidarity and collective consciousness that leaves them so disarmed in the face of the new possibilities open to them».⁴⁸³

3.1.1 *Equal pay legislation in the early Republic*

⁴⁷⁷ Ivi, p. 91.

⁴⁷⁸ PALAZZI Maura, *Donne sole. Storie dell'altra faccia dell'Italia tra antico regime e società contemporanea*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1997, p. 151.

⁴⁷⁹ DE BEAUVOIR, *Il secondo sesso I*, p. 156

⁴⁸⁰ Ivi, p. 155.

⁴⁸¹ Ivi, p. 154.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ivi, p. 155.

Italian women workers had been claiming equal pay since the 19th century, when, because of the lower cost of their labor compared to men's, thousands of them entered Italian factories during the first phase of industrialization.⁴⁸⁴ As early as 1919 the International Labor Organization Constitution established the principle of equal pay for equal work: regardless of the personal traits of people who perform it, it establishes the worth of the work performed as the criterion principle for the evaluation of pay.⁴⁸⁵ Not only the ILO, but also the United Nations speaks out on this issue: in 1948 the UN affirms in the Charter of the United Nations (Article 23) equal wages for men and women.⁴⁸⁶ In the same year, the constitution of the newly formed Republic was promulgated in Italy. In Article 37 it affirmed the principle of equal wages for men and women [see 2.1]. Note that it is thanks to Italian women's battle for equal pay within the resistance movement during World War II that this principle is introduced into the 1948 constitutional charter. The debate on equal pay, promoted by the ILO, becomes international: in 1951, the Bureau International du Travail (BIT)⁴⁸⁷ adopts Convention No. 100 on equal pay for men and women for work of equal value. In the same Session of the BIT, is also approved the Recommendation No. 90 which completes the Convention on Equal Remuneration, and in which are indicated the means and timeframe for the implementation of the same Convention.⁴⁸⁸ Moreover, the Convention specifies that the States' members must ensure the application of wage equality throughout the State Administration and Local Government sector, in industries or services where minimum wage rates are subject to public regulation or control, in sectors and enterprises that are publicly owned or under

⁴⁸⁴ BETTI, *Le alleanze delle donne italiane per la parità salariale*, p. 7

⁴⁸⁵ Ivi, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁶ Article 23 reads as follows: 1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. 2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. 3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. 4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. (Source: United Nations, Universal declaration of human rights, Paris, Dec. 10, 1948).

⁴⁸⁷ The Bureau International du Travail is the permanent secretariat of the International Labor Organization. It serves as the headquarters for all activities of the Organization. (source: ILO, About ILO).

⁴⁸⁸ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 266.

the authority of public authorities.⁴⁸⁹ From 1952 to 1960 the convention was approved by 35 states, among them Italy, which approved it in 1956 and entered into force in 1958.⁴⁹⁰ The implementation of Convention No. 100 in Italy brought current what had already been stated in Article 37 of the Constitution, whose preceptive relevance has largely been acknowledged by the Judiciary.⁴⁹¹ However, the two standards can be said to be identical, they simply use different words to express the same concept. What they differ in is that the constitutional norm does not enunciate the practical methods of applying the equality it speaks of. In contrast, the convention is more explicit in this regard. It states that the methods for setting equal wages will be subject to the decisions of the competent authorities of each individual state, which will be free to apply the principle of equal wages in a manner appropriate to the rules already in place. The State, on its side, must encourage those in authority to expedite the implementation of this principle.⁴⁹²

The 1951 ILO Convention changed the terms of the debate on equal pay in post-war Italy: parliamentarians and trade unionists saw it as a useful tool for promoting the demands of Italian women within their own mixed organizations and in opposition to employers.⁴⁹³ The following is how this recommendation translates to Italy. Italy was in favor of adopting a Convention and Recommendation, however, requesting flexibility in implementation methods. The representatives specifically emphasized the need to pursue progressive, flexible and staged implementation to consider the diversity of economic and social conditions of the various nations and enable their economies to implement the principle without adverse effects.⁴⁹⁴ In Italy, the application of the principle of equal pay should be left to collective bargaining by labor organizations with regard to those sectors where wages are set by collective bargaining.⁴⁹⁵ With regard to sectors without collective bargaining and sectors where wages are set by law or regulation, according to the Convention, the State will have to intervene legislatively or administratively to ensure

⁴⁸⁹ Ivi, pp. 273-274.

⁴⁹⁰ Ivi, p. 262.

⁴⁹¹ Ivi, p. 268.

⁴⁹² Ivi, pp. 269-270.

⁴⁹³ BETTI, *Le alleanze delle donne italiane per la parità salariale*, p. 8.

⁴⁹⁴ Ivi, p. 15.

⁴⁹⁵ COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, vol. VII, *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, p. 271.

implementation, as it did with the 1958 law n.23 for equal pay for doormen.⁴⁹⁶ However, unions were totally absent in the case of home-based workers – for instance – who even had difficulty organizing among themselves, consequently there were no such things as collective bargaining [see 2.6.5]. In the same year, it should be remembered, that the first law recognizing and regulating home-based work finally arrived [see 2.2]. For all those realities to which the convention did not reach, the Ministry of the Interior issued a circular in 1958 with the subject: “equal retribution between male and female for work of equal value”.⁴⁹⁷

In the State context, wage equality was enshrined by the rule inserted in the interconfederal agreements of Dec. 6, 1945, and May 23, 1946, which states: “Where women are assigned to perform work that is traditionally performed by male workers, under the same working conditions and qualitative and quantitative performance, the contractual pay provided for men will be paid”. This rule was later reproduced, sometimes with slight variations, in numerous collective bargaining agreements: art. 21, food; art. 20, chemical industry; art. 24, paper industry; art. 15, metal industry; art. 17, wood industry; art. 29, footwear industry; etc.⁴⁹⁸

This provision, however, presents limitations. First, the reference that this one makes to “work that is traditionally done by male workers” is now outdated because modern work leads to an ongoing transformation of the production process and, as a result, to a gradual erasure of traditional qualifications for both men and women.⁴⁹⁹ Second, with regard to incentive labor, the quoted standard - which, in the last paragraph, says: “In pieceworking the above condition is understood to be satisfied by the application of an equal rate” - hardly ever finds practical application.⁵⁰⁰ The Parliamentary inquiry Committee then concludes as follows: «from the foregoing considerations, it appears, therefore, that the contractual rule on equal pay for men and women performing equal

⁴⁹⁶ Ivi, p. 272.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ivi, p. 306.

«Qualora le donne vengano destinate a compiere lavori che tradizionalmente sono compiuti da maestranze maschili, a parità di condizioni di lavoro e di rendimento qualitativo e quantitativo, sarà corrisposta la paga contrattuale prevista per l'uomo»

⁴⁹⁹ Ivi, p. 307.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

duties, [...] does not in practice carry out the provisions of Article 37 of the Constitution and Convention No. 100, which are, therefore, still de facto inoperative».⁵⁰¹

Until the late 1950s, working women were not a priority in the political strategy of the Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL) or the Italian Communist Party (PCI).⁵⁰² As Betti explains:

The socio-cultural model still prevailing in the late 1940s-early 1950s, even in left-wing organizations, was that of the worker and breadwinner (male breadwinner), according to which women's wages were seen as secondary and complementary to men's wages. From this perspective, equal pay appeared as a possible threat to male remuneration. [...] At least until 1955, the main Italian trade union promoted the reduction of wage differentials between women and men, instead of promoting the principle of equal pay tout court.⁵⁰³

The discussion on equal pay for women is part of the discussion that followed the birth of the Italian constitution. At the time, not everyone agreed to give women adequate pay for their work. Among these was Angelo Costa, head of the most important Italian business organization (Confindustria), who declared that women's wages were even too high when compared to their productivity and that they should be reduced.⁵⁰⁴ Similarly, representatives of employers, who attended the Session of the International Labor Conference, opposed the forms of regulation accepted by the Italian government.⁵⁰⁵ Costa's claims are answered by Teresa Noce, a leading voice in political debate of the time. The devaluation of women's work and the reduction of women's wages were, in her view, part of a strategy promoted by business organizations to create unfair competition between women and men in the labor market, and for this very reason the cause of equal wages had to affect the entire working class, not just women.⁵⁰⁶

In Italy in the early 1950s, ILO Convention No. 100 influenced draft laws aimed at establishing equal pay through legislation: after 1951, all bills submitted made explicit reference to the Convention. The first bill on equal pay announced to the Italian

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

dalle considerazioni esposte, risulta, quindi, che la norma contrattuale sulla parità di salario tra uomini e donne che esplicano mansioni uguali, [...] non realizza in pratica le disposizioni dell'art. 37 della Costituzione e della Convenzione n. 100, le quali sono, quindi, tuttora di fatto inoperanti

⁵⁰² BETTI, *Le alleanze delle donne italiane per la parità salariale*, p. 13.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ivi, p. 15.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

Parliament dates back to 1952 and saw Teresa Noce as the first signatory. Given the opposition and timid attitude of labor organizations, the proposed bill was not even discussed. The same end did a bill put forward a few years later.⁵⁰⁷ These difficulties that stood in the way of a law affirming the principles expressed in Article 37 of the Constitution clearly reflected the fact that equal pay was not a central concern of either male parliamentarians or the government itself in the early 1950s, while it was strongly opposed by the employer representatives.⁵⁰⁸

So far it has been seen the legislative situation on equal pay nationally but also internationally. It has already been affirmed, thanks to the report of the Parliamentary inquiry Committee, how both national and international standards have found very little application in practice in Italy. In fact, the situation was far from what was sought by the various legislative interventions, as will be shown in the next section.

3.1.2 The real situation

Throughout the capitalist period, women were always paid as if the value of their labor was less than that of men. [...] For over a century women's wages have ranged from 50 to 60 percent of men's. [...] Today it reaches, on the general average, 80 percent, and in all branches of industry without exception the woman is worse paid than the worst paid worker. [...] For those who employ female labor it means profiting, on top of that, over half a million a year on each female worker.⁵⁰⁹

Industrialists have always sought justifications for this discriminatory treatment. First, with the massive entry of women into production, it was argued that women already received the sustenance they needed from their father's or husband's income, and therefore they only needed supportive income. Then with the introduction of machines, the lower productivity of women's labor was brought up. In reality, it was convenient for employers to keep this pool of cheap labor, in order to exert double blackmail: women needed to work because men's wages were not sufficient to support the family, on the other hand,

⁵⁰⁷ Ivi, p. 16.

⁵⁰⁸ Ivi, p. 17.

⁵⁰⁹ LENA, *5 milioni di sfruttate*, in "Noi Donne" n. 49 (1950), p. 2.

Per tutto il periodo capitalistico la donna è stata sempre retribuita come se il valore del suo lavoro fosse inferiore a quello dell'uomo. [...] Per oltre un secolo le paghe femminili hanno oscillato dal 50 al 60 per cento di quelle maschili. [...] Oggi arriva, nella media generale, all'80 per cento e in tutte le branche industriali senza eccezione la donna è peggio pagata dell'operaio peggio pagato. [...] Per chi impiega manodopera femminile significa lucrare, in soprappiù, oltre mezzo milione all'anno su ogni lavoratrice

women's low wages were used to further lower men's wages as well, triggering a vicious cycle.⁵¹⁰ It is estimated that as a result of this savage exploitation, female factory workers alone lost 80 billion lira in one year; if female employees (excluding sharecroppers and maids) are also included, this comes to over 150 billion a year.⁵¹¹ Rina Picolato, in this regard, reports how industrialists had recently refused to raise women's wages, believing they were even too high.⁵¹² The reality of the facts, however, testifies to quite the opposite. The minimum subsistence budget of a family was estimated at 54,000 liras per month. The contribution of women's wages to this quota is absolutely negligible: in the tobacco industries there are wages of 8,000 liras per month, in the food industry 12,000 liras, glovewomen go up to 6,000 liras, flaskwomen to 12,000 liras.⁵¹³ In the textile industry the laborer receives 36.75 liras per hour, the skilled woman receives 34.75 liras per hour. In metallurgy a common laborer receives 38.65 liras per hour, the first-class worker woman receives 32.95 liras per hour.⁵¹⁴

For women in agriculture, the exploitation is so severe that one of them states «le donne costano meno dei muli».⁵¹⁵ The 900,000 female seasonal workers are the most disadvantaged category of farmers, working 3 months a year for miserable wages. Among them: jasmine pickers from Messina, who work in the humidity of the night from 1 to 8 because in the light the jasmine wilts, earn 150 liras a day; olive pickers from Catanzaro start a 10-hour shift at dawn for 2-300 liras a day; chestnut pickers from Cosenza work 70 days for 6 thousand liras. On average, among Italian female farmworkers those who earn the least of all are the Calabrian women, with a monthly salary of 1,698 liras; those who earn “the most” are the Venetian women, with a salary of 8,281 liras per month.⁵¹⁶ Clearly, for both these are starvation wages.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² PICOLATO, *I salari delle donne. Troppo alti per gli industriali*, in “Noi Donne”, n. 40 (1950), p. 3.

⁵¹³ PAVOLINI Luca, *Viaggio nelle nostre fabbriche*, in “Noi Donne” n. 49 (1950), p. 3.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ TABET, *Le donne costano meno dei muli*, in “Noi Donne” n. 49 (1950), p. 4.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

A separate discussion deserves home-based work, which is excluded from censuses, social security, sickness, collective agreements and so on. Being a totally gray area of labor, it is difficult to find data, just as it is difficult to define the number of these workers. If for all other job categories there is a difference in pay between men and women, for home workers there is a difference in pay between women themselves: between those who work in factories and those who do the same work at home. This is natural because, in the first place, home-based laborers serve masters to save on labor. Then, home labor was established in female-dominated labor sectors, so there is no need to compare it with male labor and pay. Often the difference was felt even among home-based workers: bargaining over the price of each piece took place privately, often with middlemen keeping part of the profit. To be more precise: Article 8 of Law No. 877 of 1973 provides for full piecework pay (a solution provided for workers whose performance can be quantified only by the pieces worked). The legislation stipulates that wages must be set by collective agreements; in their absence, they must be decided by the parties to the labor relationship.⁵¹⁷ Wages follow the pattern provided for internal workers: a contractual minimum is given to which is added the increment for piecework and that for fringe benefits. The calculation of pay, on the basis of 40 hours per week, is defined by the ratio of the internal worker's monthly quota to the coefficient (173 x 60), which results in the 'minute quota'.⁵¹⁸ This indication assumes there is a timekeeper within the company to time the work performed at home. Failure to apply these standards becomes a rule, to the point that the determination of the piecework rates themselves becomes a unilateral act on the part of the entrepreneur.⁵¹⁹

Going by order: the differences in pay between factory workers and home-workers. Consider the case of the textile industry, a sector that is heavily feminized and outsourced to home labor. «The total wage of a specialized garment factory worker, who held the position of "machinist" was 1,238.32 liras for 8 hours of work (about 159 liras per hour), while that of a home-based worker who performed the same work would come to a maximum of 1,040 liras. This figure was obtained by calculating the amount of work the

⁵¹⁷ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 137.

⁵¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 138.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

homeworker could do over the course of 8 hours».⁵²⁰ Working hours were very different between female factory workers and home-based workers, for the latter the working hours were spread over the whole day, every spare moment was used to work. [see 2.6.3] The home worker would have had to work 10 hours to earn about the same wage as her factory colleague.⁵²¹ The shirt makers' pay was undoubtedly better because they could produce four to five shirts in eight to ten hours (for 150 to 200 liras), and they even made 100 liras per hour. However, these workers were paid 40 to 50 liras less per hour than factory workers, who made 75 liras per hour.⁵²²

Secondly, the differences in pay between home-workers. The workmanship most frequently contracted out to home-based workers were men's and women's woolen jackets or woolen sweaters and blouses, all of which were particularly demanding and time-consuming to make, requiring the alternation of two types of homeworkers: the aforementioned machinists and garment makers.⁵²³ The latter, however, were paid substantially less than the female machinists were paid. Only 170 liras of the total 600 liras paid for a finished men's jacket went to the female garment workers, who could only earn a daily maximum of 680 liras even if they were able to produce 4 jackets in just 8 hours (about 80 liras per hour).⁵²⁴ Shirtmakers were still “luckier” than fellow pantsers: the latter reached a maximum of 30-35 liras per hour, managing to make in the space of 8 hours at most 1 or 2 cloth pants (paid from a minimum of 110 to a maximum of 150 liras).⁵²⁵

However, the exploitation of female home-based workers is not only due to lower wages or longer working hours. Affecting the income of the home worker was first and foremost the debt she had to pay for buying the work machinery [see 2.6]. For the first few months or even years all income was used to pay bills of exchange: homeworkers generally rented or bought machines on installment from the same factories that

⁵²⁰BETTI, *Le ombre del fordismo. Sviluppo industriale, occupazione femminile e precarietà del lavoro nel trentennio glorioso (Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italia)*, p. 135.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ivi, p. 136.

⁵²³ Ivi, p. 135.

⁵²⁴ Ivi, p. 136.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

contracted the work out to them. In this way, these female workers became even more blackmailable as they were forced into debt to buy the equipment needed to perform the work.⁵²⁶ As one home knitter testifies: «The machine was purchased by me, as was the wool unraveler. All for a value of 700 thousand liras. For each hour of work I get about 170-180 liras, without machine allowance, without any assistance and welfare. Taking this burden off my shoulders, the profit is around 90-100 liras each hour».⁵²⁷

Moreover, piecework payment and the very low rates disbursed, coupled with the need, on the one hand, to pay the installments on the machines purchased or rented, and on the other, to guarantee a certain share of income, obliged the female home workers to extend their working hours work beyond all physical wear and tear.⁵²⁸ A very young home worker, 16 years old at the time, says she bought a sewing machine and went to tailoring school. However, she says: «But what satisfaction does this qualification give if, when it comes, the labor distributor says, “for these pajamas I'll give you 50 lira each”. I reply, “but they are few, how are we supposed to make the day?” He replies, “that's none of my business, if you don't want any, there are many others who make them and for less too”. This is the blackmail they do to us, home workers».⁵²⁹

Another inherent element of home-based work that affects income is its precarious nature. The amount of work contracted out to home-based laborers could vary in relation to both fluctuations in demand and supply. On top of this is also the discretion of the employer. Therefore, there could be months of the year when a heavy workload was required of the homemaker, due to the increased demand for the products entrusted to

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, pp. 128-129.

La macchina è stata acquistata da me, come pure il dipanatoio di lana. Il tutto per un valore di lire 700mila. Per ogni ora di lavoro prendo circa 170-180 lire, senza indennità di macchina, senza nessuna assistenza e previdenza. Togliendo questo onere a mio carico, il guadagno si aggira sulle 90-100 lire ogni ora

⁵²⁸ BETTI, *Le ombre del fordismo. Sviluppo industriale, occupazione femminile e precarietà del lavoro nel trentennio glorioso (Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italia)*, p. 136.

⁵²⁹ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, pp. 127-128.

ma questa qualifica che soddisfazione dà se, quando viene, il distributore di lavoro, dice: “per questi pigiamini le dò 50 lire l’uno”. Io replico: “ma sono poche come si fa a fare giornata?”. E lui mi risponde “non sono affari miei, se non ne vuole lei, ce ne sono tante altre che li fanno e anche per meno”. Questo è il ricatto che fanno a noi, lavoranti a domicilio

them, and periods when there was no work at all. From this perspective, home-based work had those elements of instability that were characteristic of seasonal work.⁵³⁰

The relationship with the employer was another sore point: the principal also had the option of favoring some laborers over others given the breadth of available labor, exercising this discretionary power to further compress wages, which consequently could fluctuate not only according to the amount of work done.⁵³¹ In the early 1970s, also spread the figure of the middleman, the crane operator, who was in charge of coordinating a group of workers, to whom he distributed orders on behalf of the company,⁵³² as was the case with the braiders. The “errand boy” as he was called, sought to emancipate himself from poverty through manufacturing.⁵³³ The errand boy was in charge of distributing straw to all the female workers, and at the end of the day he would come by again to collect the work done and give the daily pay. The deliveryman-fabricator would then resell the semi-hat to the shopkeeper, who would then resell the finished or semi-finished hat to foreign customers.⁵³⁴ Deliverymen – the middle link in the chain – were frowned upon by both women and shopkeepers because they often lowered prices or did not honor agreements.⁵³⁵ In particular, they were hated by the women, who in the confined space of the villages saw in their own misery the immediate reflection of their well-being. But they were also disliked by the shopkeepers who used them, and despised by the moderate political class, whose ideology placed the very need for social mobility in a gray area.⁵³⁶ Deliverymen were hated, in addition to being crooks, precisely because they sought to emancipate themselves from subalternity. The code of ethics of a hierarchical and paternalistic society offered only the option of being master or subordinate. To move between these two conditions was to act in an ill-defined borderland, to assume an identity

⁵³⁰ BETTI, *Le ombre del fordismo. Sviluppo industriale, occupazione femminile e precarietà del lavoro nel trentennio glorioso (Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italia)*, p. 138.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

⁵³² TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 140.

⁵³³ PESCAROLO-RAVENNI, *Il proletariato invisibile. La manifattura della paglia nella Toscana mezzadrile (1820-1950)*, p. 61.

⁵³⁴ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 115.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ PESCAROLO-RAVENNI, *Il proletariato invisibile. La manifattura della paglia nella Toscana mezzadrile (1820-1950)*, p. 61.

with elusive contours.⁵³⁷ Moving in this area evidently required a good deal of villainy and brutality. The delivery men's *modus operandi* was quite despicable: they would wait for the women to get used to a job and then lower the price again to push them to work faster. It was well known that the deliverymen used to contribute to starving the braiders by always expanding the number of women to whom they brought work, thus increasing competition and always lowering wages.⁵³⁸ As Tarozzi reports, deliverymen were defined as “true leeches of the braiders”. When things go wrong they try to put every burden on the poor women.⁵³⁹ However, the figure of the middleman over the years is going to decline more and more: the organization of home-based work has been involved in a process of cost rationalization that has affected first of all the distribution of assignments. As a result, home-based workers have also taken on the burden of picking up and returning materials to the company.⁵⁴⁰

This picture shows how women home workers are also mocked eventually, after exhausting work, receiving ridiculous wages. Women accept home-based work primarily out of necessity, to ‘help’ run the family, but also (and it is right to point this out) so that they are not completely dependent, like the housewife.⁵⁴¹ However, their work is miserably paid and the autonomy they gain is consequently so. Women home workers were deluded into thinking that they could earn money on their own, that they could enter the world of work, of sociality. The reality turned out to be quite the opposite: home-based work forced women into exhausting labor, which was neither recognized nor adequately paid, and which, above all, relegated them to the four walls of the home, preventing their socialization and politicization: nothing more like the care work done for free by women since the dawn of time. In this regard, a very exhaustive testimony: «the difference between homework and housework? Well, if there was the satisfaction of a decent salary, housework wouldn't even be that bad, but if I had to do only housework I would jump out the window».⁵⁴²

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ TAROZZI, *Lavoratori e lavoratrici a domicilio*, in *Operai*, p. 115.

⁵⁴⁰ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 140.

⁵⁴¹ CUTRUFELLI, *Operaie senza fabbrica*, p. 62.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

Antonio Tatò sums up in a few lucid lines the true essence of this discrimination. The following words, dated 1956, are extraordinarily pertinent to the present day, and will help to understand why the theme of wages was chosen to conclude this work. Talking about women's work allows and obliges at the same time to consider several elements. If one does not hold all these elements together, the risks are various: one would not fully understand its characteristics, and one would inevitably come up with distorted ideas, such as those that have characterized the narrative of women's workforce. The following are Tatò's words:

On the "female worker" the master class has always wanted to impose a mark of inferiority, has wanted to consider him of an inferior species, and therefore of lower economic value, theorizing on an alleged "productive superiority" of the male: a myth, this one, which probably has its origin in that very trivial and gross mistake that ignorant people make when they exchange and identify labor-power with physical-power. In this mortifying conception of women-as such and as labor-power-have undoubtedly played and play pre-bourgeois residues of an ideological, cultural, customary nature. But it has played above all a fact: idealizing the deformed and servile aspects of women's personality and condition, evoking and bringing back into vogue pre-capitalist myths about their function in society, to reaffirm that their vocation, absorbing all others, is to devote themselves to domestic labor (a labor for that matter performed in archaic forms, handicrafts at very high "invisible" costs) is the means by which today's master class obtains that women's non-domestic work be regarded as something incidental, incidental, additional to the "service" she must perform in the home, for the family, as wife and mother. The main blow that the bosses vibrate, thus acting, to all women and to the entire labor-power becomes clear: the productive performance of women suffers a starting devaluation and on the labor market it will have by principle - obviously! - a lower starting price than that of the male performance.⁵⁴³

3.2 Discrimination of the female workforce

⁵⁴³ TATO' Antonio, *Introduzione*, "Rassegna sindacale" n. 55-56 (1962), p. 2.

Al "lavoratore di sesso femminile" la classe padronale ha voluto imporre sempre un marchio di inferiorità, ha voluto considerarlo di specie inferiore, e perciò di valore economico più basso, teorizzando su di una presunta "superiorità produttiva" del maschio: un mito, questo, che ha probabilmente la sua origine in quel banalissimo e grossolano errore che compiono gli ignoranti quando scambiano e identificano forza-lavoro con forza-fisica. In questa concezione mortificatrice della donna – in quanto tale e in quanto forza-lavoro – hanno indubbiamente giocato e giocano residui preborghesi di natura ideologica, culturale, di costume. Ma ha giocato soprattutto un fatto: idealizzare gli aspetti deformati e servili della personalità e della condizione della donna, rievocare e riporre in auge i miti precapitalistici circa la sua funzione nella società, per riaffermare che la sua vocazione, assorbente di ogni altro, è quella di dedicarsi al lavoro domestico (un lavoro per di più svolto in forme arcaiche, artigianali ad altissimi costi "invisibili") è il mezzo cui la classe padronale di oggi ottiene che il lavoro extradomestico della donna sia considerato come qualcosa di accessorio, di accidentale, di aggiuntivo rispetto al "servizio" che essa deve espletare in casa, per la famiglia, come sposa e come madre. Il colpo principale che il padronato vibra, così agendo, a tutte le donne e a tutta la forza-lavoro si fa chiaro: la prestazione produttiva della donna subisce una svalutazione di partenza e sul mercato del lavoro essa avrà per principio – ovviamente! – un prezzo di origine più basso di quello della prestazione maschile.

Before getting to the data on the wage gap between men and women, and in general of the wage discrimination of the female home worker, it is useful to explore what are the reasons, but also the solutions - often unappealing - of the widespread discrimination of the female workforce in Italy. Thanks to the contribution of Professor Orlando Scarpato, from the University of Milan, it will be possible to trace those motivations behind the discrimination of women in the workplace.

According to Scarpato, to understand the mechanisms of women's discrimination in employment, two distinctions must first be implemented. The first concerns the distinction between two segments of the Italian labor market: the primary segment is the one characterized by better working conditions, better wages, low turn-over, high career prospects; the secondary segment, on the contrary, has lower wage levels, accelerated turn-over, weak unionization, and low career prospects. The second distinction that needs to be applied then is that between 'specific' and 'common' jobs, where the former belongs to the primary segment, the latter can belong only to the secondary segment or even to both segments.⁵⁴⁴ The first factor in the discrimination of women is the tendency for their expulsion from the primary segment to relegate them indefinitely to the secondary segment. The reasons, Scarpato argues, vary depending on whether the jobs are specific or common.⁵⁴⁵ When the job is specific, the employer seeks personnel with well-defined personal characteristics, with regard to trainability as well. In these cases, however, the woman is at a disadvantage because investment in her training is less profitable. The employer is reluctant to invest in the training of the working woman for several reasons: her working life is very short, she can only make it to marriage at most, her presence at work is not always schedulable (she has to be absent often for family duties), it seems that the woman is not particularly interested in advancing her career.⁵⁴⁶ When, on the other hand, the workplace is common, the situation changes. If the common job does not require rigid personal characteristics, the woman could also enter the first segment, under

⁵⁴⁴ SCARPATO, *Le recenti teorie alternative del mercato del lavoro con particolare riferimento alla discriminazione femminile in Italia*, in "Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali", vol. 87, n. 4 (1979), pp.559-587, p. 577.

⁵⁴⁵ Ivi, p. 578.

⁵⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 572.

one condition: that she decrease her wage to fade her higher cost per unit produced.⁵⁴⁷ However, Italian legislation strictly protects this aspect; women cannot negotiate their wages, which is why they are relegated to the second segment, where, in the absence of controls and regulations, women directly bargain their wages, deliberately lowering them to make up for their high labor cost per unit produced.⁵⁴⁸ What makes this cost high are always the same reasons: short working life, absence from the workplace, all those cases where women's work is less reliable, and therefore more flexible, than men's work.⁵⁴⁹ Women are also discriminated against within the primary segment, where they usually occupy the least senior positions, with less pay and career opportunities. It is accepted that women succeed in taking specific jobs in the primary segment in cases: where they have extraordinary personal talents, where these jobs do not conflict with the image the society gives her.⁵⁵⁰ Women, therefore, in the primary segment may attain a position, but almost always women are concentrated in a few jobs assigned to them by tradition and culture. This concentration gives rise to the phenomenon of 'crowding'.⁵⁵¹ It predicts that as women are ghettoized in a few jobs, they are concentrated in a small number of 'internal markets' where labor supply is very high. Often, however, it is women who choose to ghettoize themselves in certain jobs that society 'grants' them in accordance with their social role.⁵⁵² The competition created in this situation pushes women to lower their wages in order to continue to be competitive with men.⁵⁵³ One of the main drivers of women's discrimination in employment is precisely that they are concentrated in certain sectors overcrowded with women, usually in the secondary segment. The consequence of this crowding is felt in wages. Wage discrimination can be due either to the large presence of women in low-paying job sectors or by gender difference even in the same job.⁵⁵⁴ Women in fact, more than men, suffer from so-called "statistical discrimination", a theory originally due to Phelps. In short, an employer decides to

⁵⁴⁷ Ivi, p. 579.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ivi, p. 569.

⁵⁵⁰ Ivi, p. 580.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ivi, p. 573.

⁵⁵³ Ivi, p. 576.

⁵⁵⁴ Ivi, pp. 563-564.

exclude an entire social group (by race, gender, age) from employment if he or she believes their performance is inferior to other groups. It thus happens that one worker is discriminated against despite being qualitatively superior to another. Women are particularly affected when it comes to generally 'male' jobs.⁵⁵⁵ Another element contributing to women's discrimination is certainly lower unionization. Being ghettoized in the less regular and lower paid areas of the labor market, consequently less unionized, women's bargaining power is diminished and her wages bound to decrease.⁵⁵⁶ Last but not least, the formal education and training of the female workforce is the main handicap to their careers. It is all a consequence: her working life is short, her earnings will be less, and investing in her training will be dysfunctional.⁵⁵⁷

3.3 The gender pay gap

«Wages are often taken as a proxy for the quality of work as wage and salaried work is usually associated with better working conditions».⁵⁵⁸ The current work culture, in fact, tends to identify work only with wage labor, that work which allows economic stability and a place in society, in short a permanent wage. «In 2018, there were 673.9 million women (or 52.5 percent employed women) and 1.05 billion men (or 51.7 percent employed men) who worked as wage earners throughout the world. Since 1991, the proportion of women wage workers has increased by 10 percentage points, compared to 6.8 per cent growth for men».⁵⁵⁹ Although this is excellent news for women's employment, there is one thing to note, which is not a detail: the increase in female employment has not been matched by the decrease in the wage gap between men and women.⁵⁶⁰ «Around the world, women continue to earn less than men. Gender pay gaps

⁵⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 574.

⁵⁵⁶ Ivi, p. 575.

⁵⁵⁷ Ivi, p. 567.

⁵⁵⁸ ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, Geneva, ILO, 2019, p. 43.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

have lessened very slowly over time, as workers' characteristics rarely change quickly».⁵⁶¹

Defining and measuring the gender pay gap is not an easy task. In general, «the gender pay gap is a widely used indicator, representing the difference in pay overall between women and men wage employees».⁵⁶² But the results may vary between estimates, depending on different interpretations, that of 'pay' itself for example, whether one chooses to analyze the gap based on hours worked or based on monthly or annual wages.⁵⁶³ Depending on the method chosen, the elements favored in the analysis, the results can be different and sometimes contradictory. The following will show why.

The raw gender pay gap «refers simply to the difference in pay between women and men at a specific point in time and is usually calculated as the margin by which women's pay falls short of men's. For example, if women's pay is 75 per cent of men's, it is said that the gender pay gap is 25 per cent».⁵⁶⁴ The measures that are used to summarize information in the wage distribution are the "mean gender pay gap" and the "median gender pay gap".⁵⁶⁵ Each of them, when applied, give different results. In addition, the results may be different if one chooses to base the analysis on monthly wages or hours worked. If one chooses to work on monthly wages, although it is easier to trace the sources, it is difficult to disentangle hours worked from payment per hour, so the analysis is restricted to full-time workers only. Therefore, all part-time workers, who are known to be mostly women with low hourly payments, are excluded from this analysis.⁵⁶⁶ This is why in this type of analysis it is preferred to use the measure of hours, rather than months or years. That said, it is interesting to see how the results actually change depending on the method applied. The following are two tables that, based on hourly wages, show the 'mean' and the 'median' gender pay gap in high-income countries.

⁵⁶¹ OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, Paris, OECD Publishing, 2017, p. 156.

⁵⁶² ILO, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*, Geneva, ILO, 2018, p. 21.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid. The "mean gender pay gap" compares the average of the women's pay distribution to the average of the men's pay distribution, while the "median gender pay gap" compares the value located in the middle of the women's pay distribution to the value located in the middle of the men's pay distribution.

⁵⁶⁶ Ivi, p. 22.

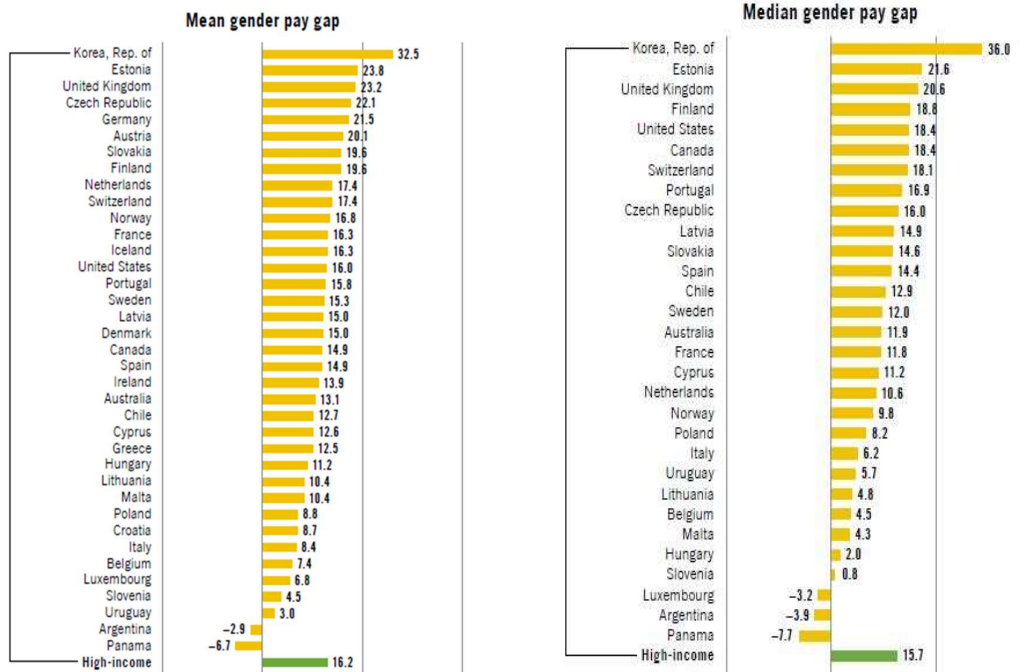


Figure 6: Gender pay gaps using hourly wages. (Source: ILO, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*).

If, instead of hourly wages, monthly wages are used as a measure, the picture changes significantly, as shown below.

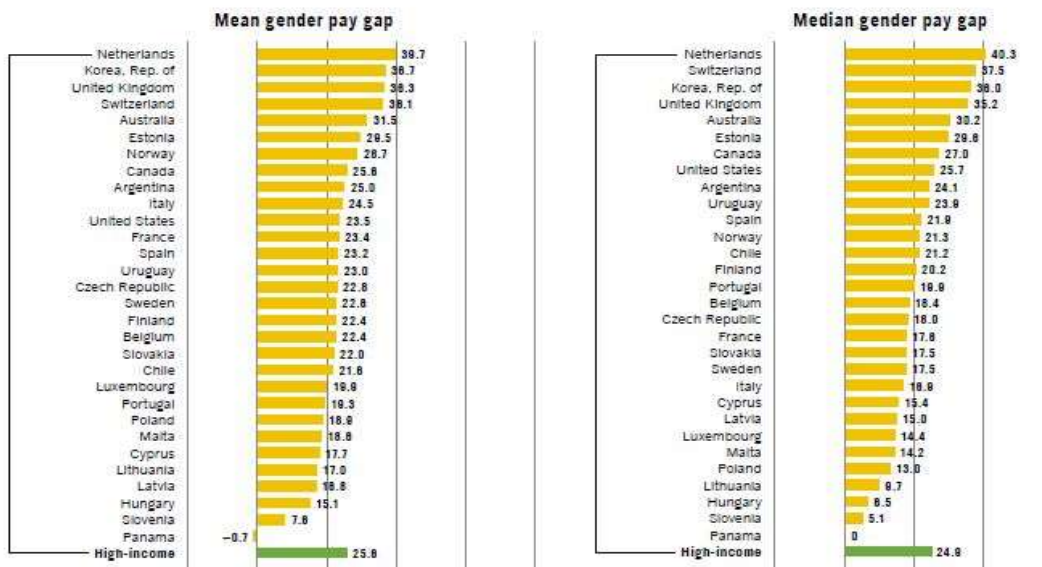


Figure 7: Gender pay gaps using monthly earnings. (Source: ILO, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*).

«The first observation arising from these figures is that the gender pay gap is overwhelmingly estimated as a positive value – that is, a value indicating that men earn more than women».⁵⁶⁷ In both cases presented, that based on hourly wages and that based on monthly wages, except for two or three countries, there is no doubt that women earn less than men. The world's estimation also shows this: «the weighted global estimates range from about 16 per cent (in the case of mean hourly wages) to 22 per cent (in the case of median monthly wages), depending on which measure is used. Looking at all the different estimates, one conclusion is that, on average, women are paid approximately 20 per cent less than men across the world».⁵⁶⁸ As transpires from the tables above, the gap widens when it comes to monthly wages, rather than hours worked. As anticipated this is a result of the large presence of women in part-time work, the difference there is between men's and women's working hours.

Although the reasons for working part time are diverse, recent estimates suggest that more than half of all part-time work is involuntary in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Italy, Romania and Spain. If a large proportion of women working part time are doing so out of necessity rather than choice, any estimate of the gender pay gap using monthly earnings implicitly also takes account of the cost to women of fewer full-time work opportunities. At the same time, many women may choose to work part-time because domestic chores and care responsibilities continue to fall mainly on their shoulders.⁵⁶⁹

3.3.1 What influences gender pay gap

Usually, the problem is traced back to the issue of training and education only, which is not sufficient in the female case. «Research has revealed that, on average, education is not a significant explanatory cause of the gender pay gap, although its importance varies between countries».⁵⁷⁰ «Nevertheless, education is a necessary but not

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Ivi, p. 23.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, p. 44.

sufficient condition for change in gender inequality to take place».⁵⁷¹ Although much of the gap remains unexplained, it is possible to trace some underlying causes of this discrimination.

Therefore, one can distinguish

gender pay gaps into an “explained” and an “unexplained” part. The explained part refers to the part of the gender pay gap that can be explained by differences in labour market attributes or characteristics (human capital endowments, job characteristics and workplace characteristics), whereas the unexplained part indicates how much of the gender pay gap cannot be explained by differences in those attributes or characteristics.⁵⁷²

The characteristics referred to are mainly: «age, education, experience, working time, contractual conditions, occupational category, industrial code (principal economic activity) and rural/urban location. [...] Exceptionally, in the case of the United States Current Population Survey, race is also identified, and a dummy for “white” versus all other races is used in the decomposition of the gender pay gap for this country».⁵⁷³

Regarding age, it has been shown that as age increases, so does gender pay gap. This happens for the majority of the 29 OECD countries where «the gender gap in median hourly earnings for full-time-employed 25-29 year-olds stands at about 7%, increasing to 13% for 35-39 year-olds, 14% for 45-49 year-olds, and 15% for 55-59 year-olds».⁵⁷⁴ Looking closely at the table, however, one voice out of the chorus emerges: Italy. Here the phenomenon is completely reversed: those who suffer from the greatest gap are precisely the 25-29 year-olds, followed by the 35-39 year-olds, then the 45-49 year-olds, and finally those who suffer the least, almost not at all, are precisely the elderly 55-59 year-olds.⁵⁷⁵

Based on averages among OECD countries, it appears that the gender gap increases when becoming parents, or rather, mothers. Working mothers, who support the home and children on their own shoulders, do not have time to devote to work, missing opportunities even for promotion. In 2014, there was a 21.2 percent pay gap between full-time working

⁵⁷¹ p. 163

⁵⁷² ILO, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*, p. 55.

⁵⁷³ Ivi, p. 56.

⁵⁷⁴ OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, p. 159.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

men and women, double that of men and women without children. «Because mothers tend to have different characteristics than childless women, and because working mothers often reduce working hours or seek out “family-friendly” jobs upon parenthood, isolating the actual effect of becoming a mother on wages is not always straightforward».⁵⁷⁶ What is interesting is that the man does not suffer from the “parenthood penalty” at all; on the contrary, it seems to benefit his career.⁵⁷⁷ When mothers tend to earn less than women without children, this pay gap is known as the “motherhood pay gap”.⁵⁷⁸ On the other hand, fathers are more likely to receive better pay than men without children. This pay gap is known as the “fatherhood pay gap”.⁵⁷⁹ «Lower wages for mothers may be related to a host of factors, including career breaks for paid and unpaid maternity leave, reduction in hours of work and gender-biased hiring and promotion decisions at the enterprise level».⁵⁸⁰ Regarding the reduction in working hours: in the absence of children, men generally work longer than women, about 3 hours and 50 minutes longer. With the arrival of the first child these hours become about 5. Therefore, the choice of working hours still remains dependent on social expectations and pressures that place women as the main caregivers and men as the main breadwinners.⁵⁸¹

The employment sector also plays an important role. The “crowding effect” is particularly dangerous for women more than men, as a matter of fact, «occupations where women predominate generally pay less than those where men predominate».⁵⁸² There are those who have attempted to offer explanations for this segregation. First, «cultural explanations emphasise the role of ideology and tradition in defining which skills are valuable, desirable and profitable. [...] In line with the male-centred order of society, a higher value is attributed to jobs or occupations mainly carried out by men or associated with male-stereotyped skills».⁵⁸³ The devaluation hypothesis offers a simple explanation

⁵⁷⁶ Ivi, p. 160.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, p. 39.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Ivi, p. 40.

⁵⁸¹ Ivi, p. 41.

⁵⁸² BRYNIN Malcolm – PERALES Francisco, *Gender wage inequality: The de-gendering of the occupational structure*, in “European Sociological Review, vol. 32, issue 1, 2016, p. 7,

⁵⁸³ PERALES, *Occupational feminization, specialized human capital and wages: evidence from the British labour market*, in “Work, Employment and Society”, n. 27 (2013), p. 162.

for why men's jobs pay more than women's. Women's work is devalued by social structures, and the discrimination is not against the individual person but against the kind of job women do.⁵⁸⁴ Many studies have shown, among other things, that the skills required for low-paying jobs dominated by women are comparable to those for high-paying jobs dominated by men.⁵⁸⁵ Thus, «the work commonly performed by women will be undervalued in respect to the work usually performed by men due to deeprooted traditionally-established beliefs privileging men».⁵⁸⁶

Another way to explain the GPG is through the human capital theories (HC). «Human capital is the stock of knowledge and skills accumulated by an individual and is acquired through education, training and experience. According to HC theories, gender differences in participation and wages are the result of gender-specific preferences regarding labour market investments and in the allocation of resources between the household and the workplace».⁵⁸⁷ Among the various HC theories, it is useful to mention that of Becker: work effort/rational choice theory. This theory holds that: «if men expect to receive higher pay in the market than women, men will decide to work and women to stay at home. If women expect to spend less time in the labour market, they allocate fewer resources to their education, job-related training and duties at work than men and instead invest their efforts in family and household-related activities».⁵⁸⁸ Some studies argue that women are more likely to interrupt their jobs and careers for family responsibilities than men. Therefore, in order to optimize their working lives, they choose flexible jobs, which allow them to be able to split up: initially, wages are high and depend little on experience; in the long run, however, salary prospects will be poor.⁵⁸⁹ «Therefore, women become concentrated in a narrow range of occupations which offer such benefits and this explains the observed patterns of occupational sex-segregation and wage differences».⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Ivi, p. 8.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

The socialization theories «use concepts such as sex-role socialization, stereotypes, and the gender-typing of jobs to explain sex-segregation at work».⁵⁹¹ Today's patriarchal society teaches from an early age to conform to a gender identity determined by stereotypes and cultural standards. «Consequently men and women are unequally distributed within the labour market because they display preferences for jobs and occupations which match their traits and skills and because crossing gender boundaries is socially penalized».⁵⁹² The woman who has internalized the gender roles imposed by society will go in search of work that can meet these needs of hers, such as stopping work often to take care of the family, being absent for entire periods, etc.⁵⁹³ «Therefore, if more traditional women and those bearing a higher household burden concentrate in female-dominated lines of work, it is possible that these aspects explain the relationship between occupational feminization and wages».⁵⁹⁴

3.3.2 The role of education in determining Gender Pay Gap

As anticipated, part of the gap cannot be explained by factors or mechanisms, as it was possible to do in the previous section. There is a dark part, which cannot be deciphered, then there is the part that can be explained, within which we find the category of education. Looking at Italy, the current situation is roughly as depicted in the following table. The yellow line represents the part not explainable, while the green line represents the explainable part with education already within it, which is made visible with the red line.



Figure 8: Weighted average of the three components of the gender pay gap. (Source: ILO, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*, p. 65).

⁵⁹¹ Ivi, p. 10.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Ivi, p. 11.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

In general, in high-income countries like Italy, education weighs on average about 1 percent of the total gender pay gap. «This general finding is hardly surprising since in high-income countries the educational attainment of women in paid employment is in the vast majority of countries, and across all rankings of the wage distribution, higher than the educational attainment of men».⁵⁹⁵ Among the OECD countries, women complete education more often than men. In 2014, 57% of degrees were obtained by women.⁵⁹⁶ «Men are less likely to earn a tertiary degree, [...] in several countries they also take longer than their female peers to graduate within the expected time».⁵⁹⁷ This characteristic of boys goes back to primary and secondary schools, where they «are more likely than girls to be all-round low achievers».⁵⁹⁸ To explain this phenomenon, it is believed that boys' behavior in and out of school influences their performance. In particular, they do less homework while they are heavy users of video games and the Internet, have poor relationships with their teachers, and arrive late to school.⁵⁹⁹ In this context, their girl peers are able to distinguish themselves and achieve higher levels of education on a qualitative level than their boy peers. However, despite their better educational level, they choose stereotypical paths, which leads them into highly feminized fields where the risk of discrimination is higher.

«The fields of study (and subsequent career paths) of boys and girls start to diverge at the age of 15. OECD-wide, 15-years-old boys are, on average, more than twice as likely as girls to expect to work as engineers, scientists or architects. In higher education, young women are under-represented in STEM».⁶⁰⁰ And it is precisely STEM graduates who are most in demand and the highest paid, precisely because of their skills.⁶⁰¹ Italy also has a record here, it has the highest rate of women linked in members with digital skills (36,4 percent of women against 63,6 percent of men), followed by the United States and

⁵⁹⁵ ILO, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*, p. 64.

⁵⁹⁶ OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, p. 24.

⁵⁹⁷ Ivi, p. 115.

⁵⁹⁸ Ivi, p. 116.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ivi, p. 24.

⁶⁰¹ ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, p. 45.

Norway.⁶⁰² The same «research is also showing that some women with digital skills are actually not using them as they are leaving the industry due to the prevalence of a male-oriented workplace culture and the lack of support for women».⁶⁰³ As a matter of fact, «in 2014, for example, women accounted for about 37% of new entrants into tertiary-level science programmes, on average across OECD, and only about 24% of entrants into engineering, manufacturing and construction programmes. [...] When it comes to computer science, they make up less than 20% of the new entrants»⁶⁰⁴. Finally «women still make up only 18% of all new entrants on to engineering programmes».⁶⁰⁵ Women deliberately choose not to pursue certain careers, not because they think they are incapable or undeserving, but because of the «entrenched stereotypes about which careers are suitable for men and which ones for women. They are passed on to children by their families, teachers and society at large».⁶⁰⁶

Therefore, women possess the titles, the preparation, but still earn less. Indeed, returns to women's education are consistently lower than those of men.⁶⁰⁷ So no matter how much one studies more or better, the world of work does not recognize women's skills. «Work performed by women is frequently undervalued either because it mirrors work which has traditionally been carried out by women in the home without pay or simply because it is work performed by women».⁶⁰⁸ The case of the teaching and nursing sector proves this: since it has been infiltrated by women, who have then made it their territory, wage levels have fallen relative to national wage averages.⁶⁰⁹ «While female labour force participation rates have moved to men's over the past few decades, women are still less likely to be in the workforce and often experience lower job quality across OECD countries».⁶¹⁰ As a matter of fact, «the share of women in the lower occupational categories (unskilled, low-skilled or semi-skilled) is almost everywhere much higher than

⁶⁰² Ivi, p. 46.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, p. 163.

⁶⁰⁵ ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, p. 46.

⁶⁰⁶ OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, p. 107.

⁶⁰⁷ ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, p. 46.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, p. 26.

the share of women in the top occupational categories (CEOs and corporate managers)».⁶¹¹ This phenomenon is ‘called vertical occupational segregation’, meaning the clustering of men at the top of occupational hierarchies and of women at the bottom.⁶¹² However, the issue of the ‘glass ceiling’ will be addressed in 3.3.

It is clear then that it is not so much education, the female propensity toward certain higher paying jobs that determines the gender pay gap. In fact, behind every possible explanation, there is always a cultural backstory, well-entrenched stereotypes that generally view women as less capable, and try to hide this belief behind reasons such as school choices, women's own characteristics. All of this only increases women's complexes - already well rooted thanks to family upbringing - so girls will always feel less than boys no matter what.

To conclude,

There are no such things as ‘female’ or ‘male’ skills. These are social artefacts derived from processes of segregation. However, if the underlying principle of devaluation theory is that women’s work is considered to be of lower value than men’s—because historically ‘femininity’ has been attributed lower value—then it is inevitable that the skills associated with the work that women do in typically female occupations will also be considered of lower value. Women’s apparent (i.e. socially constructed) skills are then devalued. This is changing, we argue, but not because segregation is declining and more women are doing ‘men’s work’ (a process that is in fact extremely slow), nor because women are now as well educated as men (which would not help if women’s skills are devalued). The change is the result of the fact that the skills that women typically apply in segregated occupations are increasingly in demand. Devaluation is not an immutable element of the social structure. Occupational gender segregation is in this climate about poorly skilled women being in dead-end jobs. To make a simple but important point, gender equality cannot come about through wage equality based on highly educated women’s skills matching those of men as long as women continue to be over-represented in low-paid occupations.⁶¹³

3.4 Gender pay gap in Italy

The choice to deal with the issue of wages separately, and not included in the single treatment of historical periods, was deliberate: the purpose is to show how, yesterday as well as still today, the issue of women's wages remains a problem, in the sense that they

⁶¹¹ ILO, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*, p. 68.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ BRYNIN - PERALES, *Gender wage inequality: The de-gendering of the occupational structure*, pp. 164-165.

are still not equal to those of their male counterparts. To follow evidences coming from the present historical time.

The table below shows the average hourly wages of men (right side) and women (left side) by occupation in 2014.

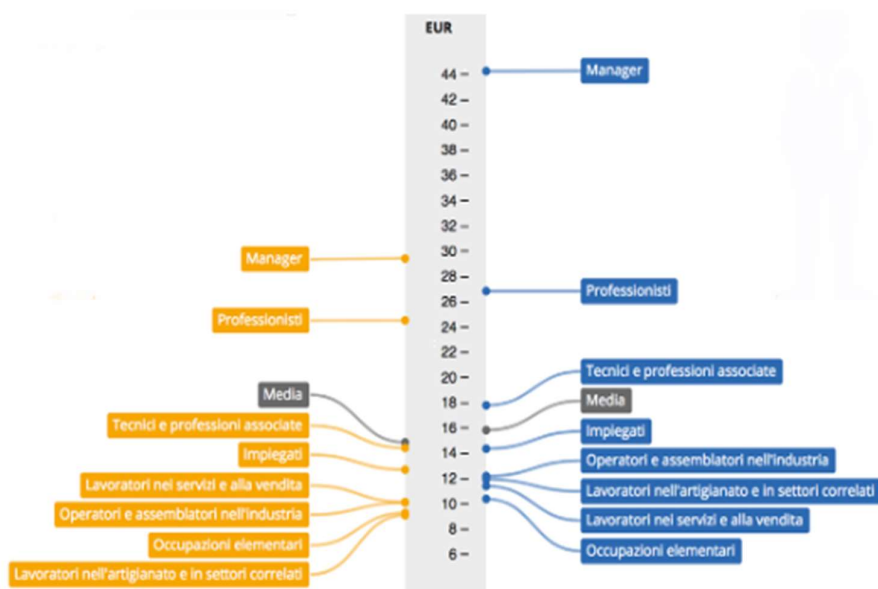


Figure 9: Average hourly wages by occupation (2014). (Source: ISTAT, *The life of women and men in Europe - Earnings*).

Based on this estimate, a man's average pay is 15.85 euros per hour, a woman's is 14.88 euros per hour, with substantial differences for the same profession, as in the case of managers. The case of managers perfectly describes the glass ceiling effect. Women managers receive compensation of 29.44 euros per hour, men 44.28 euros per hour: the differential comes to 14.84 euros per hour, meaning that women managers take about 85 percent of the salary of their male colleagues. In the EU, on average, the pay gap between men and women is exactly 15 percent, with variations across countries. Italy, thus, is well integrated into this figure. Minor differences can be seen in employed jobs (such as secretaries and office workers) as well as the lower-paying service and retail occupations (both under 8%).

One factor that contributes to narrowing or widening the gap is whether the post falls in the public or private sector. The gender pay gap in the private sector control comparison for 2018 is equal to 17,7%, while the public sector control comparison declines to 2%. Note that in this last case, women make up the majority (55,4% of the employed).⁶¹⁴

Educational choices, as explained in 3.3.2 play a key role in directing careers. Graduate incomes, for example, vary with respect to the degree programs undertaken: graduates from STEM, technical-science programs, from engineering, business, and "hard" sciences that confer specific human capital in general are the highest paid; on the other hand, graduates from humanities subjects, which impart general human capital, are those who earn relatively lower wages.⁶¹⁵ So, according to this data, women with technical-scientific degrees should be less disadvantaged than women with literary-psychological degrees. However, the data show discrepancies. In some of these areas of study (engineering, law) the female disadvantage is small, while in others (architecture, economics) the gap is very large.⁶¹⁶ Then analyzing the impact of the field of study on income, it emerges that 24 percent of the wage difference can be traced back to this factor.⁶¹⁷

Another part of the wage gap can be traced back to working hours. This factor has the power to increase the 'explainable' part of the gender pay gap portion to 42%. This demonstrates that women are disproportionately employed in part-time jobs and that the fact that they engage in less work than males accounts for a sizable portion of their income disadvantage. In fact, as the data demonstrates, people who work more than 30 hours per week make up to 40% more money each month than those who only work 20 or less.⁶¹⁸ But note that: when done voluntarily, part-time work can be helpful and improve the work-family balance. However, more women than males report being underemployed

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ CANTALINI, *Genere, settore di studio e reddito. Un'analisi delle disuguaglianze salariali di genere tra i laureati italiani*, in "Stato e Mercato", n.104, 2015, pp. 189-227, p. 205.

⁶¹⁶ Ivi, p. 215.

⁶¹⁷ Ivi, p. 211.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

globally, which means they are compelled to take part-time employment while wanting to work more hours and earning less than they would like.⁶¹⁹

The presence of children, as anticipated in 3.3.1, is one of the factors that contribute to widening the gap. The so-called “motherhood pay gap”, the difference of pay between women workers with children and women workers without children, is a reality for many women. In reverse work for men, workers with children are better paid than workers without children, a phenomenon known as “fatherhood pay gap”.⁶²⁰ Dedication to the family – a character that was meant to be embodied in the figure of the woman – is therefore what should justify her lower remuneration. Not only that, but having a child can condition the mother at the beginning, in entering the labor market. As Del Boca and Vuri note, the reason female employment in Italy is so low is due to the characteristics of the child care system markets. They maintain that since entering the labour market is strongly related with the participation in the child care market, one expects women's entry decision to depend partly on the cost of child care.⁶²¹ Italy is characterized by the so-called “Southern model”, shared with some other European countries, which include the lowest degree of social protection and the least availability of child care for children under three.⁶²² Actually, around 15-20% of children under the age of three are enrolled in public child care in various Northern regions, compared to barely 1-2% in the majority of Southern regions. It is no coincidence that mothers participate in the job market at a rate of over 60% in the North and under 20% in the South.⁶²³ Not only the costs, but the very availability of child care services is a barrier to female employment To be more specific:

Child care for young children is rationed in two ways: (1) in the number of places available (50% of children on average are not accepted in the public care, while the private child care service is scarcely used since less than 1 child out of 100 attend the private child care); and (2) in the hours of care offered (from an average of 8 on average in public child care to an average of 10 in private child care). Given this characteristics of the public child care system, it is not possible to accommodate full-time work schedules of both parents with the exclusive use of public child care, [since] full-time

⁶¹⁹ ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, p. 29.

⁶²⁰ Ivi, p. 39.

⁶²¹ DEL BOCA - VURI, *The mismatch between employment and child care in Italy: the impact of rationing*, in “Journal of Population Economics”, vol. 20, n. 4, 2007, pp. 805-832, p. 806

⁶²² Ivi, pp. 810-811

⁶²³ Ivi, p. 811.

employment typically necessitates that the employee be away from the home for approximately 9 hours per day, ignoring commuting.⁶²⁴

Availability does not depend only on the number of facilities in the territory, but also on the distance between the family residence, the parent's workplace and the location of the facilities.⁶²⁵ The choice of kindergarten is therefore very often 'binding', due in part to the price and the effect this has on the mother's work choices. To begin with, according to estimates, child care costs for working mothers with one child under the age of three range from 30 to 50% of their income.⁶²⁶ «Given that women are the principal caregivers in the household, the mother bases her decisions on the costs and benefits of working in the labor market and these will depend on her wage minus the cost per hour worked of child care. Increasing the cost of extra-family child care decreases her effective wage».⁶²⁷ When her wages decrease, the woman decides either to quit her job, or if she chooses to continue this affects the hours worked, in the way that they will be reduced as the costs of child care increases.⁶²⁸ Moreover, the higher the costs of child care, the lower the possibility of an additional child. In this way, child care costs and availability of child care services affect fertility choices. Speaking of which, one study found that «low wage women are at a higher risk of experiencing the first birth when they are very young, reaching the maximum level when they are aged between 25 and 30 years of age. High wage women tend to delay, maximizing the likelihood for the first birth when they are 30 or older».⁶²⁹ «Given the presence of a child, child care costs lower the mother's effective wage in the labor market and thus impact decisions for which the mother's wage is a relevant "state variable". In most families mothers are the members of the families with the lowest potential earnings and hence are the "marginal" workers in the formal labor».⁶³⁰ Indeed, it is evident how women must shape their work choices to the demands of childcare, their major responsibility: to fit in with daycare schedules they often choose

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Ivi, p. 812.

⁶²⁶ Ivi, p. 812.

⁶²⁷ Ivi, p. 813.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ RONDINELLI et al., *Women's wages and childbearing decisions: evidence from Italy*, in "Demographic Research", vol. 22, 2010, pp. 549-578, p. 562.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

a part-time job, with all its implications. Consequently, because their salary is not a constant in the family income, their work will be of lower value than those who instead provide a fixed income in the family coffers: men. As De Beauvoir emphasize:

The woman tries to emancipate herself by work within a society in which the conjugal community subsists: tied to the hearth of her father, her husband, she is almost always content to bring a little help into the home; she works outside the family, but for it. [...] And, since a large number of women are content with reduced wages, the whole of women's wages are adjusted to the level most advantageous to the employer.⁶³¹

This view of women's work with all its implications is certainly not a modern phenomenon; rather, it can be found as far back as women have been working. The same constant devaluation and disregard for the care work historically done by women shows how there is a bias that blankets any female action regardless.

⁶³¹ DE BEAUVOIR, *Il secondo sesso I*, p. 156.

La donna cerca di emanciparsi col lavoro in seno a una società in cui sussiste la comunità coniugale: legata al focolare del padre, del marito, si contenta quasi sempre di portare in casa un piccolo aiuto; lavora fuori della famiglia, ma per questa. [...] E, dato che un gran numero di donne si accontenta di salari ridotti, tutto l'insieme del salario femminile si adegua al livello più vantaggioso per il datore di lavoro.

CONCLUSION

Talking about women's work necessarily requires consideration of factors that fall outside the sphere of work itself. The image of women in society is a first aspect: the perception of women's role has not changed, it has been cleverly veiled. When talking about women's work, one cannot help but consider what has been turned into 'risk' by the capitalist work norm: motherhood. So the presence of children and therefore the domestic environment must be kept in mind. On the whole, everything about the woman as an individual can be used against her in the workplace.

Through the analysis of home-based work, particularly its characteristics and the risks it posed to the women involved, it was possible to depict a rather bleak scenario of mid-20th Century women. The work they did was only a part of the condition to which they were forced, squeezed, on the one hand, by the family's 'need' for them and, on the other, by the need to earn some extra money - still for the family. The strain both physical and mental required of these women brought its consequences: nervous breakdowns, actual professional illnesses. But what all women home workers definitely suffered from was loneliness. Obligated to do their work inside the home in every spare moment from their main job as housewives, women home-workers found little time to devote to socializing. The only sociality they knew was at meal times, during which they became maids to their own families. Many reported entries testify to how they not only lacked the time but also the desire and strength to leave the house for distraction. What they did inside the house was non-stop work that alternated between house and family care and actual wage labor, leaving no free time in the day. Because they did piecework, women tried to work as hard as possible to earn a few extra liras: that is why their workday never ended. One can argue that even female factory workers had to divide themselves between factory work and care work at home. However, factory work lasted eight hours, was paid and protected. Once back home, female factory workers did not continue the work they did in the factory, but devoted themselves to care work only. Through the testimonies it was also shown that the female factory worker enjoys greater support from her family

and husband in particular, who recognizes her work and tries to help her with household chores, which was not the case if the woman worked at home. Separating the places and times devoted to this double work can bring benefits in the sense that it does not force women to divide every minute of the day between work and home. This risk is returning today in the form of benefit. The pandemic has sent a great deal of industries, mainly those dominated by women, into crisis, a detail that testifies to how strongly sexualized and sectoralized the labor market still is today. There have been so many who have lost their jobs, but there are those who, however, have been 'luckier' and have been able to continue their work from home. In this context it was not difficult to hear people stating that working from home allows a better work-family balance, and is a benefit, above all, for women, who are finally able to combine work and family duties. Through this analysis it was possible to confirm and again demonstrate how nothing is more false than to claim that working at home is advantageous for women. This is evidenced first and foremost by the testimony and account of home-based work that provides a basis for reflecting on the 'double work' to which women are subjected. In general, every woman is subjected to this double exploitation: domestic and care work represents her 'first' and unavoidable job, it takes place inside the home and does not receive compensation in money nor in recognition and therefore is identified as exploitation; to this is added the 'second' job, which generally takes place outside the home and falls under the common norm of wage labor and is configured as the classic exploitation of the labor force, the productive force according to capitalism, unlike the first. This double work when carried out inside the home tends to be intensified, as demonstrated by the case of the home-workers. But this is also demonstrated by the recent case of work from home in the form of smart-work. First of all, the change of work environment required efforts: to divide home space among members, to equip themselves with the means to work (mainly computers) but also to study (in the case of children in distance education). But mainly, the change imposed by the pandemic has been at the social level of family life. Not only were spaces rationed but also time. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to quantify and qualify all the hardships created by the pandemic for families. But already early signs have shown how, when both parents are at home, the domestic workload – which during the pandemic sharply soared – after

a shy balancing act, becomes unbalanced back toward the woman. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that although housework becomes more noticeable when staying at home for both the man and the woman, it will always be the latter who will take responsibility for it. It is therefore irrelevant that it increases the visibility of housework by staying at home: the greatest burden of this will be on the woman, thus, neither does the husband's presence in the home matter anymore. The result is that women are more caught between work and home than men, who are even 'rewarded' when they have families and children (fatherhood pay gap). Double work, therefore, is still a reality for many women today, and in the context of the pandemic it has become a double problem. The reality of the facts today – as yesterday – is that the working woman will always have to come to terms with her supreme duty – what the Italian constitution calls her 'natural role' – as a caregiver. This result is precisely what binds to the purpose of this paper: the consideration of the two phenomena of working from home have only served as illustrative expedients because of their characteristics and the reality they reveal, which is often withheld. The difficulties faced in working from home – yesterday as well as today – can be traced mainly to the role of the woman who never detaches from the role of mother (of her family not only children). The space she doesn't find, the time she doesn't have is because she shares it with the rest of the family. Affected by this is the choice to work or not to work, the choice of work itself on which hours and wages then depend. Because she feels – and is made to feel – as primarily responsible for the care and education of her children, she will think twice before accepting a job that takes up too much of her time, opting for a part-time job. But since part-time work does not make enough to equal the cost of a daycare, it will be natural to prefer not to work. In this way, she would have to work to send her children to daycare, so she might as well do it herself at home. If she decides to work anyway, to take a full-time job and be away from the family, that's when discrimination takes over. Chapter three showed how women today still struggle to reach top management positions, how their wages are affected by having children but also by just being married. Maternity 'risk' is the one that scares employers the most: they are well aware that the family responsibility is all on the woman and that for these reasons she will often have to be absent from work, starting when she becomes

pregnant. Investing in a workforce such as women therefore poses 'risks', including having to hire a replacement while continuing to pay the woman on leave, or having to reduce the woman's work hours and make up for it by hiring new staff. Employers who foresee these developments act immediately: they reserve secondary roles of little responsibility for the woman and do not invest in her training because it brings no revenue. The so-called 'glass ceiling' routinely prevents so many women from rising to management positions, characterized by high pay. This is both for the reasons above but also because of the dominant culture that still struggles to see women in power. Women are often relegated to a few jobs that on the one hand provide the flexibility required by their role as mothers but on the other hand don't pay them enough. There are so many women who choose to underpay themselves, to devalue their skills to settle for what the market offers them in order to eventually work. And there goes the gender pay gap: women earn less than men at the same level of occupation, education and skills. It is generally blamed on women's education, allegedly inferior to that of men. But reality proves the opposite, women today are better educated than men, get degrees earlier, and get to management roles sooner than men. Despite this they are paid less. So, if education and skills have nothing to do with it, what prevents women from making it to the top? It always comes back to the same answer: the stereotypes of the dominant culture. Modern society dictates gender roles more rigidly than it seems, more subtly than in the past. According to the narrative of patriarchal society, women fall into the category of the 'frail' and 'weak,' alongside children, the elderly and foreigners in the case of labor. And in every way attempts are made to make life difficult for her, going so far as to use her nature against her, making it an element of disadvantage, such as being baby and helpless or elderly and sick. Children like the elderly in need of care need someone to take care of them and support them financially, and that is what 'weak' means. Even the woman then, because she is frail, needs a carer: her father or husband. Male primacy over woman is of vital necessity for the perpetuation of patriarchy but also of capitalism – both phenomena being born in concomitance and necessary to each other. Woman is in a position of subordination within the matrimonial home because of the role intended for her, which is non-money-producing and therefore non-productive. Assignment to an unproductive role

prevents her from earning a role first in her home, and then in society. Women's low wages contribute to the same end: relegating her to the superfluous. In light of this study, it is possible to make some observations on the issue of the alleged fragility of women and the female workforce. Rather than calling the female labor force 'weak' it should be said that the female labor force has been systematically attacked and made weak. First of all, because of her role as a caregiver, which takes up her time and energy, she is led to make certain choices in the job market, which will lead her to choose anything to earn money. The income she earns is almost never under her control because it flows directly into the household's income as a 'support wage'. The risk of becoming pregnant makes employment more unstable; one may even choose to leave the job. Working intermittently is also one of the ways mothers choose, alternating periods of work with periods of not working. Changing jobs often does not allow for specialization, career advancement, and thus higher earnings. Because of the effect of all these elements, the female labor force is said to be weak. Wanting to get to the bottom of it: the social role assigned to women is what makes them weak and influences their life choices, what keeps them in the realm of 'immanence' – as Simone de Beauvoir would have said. In order to escape from this sphere, women need to conquer the place in the world which they deserve and which they have long been denied. And the only way to achieve freedom and independence in today's society is through work. But work must be freely chosen without guilt or being accused of negligence toward children, it must take place in an environment where the person is recognised before gender, it must be fairly paid and it must recognise the value of people, it must respect life choices whatever they may be, it must be adequately protected, it must include parental leave for both men and women. In short, it must guarantee respect for the worker, but above all for the individual. In the case of a woman, in order to be a job that does not impair her mental well-being, it must take place outside the home. Work inside the home represents too many risks for her, the main one being exclusion from society outside the home. Exclusion from society makes people invisible and deprives them of their personal power: that's exactly what happens with women. Lack of power and social status is felt in the family: her economic dependence on her husband makes

her doubly dependent on his power. The male bread-winner syndrome undermines family institutions, making the men – the major earner – the head of the family.

This work attempted to fill a gap in the literature on home-based work in historical perspective, notwithstanding that the analysis of this phenomenon has been employed to demonstrate the principle underlying this paper. There have been numerous contributions to the topic, but few have attempted to provide a complete picture. The majority of contributions examine certain aspects of home-based work, such as institutionalization, salary expectations, and so on. This work, on the other hand, has attempted to gather as many features as possible in order to provide the most realistic representation possible. When it comes to working from home, there are no shortage of challenges. As previously stated, this is a phenomenon characterized by invisibility and precarity; however, the available data is frequently only a portion of the total, there are parts of the country that are completely devoid of data, as is the case in the south of Italy. In this regard, it would be interesting to conduct direct research in these areas of the country where the person also worked from home. Due to the economics of this work, the tools available, and the time available, it has not been possible to conduct a thorough investigation into this area of the country, despite its high relevance. Hold this, in any case, as a possible area of research for future literature. There is less space in this work dedicated to the treatment of home-work in the modern mode of smart working because it is still a relatively new phenomenon that is difficult to analyze. As well as it is difficult to determine the effects of pandemic on society after only two years: to learn more, it will be necessary to wait a little longer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

COMMISSIONE PARLAMENTARE D'INCHIESTA SULLE CONDIZIONI DEI LAVORATORI IN ITALIA, *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VIII, *Rapporti particolari di lavoro: contratti a termine, lavoro in appalto, lavoro a domicilio, apprendistato*, Segretariati generali della Camera dei deputati e del Senato della Repubblica, Roma, 1958.

—, *Relazioni della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulle condizioni dei lavoratori in Italia*, vol. VII, *Indagini sul rapporto di lavoro*, Tomo III *Qualifiche e carriera del lavoratore, trattamento e tutela delle lavoratrici*, Segretariati generali della Camera dei deputati e del Senato della Repubblica, Roma, 1962.

CASTELLINA Luciana, *A casa non si torna*, in “Noi Donne”, n.48 (1964).

CHINNERY-HESSE Mary, *All women are working women*, ILO BLOG, 2020.

EIGE, *Gender equality and the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic*, Luxembourg, Publication office of the European Union, 2021.

EUROFOUND AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE, *What just happened? COVID-19 lockdowns and change in the labour market*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, *In-Depth Review for Italy, in accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances*, Brussels, 2021.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *SURE: Report confirms instrument's success in protecting jobs and incomes*, Press Release, Brussels, September 22, 2021. (last consultation June 29, 2022)

—, *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021, Italy*.

FEDERICI Nora, *Dimensioni, struttura e tendenze dell'occupazione femminile in Italia nel periodo 1954-1962*, in “Rassegna Sindacale” n.55-56 (1962), pp. 7-19.

GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, Legge 26 Agosto 1950, n.860, *Tutela fisica ed economica delle lavoratrici madri*.

—, Legge 13 Marzo 1958 n. 264, *Tutela del lavoro a domicilio*.

—, Legge 20 maggio 1970 n. 300, *Norme sulla tutela della libertà e dignità dei lavoratori, della libertà sindacale e dell'attività sindacale, nei luoghi di lavoro e norme sul collocamento*.

—, Legge 7 dicembre 1977, n. 903, *parità di trattamento tra uomini e donne in materia di lavoro*.

—, DECRETO DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI 1 marzo 2020, *Ulteriori disposizioni attuative del decreto-legge 23 febbraio 2020, n. 6, recante*

misure urgenti in materia di contenimento e gestione dell'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19.

—, Decreto Legge 17 marzo 2020, n.18 “Cura Italia”, *Misure di potenziamento del Servizio sanitario nazionale e di sostegno economico per famiglie, lavoratori e imprese connesse allemergenza epidemiologica da COVID-.19.*

—, Decreto Legge 19 maggio 2020, n.34 “Decreto Rilancio”, *Misure urgenti in materia di salute, sostegno al lavoro e all'economia, nonche' di politiche sociali connesse all'emergenza epidemiologica da COVID-19.*

—, Decreto Legge 7 agosto 2020, *Piano voucher sulle famiglie a basso reddito.*

GAZZETTA UFFICIALE DEL REGNO D'ITALIA, Legge 19 luglio 1902, n.242 *disposizioni circa il lavoro delle donne e dei fanciulli negli opifici industriali, laboratori, ecc.*

—, Regio Decreto 28 Agosto 1924, n. 1422, *Approvazione del regolamento per la esecuzione del R. decreto 30 dicembre 1923, n. 3184, concernente provvedimenti per l'assicurazione obbligatoria contro l'invalidità e la vecchiaia.*

ILO, C177 - *Home work Convention*, No.177, 1996.

—, *Global wage report 2018/19. What lies behind gender pay gaps*, Geneva, ILO, 2018.

—, *A quantum leap for gender equality. For a better future of work for all*, Geneva, ILO, 2019.

—, *Working from Home : a Potential Measure for Mitigating the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Geneva, ILO, 2020.

- , *Teleworking During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond: a Practical Guide*, [1st ed.], Geneva, ILO, 2020.
- , *Building Forward Fairer : Women's Rights to Work and at Work at the Core of the COVID-19 Recovery*, Geneva, ILO, 2021.
- , *Working from home. From invisibility to decent work*, Geneva, ILO, 2021.
- INAPP, *Le policy europee di contrasto alla crisi Covid-19. Una lettura di genere*, Esposito M. - Rizzo A. (edited by), Roma, 2022.
- ISTAT - EUROSTAT, *L'organizzazione del lavoro in Italia. Orari, luoghi, grado di autonomia*, 2020.
- ISTAT, *Nidi e servizi integrativi per la prima infanzia - Anno educativo 2019-2020*, Roma, 2021.
- , *Il mercato del lavoro 2020. Una lettura integrata*, Roma, 2020.
- , *Il numero di pubblica utilità 1522 durante la pandemia (periodo marzo-ottobre 2020)*. (last consultation 6 may 2022).
- , *Rapporto annuale 2021. La situazione del paese*, Roma, 2021.
- NOI DONNE, *5 milioni di sfruttate*, n. 49 (1950), p. 2.
- , *Le donne costano meno dei muli*, n. 49 (1950), p. 4.
- , *Le donne e l'art. 37*, n. 46 (1951), pp. 10-11.

- , *Le donne e l'art.* 37, n. 45 (1951), pp. 4-5.
- , *Sposarsi è un reato?*, n.21 (1954), p. 6.
- , *Le malattie professionali della casalinga*, n.14 (1955), pp. 6-7.
- , *La prima ad alzarsi e l'ultima a coricarsi*, n. 13 (1955), pp. 8-9.
- , *Prigioniera delle proprie case*, n. 8 (1958), pp. 13-15.
- , *Si è fatta adulta la legge sul lavoro a domicilio*, n.20 (1960).
- , *Tra lavoro e famiglia, il primo incubo: il tempo*, n. 22 (1960), pp. 16-19.
- , *Il benzolo l'ha uccisa a domicilio*, n.15 (1963), pp. 7-9.
- OECD, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017.
- PAVOLINI Luca, *Viaggio nelle nostre fabbriche*, in "Noi Donne" n. 49 (1950), p. 3.
- PICOLATO Rina, *I salari delle donne. Troppo alti per gli industriali*, in "Noi Donne", n. 40 (1950), p. 3.
- , *La piaga sociale del lavoro a domicilio*, "Rinascita", 6 giugno 1957, pp.283-286.
- RASSEGNA SINDACALE, *Che fare per il lavoro a domicilio?*, n.18-19, 1959.
- , *Per liquidare il sottosalario "strutturale", e per fondare valori professionali nuovi nel settore delle "calze e maglie"*, n.55-56, 1962, pp. 62-66.

—, *Il lavoro a domicilio nei programmi dei padroni e in quelli del Sindacato di classe*, n.57, 1962, pp.53-59.

—, *Dibattito registrato sull'andamento dell'occupazione femminile*, n. 46, 1964.

SENATO DELLA REPUBBLICA, *La Costituzione, principi fondamentali*.

—, *La Costituzione*, Parte I, Titolo II, Art. 31.

—, *La Costituzione*, Parte I, Titolo III, Articolo 37.

TATO' Antonio, *Introduzione*, in "Rassegna sindacale" n. 55-56 (1962), pp. 1-2.

UNITED NATIONS, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Paris, December 10, 1948.

Secondary bibliography

BAUMAN Zygmunt, *Vita liquida*, Bari, Laterza, 2005.

BERNARDI Claudia - RICCIARDI Ferruccio, *Le frontiere del contratto: status, mobilità, dipendenza (XIX-XX secolo)*, Palermo, New Digital Frontiers, 2021.

BETTI Eloisa, *Precari e precarie: una storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, Carocci editore, Roma, 2019.

—, *Le ombre del fordismo. Sviluppo industriale, occupazione femminile e precarietà del lavoro nel trentennio glorioso (Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italia)*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2020.

—, *Le alleanze delle donne italiane per la parità salariale. Il contributo dell'Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro*, Roma, OIL, 2020.

BRYNIN Malcolm - PERALES Francisco , *Gender wage inequality: The de-gendering of the occupational structure*, in “European Sociological Review”, Vol. 32, Issue 1, February 2016, pp. 162–174.

CANTALINI Stefano, *Genere, settore di studio e reddito. Un'analisi delle disuguaglianze salariali di genere tra i laureati italiani*, in “Stato e mercato”, N. 104 (2) (agosto 2015), pp. 189-227.

COLLINS Caitlyn - LANDIVAR Liana C. - RUPPANNER Leah - SCARBOROUGH William J., *COVID-19 and the gender gap in work hours*, “Gender Work Organ”, 28(S1), pp. 549-560, 2021.

CUTRUFELLI Maria Rosa, *Operaie senza fabbrica. Inchiesta sul lavoro a domicilio*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1977.

DE BEAUVOIR Simone, *Il secondo sesso* (1949), Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1961.

DEL BOCA Daniela - VURI Daniela, *The mismatch between employment and child care in Italy: the impact of rationing*, in “Journal of Population Economics”, Vol. 20, n. 4, (Oct 2007), pp. 805-832.

DEL BOCA Daniela - OGGERO Noemi - PROFETA Paola - ROSSI Mariacristina, *Women's and men's work, housework and childcare, before and during COVID-19*, in “Review of Economics of the Household”, Vol. 18, 2020, pp. 1001–1017.

ENGELS Frederick, *Engels on the origin and evolution of the family*, in “Population and Development Review”, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Dec., 1988), pp.705-729

- FOLBRE Nancy, *Exploitation Comes Home: A Critique of the Marxian Theory of Family Labour*, Cambridge Journal of Economics, vol. 6, no. 4, 1982, pp. 317–29. JSTOR, (Accessed 2 Jul. 2022).
- FRISINA Annalisa, *Razzismi contemporanei. Le prospettive della sociologia*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 2020.
- HARTMANN Heidi I., *The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework*, Signs, vol. 6, no. 3, 1981, pp. 366–94. JSTOR, (Accessed 21 Jun. 2022).
- KAIN Philip J., *Marx, Housework, and Alienation*, Hypatia, vol. 8, no. 1, 1993, pp. 121–44. JSTOR, (Accessed 2 Jul. 2022).
- MUSSO Stefano (ed.), *Operai*, Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 2006.
- PALAZZI Maura, *Donne sole. Storia dell'altra faccia dell'Italia tra antico regime e società contemporanea*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1997.
- PERALES Francisco, *Occupational feminization, specialized human capital and wages: evidence from the British labour market*, in “Work, Employment and Society”, n.27 (2013), pp. 600–620.
- PESCAROLO Alessandra - RAVENNI Gian Bruno, *La manifattura della paglia nella Toscana mezzadrile (1820-1950)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 1991.
- RONDINELLI Concetta - AASSVE Arnstein - BILLARI Francesco C., *Women's Wages and Childbearing Decisions: Evidence from Italy*, in “Demographic Research”, vol. 22, 2010, pp. 549–78. JSTOR, (Accessed 5 Sep. 2022).

SALMIERI Luca - VERROCCHIO Ariella (a cura di), *Di condizione precaria. Sguardi trasversali tra genere lavoro e non lavoro*, Trieste, EUT, 2015.

SARTI Raffaella (a cura di), *Lavoro domestico e di cura: quali diritti?*, Roma, Ediesse, 2010.

SARTI Raffaella - BELLAVITIS Anna - MARTINI Manuela (ed. by), *What is work? Gender at the crossroad of home, family, and business from the Early Modern Era to Present*, Beghahn Books, 2018.

SCARPAT Orlando, *Le recenti teorie alternative del mercato del lavoro con particolare riferimento alla discriminazione femminile in Italia*, Rivista Internazionale Di Scienze Sociali, vol. 87, no. 4, 1979, pp. 559–87. JSTOR, (Accessed 29 Aug. 2022).

SCIURBA Alessandra, *La cura servile, la cura che serve*, Pisa, Pacini Editore, 2015.

TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, in “Genesis. rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche”, n. 2 (2016), Roma, Viella, 2016, pp. 127-145.

Sitography

ARCHIVIO AUDIOVISIVO DEL MOVIMENTO OPERAIO E DEMOCRATICO, *Le lavoranti a domicilio* (2012, 20 settembre). YouTube. [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

BBC, *What the Dutch can teach the world about remote work*, (last consultation July 2, 2022 6.50PM) [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com).

CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI, *Politiche sociali per fronteggiare l'emergenza coronavirus - Welfare*, Documentazione parlamentare, 23 giugno 2022, (Last consultation July 2, 2022) camera.it.

CASADEI Cristina, *Dalla Spagna all'Olanda, le diverse vie dello smart working per il post pandemia*, in "Il Sole 24Ore", March 1, 2022, (last consultation June 29, 2022) ilsole24ore.com

CENSIS WEB-BOOK SICUREZZA E CITTADINANZA. *Il talento femminile mortificato*. censis.it

DELLAPASQUA Erica, *La dirigente del liceo Socrate di Roma alle studentesse: «Niente minigonne, senza banchi ai prof cade l'occhio»*, in "Corriere della Sera", (Sept. 18, 2020) roma.corriere.it

EUROSTAT, *Employed persons working from home as a percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and professional status*. (last consultation June 29, 2022) eurostat.eu

FORUM PA, *Covid-19 e smart working: uno sguardo all'Europa*, December 3, 2020, (last consultation June 29, 2022) forumpa.it

MONNIS Monica, *"Sono un'insegnante e nella mia carriera sono sempre stata discriminata per l'aspetto fisico"*, in "ELLE Magazine" (July 5. 2019) elle.com

GRION Luisa, *Otto marzo, il lavoro perduto delle donne. Oltre 300 mila hanno perso il lavoro*, in "La Repubblica", 8 marzo 2021. (last consultation 6 may 2022) repubblica.it

IL FATTO QUOTIDIANO, *Asiago, pubblicarono un annuncio di lavoro per “commesse 18enni libere da impegni familiari”*: multa di 7 mila euro agli esercenti. (May 4, 2020) ilfattoquotidiano.it

ISTAT-EUROSTAT, *La vita delle donne e degli uomini in Europa. Un ritratto statistico*. (Edizione 2020). (last consultation 2 sept. 2022) istat.it

ISTAT, *La violenza sulle donne. Il numero delle vittime e le forme della violenza*. (last consultation 5 may 2022 5:22PM) istat.it

MINISTERO DELLO SVILUPPO ECONOMICO, *PNRR: Le misure MISE per le imprese* mise.gov.it

TAGESSCHAU, *Weiteres Hilfspaket für Mittelstand geplant*, April 3,2020, tagesschau.de

UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA, *Online la piattaforma per le richieste di contributi straordinari 2020-21*, unipd.it

WORLD POPULATION REVIEW. (last consultation: 21 apr 2022) worldpopulationreview.com

YOUTUBE, *La casa in Italia (1964)*, youtube.com

SUMMARY

(italian)

Il presente lavoro, che si inserisce nella disciplina della storia del lavoro, prende il titolo dai casi di studio utilizzati: “smart-work and home work in historical perspective”, ma si propone di investigarli da una prospettiva femminile, e dunque nasce la “gender analysis”. L’uso di questi due casi di studio, che sono il lavoro a domicilio di metà XX secolo e l’attualissimo ritorno del lavoro da casa innescato dalla pandemia, è stato funzionale per arrivare allo scopo di questa tesi: dimostrare come il ritorno del lavoro da casa possa essere un rischio soprattutto per le donne. Dall’analisi proposta non è emersa solo questa, ma anche un’altra realtà che vede le donne ancora soggette all’imposizione di ruoli di genere che la definiscono in base alla sua “essenziale funzione familiare” – per usare un’espressione cara alla Costituzione Italiana.

Parlare di lavoro femminile richiede necessariamente la considerazione di fattori che esulano dalla sfera del lavoro stesso. L’immagine della donna nella società è un primo aspetto: la percezione del ruolo femminile non è cambiata negli anni. Quando si parla di lavoro femminile, non si può fare a meno di considerare ciò che è stato reso un ‘rischio’ dalla norma del lavoro capitalista: la maternità. Bisogna quindi tenere conto della presenza dei figli e quindi dell’ambiente domestico. Nel complesso, tutto ciò che riguarda la donna come individuo può essere usato a suo discapito sul posto di lavoro.

Il presente tema è stato scelto perché è di estrema importanza oggi che - a causa delle sfide imposte dalla pandemia - il mondo del lavoro sta cambiando. Non solo, la pandemia ha abituato le persone a vivere più isolate, più in solitudine, sinonimo di ‘sicurezza’ fino a poco tempo fa. Ora che il Covid-19 sembra essere entrato a far parte della vita di tutti come normalità – e quindi è passata quella fase in cui era necessario apportare grandi cambiamenti alla vita di tutti – la vita lavorativa non è poi tanto tornata alla normalità. Al contrario, sembra che la pandemia abbia dato un ulteriore impulso, poiché già esisteva, al fenomeno del lavoro a domicilio. Il lavoro a domicilio è una forma di lavoro vecchia e superata che ha preceduto e accompagnato l’ascesa dell’industrializzazione. È con la nascita dell’industrializzazione che il lavoro a domicilio

si diffonde sempre di più, fino al XX secolo, e in particolare alla metà del secolo, quando conoscerà la sua massima espansione. La caratteristica del lavoro a domicilio è che si svolge in casa un lavoro che normalmente si dovrebbe svolgere in fabbrica, per garantire gli standard di sicurezza, la salubrità dell'ambiente di lavoro, l'idoneità dell'ambiente, i mezzi di produzione adeguati e così via. Lavorare a casa non è come lavorare fuori casa, anche se si tratta di un lavoro retribuito. Lavorare a casa significa diventare invisibili, non essere riconosciuti come lavoratori degni. Nel caso in cui è una donna a lavorare a casa - come accadeva negli anni Sessanta - la situazione si aggrava ulteriormente se si considerano tutti i lavori di cura a cui la donna è destinata all'interno della famiglia. La lavoratrice a domicilio degli anni Sessanta è una testimonianza di come le donne siano sottoposte a un doppio sfruttamento, quello del lavoro in casa che non viene riconosciuto, anzi viene dato per scontato, e quello del lavoro sempre in casa che è mal pagato, non garantito e precario. Tenendo conto di ciò, questo lavoro cerca di esplorare e confrontare due momenti eccezionali nella storia del lavoro femminile italiano: l'esplosione del fenomeno del lavoro a domicilio e la conseguente battaglia per il suo riconoscimento formale, e l'attualissimo ritorno alla ribalta del lavoro da casa sotto forma di telelavoro grazie alla risposta alla pandemia COVID-19. Ciò che accomuna questi momenti è la posizione della donna, che si trova a svolgere il suo lavoro più tutto il lavoro di cura non retribuito all'interno di un unico territorio: la sua casa. Le donne italiane hanno combattuto una lunga battaglia per il loro diritto a lavorare, ad avere una vita fuori casa. "A casa non si torna": così recitava il titolo di un articolo di una delle più famose riviste italiane degli anni Sessanta. Con questo motto come *leitmotiv*, la ricerca intende mostrare come il ritorno a casa per le donne possa rappresentare un grosso rischio, che può arrivare a distruggere anni di lotta. Anche Mary Chinnery-Hesse esprime questo rischio: "Il mio timore è che la pandemia COVID-19 possa annullare alcune delle conquiste ottenute negli ultimi 25 anni. Temo che la perdita di posti di lavoro a causa della crisi possa innescare la 'syndrome of the male breadwinner', che potrebbe spingere le donne fuori dal mondo del lavoro". Lo scopo di questo lavoro è quello di mostrare i rischi che si corrono quando una donna lavora a casa, utilizzando in particolare il fenomeno del lavoro a domicilio negli anni 1950-60 come illustrazione.

Attraverso l'analisi del lavoro a domicilio, in particolare delle sue caratteristiche e dei rischi che comportava per le donne coinvolte, è stato possibile delineare un'immagine piuttosto desolante delle donne di metà XX secolo. Il lavoro che svolgevano era solo una parte della condizione a cui erano costrette, schiacciate, da un lato, dal 'bisogno' che la sua famiglia ha di lei, dall'altro, dalla necessità di guadagnare qualche soldo in più – sempre per la famiglia. Lo sforzo fisico e mentale richiesto a queste donne portava le sue conseguenze: esaurimenti nervosi e vere e proprie malattie professionali. Ma ciò di cui tutte le lavoratrici a domicilio soffrivano sicuramente era la solitudine. Obbligate a svolgere il loro lavoro all'interno della casa in ogni momento libero dal loro lavoro principale di casalinghe, le lavoratrici a domicilio trovavano poco tempo da dedicare alla socializzazione. L'unica socialità che conoscevano era quella dei pasti, durante i quali diventavano le cameriere delle loro stesse famiglie. Molte donne testimoniano come non solo non avessero il tempo, ma anche la voglia e la forza di uscire di casa per distrarsi. Quello che facevano in casa era un lavoro ininterrotto che alternava la cura della casa e della famiglia al lavoro salariato vero e proprio, senza lasciare tempo libero nella giornata. Poiché lavoravano a cottimo, le donne cercavano di lavorare il più possibile per guadagnare qualche lira in più: ecco perché la loro giornata lavorativa non finiva mai. Si potrebbe obiettare a questo punto che anche le operaie dovevano dividersi tra il lavoro in fabbrica e il lavoro di cura a casa. Tuttavia, il lavoro in fabbrica durava otto ore, era retribuito e tutelato. Quando tornavano a casa le operaie avevano già finito di lavorare e si potevano dedicare esclusivamente al lavoro di cura. Attraverso le testimonianze è emerso anche che la lavoratrice in fabbrica gode di un maggiore sostegno da parte della famiglia e del marito in particolare, che riconosce il suo lavoro e cerca di aiutarla nelle faccende domestiche, cosa che non accadeva se la donna lavorava a casa. La separazione dei luoghi e dei tempi dedicati a questo doppio lavoro può portare benefici, nel senso che non costringe le donne a dividere ogni minuto della giornata tra lavoro e casa. Questo rischio ritorna oggi sotto forma di beneficio. La pandemia ha mandato in crisi moltissimi settori, soprattutto quelli dominati dalle donne, un dettaglio che testimonia quanto il mercato del lavoro sia ancora oggi fortemente sessualizzato e settorializzato. Sono tanti coloro che hanno perso il lavoro, ma c'è anche chi è stato più 'fortunato' e ha potuto

continuare a lavorare da casa. In questo scenario sono state diverse le voci a sostegno del lavoro da casa, il quale consentirebbe un migliore equilibrio tra lavoro e famiglia, il tutto a beneficio delle donne, che finalmente potrebbero conciliare lavoro e famiglia. Attraverso questa analisi è stato possibile confermare e dimostrare ancora una volta come non ci sia nulla di più falso che affermare che il lavoro da casa sia vantaggioso per le donne perché permette una conciliazione di doveri. A riprova di ciò le testimonianze e i racconti del lavoro a domicilio che forniscono lo spunto per riflettere sul ‘doppio lavoro’ a cui sono sottoposte le donne. In generale, ogni donna è soggetta a questo doppio sfruttamento: il lavoro domestico e di cura rappresenta il suo ‘primo’ e inevitabile lavoro, si svolge all'interno della casa e non riceve compenso né riconoscimento e che si identifica come sfruttamento; a questo si aggiunge il ‘secondo’ lavoro, che generalmente si svolge fuori casa e rientra nella norma comune del lavoro salariato e si configura come il classico sfruttamento della forza lavoro, la forza produttiva secondo il capitalismo, a differenza del primo. Questo doppio lavoro, se svolto all'interno delle mura domestiche, tende a intensificarsi, come dimostra il caso delle lavoranti a domicilio. Ma lo dimostra anche il recente caso del lavoro da casa sotto forma di smart-work. Innanzitutto, il cambiamento dell'ambiente di lavoro ha richiesto degli sforzi: dividere lo spazio domestico tra i membri, dotarsi dei mezzi per lavorare (soprattutto computer) ma anche per studiare (nel caso dei figli in D.A.D.).⁶³² Ma il cambiamento imposto dalla pandemia ha riguardato soprattutto l'equilibrio familiare. Non solo gli spazi sono stati razionati, ma anche il tempo. Tuttavia, è ancora difficile quantificare e qualificare tutti i disagi creati dalla pandemia alle famiglie. Ma già i primi segnali hanno mostrato come, quando entrambi i genitori sono a casa, il carico di lavoro domestico – che durante la pandemia ha subito una forte impennata – dopo un timido bilanciamento tra i genitori, torna nuovamente a sbilanciarsi verso la donna. Infatti, è stato notato che i lavori domestici diventano più ‘evidenti’ quando si sta in casa: ciò però non porta ad un aumento del contributo maschile a questi, anzi l'uomo tende di più della donna a evitare e a delegare queste incombenze. È quindi irrilevante che la permanenza a casa aumenti la visibilità delle faccende domestiche: il peso maggiore di questi sarà a carico della donna, per cui non ha

⁶³² “Didattica a Distanza”.

importanza nemmeno la presenza del marito in casa. Il risultato è che le donne sono più incastrate tra casa e lavoro rispetto agli uomini, che vengono addirittura ‘premiati’ quando hanno famiglia e figli (“fatherhood pay gap”). Il doppio lavoro, quindi, è ancora oggi una realtà per molte donne, e nel contesto della pandemia è diventato un doppio problema. La realtà dei fatti, oggi come ieri, è che la donna lavoratrice dovrà sempre fare i conti con il suo supremo dovere - quello che la Costituzione italiana chiama la sua ‘essenziale funzione’ - di cura. Proprio a questo risultato si lega lo scopo del presente lavoro: la considerazione dei due fenomeni del lavoro da casa sono serviti solo come espedienti illustrativi per le loro caratteristiche e per la realtà che rivelano, che spesso viene taciuta. Le difficoltà che si incontrano nel lavorare da casa - ieri come oggi - sono riconducibili soprattutto al ruolo della donna che non si stacca mai dal ruolo di madre (della sua famiglia, non solo dei figli). Lo spazio che non trova, il tempo che non ha è perché lo condivide con il resto della sua famiglia. Di questo ne risente la scelta di lavorare o meno o la scelta stessa del lavoro da cui dipendono poi orari e salari. Poiché si sente – e viene fatta sentire – come la principale responsabile della cura e dell'educazione dei figli, ci penserà due volte prima di accettare un lavoro che le prende troppo tempo, optando per un lavoro part-time. Ma poiché il lavoro part-time non rende abbastanza da coprire il costo di un asilo nido, sarà naturale che preferirà di non lavorare. Così facendo, infatti, dovrebbe lavorare per mandare i figli all'asilo. Se decide di lavorare comunque, di accettare un lavoro a tempo pieno e di stare lontana dalla famiglia, è allora che subentra la discriminazione sul posto di lavoro. Il terzo capitolo ha provato come ancora oggi le donne faticano a raggiungere posizioni dirigenziali di alto livello, come i loro salari siano influenzati dall'aver figli ma anche dal semplice fatto di essere sposate. Il ‘rischio’ della maternità è quello che spaventa di più i datori di lavoro: sono ben consapevoli che la responsabilità familiare è tutta a carico della donna e che per questi motivi dovrà spesso assentarsi dal lavoro, a partire dal periodo della gravidanza fino anche oltre la maggiore età dei figli. Investire in una forza lavoro come quella femminile comporta quindi dei ‘rischi’, tra cui quello di dover assumere un sostituto continuando a pagare la donna in congedo, oppure di dover ridurre l'orario di lavoro della donna e compensare con l'assunzione di nuovo personale. I datori di lavoro che prevedono questi sviluppi agiscono

immediatamente: riservano alla donna ruoli secondari di scarsa responsabilità e non investono nella sua formazione perché non riporta alcun guadagno. Il cosiddetto ‘soffitto di vetro’ impedisce sistematicamente a tante donne di raggiungere posizioni dirigenziali, caratterizzate da retribuzioni elevate. Questo sia per i motivi sopra citati, ma anche per la cultura dominante che ancora fatica a vedere le donne al potere. Le donne sono spesso relegate a pochi lavori che, se da un lato garantiscono la flessibilità richiesta dal loro ruolo di madri, dall'altro non le pagano abbastanza. Sono tante le donne che scelgono di sottopagarsi, di svalutare le proprie competenze per accontentarsi di ciò che il mercato offre loro pur di lavorare. Ed ecco il gender pay gap: le donne guadagnano meno degli uomini a parità di occupazione, istruzione e competenze. In genere si dà la colpa all'istruzione delle donne, presumibilmente inferiore a quella degli uomini. Ma la realtà oggi dimostra il contrario: le donne sono più istruite degli uomini, si laureano prima e raggiungono i ruoli dirigenziali prima degli uomini. Nonostante ciò, vengono pagate meno. Quindi, se l'istruzione e le competenze non c'entrano nulla, cosa impedisce alle donne di arrivare ai vertici? La risposta è sempre la stessa: gli stereotipi della cultura dominante. La società moderna detta i ruoli di genere in modo più rigido di quanto sembri e in modo più sottile che in passato – per questo forse non sembra vero. Secondo la società patriarcale, le donne rientrano nella categoria dei ‘fragili’ e dei ‘deboli’⁶³³, insieme ai bambini, agli anziani e agli stranieri nel caso del lavoro. Basti pensare – come esempio lampante – all'identificazione delle donne come ‘sesso debole’. E si cerca in tutti i modi di renderle la vita difficile, arrivando a usare la sua natura contro di lei, facendone un elemento di svantaggio, come l'essere bambini e indifesi o anziani e malati. I bambini come gli anziani bisognosi di cure hanno necessità di qualcuno che si prenda cura di loro e li sostenga economicamente. Secondo questa narrazione anche la donna, in quanto fragile, ha bisogno di un responsabile: il padre o il marito. La supremazia dell'uomo sulla donna è di vitale importanza per la perpetuazione del patriarcato ma anche del capitalismo – due fenomeni intersecanti e indispensabili l'uno all'altro. La donna si trova in una posizione di subordinazione all'interno della casa coniugale a causa del ruolo a lei

⁶³³ Il vocabolario Treccani definisce debole così: “Che non ha sufficiente potenza o autorità o energia”. treccani.it

destinato, che è non produttivo e quindi non ‘monetizzabile’. L’assegnazione a una funzione improduttiva le impedisce di guadagnarsi un ruolo prima nella casa e poi nella società. I bassi salari delle donne contribuiscono allo stesso scopo: relegarle al superfluo. Alla luce di questo studio, è possibile fare alcune osservazioni sulla questione della presunta fragilità delle donne e della forza lavoro femminile. Più che definire la forza lavoro femminile ‘debole’, bisognerebbe dire che la forza lavoro femminile è stata sistematicamente attaccata e *resa* debole. Innanzitutto, a causa del suo ruolo di cura, che le sottrae tempo ed energie, è portata a fare determinate scelte nel mercato del lavoro, che la porteranno a scegliere qualsiasi cosa pur di guadagnare denaro. Il reddito che guadagna confluisce direttamente nel reddito familiare come ‘salario di sostegno’. Il rischio di rimanere incinta rende l’occupazione più instabile: si può anche scegliere di lasciare il lavoro. Anche il lavoro intermittente è una delle scelte delle madri, che alternano periodi di lavoro a periodi di non lavoro. Cambiare lavoro spesso non consente la specializzazione, l’avanzamento di carriera e quindi guadagni più elevati. A causa dell’effetto di tutti questi elementi, si dice che la forza lavoro femminile sia debole.

Questo lavoro ha cercato di colmare una lacuna nella letteratura sul lavoro a domicilio in prospettiva storica, nonostante l’analisi di questo fenomeno sia stata impiegata per dimostrare il principio alla base del presente lavoro. I contributi sull’argomento sono stati numerosi, ma pochi hanno cercato di fornire un quadro completo.⁶³⁴ La maggior parte dei contributi esamina alcuni aspetti del lavoro a domicilio, come l’istituzionalizzazione, le aspettative salariali o si concentra su alcuni casi di studio o aree del Paese. Questo lavoro, invece, ha cercato di raccogliere il maggior numero di caratteristiche possibili per fornire una rappresentazione il più possibile realistica. Quando si tratta il lavoro a domicilio le sfide non mancano. Come già detto, si tratta di un fenomeno caratterizzato da invisibilità e precarietà: i dati disponibili sono spesso solo una parte del totale, ci sono zone del Paese che ne sono completamente prive, come nel caso del Sud Italia. A questo proposito, sarebbe interessante condurre una ricerca diretta

⁶³⁴ TOFFANIN Tania, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, in “Genesis. rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche”, n. 2 (2016), Roma, Viella, 2016, pp. 127-145, p. 127.

in queste aree del Paese dove pur si lavorava a domicilio. A causa dell'economia di questo lavoro, degli strumenti a disposizione e del tempo a disposizione, non è stato possibile condurre un'indagine approfondita in quest'area del Paese, nonostante la sua elevata rilevanza. Si tratta, in ogni caso, di una possibile area di ricerca per la letteratura futura.

Questa dissertazione è organizzata in tre capitoli. In un primo momento, l'attenzione si concentrerà sul momento più attuale della ricerca: il fenomeno del lavoro da casa come risposta alla pandemia. L'arco temporale in questione è l'ultimo triennio, l'attenzione si concentrerà dapprima sul 2019, che servirà come base di confronto per il 2020, anno centrale di questa trattazione per la sua eccezionalità. Si vedrà come la pandemia, in particolare il *lockdown*, abbia influito sul mercato del lavoro, con ripercussioni specifiche per le donne. Il capitolo si conclude mostrando come gli Stati europei prima, e l'Italia poi, hanno affrontato la crisi da Covid-19. Nel dettaglio, sarà opportuno esplorare le misure di sostegno che alcuni Stati europei hanno previsto per i propri cittadini, per confrontarle con quelle italiane.

La pandemia COVID-19 ha costretto le persone a cambiare abitudini, a riorganizzare gli spazi, a rinunciare alla vita pubblica. Ha riunito sotto lo stesso tetto tutti i membri della famiglia, persone diverse con esigenze e desideri diversi. Non è facile gestire questa situazione e lo è ancora di più se uno dei genitori lavora da casa. Alcuni sostengono che sia più facile controllare tutto da casa, ma ciò che bisogna considerare è il totale distacco dalla vita fuori casa. Non è una novità per le donne, che per un periodo indefinito hanno svolto il ruolo loro assegnato: "l'angelo del focolare" – come si dice in un modo caro alla propaganda fascista. Per fortuna questi tempi sono passati, le donne sono riuscite a ritagliarsi un posto nella società soprattutto attraverso il lavoro. Tuttavia, la maggior parte delle donne che lavorano non esce dal mondo femminile tradizionale; non riceve dalla società, né dai mariti, l'aiuto che sarebbe necessario per diventare concretamente uguale all'uomo,⁶³⁵ o meglio ancora, «la donna che acquisisce l'indipendenza economica non si trova per questo motivo in una situazione morale, sociale, psicologica identica a quella dell'uomo».⁶³⁶ La posizione della donna nella società

⁶³⁵ DE BEAUVOIR Simone, *Il secondo sesso* (1949), Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1961, p. 474.

⁶³⁶ Ivi, p. 475.

è ancora troppo debole, molte volte si trova a dipendere dal marito, dai figli, confinata ai lavori domestici. Con questo non si vuole assolutamente dire che le donne non possiedano *agency*. Piuttosto, sono costrette dalle circostanze. Hanno delle opzioni: scelgono di affidarsi al marito a causa delle insicurezze che devono affrontare nel mondo del lavoro. Vale la pena notare che, secondo un recente studio, una delle caratteristiche che metterebbe un lavoratore a rischio di povertà è proprio l'essere donna.⁶³⁷

La parte centrale del documento, sia per posizione che per importanza, è dedicata all'analisi del fenomeno del lavoro a domicilio in Italia. Un ritorno al passato, quindi, a quegli anni tra il 1950 e il 1970 che hanno significato per l'Italia un periodo di grande crescita economica. Dietro la bella facciata della crescita, però, si nascondevano diverse ombre, fatte di clandestinità e sfruttamento. Un simbolo di queste ombre è senza dubbio il lavoro a domicilio. Il secondo capitolo affronterà inizialmente l'ambiente culturale e il mercato del lavoro femminile, due elementi strettamente correlati. In particolare si osserveranno: la costruzione della figura della donna attraverso i censimenti, i principi costituzionali e le leggi che tutelano la donna e il suo lavoro, il mercato del lavoro femminile, le leggi che regolano il lavoro a domicilio e la loro lunga gestazione, per poi arrivare a osservare da vicino il fenomeno vero e proprio. Si è partiti dalle cause, da ciò che ha innescato i meccanismi di diffusione del lavoro a domicilio, per arrivare ai suoi effetti – che sono principalmente problemi. Infine, il capitolo si conclude con una sezione dedicata alle testimonianze tratte da varie fonti per offrire anche la prospettiva delle interessate. Il fenomeno del lavoro a domicilio rappresenta un momento complesso della storia del lavoro italiano: è un argomento ancora misterioso, con ampie zone d'ombra, difficile da delineare e definire. Le donne che lavoravano in casa erano costrette a farlo quasi di nascosto, non dichiaravano il proprio lavoro né il proprio reddito, per questo è ancora oggi un tema insidioso: molte fonti istituzionali sono falsate da dichiarazioni poco veritiere, le stime sono al ribasso, alcune aree del Paese non possono essere analizzate per mancanza di dati.

⁶³⁷ SALMIERI Luca - VERROCCHIO Ariella (a cura di), *Di condizione precaria. Sguardi trasversali tra genere lavoro e non lavoro*, Trieste, EUT, 2015, pp. 48-49.

L'elevata prevalenza del lavoro a domicilio negli anni Settanta si scontra con le aspettative di emancipazione delle donne, ma non con le esigenze delle imprese, dello Stato e del patriarcato.⁶³⁸ La segregazione occupazionale di genere sperimentata dalle donne dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale porta a sostenere che l'alleanza tra imprese, Stato e patriarcato godeva di un solido sostegno da parte di forze tradizionalmente vicine agli interessi della classe operaia (politica e sindacati).⁶³⁹ In questi termini, il fenomeno del lavoro a domicilio testimonia la perenne e condivisa indifferenza nei confronti del lavoro riproduttivo e della conciliazione vita-lavoro. Per comprendere il fenomeno del lavoro a domicilio è proprio necessario partire dal nodo del lavoro riproduttivo.⁶⁴⁰ Ed è quello che questo lavoro si è proposto di fare. La donna lavoratrice a domicilio ha sofferto di un'invisibilità che, se da un lato le ha permesso di lavorare, dall'altro l'ha relegata sullo sfondo della società. Dietro le mura domestiche spesso si nascondeva una piccola fabbrica, che fumava in continuazione, senza mai chiudere, nemmeno di notte. Eppure nessuno lo vedeva come lavoro produttivo, come sforzo fisico e mentale. La donna, se lavora in casa, è come se non lavorasse affatto. Lo dimostrano anche tutti i lavori di cura che svolge senza essere pagata o riconosciuta. Anche il lavoro domestico non è un lavoro: è solo un dovere, a cui però non corrispondono diritti. La donna che lavora in casa, o la casalinga, a causa di questi disconoscimenti, è anche teoricamente esclusa dalla cittadinanza italiana, poiché non svolge alcun tipo di lavoro.⁶⁴¹ Come sottolinea De Beauvoir:

la donna cerca di emanciparsi col lavoro in seno a una società in cui sussiste la comunità coniugale: legata al focolare del padre, del marito, si contenta quasi sempre di portare in casa un piccolo aiuto; lavora fuori della famiglia, ma per questa. [...] E, dato che un gran numero di donne si accontenta di salari ridotti, tutto l'insieme del salario femminile si adegua al livello più vantaggioso per il datore di lavoro.⁶⁴²

Questa visione del lavoro femminile, con tutte le sue implicazioni, non è certo un fenomeno moderno, ma si ritrova fin da quando le donne lavorano. La stessa costante svalutazione e noncuranza per il lavoro di cura storicamente svolto dalle donne dimostra

⁶³⁸ TOFFANIN, *Invisibili trame. Il ruolo nascosto delle lavoranti a domicilio*, p. 145.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ La Repubblica Italiana è fondata sul lavoro, come recita il primo articolo della sua Costituzione.

⁶⁴² DE BEAUVOIR, *Il secondo sesso I*, p. 156.

come esista un pregiudizio che copre qualsiasi azione femminile a prescindere, sia nel lavoro, sia nelle relazioni, sia nella famiglia, ecc.

L'ultimo capitolo affronterà la questione dei salari, o più precisamente del differenziale salariale tra uomini e donne, come elemento comune ai due periodi in questione. Il capitolo si apre con un'analisi dei salari delle lavoratrici a domicilio. Quest'ultimo argomento, infatti, è una delle questioni su cui le lavoratrici a domicilio hanno lottato di più. Il lavoro di queste donne era svalutato sia dalle famiglie che dai datori di lavoro. Le lavoratrici a domicilio lavoravano tutto il giorno per salari da fame. Arrivavano a guadagnare meno della metà del salario delle operaie, che a loro volta prendevano la metà del salario di un loro collega maschio. La discriminazione salariale delle lavoratrici a domicilio fa parte di una discriminazione più ampia che riguarda l'intera forza lavoro femminile, ieri come oggi. Per capirlo, verrà presentata la teoria secondo cui la forza lavoro femminile è storicamente discriminata. Allargando la lente si parlerà poi della discriminazione salariale (Gender Pay Gap) come fenomeno generale, quindi in relazione all'Italia e al momento storico attuale.

Volendo tornare al principio: il ruolo sociale assegnato alle donne è ciò che le rende deboli e ne influenza le scelte di vita, è ciò che le mantiene nel regno dell' 'immanenza' – come direbbe Simone de Beauvoir. Per uscire da questa sfera, le donne devono conquistare il posto nel mondo che meritano e che è stato loro a lungo negato. E l'unico modo per raggiungere la libertà e l'indipendenza nella società di oggi è il lavoro. Ma il lavoro deve essere scelto liberamente, senza sensi di colpa o accuse di negligenza nei confronti dei figli, deve riconoscere la persona prima del genere, deve essere equamente retribuito e deve riconoscere il valore delle persone, deve rispettare le scelte di vita personali, deve essere adeguatamente tutelato, deve prevedere il congedo parentale per uomini e donne. In breve, deve garantire il rispetto del lavoratore, ma soprattutto dell'individuo. Nel caso di una donna, per essere un lavoro che non comprometta il suo benessere mentale, deve svolgersi fuori casa. Il lavoro all'interno delle mura domestiche rappresenta troppi rischi per la donna, il principale dei quali è l'esclusione dalla società al di fuori delle mura domestiche. L'esclusione dalla società rende le persone invisibili e le priva del loro potere personale anche e soprattutto all'interno della loro casa. La

manca di potere e di status sociale si fa infatti sentire in famiglia: la dipendenza economica dal marito la rende doppiamente dipendente dal suo potere. La sindrome del 'male breadwinner'⁶⁴³ dà forma alle istituzioni familiari, rendendo l'uomo – il maggior percettore di reddito – il capofamiglia. Il desiderio e l'augurio non è che la donna diventi capofamiglia, ma che decada completamente l'assetto che ne prevede uno.

⁶⁴³ 'sindrome dell'uomo capofamiglia'.