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Guest editors

Marco Alberio
Simone Caiello
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Special Issue Multi-locality studies: Recent insights and future pathways

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Giuseppe Gargiulo, Emanuele Scognamiglio[1]

The Meaning of Work: Life Stories and Career Trajectories of Ukrainian Women from the Domestic and Home-Care Sector to the Third Sector[2]

Introduction

The almost exclusive inclusion of the female migration in the domestic and home-care sector (hereafter abbreviated, d.h.c.s.) has global dimensions (Andall, 2000; Anderson, 2000; Lutz, 2008). In Italy, immigrants have higher employment rates than in Central-Northern Europe but are pushed down in occupational hierarchies (Fullin & Reyneri, 2013; IDOS, 2022). In order to enhance the migrant women agency, this research aims to investigate those work trajectories characterized by the exit from the «domestic work trap» (Fullin & Vercelloni, 2009, p. 433) and, therefore, the refusal to conform to the process of adapting preferences (Elster, 1983) and to the penalizing opportunities imposed by the labour market. The research, therefore, aims to understand which factors, both personal and contextual, push and allow to female foreign workers to exit from the d.h.c.s. and the meanings attributed to the new employment especially in relation to the previous job situation. In the specific case of our research, the career trajectories are those of long-term resident Ukrainian female workers and take place in the unprecedented scenario represented by the growing demand for linguistic and cultural mediators in the Neapolitan third sector (hereafter abbreviated, t.s.) linked to needs of people fleeing the Ukrainian conflict.

The ultimate aim is to understand if the trajectory of escape from the d.h.c.s, occurred with the transition in the t.s., is perceived as "vertical" career promotion and for which significant aspects. This paper is structured as follows. The first paragraph examines the literature on the career trajectories of the immigrant population, also in relation to the mechanisms that make the occupational segregation of immigrant women in the d.h.c.s. both a structural factor of the insertion of foreign female into the Italian labour market and a reason for the invisibility - social and sociological - of those workers (Sòrgoni, 2000).

The second paragraph introduces the research design and the biographical-narrative method used because this approach offers the possibility to penetrate the individual-system relationship providing tools capable of identifying the connections of meaning between the two levels (Rosenthal, 1993. The difficulties of accessing alternative occupational fields and the consequent career paths do not take shape in a social vacuum; they are influenced, on one hand, of the social actor's biographical experience and therefore are conditioned by multiple personal aspects such as family, the network, the educational/training path, and the objectives of the migration project, on the other hand, they are influenced by structural processes and contextual constraints such as, for example, the traditional demand for labour in the d.h.c.s. or migration policies, power relations, and the effects of the entire social, political, and cultural environment in which the migratory experience takes shape (Sayad, 1999).

The third paragraph presents the context in which the women interviewed live, considering both the entrenched presence of the Ukrainian community in the Naples area and the significant arrival of Ukrainian refugees generated by the war.

The fourth paragraph moves on to the analysis of the empirical material that develops along the three functions served by work: material, expressive, and socialization (Semenza, 2022). From these functions we propose the hermeneutic interpretation of the meanings embedded in the

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transition from one job to another, and in doing so, the factor related to the evolution of migration projects also taken into account. Starting from the three functions, the interviewees make sense of work, weighing the meanings attributed to them. The attributed meaning that prevails in terms of subjective relevance becomes a selecting principle that guides the sense of work choices and the purposes of profit between the material and symbolic plane. In other words, people's work choices do not respond solely to criteria of a strictly economic nature, and economic and non-economic motivations are deeply intertwined.

In the conclusions, some reflections are developed on the possibility that a vertical career promotion has been achieved. At a certain point in the migratory experience, on one hand, and in the work experience, on the other, and due to the occurrence of specific events and preconditions, the measure of meanings attributed to work changes. From the moment in which the meaning of work places greater importance through strategic motivations on its expressive function and socialization, then the main advantage (pursued and) obtained by moving from the role of caregiver and/or housekeeper to that of social worker lies in the symbolic profit hidden in the greater social recognition of the new role, recognized as a social prestige symbol (Goffman, 1967), a driving force of emancipation for oneself and one's family.

1. The invisibility of foreign female workers

Emigration entails a downward social mobility, from which it is not easy to recover (Fullin & Reyneri, 2013, *op. cit*.). Following Ambrosini (2020), there is a substantial difference between the desired professional trajectory and the actual one: in the intentions of their projects, the professional trajectory imagined in the societies of arrival would draw a sort of "U" outlined in two phases. In the first phase, despite the relative qualification in the society of origin, jobs from the "3D" are accepted (Benach *et. al.*, 2010): even if they are dirty, dangerous and degrading/demanding, they would still represent a step forward compared to the starting situation. On the other hand, it is this initially accepted condition of inequality that substantiates the instrumental relationship between receiving economic systems, native workers, and foreign workers.

Subsequently, in the second phase, the achievement of a better occupational position is hoped for. In fact, however, most often, the trajectory takes an "L shape" in which social descent, almost certain, is followed by entrapment in the lower positions of the occupational systems: inequality becomes institutionalized compared to local workers considering the preclusion from work improvements as natural and obvious. As scarce as they are, the opportunities for recovery concern almost exclusively the male component and are limited to the segment of manual labour or, at most, to the transition to self-employment (Fellini & Guetto, 2019).

Specifically, regarding the female component, in Italy and more generally in Mediterranean countries, the demand for female labour in the d.h.c.s is very much in line with the familistic welfare model (Esping-Andersen, 2000), which has fuelled a demand for labour that finds its answer in the foreign female workforce (Ambrosini, 2014). Furthermore, Italian migration policies have encouraged this phenomenon through increasingly large quotas reserved for domestic workers and caregivers within regularisation programmes and flow decrees (Ambrosini & Triandafyllidou, 2011).‐

Regarding the Italian situation, the literature specifically dealing with immigrant workers in the d.h.c.s. is scarce considering the very high number of workers and the duration of the phenomenon (Gissi, 2018). From to Cvajner (2012), the Ukrainian migrant women perceive their life in Italy as degrading, their work is stressful and undignified. They continuously endeavour to define their current condition as accidental and temporary and to assert their right to a better future (Cvajner 2012). More generally these women give meaning to the process of devaluation by viewing it as an interlude in their life and as a sacrifice that serves to improve their families'

upward social mobility (Vianello 2014). Moreover, the studies that have focused on the exit from d.h.c.s are even more rare (Ambrosini, 2013).

The only path of career promotion that emerges from studies on the subject is the horizontal one, and essentially, the transition from a fixed employment as a caregiver and/or family assistant to a part-time housekeeper: «a step forward in terms of work-life balance, with the overcoming of the most constraining and emotionally stressful aspects of cohabitation» (Ambrosini, 2020, p. 160, *op. cit*.).

In conclusion, the peculiar condition for the female component involved in the d.h.c.s. is invisibility (Solari, 2010), as it is inherent in the type of activity. On one hand, indeed, the domestic work makes them invisible except of the household they work for; this condition can therefore partially explain the scarcity of studies on the issue. On the other hand, there is a sociological invisibility due to the narrow definition of work as an economic exchange that takes place in the public sphere. In fact, the domestic sphere has been considered marginal and unproductive for a long time. Since female labour is often located within the private sphere, not only has unpaid domestic work not been recognized as real work but, by extension, productive activities that take place in the home have also been denied the qualification of work (Glenn, 2004).

2. Methodology

The individualization process linked to post-wage society has made it clear that the experiential dimension of the individual appears less influenced by the social structures in which they are embedded, leading to an expansion of possible alternatives in the construction of biographical paths (Castel, 1995). For a long time the application of the biographical method was limited to studies on marginality and social exclusion, in the current scenario instead the range of this approach extends to the interpretation of those social phenomena that take shape in the folds and choices made in various segments of human biography, such as the transition to adulthood or the construction of career paths (Berteaux, 1984; Cangiano, 2023). The reconstruction of life stories can be particularly useful to understand strategic motivations when scenario changes occur that impact on the paths taken by the subjects and their identities (Spanò, 2007): in our case we refer both to the evolution of migration project and the indirect impact on the labour market of the Ukrainian conflict. Similarly, it should be emphasized how in modern societies the life project has acquired an intrinsic value and finds in the labour market the primary vector for its realization and as such is perceived as the organizing principle of this project (Berger *et al.*, 1983).

The choices related to the methodological framework and research strategy, from case selection to the techniques used, were dictated by social and occupational invisibility that characterizes the paths of female migrant workers in the d.h.c.s. as mentioned above. For this reason and considering a phenomenon that is unprecedented - at least within the neapolitan context - a decision was made to prioritize substantive representativeness over statistical representativeness. The biographical approach, through life stories, provided the opportunity to shed light a posteriori on the meaning given by the interviewees to their work experiences at the time of the events narrated but also on the meanings assigned at the time of narration (Rosenthal, 2004) in relation to the context of their current life and in light of the work achievements reached. The research is based on 10 biographical interviews, conducted between autumn 2022 and winter 2023, with long-term resident Ukrainian women in Naples[3], that are currently employed in the t.s. but with significant work experience in the d.h.c.s.

Using a "snowball" sampling approach, we identified several Ukrainian social workers participating in a cultural mediator training course organized by third sector organizations to support

3   The interviewees provided their informed consent, and their privacy and anonymity are fully protected.

the refugee emergency response to the war[4]. This approach proved effective for accessing a difficult-to-reach population and yielded in-depth information.

Following the methodological proposal by Rosenthal (1993, *op. cit.*), initially, the interviewees were encouraged to share their life stories and their changes in the career path (opening question - main narration). Subsequently, we asked participants to elaborate on certain spontaneously mentioned events and details, using memory-stimulating questions rather than explanatory ones ("internal questions"). After then, issues not yet explored have been introduced as the family unit established in Italy, the educational paths of the children and future aspirations ("external questions").

The interviews lasted an average of about one hour and thirty minutes and were conducted in university settings, deliberately avoiding places such as homes or offices where the women live and work. The ten life stories involved Ukrainian women aged between 35 and 46 years, resident in Italy from a minimum of 9 years to a maximum of 25 years.[5] Another element they have in common is the presence in the territory of children born or raised in Italy. Finally, it should be emphasized that the interviewees differ to their relationship with domestic work: although employed as social workers, some of them still remain in it.

3. The Ukrainian presence in Naples

The Neapolitan context is particularly important due to a series of peculiarities concerning the characteristics of Ukrainian migration and the support policies for refugees activated since March 2022. First and foremost, the Ukrainian population in the metropolitan area of the capital city of Campania is very significant. Even before the conflict, Naples was the Italian province with the highest number of Ukrainian residents, about 20.000; further, the Ukrainian community is the largest among those present in the area (16,4% of the total foreign residents in the city) (ISTAT, 2022). The strong gender bias, with a predominantly female component, amounting to 75.14% (*ibidem*), should also be highlighted for research purposes.

The arrival of Ukrainian people in the Naples area began at the end of the Nineties, with socio-demographic characteristics and perspectives that were unprecedented compared to previous migration models or those from other origins (De Filippo & Strozza, 2015). In the early years, Ukrainian migration was already composed almost exclusively of women, who in 2003 accounted for 90% of the total (ISTAT, 2005). They were mostly adults (over 40 years old) who often left their loved ones in their country of origin (De Filippo *et al.*, 2010). With the surge of Ukrainian migration, Naples was no longer a mere place of transit towards the North-Italy or other European regions. Unlike older migration models, Ukrainian migration seems to immediately stand out for a perspective of greater permanence. The Ukrainian migration experience in the Campania capital has highlighted with extreme clarity the characteristics of the typical migration models of the countries of the Mediterranean area in the post-Fordist era, namely a recent and mass immigration, insertion into the secondary segment of the labour market, sustainability

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4   The reference is particularly to the organizations involved in the FAMI project named «YALLA! Social Community Services», started in 2020 and led by the Municipality of Naples. The general objective of the project was to improve the efficiency level of the municipality's social care services system in response to the needs of Third Country nationals. The Municipality, as the lead partner, decided to focus a part of the originally planned interventions on a more specific users, consequently generating an urgent co-optation of equally specific workforce, which found its answer precisely in Ukrainian mediators and social workers. The services offered covered a wide range of needs: linguistic mediation, housing integration support, access to health services, school integration for adults and minors, legal advice, job orientation and search, Italian language courses, counselling service, distribution of essential goods, recreational workshops that were quite transversal to all the realities involved.

5   In Ukraine, the ten interviewees achieved various educational qualifications: one earned a professional diploma, one a technical diploma in accounting, six obtained teaching diplomas and two holds a degree (psychology and Russian and Ukrainian language and literature). In Italy, all of them completed lower secondary education and obtained a high school diploma.

of the cost of living, a migration policy characterized by the absence of entry possibilities and periodic regularization measures (Schmoll, 2006).

The dynamics narrated are fundamental to understanding the processes generated by the significant influx of Ukrainian refugees recorded since the Russian invasion. Since February 2022, over 10,000 temporary residence permits have been issued by the Naples Police Headquarters to Ukrainian refugees (the second city in Italy in terms of no. of permits issued to Ukrainians) (Protezione Civile, 2024). Such a high influx was also facilitated by the presence of compatriots: according to data made available by UNHCR (2023), for 70% of the Ukrainian refugees arriving in Naples, the choice of the city to migrate to was based on being able to count on family and friends already residing in the territory. As a result, part of the housing needs was absorbed by the network of compatriots, but at the same time, new and diverse forms of reception were activated compared to what is usually provided for asylum seekers, with the direct involvement of the Diocese of Naples, the Municipality, private foundations and individual citizens. In terms of services to refugees, this has resulted in support interventions that are not only limited to the traditional prepared structures, as happens in reception centres for non-Ukrainian asylum seekers but are redistributed in an integrated manner among all the organizations and associations that deal with the migration phenomena at the territorial level. The sudden and unexpected demand for services and assistance related to the flow of Ukrainian refugees has consequently generated an urgent need of workforce that found an answer precisely in Ukrainian women. As an illustrative and non exhaustive example of the sudden need for linguistic-cultural mediation, it is worth mentioning the approximately 2.500 school enrolments of Ukrainian refugee students in the period between March and May 2022 alone (MIUR, 2022). The same level of need and complexity can be extended to unaccompanied foreign minors: 43% of the UAMs present in Naples are Ukrainian, considering that in the previous year Ukraine did not even appear among the top 20 countries of origin for this specific category (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2022).

4. Between old and new occupations

Exploring work trajectories on the transition from d.h.c.s. to t.s., subjective references about meanings and sense of work are situated within its two its dimensions evoked: material (section 4.1.) and symbolic (section. 4.2.).

As regards the first dimension, we referred to aspects that the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) qualifies as essential to define decent work conditions as contracts and remuneration; working time; well-being at work (Lugo, 2007).

As regards the second dimension, we referred to the other two work functions: expressive and socialization function. The expressive function refers to the fact that working not only means benefiting from a wage but also serves as a means of self-realization to one's intelligence, creativity, competence, and self-esteem; while the socialization function refers to the idea that through work individuals learn to cooperate, share rules, codes of behaviour, and values due to it is intended as a means to develop solidarity forms and collective identities.

Lastly, it is useful to repeat here that effects of migratory projects evolution on life and work paths will be considered.

4.1. Material dimension of work

As noted in other studies, Ukrainian migrant women typically view their move to Italy as a «short interlude» (Vianello, 2014, p. 89) in their life, intended to optimize earnings before returning home to rebuild their lives; this perspective is also reflected in our research findings.

Upon arrival in Italy, interviewees were also well aware that the labour market access would be

within the domestic and home care sector and particularly in co-residence situation due to the structural convergence between demand and supply of labour (Ambrosini, 2006; Fullin & Vercelloni, 2009; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Narrating the first work experience, traditional disadvantageous emerged as reported in literature (Redini *et al.*, 2020). First of all, psychophysical health issues have been relevant topic: while on one hand, workload and tasks performed result in physical complications, on the other hand, daily micro-interactions, constant contact with illness, often inappropriate requests from the assisted persons and their families, and moral compromises bring forth situations of emotional distress. Moreover, the blurred boundary between working hours and non-working hours becomes a recurring issue due to round-the-clock work performances. Cohabitation further diminishes personal space and time, placing workers in a continuous negotiation situation of the daily life management.

A commonly overlooked aspect comes up consistently: the extremely disadvantageous conditions were instrumentally accepted also in view of the promise by employers to participate in the subsequent regularisation, and thus in the perspective of regularizing both residence status in Italy and thus the contractual condition. Regularisation programmes have been the mainstay of Italian migration policies for more than two decades (Pastore *et al.* 2013). The possibility to recourse for periodic regularisation programmes has generated a system of expectations upon which both immigrants without regular residence permits and employers could build plausible projects.

Upon obtaining regular residence permit, a horizontal promotion from caregiver to housekeeper occurred and working conditions improved: interviewees sign their first contracts and earn more by diversifying employers. Moreover, greater maneuver both space and time to planning their lives also opened up and the consequences are familiar reconfiguration with family reunifications, new marriages, birth of children. The migration project changes and the hypothesis of returning to the country of origin as soon as possible is stretched out in time. From this point on, the problematization of domestic work begins and they identify learning as a tool to facilitate the search for more qualifying jobs given the awareness that domestic work cannot be extended beyond a certain age due to purely physiological reasons:

«Many Ukrainian women got to a certain age now; elderly workers that can't do physical work as before, but they can't study anymore. I meet many people suffering from arthritis, herniated discs, and it becomes hard to work in old age. Unfortunately, they cannot restart studying longer to change things. I just thought that social work as language and cultural mediator has not age limit and so even if you're old, you can always earn. That's why I sacrifice to study again». L.

After achieving the high school diploma, they looked for further training opportunities to expand their options beyond domestic work. They turned to courses provided by the t.s., due to the growing demand for linguistic and cultural mediators to assist the population fleeing the Ukrainian conflict. From this point in the interviews, the reflections on type of tasks performed related to new social work lose the burden of anguish: the references to physical fatigue that marked the description of care work dissolved. The usefulness of new tasks is emphasized now whereas before it was a dimension completely excluded in the narrative of domestic work in which the figure of the caregiver is only mentioned in relation to problematic consequences it determines.

Above all, the role of school mediator has positive impact due to it goes beyond facilitating communication, but it based on an interpretation of the situation contributing to making it understandable in sensemaking process (Weick, 1995):

«The child does not understand what the teacher says and often cries because maybe in Ukraine he was such a good student and he feels bad here. My task is also to explain that it's normal, encourage this child who feels in difficulty, maybe even provide a little psychological support, then [my task] is to help

communication between teachers and parents. Yeah, teachers were very happy, they said they couldn't do better without mediator» S.

However, the issue of the lack of adequate and continuous training which goes beyond the baggage of practical knowledge acquired during the "migrant career" is relevant:

> «We do mediation because we went through it too and we have a lot of experience with the residence permit, with many documents needed to see a doctor, to obtain residency, and all those things that we have already experienced and we are good at, we can show where to go because it's not easy». Sv.

Although Italian regulatory text on figure of mediators (article 40 of Law no. 40/1998) mentioned two central elements as both common ethnic-cultural belonging and sharing of the migratory experience in our country, however legal expertise is essential. As stated by Quassoli and Colombo (2012), the interaction between public service operator and foreign citizen takes place through an asymmetric communication flow and within a binding regulatory framework often taken for granted on the basis of tacit assumptions of common sense but which are not actually such for migrant users.

> «When you are not very prepared, if you don't know the law well and give some wrong advice, that person could come and say "you ruined my life". So, there are risks [...] Now I already know some things but I am not yet well trained on everything and, in my opinion, this is not good. We need a law course, I'm not saying the whole law, but at least understand to react in one case or another; instead, today we are better at communicating with people, we do more as interpreters». O.

It is necessary that mediators acquire technical and specific competence in immigration law and administrative practices through targeted training allowing to deal with situations with greater serenity and more self-confidence. Decidedly most controversial issue concern contract type and remuneration. As literature highlighted, in Italy the welfare mix has had effect on working conditions of third sector operators: low wages and strong job instability increased (Busso & Gargiulo, 2016; Dorigatti, 2017; Gori *et al.*, 2014). In particular, contracting-out processes have increased the job insecurity and the use of non-standard employment contracts resulted to a lack of recognition of "indirect" working hours (Baines, 2004). On-demand style contracts generated remuneration uncertainty due to working hours undefined for all interviewees. Currently, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the consequent high demand for mediation alleviate some of these critical issues («We work a lot, we have many requests, I don't think was possible all this without the war» L.), but doubts about the future persist:

> «I don't think you can live with this job [...] job is when you have a permanent contract for me [...] it's unstable work and this therefore prevents me from achieving my plan to get a mortgage». Z.

The remuneration issue has been linked to meet the requirements of family: in fact, social work opportunity has been seized by means of specific economic conditions. For some of them, the family income mostly provided by partner is one of those conditions:

> «All the professional searches that a woman like me wanted to do and could do are been possible because my husband could pay house rent and buy food with his salary, and so I could work a little less in the last few months to attend training courses and also because if you are always working, you don't have much time to focus on anything else, so practically one of the couple was sacrificed, because it was his job - working ten, eleven hours a day - to give me some time». Z.

For others of them, the diversification of income is necessary or with continuing with domestic work as housekeeper or whit other works started next to social work such as tourist guides and office secretaries.

4.2. Symbolic dimension of work

The positive aspect derived from the emphasis on the health dimension of the activity performed as nurses engaged in such a socially valued activity as caring for the elderly and the sick has diminished over time in the context of family caregiving. Just think that a neologism like "badante" entered Italian legislation: it explains a lot the foreigners integration processes into Italian labour market and how the otherness - ethnic, national, cultural, and even gender - constitutes an effective escape route to justify the inclusion in decidedly inferiorizing positions. The extract from the account of Z. explains how labelling mechanisms perpetuate stereotypes and thus tend to steer migrants towards employment opportunities considered socially suitable for them: in the pursuit of different work that could offer her better employment conditions, employment opportunities requiring knowledge of "body techniques" (Glenn, 2004, p. 198, *op. cit*.) are once again proposed:

> «When I started looking for work beyond domestic sector, I naturally asked my employers, and answer was: "here we don't have work, you know?! I see you very well as heath care assistant (HCA)...yeah, you would be a perfect HCA!" ».

The advice given to Z. embods the "Trimurti" (Campani, 2003; Brettel & Simon, 1986) of characters - race, gender, class - that define women immigrant role in receiving societies: in fact, she would see herself as a "qualified caregiver" (Z.) in this role as reductive and devaluing connotations of the role (Toniolo Piva, 2002) would persist despite the qualification. Despite the awareness that economic subsistence is primarily guaranteed through other income as seen above, however, there is a strong desire to identify alternative paths starting from development and valorisation of the skills and competencies possessed: the expressive dimension of work comes into play now in its function of self-realization. Social work in this sense endows them with a professionalism never recognized before.

> «The work that most reflects me is mediator, because in Ukraine, I worked as a teacher and so I worked with children and parents, just in a slightly different way [...] I do mediation here [...] I like other my work [as domestic worker] because I earn money that way, but you feel like you're in a cage, you can't do what you like, whereas this work, yes, I really like it: if possible, I would prefer to be a mediator in the future». I.

An upward career trajectory seems to be emerging for all finally.

> «I attended a course as cultural mediator, then I collaborated as school mediator at, and now I have been promoted: I'm already responsible of linguistic-cultural mediation agency, I'm the one who organizes all mediations: the fact that I studied and that I am also a teacher helped me» T.

Even when the current work experience in the social sector is not perceived as fully satisfying and fulfilling, it still represents a stepping stone for professional trajectories different from domestic work. This is the case of O., for whom the element of educational background in the country of origin appears to be crucial: the specific skills of a professional qualification (as a hairdresser, a job never performed in Ukraine or Italy). O. acknowledges the fundamental value of the experience in the world of associations especially in terms of empowerment:

> «I am glad to have joined this project, another perspective on what you can do, another type of work you can do, another type of life where you are not just a foreigner and you can only do servitude, you can also do something different».

However, her experience as a mediator leads to definitive and complete awareness of new paths to be traced with greater confidence («Now I want to get a license to drive a bus, I recently got my driver's license to drive a car, I like driving» O.).

The third work function of socialization has been connected to social inclusion: the network inside broader community resulting now repeatedly emerges from the interviews («I really like this job: you go out and see people» I.), and Z.'s reflection appears particularly relevant:

> «I really don't know anything about Italians' lives, because there was work and home, home and work. I realize now that my integration is not going well because I don't have Italian friends in my circle, I don't know why this question never occurred to me before. So now I'm thinking about how to also expand this life experience in Italy with Italians».

The salient point of this statement lies in noting that only now - thanks to work trajectories - Z. problematizes that she did not ask herself the question before: probably, Z. now feels that, in a situation of interaction in the presence of "mixed contacts" (Goffman, 1967, *op. cit.*), she would face the feeling of being "under the spotlight" - typical of those who bear a stigmatizing attribute - with less discomfort as a bearer of social information of opposite sign, compared to the inferiorising one, coming from the renewed professional identity.

Finally, from the perspective of the interviewed women, the added value that the work trajectories bring seems to impact over a long-time span in attempting to pursue strategies for social mobility of family status, particularly regarding their children. With the shift from temporary immigrations to lasting settlements, Bastenier and Dassetto (1990) noted that family reunifications, birth of children and their schooling increase the relationships with the institutions of the receiving society through a process of progressive citizenship that fosters the development of interactions and the turning point of interethnic relationships. However, for the same reasons, families become aware of their minority status, now settled in a context different from that of the society of origin. Furthermore, the paradox of integration between parents and children, (Wrench *et al.*, 1992) is formed: it is based on the tension felt by the second generations between the marginal social image closely linked to humble occupations of their parents and the acculturation to lifestyles and representations of occupational hierarchies acquired through socialization in the context of receiving societies. In other words, there is a dissonance between the implicitly successful "cultural" socialization and socioeconomic exclusion for the new generations: while parents often remained relatively invisible, engaged in occupations with few national workers, children project themselves toward a much wider range of opportunities, coveted even by natives, thus exposing themselves to situations where racism and discrimination are more likely encountered. Upon these considerations, the work trajectories appear to be a strategy to reduce intergenerational dissonance, at least in terms of social recognition.

> «All these little pushes that I am giving to myself are not really for me, but I have to understand how he [her son] has to live in this European world ... a world unknown to me ... the vision is not the same as in my country and so I would like him to have a student life with a complete educational qualification because I believe in education and I believe that a person establishes themselves through studies both personally and professionally». Z.

The awareness on phenomenon of "blocked opportunities" emerges from the words of this mother. It is reverberated on children of immigrants: the new generations can compensate for migrant status restrictions through higher qualifications despite they are more exposed to structural and social obstacles (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Therefore, interviewees wish to their children to have educational and training credentials obtained in contexts that recognize their achievements and value them as future workers (unlike what happened for themselves).

Evolution of the migration project	Career trajectory	Material dimension of work			Symbolic dimension of work	
		Material Function Work Conditions (decent work)			Expressive function	Socialization function
		Contracts and remuneration	Working time	Well-being at work		
Short-term migration project, single migrant actor and absence of residence permit	Work situation in domestic and home-care sector	In a co-residence situation (caregiver): absence of contract and possibility to optimize earnings	Continuous cycle (difficulty in distinguishing between work and non-work time)	Repeated references to continuous conditions of physical/ psychological stress	Degrading of personal and professional identity (fusion between ethnic stereotype and gender stereotype)	Limited circle of contacts (compatriots and employers)
Uncertain migration project; partner reunification or new marriages; obtaining a residence permit through regularization programmes		In a part-time work situation (housekeepers): non-standard contractual forms and diversified remuneration (differentiation of employers)	Part-time (better management of work schedules)	Continuous references to long-term physical complications		
Definitive migration project and reunification (or birth) of children	Work situation in third sector	Non-standard contracts, poor remuneration (differentiation of jobs and/or reliance on the husband for family support)	Fragmented (based on "on-call mediations")	Absence of explicit references to physical and psychological issues — Stress generated by lack of specific training	Enhancement of personal and professional identity (re-actualization of previous skills and recognition of the usefulness of the work)	Expansion of contacts with the broader community
		Negative value				
		Positive value				

Tab.1: Summarizing table on subjective value on career trajectory considering the work functions and the evolution of the migration project.
(Authors: Gargiulo & Scognamiglio)

Conclusions, work as a prestige symbol

If the labour market is both primary vector and organizing principle to realize life project in modern societies, then it is important to identify strategic motivations that women interviewed have pursued to promote their social and work mobility.

The first one refers to the issue of educational qualifications: interviewees are excluded from most qualified segments of the labour demand also due to the impossibility of validating in Italy educational credentials acquired in their home country, and consequently of being able to use the related professional skills. It must be noted that the professional figure of cultural mediator does not require specific or mandatory qualifications, except for the high school diploma.

Mainly for these reasons, these women are attracted by the opportunity to fill the professional figure of cultural mediator since it allows them to valorise, even if in part, the professional skills acquired in their home country (mainly as teachers).

Similarly, and this is the second strategic motivation, they see in these roles the possibility of recovering their previous experience in accessing services acquired firsthand as migrants, and therefore they see the opportunity to put into value specific skills learned not in the workplace or in training but experientially on their own skin. The third one is related to the strictly economic aspect and it is linked to the possibility of ensuring enough household income by means of partner's salary or diversification jobs and remunerations. Last but not least, the fourth one is related to the issue of symbolic profit (Bourdieu, 1998): It is linked to professional status and job

quality as well as to the possibility of reducing intergenerational dissonance with children and, more generally, increasing social recognition.

Following Bourdieu (1996), there is a "the twofold truth of labour": There is an objective truth and a subjective truth. If the objective truth refers to the case where the worker expects nothing from work other than their remuneration, the subjective truth refers to the case where individual investment in work leads to finding an intrinsic interest that cannot be compared to the mere acquisition of income.

The subjective meaning for the female component of immigration lies in individual emancipation achieved through economic independence; and it is so until the moment when the comparison is with the society of origin and as long as the migratory project is imagined as short-term and when they have not started a family and children are not born. The subjective meaning changes when the migratory project changes and both families are created and children are born. Both the meanings attributed to work functions and the renewed sense of the overall career aim to have an impact in the long term through a willingness that can be identified in all interviews, namely that the work trajectories could reverberates not only in terms of economic subsistence (individual and family), not only in terms of professional fulfilment, but also and above all on the symbolic level of recognition in the dimension of social representation.

The terms with which institutional language identifies migrants are not neutral and convey expectations of behaviour and, sometimes, legitimize exclusion and social marginality of this specific segments of population, especially in the labour market. The dialectic between person and role as well as between being and doing, is socially imposed and regulated in interaction rituals: thus, the transition from the role of caregiver and/or housekeeper to the role of social worker is felt as a prestige symbol (Goffman, 2018, p. 68) because it allows for a more recognized social projection of the self.

Into dynamics of social recognition, the dialectic between self and hetero recognition for these women revolves around the current job demand for social worker generated by Ukrainian conflict.

This labour demand seems to be structured around ambiguous conditions: the first, the "capitalization" of both informal and lived experience in the face of inadequate training delivered, and the second, the "capitalization" of skills derived from qualifications held in the face of legal non-recognition. If the profits on labour demand side appear ambiguous, on the other hand those on labour supply side are still too fragile both in terms of material dimension and symbolic dimension.

As regards the material dimension, although they have formal contracts, these are non-standard - on-demand - and therefore the remuneration is inadequate to guarantee not only economic subsistence for the family but also protections, rights, and long-term investments (e.g., mortgage), as we have seen. The women interviewed need to or diversify jobs - some as tour guides, some as office secretaries, and some even derive part of their income still as housekeepers - or having to rely on the partner's income for family support. However, there is also the advantage of not having to engage in physically demanding work. As regards the symbolic dimension, the symbolic profit achievable by the new occupation becomes a selecting principle that guides the sense of work choices: as a means of both self-realization, and social inclusion and above all family empowerment and social mobility for children. Therefore, in response to our research question, we can conclude that the work trajectory is perceived as vertical promotion precisely because it maximises symbolic profit. In other words, the symbolic profit justifies and motivates the perception of job and social mobility. However, it seems to us that it is fragile because it relies on a presumably temporary job demand: either in the case, strongly desired by all, of the end of the war or in the case of "normalization" of the services offered by third sector (even in the event that conflict continued), what will become of these new professionals?

In conclusion, this paper is focused on the visibility of female foreign workers and its exit from domestic work drawing attention to a phenomenon unprecedented among studies on this the-

me. This research shows that after the era called «the exile of older women to Italy» by Solari (2010, p. 217), new motivations emerged to try to go beyond the invisibility of labour domestic spaces. The Ukrainian migrant women perceive their life in Italy as degrading, their work is stressful and undignified. Consequently, they seek to dilute the social stigma, rejecting the idea of home as a woman's place and so presenting positive images of their selves and claiming respect from a variety of audiences (Tolstokorova 2016). This process may facilitate the transformations of bodily and physical image of females as well as gendered evolution of their self-identity. It is not just a mere transition from one job to another, but rather a potential social metamorphosis (Castel, 1995, *op. cit*.), as we have seen. However, the freedom of movement in the public sphere transformed the empowerment from a decided benefit into new forms of exploitation and over-exploitation at the "visible" working.

It would be interesting to delve on medium or long term (in relation to the course of the conflict) how and if both work trajectories and the social inclusion processes will evolve. This could be achieved by combining the biographical approach (also extending it in number) with an ethnographic study within third sector associations to observe social relations in which these new mediator figures are involved.

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