



**Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference
of the Journal Scuola Democratica
REINVENTING EDUCATION**

VOLUME II

**Learning with New Technologies,
Equality and Inclusion**

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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**ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"
Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 - Rome, Italy**

Edited by

The Organizing Committee the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica

<https://www.rivisteweb.it/issn/1129-731X>



Published by: ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 – Rome, Italy

Published in Open Access



This book is digitally available at:

<https://www.scuolademocratica-conference.net/proceedings>

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How to cite a proceeding from this Volume. APA citation system:

Author, N., Author, S., (2021). Title, in *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica "Reinventing Education", VOL. 2, Learning with New Technologies, Equality and Inclusion*, pp-pp

978-88-944888-8-3

***Title* Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” – Reinventing Education VOLUME II Learning with New Technologies, Equality and Inclusion**

This volume contains papers presented in the First International Conference of the Journal “Scuola Democratica” which took place at the University of Cagliari on 5-8 June 2019. The aim of the Conference was to bring together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate the concepts of “education” in a “post-democracy” era, the latter being a set of conditions under which scholars are called to face and counteract new forms of authoritarian democracy.

Populisms, racisms, discriminations and nationalisms have burst and spread on the international scene, translated and mobilized by sovereigntist political movements. Nourished by neo-liberalism and inflated by technocratic systems of governance these regressive forms of post-democracy are shaping historical challenges to the realms of education and culture: it is on this ground, and not only on the political and economic spheres, that decisive issues are at stake. These challenges are both tangible and intangible, and call into question the modern ideas of justice, equality and democracy, throughout four key dimensions of the educational function, all of which intersected by antinomies and uncertainties: ethical-political socialization, differences, inclusion, innovation.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and inter-disciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners’ mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 600 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on researches, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

ISBN 978-88-944888-8-3

Premise

In recent years, an important debate has developed on the role that digital technologies are playing and can play in the transformation of education and its institutions. Digital platforms, distance learning, blended learning, online training technologies are part of a significant restructuring and reculturing of the educational worlds. Digital technologies have restructured learning practices, educational content and the forms of educational governance which are immersed in public spaces and global markets. On the one hand, the digital governance of education contributes to changing and reconfiguring educational practices and the management of education on a local, national, international and transnational scale. On the other hand, technologies make possible the interconnection of multiple modes and shapes of formal, informal and non-formal education and training, producing forms of re-spatialization of education, locating the classroom within a digital learning ecosystem and favouring the emergence of different models of blended or hybrid learning.

The pandemic scenario has accelerated these processes, making more visible the tensions between multiple worlds of education and the processes of digitalization, while triggering a complex restructuring of educational institutions whose directions are not yet easily predictable. Perhaps, we are entering a new era that will mark the end of education as we have known it so far. In such a scenario, it becomes more urgent to carry on and debate an informed educational research, that explores the realities of the relations between education and digital technologies. This is especially needed because technologies are far from neutral. They are a heterogeneous technical and social world in which possibilities to change education for the better and make education fairer can be encountered as well as risks can be run of reproducing social and educational inequalities. Therefore, key questions are: how and in what direction the processes of digitalization are changing education, its practices and its governance? What are forms of coordination between educational technology markets and the institutional and educational actors in the emerging transnational governance arenas? How do the professional and social actors (teachers, managers, students, families) that are involved in the digitalization of education react to and translate these transformations? How do digital technologies change the aims and the curriculum of contemporary educational institutions? How can the digital competencies learned by students beyond the educational spaces (school and university) become a resource for learning processes and educational socialization in educational contexts? And above all, what are the possibilities that digital technologies offer us to reinvent education and its governance that are worth to be explored?

Papers collected in the Volume try to give preliminary answers to those issues. Furthermore, contributions from a range of experts, specialists and scholars cannot avoid facing educational inequalities which haven't by any means disappeared. They have rather changed and (re)combined into new forms that challenge the resilience of educational systems in terms of both effectiveness and equity. Several contributions published in the Volume aims to address these issues from a theoretical and empirical point of view, as well as their implications for educational policies. In this sense, proposals linked to educational inequalities in relation to social stratification as a factor affecting cognitive results, educational choices, the attainment of educational qualifications and working careers are of interest for the reader. Comparative research on different scale (comparisons between national, regional or local cases) is

particularly relevant and much importance is attached to the analysis of institutional factors (tracking, comprehensive vs selective systems, accountability policies, private education, ability grouping) which can produce educational segregation dynamics affecting educational inequalities, intersecting extra-curricular factors, such as urban segregation, for example.

The intertwining and interconnecting of differences (gender, socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, cognitive, and motivational factors) often generate inequalities both for their effects in themselves and in relation to the policies implemented to address them in their multidimensionality and intersectionality. Therefore, specific tracks on how education systems and educational institutions try to manage differences and end up producing inequalities are welcome.

The links between education and the labour market are another central aspect of research: the debate on the inflation of educational qualifications and over-education, the differential returns to education according to the type of diploma, degree program or type of tertiary program attended and, more generally, the relationship between education and social mobility represent a pivotal set of phenomena to understand production and reproduction of educational inequalities.

The applications of randomized controlled trials to the assessment of policies aimed at reducing inequalities and improving cognitive and career results as well as empirically driven reflections on how educational policies intersect the complex relationship between equity (equality and inclusion), quality and excellence are one of the main focuses researchers have dealt with in the collected papers.

Gender inequalities are a key topic to understand educational differences. Educational contexts are marked by a significant gender gap in staffing and in the formative experiences of children, teenagers and young students. These differences reflect and often reproduce gender stereotypes and asymmetries in societies at large. How are gender issues addressed in classrooms? Where are they encountered in training settings? What models do teachers convey, and what are the emotional responses from students of diverse gender? How do educational institutions practice and reproduce gender stereotypes and asymmetries? Can school and university provide contexts in which to acquire gender awareness and tackle gender issues? What are the responsibilities of educational contexts in the representation of gender in society? What experiences and good practices have been activated to promote greater gender equity? What cultural resistances? Several questions are addressed in the Volume and many are the answers discussed.

Many forms of educational segregation persist, yet today a growing presence of women – which are in some cases becoming a majority – is found even in fields that have historically been a male domain; this is the case, for example, of medicine and biology in higher education. International and national data show that many things have changed in recent decades, and gender equity is rising in all spheres of education and training. At the same time, several initiatives have been launched to promote greater awareness of gender stereotypes and prevent phenomena such as discrimination and gender-based violence. However, much remains to be done – not least to prevent backlashes and the emergence of new inequalities alongside

established ones. This is the case, for example, of the asymmetries in accessing fields of knowledge that may become relevant for the future of work (e.g., digital skills), or the development of new practices of discrimination related to the use of new technologies (e.g., hate speech or revenge porn).

Younger generations have been challenging those constraints surviving from the past, but new challenges arise in a constantly evolving global environment, where the urgency of the climate crisis in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic call for societal radical shifts while populism, unemployment, artificial intelligence, remote education and communication are affecting the ordinary daily life as we knew it.

Some analysts fear the pandemic will spur a new kind of backlash against the very basis of global society, from migration to cooperation and interdependence, while others worry about younger generations' abilities to overcome mass unemployment and economic vulnerability. Economic, political and environmental crisis are now fully part of the youth horizon: how are formal, informal and non-formal education going to support young people in moving forward positively and purposefully in their lives while simultaneously ensuring space for their autonomy, decision-making and voice?

Such general question contains intersected and multiple issues and applies across contexts as diverse as the role and relevance of democracy as educational content, the changing landscape of non-formal learning/education, the forging of future visions on politics, digital technologies and the media, youth educational transitions, youth experiences at work, the relation between consumerism and environmentalism, the widening of opportunities and constraints stemming out from cooperative learning and digital exchange tools.

Social research and youth studies have been producing a wide range of analyses on these relevant issues, with the (re) emergence of broader theories and empirical inquiries directed towards the recognition and validation of non-formal education, the promotion of youth participation, and the deeper rethinking of youth policies.

Under the large umbrella of an education to be re-invented, papers in the Volume are dedicated to new generations, transitions and the future of education, with a broad, multidisciplinary, and internationally set of contributions focusing on a variegated platform of topics on youth studies theories, critical analysis of relevant societal debates surrounding youth in and out education; in and out the labour market; on youth transitions throughout and across cultures, statuses, roles, responsibilities and institutions; on the impact of the various initiatives to promote and enhance youth participation; on the role of youth organisations as well as on the strengths and weaknesses of youth policies at both a national and supranational level.

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Academic Work during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy. Structural Factors and the Redefinition of Spatial, Time and Relational Boundaries

Annalisa Dordoni and Anna Carreri

University of Milan-Bicocca, annalisa.dordoni@unimib.it

University of Trento, anna.carreri@unitn.it

ABSTRACT: *The pandemic represents a turning point which affects the micro-politics of managing productive, reproductive and social life in our new everyday lives. In this paper, we make a contribution to the recent and growing scientific debate by exploring academic researchers' processes of construction and de-construction of spatial, temporal and relational boundaries that take place in the pandemic work-life stay-at-home style. Particular attention is paid to some macro-structural drivers of work and family life, specifically to the role of gender and class, as well as to the organizational culture of the neoliberal university. We chose an exploratory, qualitative, non-directive methodology in order to grasp the permeability between the public/private and the work/life spheres. The empirical material consists of in-depth narrative video-interviews conducted online with Italian early career researchers and images collected through the native image making technique.*

KEYWORDS: *pandemic, gender, work-life balance, neoliberal university.*

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have had to work from home, managing a distortion of temporal and spatial boundaries and deep relational consequences. An increasing number of people have worked and still work from home today, in Italy this is the case since February-March 2020. The confinement caused an encroachment of spaces, times and relationships, crossing limits and bringing to a renegotiation of boundaries between the public and the private sphere, family and work settings, online and offline intimate and working relationships.

This paper is the result of an empirical study focusing on the experiences of working from home in the academic sector in the first lockdown occurred in Italy in March-April 2020, in particular observing individuals in the early stages of their career (fixed term contracts). The academic sector has specific characteristics: wide use of devices and platforms; organizational autonomy, real or perceived; high levels of

productivity required in a competitive environment; significance in terms of gender inequalities (Gherardi, 2010; Van den Brink, Benschop 2011; Murgia, Poggio 2018; Ivancheva, Lynch, Keating 2019); class inequalities, precariousness (Weisshaar, 2017; Gaiaschi, Musumeci 2019) and a predominantly urban context (linked with small houses).

The experience of working from home is conditioned by structural factors, especially in the neoliberal academia (Zippel, Ferree 2015; Thomas, Davies, 2002; Poggio, 2018; De Coster, Zanoni 2019; Ivancheva, Lynch, Keating 2019) based on excellence (Rees, 2011; Van den Brink, Benschop 2012). Precarious and non-privileged workers have fewer resources, for example in terms of available space. Furthermore, on the one hand, for those who live by themselves it is difficult to have an online-only social life, and, on the other, because of the closure of schools, fathers and mothers need to supervise their children's activities full-time. In Italy, domestic and care work increased especially for academic mothers, seeming to already affect the scientific productivity of women (Manzo, Minello 2020; Minello, Martucci, Manzo 2020).

Seventy photos were collected, around thirty from academics. Research participants were asked to provide a picture «representative of home working during the lockdown of March-April 2020». The images were taken or chosen by participants and sent through an online platform. The native image making technique was used (Warren, 2019; Pauwels, Mannay 2019) in order to directly observe the social actors' experiences. Participants were also asked to provide some information through the same platform, such as the reason behind their image of choice and essential socio-demographic data. Furthermore, in addition to this rich visual material, 10 narrative and non-directive interviews with academics in the early stages of their career were preliminarily carried out, and the results of this first investigation were published in the journal *Italian Sociological Review* (Carreri, Dordoni 2020). Both the analyses for images and transcriptions have been conducted using MaxQDA.

1. Theoretical framework

The scientific debate on 'work-life balance' was born with the intention of overcoming the vision of 'separate spheres' for its tendency to reify the division of social experience into public/male and private/female worlds, and to overlook the interactions between them (Carreri et al., forthcoming). However, the key concepts in the work-life balance literature, especially the concepts of conflict and enhancement/enrichment (or harmonization), overlook the diverse, embedded, mixed and messy ways in which individuals manage their family, work and community life, not all of which fall within 'balance' or 'out-of-balance' (e.g. Gambles et al., 2006; Rajan-Rankin, 2016).

A line of studies placed at the centre of their investigation the concept of work-family boundary (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng,

1996), with which scholars refer to the ways individuals create clear boundaries between the different domains of their daily lives. Examples are segmentation, integration or more mixed processes (Kossek, 2016). This research has allowed for the study of the 'fit' between effective boundary practices and those desired by individuals (Ammons, 2013), and directionality of individuals' boundary practices to understand whether they tend to integrate or separate family from work or vice versa (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kossek et al., 2012).

Importantly, despite the explanatory capacity of the concept of boundary work', there has been no in-depth exploration into the practices, the meanings and the power dynamics which link the structural drivers to the micro-level experiences (Hughes, Silver, 2020). In a recent analysis (Williams et al., 2016) was already pointed out how work-life studies continue to move toward an individualistic direction, emphasising issues of individual cognition and decision-making, while neglecting the power relations and macro-structural drivers of work and family life, also in cultural terms. Work-life balance research needs to take into account multiple and interrelated levels in order to bring dimensions like gender, social class, migrant status, worker status, organizational and social context to the core of the debate about work-life articulation (Özbilgin et al., 2011).

By moving in this direction, we use the term 'boundary(less) work' to indicate the (predominantly) discursive and narrative practices by means of which boundaries are (de)constructed (Gieryn, 1983). Moreover, we deem crucial putting work-life 'boundary(less) work' into relation with the process of constructing gender boundaries (Carreri, 2015; 2020), and the interrelated dimensions of social class and family composition which are scarcely explored.

It is important precisely in this phase of the pandemic as gender inequalities have been magnified (e.g. Alon et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2020; Craig, Churchill, 2020; Czymara et al., 2020; Hjálmsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir, 2020; Manzo, Minello, 2020), also with specific reference to the university context (Myers et al., 2020; Minello et al., 2020; Yildirim, Eslen-Ziya, 2020). Importantly, especially in the early career stages, gender and social class differences are particularly marked (Murgia, Poggio, 2018).

Furthermore, many studies showed that academic women with care duties have an additional disadvantage (Bozzon et al., 2017; Ivancheva et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2019; Gaio Santos and Cabra Cardoso, 2008; Thun 2019). During the pandemic, female academics with children have especially struggled to reconcile work, domestic and care commitments with the consequence of producing fewer paper proposals and publications in scientific journals, thus possibly facing future negative consequences in their academic career (Myers et al., 2020; Minello et al., 2020; Yildirim, Eslen-Ziya, 2020). Moreover, in this extraordinary moment neoliberal universities have evaded their responsibility to ensure women with caring duties full participation in the academic work by

understanding work-life balance as a 'private' matter (Nash, Churchill, 2020).

These findings must be analysed in light of the changes in organizational culture, following the introduction within universities of neoliberal policies which promote a new ideal academic subject profoundly imbued with masculinity. Recent neoliberal policies have reshaped the academic world on the blueprint of a market (Currie et al., 2000; Poggio, 2018; Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2017).

New Public Management controls academics through practices that foster hyper-competition, including temporary contracts increasing job insecurity, funding pressures, and performance accountability measures (Ball, 2016; Clarke et al., 2012; Thomas, Davies, 2002). This literature has emphasised that these practices also exert control by enjoining individuals into self-definitions, identities and social relations aligned with the neoliberal norms of individualised efficiency and performativity (Brunila, 2016), accountability towards multiple audiences (Frølich, 2011; De Coster, Zanoni, 2019), academic entrepreneurship (Nikunen, 2014) and flexibility (Knights, Clarke, 2014).

2. Empirical Research

We conducted a qualitative study using non-directive techniques. During the Italian first lockdown period, we recruited a snowball sample of academics working in SSH fields. Specifically, we collected ten in-depth narrative video-interviews (Carreri, Dordoni, 2020). Additionally, through the native image making technique (Pauwels, Mannay, 2020) we collected more than seventy images by workers (plus sociodemographic information and the signed consent) by May 18, 2020. Thirty images were sent by academic workers.

This technique allows us to get closer to participants' experience without influencing their vision of the world and mines deeper shafts than do words-alone interviews (Harper, 2002), especially by overcoming the discourse of public / private dichotomy (De Coster, Zanoni, 2019). The analysis of visual material is still underway.

The use of visual methods and the native image making technique makes the research of particular interest also from a strictly methodological point of view. The use of information technology can have positive and negative effects on social research (Hanna, 2012; Lo lacono et al., 2016). However, conducting online interviews can be a useful method to carry out synchronous interviews when meeting face-to-face is hampered by external conditions (Janghorban et al., 2014).

3. First results

3.1. *Rhetorics of 'conquered time' and 'extreme neoliberalism'*

The researchers we interviewed highlighted how their job has always allowed them to mix times and spaces of private and professional life. Nevertheless, the spatial-temporal-relational dis-articulation occurred during the pandemic, and in some ways still ongoing, has brought about drastic changes in the daily lives of academics at home.

Our analysis sheds light on new ways of organising work-care-life that are discursively constructed using two main, quite different, types of rhetoric: the interviewees adopted either the rhetoric of 'conquered time', or one we could call of 'extreme neoliberalism'. Through these rhetorics, the subjects discursively constructed an image for themselves and for others that is coherent with their daily boundary(less) work experiences during the pandemic.

Importantly, both rhetorics shed light on the respondents' subjective experiences of the melting (spatial and temporal) conditions of work-care-life during the lockdown, and their perception of how 'productive' they have managed to be in this extraordinary period. We found that productivity in terms of paper publication is a common concern for all researchers interviewed, confirming the strength of the individualistic and competitive model of the Olympus in university (Benschop, Brouns, 2003).

By using the first rhetoric of 'conquered time', the subjects highlighted how the lockdown has allowed them to rediscover their own time, free from the frantic rhythms of academic work, which is described as mechanical and is compared to that of a factory. This type of rhetoric was linked to 'environmental' conditions such as the availability of large spaces. Time and space are indeed inextricably connected as time-space, which is socially constituted and shaped by power relations as different social groups have unequal access to and control over time and space dimensions (Massey, 2005). In this sense, this extraordinary period was experienced by researchers who adopted the rhetoric of 'conquered time' as a rediscovery, as well as a reclaim of care work (Fraser, 2016; Thomason, Macias-Alonso, 2020). Interestingly, those who adopted the rhetoric of 'conquered time' told us that they felt more productive in terms of devising new projects and writing. Having gained time for themselves, for reflection and introspection (Nowotny, 2018), they felt intellectually freer and more creative.

We defined 'extreme neoliberalism' the second type of rhetoric used by researchers to describe their new way of experiencing and managing productive, reproductive and social life by staying at home. Contrary to the rhetoric of 'conquered time', it emphasises the invasion of work, both in terms of time and space, into the home, completely changing its look. In terms of directionality, the subjects who adopted this rhetoric tended to integrate from work to the family (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kossek et al., 2012). Some researchers told us they felt «*productive in spite of themselves*», due to having maintained or, more often, increased the pace and workload in their daily life, but with great fatigue and stress. Productivity was therefore understood as workload and compliance with

deadlines, and not in the terms of creativity and originality that we find in the rhetoric of 'conquered time'. The qualitative dimension of time plays a central role (Adam, 1990; Leccardi, 2014; Nowotny, 2018). However, it must be closely linked to the material conditions of the interviewees, as already emerged in previous research (Rafnsdóttir, Heijstra, 2013).

3.2. Precarious and «squeezed» researcher mothers

Despite an increase in the involvement of fathers in housework and care work (Di Nicola, 2013; Ruspini, Crespi, 2016) during the pandemic, mothers took on greater care, domestic and mental work than before as revealed in other research (Collins et al., 2020; Craig, Churchill, 2020; Hjálmsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir, 2020). The mothers interviewed declared they did more housework and care work than fathers and had a greater burden following their children's online education during the pandemic, as found in other research (Guy, Arthur, 2020). These conditions inevitably had a negative effect on the productivity of academic females with care responsibilities (Myers et al., 2020; Minello et al., 2020; Yildirim, Eslen-Ziya, 2020).

Importantly, the consequences of the division of care and domestic work during the pandemic could have negative effects on the careers of academic women with children, especially if they are precarious. More than ever, the pandemic brought a 'crisis of care' (Fraser, 2016; Thomason, Macias-Alonso, 2020).

In line with recent research (Myers et al., 2020; Minello et al., 2020; Yildirim, Eslen-Ziya, 2020), our study shows that the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown have exacerbated the impact of the neoliberal university especially on women and mothers. Researcher mothers interviewed had much more difficulty in focussing on a topic, devising lectures and writing papers, they perceived stress, anxiety, tiredness. Moreover, we observed that de-structured and even disintegrated boundaries deeply influenced intimate relationships. Specifically, the mothers we interviewed felt «squeezed» between care and domestic work, remote research work and online teaching (Hjálmsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir, 2020; Malisch et al., 2020).

The researcher mothers interviewed, instead of the fathers, said they have been feeling «*not independent and autonomous*», «*forced to constantly ask*», and «*afraid of being seen as demanding*» by partners. We argue this was because of boundaries de-structuration or disarticulation, linked with the model of the neoliberal university. Gender inequalities stemming from this model (Poggio, 2018), together with the closure of schools and the forced coexistence at home, impacted on working spaces and times, and on the (in)stability of couples with children. The neoliberal norms of individualised efficiency and performativity produced friction, quarrels, sometimes leading to conflicts and couple crises.

Moreover, the neoliberal model is politically embodied in the processes of deregulation and privatisation of social services. In a context of neoliberalism and welfare state retrenchment, family policies do not significantly challenge long-standing class and gender inequalities, but they contribute to their perpetration under new forms (Ferragina, 2019). Certainly, the impact of the pandemic would have been less deep with better public policies for work and family responsibilities' reconciliation.

3.3. Living alone early career researchers

Single researchers with precarious employment have internalised the neoliberal model of research work: their work ends up absorbing all their time and makes it difficult to have time for themselves (Nowotny, 2018). In this model, the centrality of productivity overcomes the importance of product quality, which instead requires a slower pace of work and different rhythms for reflection and analysis.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, technological tools have been more important than ever before. As shown in recent studies (Watson et al., 2020), they have become instruments to preserve human sociality. In this case, these acted as surviving strategies to face the pervasiveness of working from home as well as loneliness, during what interviewees called «*interminable working days*».

The researchers who were living alone during the lockdown perceived a condition of alienation, due to the pervasiveness of work associated with loneliness. According to other research conducted in a different sector, fast working times and rhythms together with the lack of private time can bring to a form of time alienation (Dordoni, 2018; 2020).

3.4. First visual materials' analysis: the importance of gender and class issues

Our visual analysis, which is still ongoing, has allowed us to critically reflect (even more than the analysis of the interviews) on the binary vision of the concept of work-life balance, and on the concept of «balance» as a matter of individual choice, which recently have been criticized in the literature (De Coster, Zanoni, 2019; Fleetwood, 2007; Lewis et al., 2007; Özbilgin et al., 2011).

Mothers had to face a greater burden due to the «double presence» and the pandemic disarticulation of the borders which was exacerbated by the presence of their children, who during the first lockdown were always present even in the 'personal' moment-spaces of work, as shown in the collected images. The images show the «disintegration of borders» in the case of academic mothers, during the pandemic.

Moreover, precarious and not privileged Italian academics during the first lockdown had to «squeeze» time-space (Massey, 2013) of the private, family, work and social life in small apartments, while living and working with family members or roommates and children. They had to share the small space available and had difficult to reorganize home spaces to

reserve a personal work-space or create a precarious support for the laptop.

The housing issue took on great importance during the pandemic not only from the point of view of the availability of internal space, but also of the external one, e.g. balconies and terraces. In addition, housing in the urban environment or in a countryside setting, or the possibility of having a second home in a more pleasant and natural place, played a key role in the experiences of everyday life and boundary-work. Importantly, housing conditions are clearly linked to the dimension of the social class.

Conclusive remarks and future analyses

The paper has offered the first results of our research on COVID-19 pandemic's effects on academic working from home, which was conducted using qualitative and visual methods.

This research sheds light on subjective experiences of the disarticulation of boundaries and their intertwining with the neoliberal ideal type of academic researcher that have unequal consequences on the experience of work-life-care, time-space, productivity, and relationships.

Neoliberal university is characterised by high levels of productivity required, extreme competition, precariousness and temporary contracts in the early stages, fast working rhythms and gender inequalities, above all for academic mothers (Van den Brink, Benschop, 2012; Murgia, Poggio, 2018; Ivancheva et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the analysis has allowed us to critically reflect on the binary vision of work-life in the literature and the concept of 'balance' as a matter of individual choice. In particular, our visual analysis seems to make it clear how public and private are intertwined, and how the 'boundary work' during the pandemic has depended on, and contributed to reproduce, traditional cleavages, such as social class, gender and parenthood in neoliberal academia.

In the coming months, the preliminary results, especially those on gender and class issues emerged from the visual part of the research, will be investigated more in-depth.

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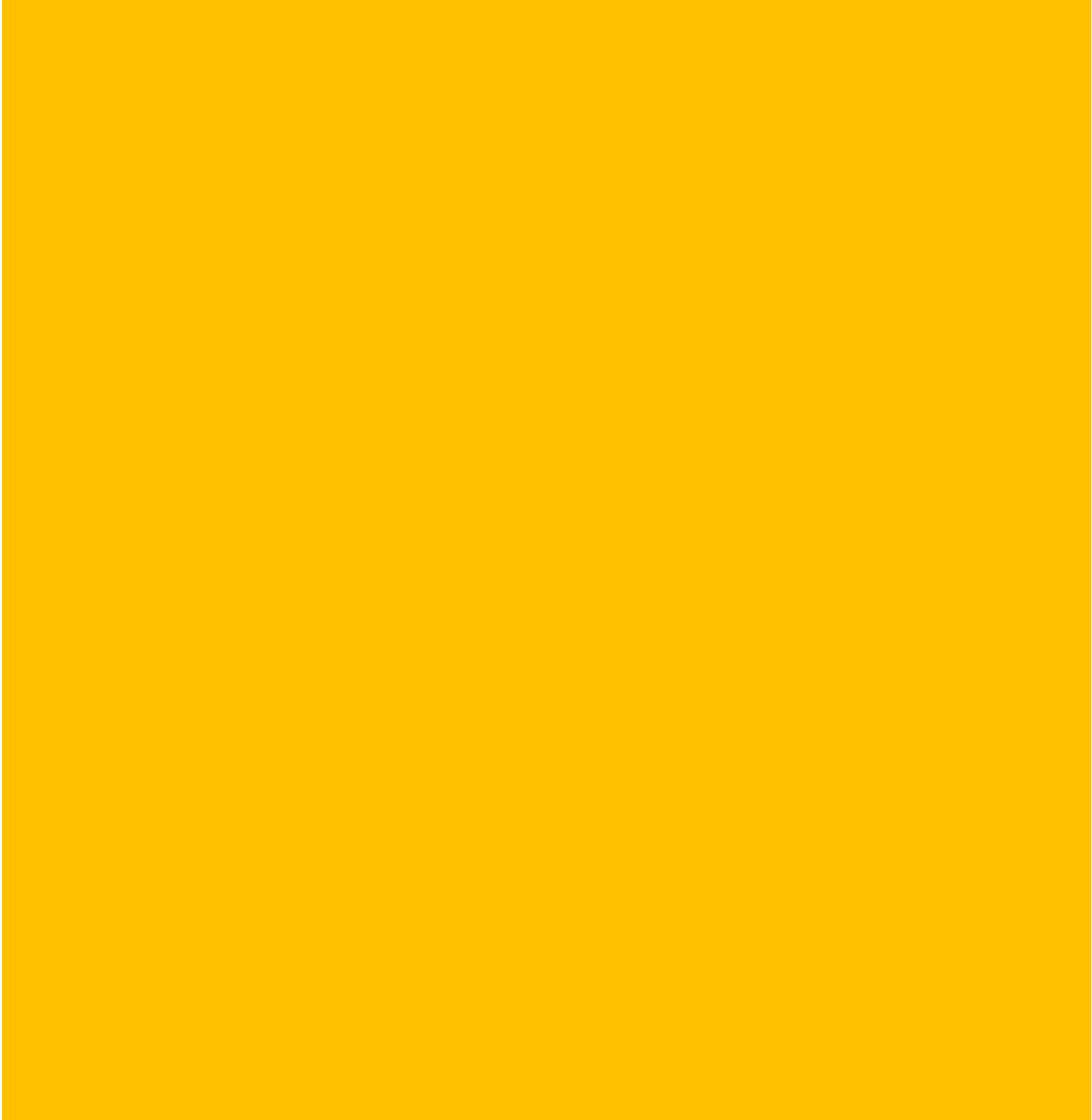
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ISBN 978-88-944888-8-3

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica
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