

The logo for AIS (Sociologia della Salute e della Medicina) features the letters 'AIS' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The 'A' is stylized with a dark blue shadow effect.

SOCIOLOGIA  
DELLA SALUTE E  
DELLA MEDICINA

# Everyday life during Covid-19

The following abstracts are the results of several research activities carried out by a selected group of sociologists belonging to the Medical Sociology Section of the Italian Association of Sociology.

The focus of the scholarship is the everyday life during Covid-19, that is: living conditions of students; illness narratives from Covid patients; intersectionality and Covid-19; the ambiguous effects of smart working; family relationships under the lockdown; new normalities under the lockdown.

The perspectives that drove the research activities are different, though the sociological stance is present in any proposal.

The results were discussed among the members of the group in several occasions and a special attention has been devoted to the practical consequences of the research and the effects on policy actions. In a few words, we hope these small contributions may be considered as ‘droplets’ of public sociology.

Antonio Maturo and Micol Bronzini (Coordinators of the “Everyday life during Covid-19” group)

# *Locked in a bubble-up: living conditions of students in higher education during the covid-19 pandemic*

**Mario Cardano, Alice Scavarda**

(Università di Torino)

## *Object and context of the research*

The paper deals with the living conditions of Turin University students, during the covid-19 pandemic. We consider the current pandemic as a sort of natural experiment, able to put into light the importance of everyday life for both social and identity cohesion, by disrupting it in terms of time, space and habits. More specifically, the covid-19 crisis, which forced to embrace distance education, invites to rethink the role of the teacher as a designer called to plan hybrid learning environments. International studies show the weaknesses of the online infrastructures, teachers' inexperience and the presence of inadequate domestic environments (in terms of spaces and relational dynamics) which produce adverse effects on students' learning processes and mental health.

## *Methodology*

Within the international study: "COVID-19 Multi Country Wellbeing Study" (27 countries), we carried out an online survey on the Turin University students, with 9.988 respondents (N% of the whole population). The questionnaire was structured around two main themes: the living conditions and the workload of higher-education students during the outbreak; the changes related to mental health, well-being, health behaviours among students.

## *Results*

We created three indexes, which express depression mood, academic stress and academic satisfaction. Turin sample presents high values of depression mood (in a scale 0-24, the mean value is 10.1, compared to the international mean: 8.8) and of academic stress (in a scale 0-16, the mean value is 10.5, while the international mean is 9.9). The main factors of academic stress are worries about not being able to complete the academic year, because of the changes in the teaching methods and the lack of clarity about the learning goals related to the course modules. In parallel, more than 40% of the respondents express satisfaction as far as the information about the protective measures is concerned. Only 18.6% of the interviewees are sure to find in the university staff someone who share their worries about the pandemic with.

## *Policy Implications and Recommendations*

Our results show the need to go beyond the ideological debate about online teaching, which often represents opposite positions, in order to face the main critical issues:

- The professors' difficulty to come to terms with distance teaching and the need to provide them with clear coordination, sufficient information and support from the academic community.
- The need to collectively reflect upon how to design successful online teaching and learning practices, taking into accounts also the demands of students with special education needs.
- The aim to foster teachers-students communication, as far as the learning outcomes and the assessment methods are concerned.
- The unwillingness of students to ask for support from the university staff, despite the expression of concerns related to the study conditions, which suggests the need to strengthen counselling services.

# *The construction of new normalities in Italy during the Covid-19 lockdown: feeling unfamiliar at home*

**Antonio Maturo, Veronica Moretti, Marta Gibin**

(Università di Bologna)

## *Research topic and context*

Everyday life provides that reservoir of meanings which allows us to make sense of reality. Everyday life is the 'taken-for-granted' dimension of our existence, and according to Guy Debord 'the measure of all things'. Italy, the first European country that started the lockdown due to Covid-19, today is – still – in the midst of a mass biographical (or else, societal) disruption. Our everyday life has been completely overturned.

On this ground, we have explored 'new normalities' in the lockdown: How are Italians making sense and 'doing' sense of the lockdown imposed by the Coronavirus? How is the domestic life re-organized in order to cope with the anomy of this situation?

## *Methodology*

During the first phase of the pandemic (March/April 2020) we conducted 20 episodic narrative interviews with childless, highly educated adults (11 females and 9 males, 29 to 36 years old) living in Northern Italy, the epicentre of the epidemic. The decision to exclude individuals with children derived from the fact that daily life with children is drastically different from that of adults able to manage their own activities in autonomy.

## *Results*

Interviewees report mixed feeling about staying locked in their homes: cozyness but also restriction; easiness to call friends but forced physical isolation; doing work in places usually devoted to relax. Moreover, being forced to stay at home appears as a cognitive ambiguous situation in which people define themselves as persons 'in-waiting' in a 'hold-on' time. In practical terms, the interviewees coped with this uncertainty creating and adhering to rigid routines and new habits. With COVID-19, something (very) familiar like everyday life became suddenly hostile and incomprehensible. We avoided our neighbours, visited the grocery store as infrequently as possible, and felt irritated when others walked too near. We underwent a social disruption requiring new cognitive categories, new social practices and new habits. Our experience of the domestic sphere turned ambivalent.

## *Policy Implications and Recommendations*

- We filled our days with tasks, seeking to maintain a distinction between various activities. Yet often there was no difference between workdays and the weekend. We were struck by 'strange' sensations like those recounted by our respondents: having to stay home on gorgeous days, drinking fine wines while listening to catastrophic news reports, participating in online aperitivi that suddenly ended with a click: leaving us to our solitude.
- Yet our hope is that the type of social practices we were forced to adopt might once again become something exotic and unusual. In other words, that they cease to be part of the taken-for-granted that characterizes the lifeworld.
- We must train ourselves to accept this mix of familiar and unknown for our own mental health

# *“I will tell you about my Covid”: Voices of people healed from Sars- Cov2. First results of a survey*

**Maurizio Esposito, Lucio Meglio, Iolanda Romualdi**

(Università di Cassino e del Lazio Meridionale)

## *Research topic and context*

In this work, an attempt was made to explore how people have dealt with the experience of Sars-Cov2 disease, by analyzing the construction of meanings related to a highly traumatic event that suddenly disrupts, altering a person's individual balance and his whole social life. The research was conducted in the provinces of Frosinone and Latina, a frontier territory, where the population is distributed over numerous small municipalities, which represents a social laboratory to study how the incidence of a pandemic on a planetary scale has affected individual lives in a fragile area.

## *Methodology*

The *corpus* of data consists of 10 individual deep interviews conducted remotely on a virtual platform. The analysis was conducted following the *Narrative analysis* method through the R-Text Mining Package software using text mining, word relationships and sentiment analysis tools.

## *Results*

From the analysis of the interviews, a series of particularly relevant areas and dimensions emerged in order to assess the impact that the disease has had on people's lives both individually and socially. Specifically, two focuses emerged: social stigma deriving from the “return to society” of the healed people, and their evaluation of the health communication to which they were exposed, that has been considered as deficient as to what Covid really is and what danger it poses to individual and public health.

## *Policy implications and recommendations*

- Implementation of valid health communication and emergency risk policies aimed at guaranteeing all people their health potential by making information available and by preventing any situation of abandonment and discouragement.
- Implementation of specific communication activities “for” healthcare, whose areas of intervention concern all health determinants (environmental, social and economic), aimed at circulating specific information on problems within the reference community, activating communication flows between citizens, public institutions and the media system, aimed at stemming problems related to disinformation that often produce phenomena of isolation and social stigma.

# *The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on social vulnerability. A study in Lombardy*

**Lia Lombardi**

(Università degli studi di Milano)

## *Research topic and context*

COVID-19, the largest and most serious pandemic of the last hundred years, challenges all our certainties. According to Ulrich Beck (2000), we can interpret the pandemic as an example of the “Risk Society” highlighting the *uncertainties* in science and its experts; *insecurities* in the welfare state; *lack of safety* in our lives and health. In this context SISS (Società Italiana di Sociologia della Salute) has designed a quantitative and qualitative study which focusses on the impact of the virus and lockdown on the everyday life of vulnerable people in some regional contexts, on the reorganization of social and healthcare policies and on future prospects. The research reported here is part of the aforementioned study.

## *Methodology*

The study - carried out between June and July 2020 - used a qualitative methodology that included ten in-depth interviews with stakeholders of local institutions and the third sector of the cities of Milan, Brescia, Cremona, Mantua and Pavia. The fields investigated are: reception facilities for migrants, poverty and homeless, LGBT associations and disability.

## *Results*

The multifactorial nature of social vulnerability emerges from the research. Illegal migrants, homeless, sex workers, the poor are at risk of survival because of isolation, lack of resources, exclusion from welfare benefits. Conflict and domestic violence worsen; poor children and students do not have the means to continue their schooling from home.

On the other hand, new social policies and services are offered, such as information, food, economic support and 24-hour shelter for the homeless. Devices are also made available for distance learning (DAD) while training and psychological support is offered to social workers. A strong sense of solidarity emerges among operators, users and social welfare organizations.

## *Policy Implications and*

In Lombardy, in the face of a great weakness of regional healthcare, a significant programme of city policies for the management of social and health emergency has been implemented, in collaboration with local institutions (prefecture, police headquarters, hospitals) and organizations of the third sector. For example, in Milan the following has taken place:

- A reorganization of the «Piano Freddo»: the facilities used as night shelters became reception facilities for the homeless and destitute people 24 hours a day, hosting up to 2000 people;
- Distribution of social vouchers, food, protective equipment, tablets and phones, brochures and informative videos in multiple languages.

## *Recommendations*

Improving the paths of inclusion for vulnerable people through four areas of intervention: work-income, housing, legalization of documents, health and healthcare.

- Establishing emergency housing and a permanent, effective and updated social-health plan abled to cope with epidemics or other calamities.
- Enhancing the tools and operating methods created and tested during the lockdown.
- Strengthening public and territorial healthcare both through an increase in the number of professionals and the strengthening of social and health facilities.
- Making the experience of the pandemic and the lockdown a reason for changing regional and global policies in favour of a fairer and supportive society.

# *Remote-Work in the covidic context and the misunderstanding of Smart-Work*

**Cleto Corposanto, Umberto Pagano, Emilio Gardini**

(Università di Catanzaro “*Magna Graecia*”)

## *Research topic and context*

The contribution reflects on the phenomenon of the sudden and enormous expansion of remote working starting from the first lockdown in March 2020. The term “smart-working” has frequently been used inappropriately in the place of “remote working”, since the typical elements of “smartness” were not really involved. But anyway, what is going on is a sort of social experiment on the largest scale of new forms of organization of work and everyday life towards smart-working models. Some companies had been experimenting protocols of this kind for some time, others had not yet the same determination. The mandatory nature of the emergency has in fact conveyed a stimulus for which the process of change in the organization of work and social/personal space-time is being accelerated and consolidated.

## *Methodology*

A brief initial theoretical framework outlines the differences between “remote working” –practiced since the late 1970s – and “smart-working”. Later on, with a qualitative approach, we present the results of 20 in-depth interviews to managers and top managers and employees who during the lockdown period worked exclusively remotely, in several cases managing implementation, coordination and monitoring remote working procedures in their organization.

## *Results*

The research highlights issues (pros and cons) concerning the practice of distance working in an emergency situation but, at the same time, it grasps elements capable of shedding light on the need for guidelines for implementation of “real” smart-working in the future. Many interviewees report, for example, an evident increase in work-related stress to which is added the discomfort generated by the overlap between working times/spaces and family ones. The distance, while providing some advantages, greatly affects the community dimension of the working group and this, as some interviewees pointed out, can also interfere with the effectiveness of the work processes and their results and also makes it much more difficult for new hires to fit in.

## *Policy Implications and Recommendations*

The use of smart-working in emergency conditions immediately produced necessary analyses that –albeit in some ways hasty and imprecise – opened important reflections



on the future of work. It is difficult to imagine the prospect of a smart-working in a full remote mode, moreover it is undoubtedly necessary to act for precise rights protection for workers when it is adopted. Thinking in terms of redistribution of costs and rewards is needed, starting from advantages companies achieve from new configuration. While it will be necessary to rethink the social and economic fabric of the related industries that produce services to workers (starting with all catering activities, for example). The complex shift from remote working to smart-working as no longer a compulsory condition but a chosen and planned one, must also (or even mainly) be observed through sociological research, whose contribution can be supporting and facilitating public policies and managerial strategies of organizations.

# *The family relationships in Italy during the first lockdown. Three pandemic metaphors in the Italian newspapers*

**Pietro Paolo Guzzo, Cristina Martini, Giovanni Frazzica**

(Università di Bari, Università di Verona, Università di Palermo)

## *Research topic and context*

This contribution aims to analyze the Covid-19 metaphors of communications in the Italian newspapers during the first lockdown in March 2020, focusing on the relationships and politics of family. Even in the pandemic emergency, the media continued to play their main role in guiding the agenda setting process. The metaphoric narrative of pandemic family relationships has been reconstructed under a sociological lens of the COVID-19 emergency in order to analyze certain public policies launched in the subsequent period (e.g. bonus and smart-working as a way of reconciling family life and working hours).

## *Methodology*

A mixed method was used for reconstructing the pandemic metaphors, i.e.: computerized qualitative-quantitative content-analysis of ANSA press releases in some sample periods during the lockdown combined with two heuristics tools: the “cultural diamond” of Griswold (1994) and the “dramaturgical pentad” of Burke (1945). In this perspective the ANSA press releases represent the agenda-setting of the main national newspapers, The sample and the construction of the corpus: Ansa national Press Agency-Ansa Cronaca 10-17 March (week following the start of phase 1) 11-18 April (the week following the lockdown extension); keywords: “smart working”, “bonus”, “distancing”, “sociability”, “family”. The research design includes a) quantitative and qualitative analysis; b) detection card for metaphors and quotes; c) content analysis with Taltac2 textual lexicon analysis software and with T-lab for correspondences analysis. In particular, 231 articles (Ansa Cronaca) and 16,098 graphic forms have been analyzed so far.

## *Results*

The present pilot phase of this in progress study seems to reveal three pandemic metaphors: “a war-post-apocalyptic climate”, “segregationist and authoritarian”, “reactive-participatory”. In all three metaphors different themes were identified and analyzed, converging into the following general categories: request for help; closures; fragile categories; family relationships; sociability; reports/offenses; recommendations.

The first results lead to affirm that family relationships are represented in a mixed way (conflictual-collaborative) between genders, while institutions seem to orient themselves towards “reparative” family policies that are limited in time. Moreover, family relationships are interpreted as self-protective while policies tend to maximize social control inside and outside the home with a punitive and emergency approach. Finally, intra and extra family relationships are interpreted in a generative-transformed key and the family policies resemble the co-activation policies between public institutions and family.

## *Implications and policy recommendations:*

The pilot phase of research seems to reveal three policy implications that count as recommendations. First of all, the need to increase the empirical and participatory knowledge of different dimensions of family policies at the time of coronavirus. This suggests to place the analysis of collective representations of family needs as guide for related policy actions. Secondly, the need for systematic stabilization of bonuses in structural, targeted and coherent policies. Last but not least, the enhancement of support services and digital welfare infrastructures to reduce the various gaps (digital and social), exacerbated by the Covid-19 emergency, to which may Italian families often succumb. These are only some preliminary results of a pilot phase of a broader research that we are conducting on these and other aspect of social family life and public policy in Italy during the COVID-19 age.

# *The Lockdown as an Extreme Case of Familism: Which Consequences on Working Parents' Health?*

Maddalena Cannito, Benedetta Polini, Alice Scavarda

(Università di Torino, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Università di Torino)

## *Object and context of the research:*

The paper deals with working parents' redefinition of their life courses and its consequences on their health during the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. We decided to consider the lockdown as an extreme case of familism that exacerbated the contradictions of the Italian welfare state and, therefore, an interesting case study to reflect on the effects on the health of Italian working parents of managing work and family duties with no external supports. We integrated different literatures on: the familism by default of the Italian welfare state; the helicopter parenthood; the stress derived by the negative spillover between different life spheres.

## *Methodology:*

We conducted 30 semi-structured qualitative online interviews, during the lockdown (the "phase 1" of the pandemic), with: 10 heterosexual couples with children aged under 6, both mothers and fathers interviewed separately, and 2 fathers and 8 mothers with children in school age. Except for one mother, all the interviewees were in remote work, and one mother is a housewife.

## *Results:*

The interviews show the disorientation of parents facing a circumstance that brings back the enthusiasm for family relations, but exacerbates the ideal worker and the helicopter parenting model. The lockdown imposed the reorganization of familial spaces and schedules according to the work of the parents and the school of the children. Working at home intensified parents' – especially mothers' – commitment, but at the same time the distance learning attributed a lot of responsibilities. The roles' accumulation and extra responsibilities produced parents' stress and fatigue and reduced the capabilities to balance work and family, even if it lowered mothers' senses of guilt. Results raise also the question of the effects of the lack of parenting support on children's health.

## *Implications and policy recommendations:*

Our results suggest the need to adopt systematic but differentiated policies to challenge the risk of strengthening familism. These policies are aimed at:

- Supporting parenting as a social issue which, on the one hand, implies social and health risks and, on the other hand, intersects specific cultural and gender roles.
- At the same time, they have to be differentiated taking into consideration the social construction of motherhood and fatherhood and gender models. Policies should simultaneously:
  - promote the dual-carer model, by fostering fathers' care roles and involvement in family life, in order to mitigate the effects that the demanding working models have on the senses of guilt of men and women: towards job for fathers to fulfill the ideal worker model, towards family for mothers to fulfill the intensive motherhood model;
  - uphold the dual-earner model, by supporting mothers' employment, so as to mitigate the consequences of the parenting high-performing models.