
Work and public policies: the interweaving of feminist economics and the capability approach

Este artículo comienza con una valoración sobre la utilidad del enfoque de las capacidades en el marco de la economía feminista, para analizar los determinantes de las desigualdades de género, así como identificar las políticas públicas capaces de hacerles frente. El análisis de las políticas públicas en el marco de la economía feminista, teniendo como referente el enfoque de las capacidades, se realiza siguiendo la metodología propuesta por Addabbo, Lanzi, Picchio (2010). En el análisis se pone el foco especialmente en la dimensión relativa al trabajo, la cual será analizada haciendo referencia a los indicadores desarrollados para medir el trabajo planteados por la economía feminista (Picchio, 2003). También se destaca su vínculo con otras dimensiones relevantes del bienestar, así como con el impacto de las desigualdades de género en su consecución. En este contexto, se evalúa un conjunto de políticas públicas con objeto de descubrir sus efectos sobre la capacidad de trabajar y la desigualdad de género en su desarrollo y en su conversión en funcionamientos observables.

Artikuluaren hasieran, ekonomia feministaren esparruan gaitasunen ikuspegia erabilgarria ote den baloratzen da, genero-desberdintasunak zerk eragiten dituen aztertzeke, eta horiei zein politika publikok aurre egin diezaiekeen zehazteke. Ekonomia feministaren esparruan politika publikoak aztertzeke, eta, betiere, gaitasunen ikuspegia erreferentziatzen hartuta, Addabbo-k, Lanzi-k eta Picchio-k proposatutako metodologiari jarraitzen zaio (2010). Azterketan, lanari buruzko dimentsioan jartzen da arreta. Dimentsio hori aztertzeke, lana neurtzeko adierazleak aipatuko dira, ekonomia feministak planteatzen dituenak (Picchio, 2003). Ongizaterako garrantzitsuak diren beste dimentsio batzuekiko lotura ere azpimarratzen du, bai eta genero-desberdintasunek ongizatea lortzeko duten eraginarekiko lotura ere. Testuinguru horretan, politika publiko batzuk ebaluatzen dira, ikusteko politika horiek zer ondorio dituzten lan egiteko gaitasunaren gainean eta genero-desberdintasunaren gainean, horiek garatzeko eta horiei buruzko emaitzak neurtu ahal izateko.

This paper will start with an assessment on how the capability approach within a feminist economic framework can be used to analyse the determinants of gender inequalities and then to address public policies that are able to contrast them. To analyse public policies within a feminist economic framework and in the capability approach reference will be made to the methodology proposed in Addabbo, Lanzi, Picchio (2010) and a special focus will be devoted on work that will be analysed with reference to the indicators developed to measure it and in a feminist economics perspective (Picchio, 2003). Its link with other relevant dimensions of well-being will be highlighted together with the extent of gender inequalities in its achievement. In this setting a selection of public policies will be evaluated to uncover their effects on the capability of working and gender inequality in its development and in its conversion into observable functionings.

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Keywords: capability approach, gender inequality, public polices, feminist perspective.

JEL codes: B54, J16, J18, J22.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is first of all to assess to what extent the capability approach within a feminist economic framework can be used to analyse the determinants of gender inequalities and then to address public policies that are able to contrast them.

As shown in Section 1 the very fundamentals of the capabilities approach, by allowing to extend the definition of well-being to multiple interweaving dimensions within which the capability of care plays a central role and the family is no longer seen, as in mainstream economics, as a place where no gender conflicts arise, provides a theoretical basis to analyse gender inequalities in their complexities and interaction. Section 1 also recaps what types of indicators can be used in the human development framework to make visible gender inequalities in well-being. The crucial role played by agency in Sen's view of the construction of well-being can be considered as a way to detect the different factors that allow the conversion of capabilities into functionings or the very development of capabilities by gender.

With the scope of operationalizing the capability approach (CA) we analyse more in depth the capability of work in the CA setting (Section 2) and provide some hints for its measurement with reference to a country, Italy, characterized by sharp

gender inequalities in the capability of work (Section 3), for then turning to a Section dedicated to the application of well-being gender budgeting (that applies the capabilities approach to gender budgeting as suggested by Addabbo, Lanzi, Picchio, 2010) to public policies that can impact on the capability of work (Section 4).

2. THE CAPABILITY APPROACH IN A FEMINIST ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

The capability approach introduces a wider definition of well-being that can be disentangled in different interrelated dimensions (Sen, 1985, 1993 and Nussbaum, 2003). The new dimensions are added to the income dimension and depict individuals who are in relation to each other also in a care role therefore departing from the assumption of the philistine economic man at the heart of the neoclassical economic model.

Differently from other economic approaches to the construction of well-being, the capability approach focus is the capability of people to be or to do, in Robeyns' words:

«The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities. This contrasts with philosophical approaches that concentrate on people's happiness or desire-fulfilment, or on income, expenditures, or consumption». (Robeyns, 2005).

Capabilities are defined as a set of opportunities that the individual can develop whose observable realizations are defined as functionings.

As stressed by Robeyns (2008) one of the aspects that make the capability approach a gender-sensitive evaluative framework is the very focus on capabilities and functionings.

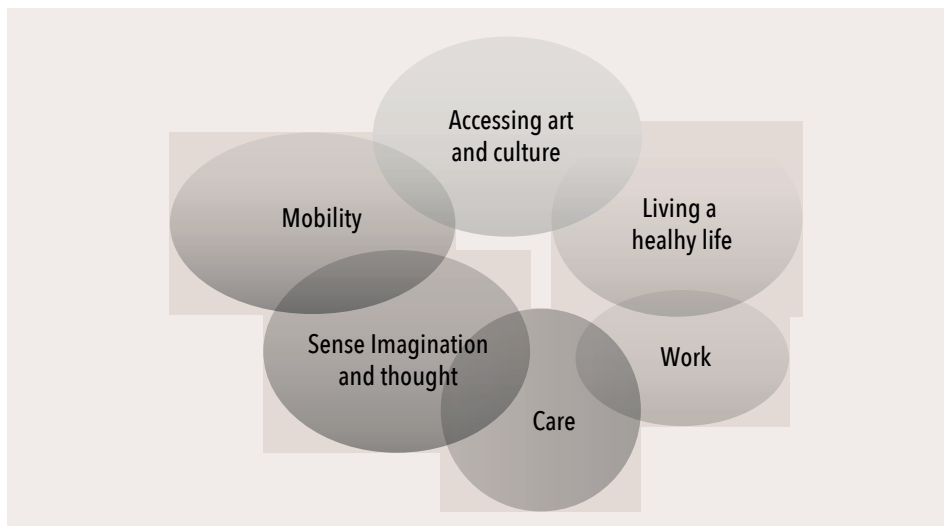
The evaluative space is made in Sen's approach by capabilities instead of resources and:

«Sen...gives human diversity a central place in his framework. For feminist this is very important, because all too often the agents in mainstream theories are very androcentric, in the sense that, either explicitly or implicitly, this person's characteristics are 'masculine' characteristics, i.e. characteristics which are positively valued by the masculinity norms in dominant gender ideologies». (Robeyns, 2008, p.87).

Mainstream approach tends to make the role played by women in their care interaction with other individual not visible, not relevant as an issue to be addressed in public policies and in the evaluative space. Human diversity is, on the other hand, central to Sen's capability approach.

The composition of the different capabilities and their interactions, as depicted in Figure 1, actually allows to show the complexity of the construction of well-being that can result in human flourishing. However, one should be aware that, given the interweaving of the different capabilities, by affecting the development of a given capability the whole set can be affected.

Figure 1. **WELL-BEING IN THE CAPABILITY APPROACH THE INTERACTION OF CAPABILITIES**



Source: Our elaboration.

The capability approach is at the heart of the attempt of measuring human development that characterizes since 1990 the work of the United Nations Development Programme that in the 1995 HDR Report explicitly tackles gender inequalities by proposing also new indicators to make it more visible and from the very beginning claims that:

«Human development is a process of enlarging the choices for all people, not just for one part of society. Such a process becomes unjust and discriminatory if most women are excluded from its benefits. And the continuing exclusion of women from many economic and political opportunities is a continuing indictment of modern progress» (UNDP, 1995, p.1).

Stated in the overview to the Report as its principal message:

«Human development, if not engendered, is endangered» (UNDP, 1995, p.1).

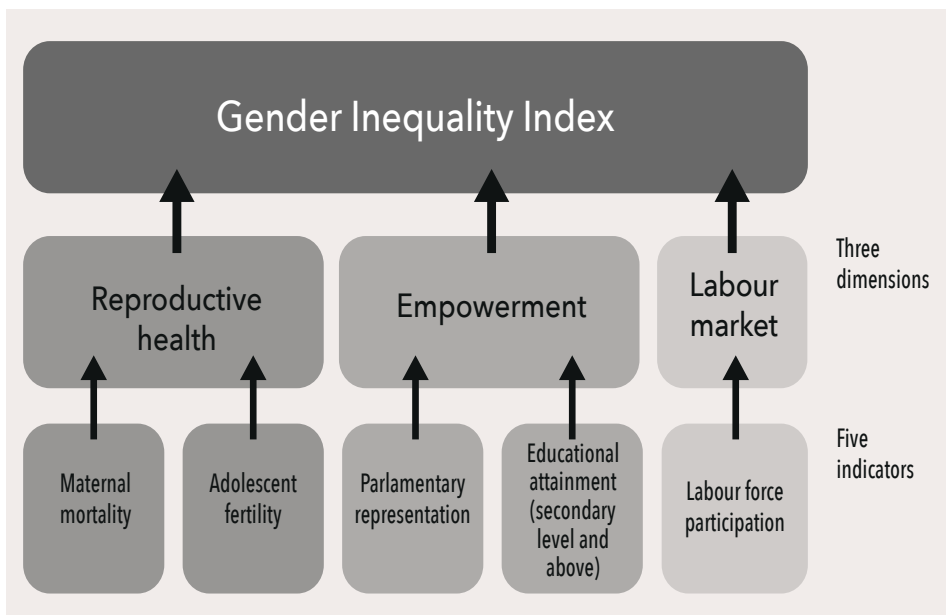
In order to assess gender inequalities in the basic dimensions of well-being UNDP (1995) introduced just before the Beijing Fourth World Conference on

Women, the gender-related development index (GDI) that measures to what extent women and men are unequal in the achievement of the three dimensions that compose the Human Development Index: standard of living, health and education.

Together with GDI the 1995 Human Development Report included also an indicator of gender empowerment (GEM) that measures gender inequalities in parliaments, in apical positions, in participation to paid work activities as well as share of national income.

However, as stressed in UNDP (2010) both indicators were subjected to different critiques addressed both to their design, to the indicators used (more closely related to developed countries) and to the difficulties in getting the needed values for sub-indicators for a wide number of countries leading to the need of introducing too many imputed values to get to the rank of a higher number of countries.

Figure 2. THE COMPONENTS OF THE UNDP GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX



Source: UNDP (2015) Figure 5.3 p.91.

In 2010 under a process of proposals and experimentation of new indicators UNDP has introduced another indicator on gender inequalities: the Gender Inequality Index (GII) that measures gender inequalities in education (higher educational attainment), economic (female labour market participation) and political participation (National parliamentary representation) and female specific health issues (maternal mortality ratio and adolescent fertility rates) (Figure 2; UNDP,

2010). The need for imputation, given the information required, drastically reduced with the implementation of this new measure of gender inequality. The indicator ranges from 0 (less gender inequality) to 1 (maximum gender inequality) and another important feature of this new indicator is that it increases the more the disparities across dimensions are correlated thus giving an important weight to the interaction of different dimensions of well-being in determining critical situations in terms of gender equality.

Let's now turn to another crucial element of the capability approach: agency (Sen, 1992). Agency refers to the freedom to act and choose in order to pursue goals that one has reasons to value.

On this regard, women are not considered as passive actors and the limits to their freedom in action are investigated.

Capabilities can actually be interpreted as set of functionings that are feasible to achieve. This allows to consider in a feminist perspective to what extent men and women have the same freedom to achieve. In Nussbaum's words:

«They are not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms and opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment» (Nussbaum, 2011, p.20).

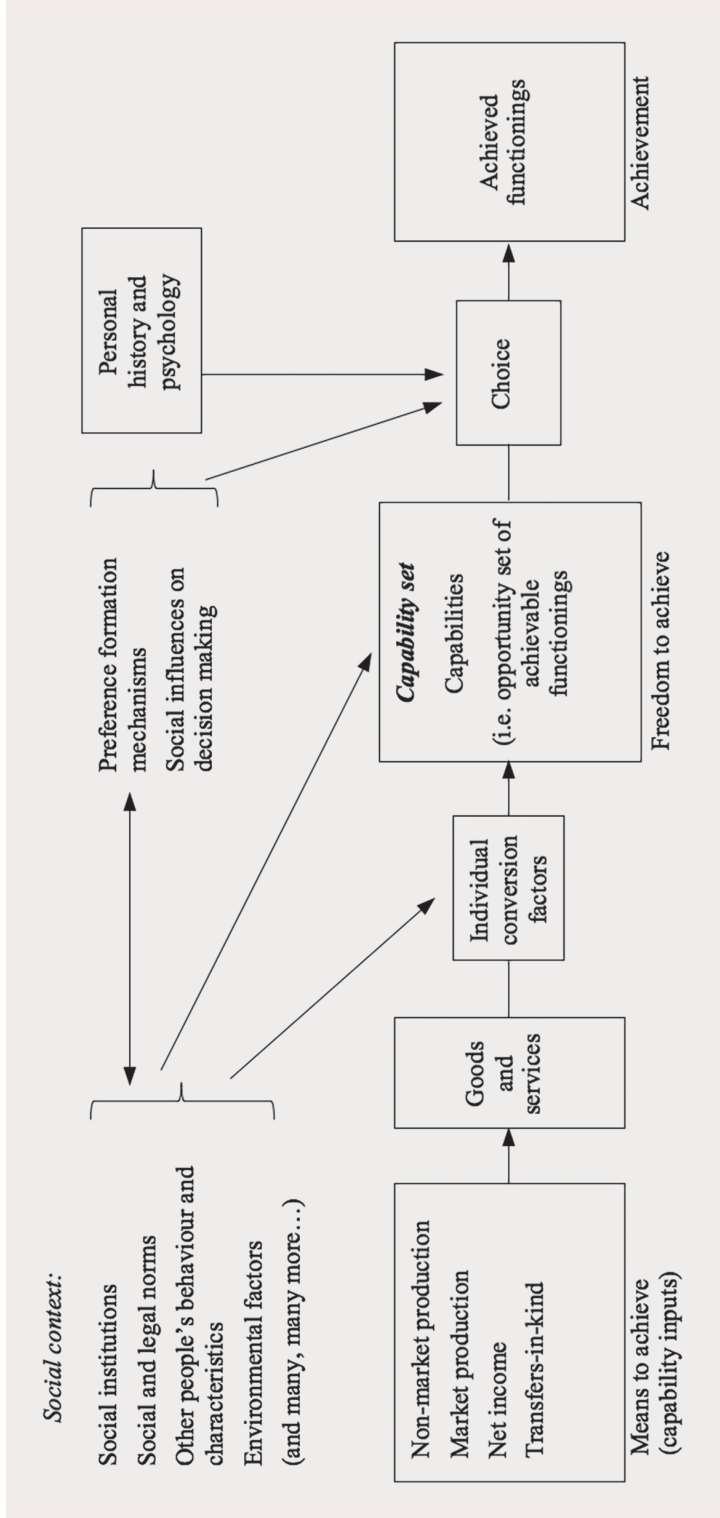
Taking into account capabilities in a gender perspective allows to detect gender inequalities in a domain (capabilities) that are more likely to persist if not properly accounted for.

This applies for instance when mental health condition is analysed in a gender perspective by using the capability approach (Simon *et al.*, 2013). Simon *et al.* (2013) detect a higher negative effect of mental health status on the development of most capabilities domains analysed for women with differences related also to the different levels of legal coercion. The capability approach has proven particularly helpful in the assessment of social care and public health programmes.

Though the focus is the individual the definition of well-being in the capability approach is embedded in a given context. The capability approach recognizes that the development of capabilities is not only a matter of individual skills or competences but it is affected by external conditions related to the family, the society, institutions, norms.

The capability approach applied to the construction of well being has acknowledged the role of public institutions both in the access to resources, to develop capabilities and convert them into functionings (Robeyns, 2008; Nussbaum 2003). The focus on capabilities allows to see the effect of the institutional context not only on what an individual does or is but also on what can do or be, on her set of opportunities to do and to be and on her agency to be or to do (Sen, 1992).

Figure 3. THE CONSTRUCTION OF WELL BEING



Source: Robeyns (2005, p.14).

Considering the representation of the model provided by Robeyns (2005) as reported in Figure 3 above, in a feminist perspective a first issue that can be addressed in the capability approach is how public institutions affect gender inequalities in the access to resources and the freedom of women and men to convert developed capabilities into functionings.

Addabbo, Lanzi and Picchio (2010) apply the capability approach in a feminist perspective to the analysis of the impact of public policies. A first important step that places the approach within a feminist macroeconomic framework is recognizing the importance and the implications of the process of social reproduction (Picchio, 1992, 2003) of women and men and the role played by women as main carers in the construction of well-being.

In this approach the contribution of public policies on the development of well-being is made explicit and evaluated in a gender perspective.

In this paper we will focus on a special dimension of well-being: the capability of work with reference to its interaction with other capabilities and in a feminist perspective (Section 2), for then turning to its measurement (Section 3) and to the gender impact of policies affecting it in a special context characterized by high gender inequality in the development of this capability or in their observables functionings.

3. THE CAPABILITY OF WORK IN A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

The capability of work can be considered as one of the fundamental capabilities given its role in enabling the development of other capabilities. As stressed by Sayer (2014) work can enhance or constrain the development of other central capabilities both with its process and with its effects.

When one defines the capability of work with reference to paid work the capability in itself can, if converted into the functioning of being employed, provide the resources to be able to develop other capabilities. The very quality of work and its different dimensions affect the development of capabilities. However the very quality and quantity of work can be considered as structurally determined by the labour markets, by the unequal division of labour (Sayer, 2014) and by the different role played by women and men in the process of social reproduction (Picchio, 1992).

In what follows we stress some of the interactions of the capability of paid work with other capabilities.

As represented in Figure 3 by providing earnings, paid work activities not only allow the individual, and the people she is related, to live a healthy life but they enable the individuals to access to goods and services that can develop their well-being by fostering the individual with goods and services to develop also other capabilities.

Think for instance to the possibility that labour income can be spent in attending a concert this can clearly contribute to the individual capability of enjoying recreation and leisure.

But just when one focuses on the opportunity to enhance other capabilities by gaining a salary through paid work, one should be aware of the existence of a persistent wage gap at the disadvantage of women. The awareness of gender inequality in the access to resources can therefore reveal a gap in the development of capabilities related to women's lower wages. Moreover, in a feminist economics framework, it is important to state that the very origin of the gender gap in wages is related to discrimination. Therefore policies that contrast wage discrimination can produce a positive effect in the development of women's well-being and in closing the gender gap also in the other related dimensions of well-being.

The higher is the wage differential at the disadvantage of women the more unequal can be the effect of paid work activities in developing other capabilities by gender.

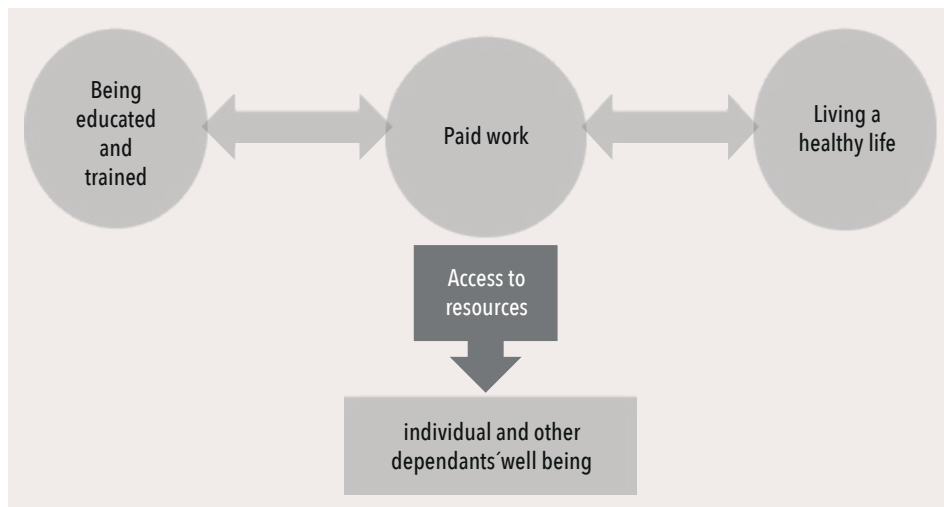
Let's now turn to another crucial link: capability of work and capability of being trained and educated. If the capability of work can be affected by the capability of being educated and trained in itself, the paid work activities can allow the development of specific skills that in turn allow to develop the capability of being trained and educated. On the former link one has to take into account the inequalities in the fields of education by gender. These are bound to affect the capability of work as long as they determine a lower access to better quality jobs and to higher returns in terms of wages (OECD, 2012). According to OECD data (OECD, 2016) though women represent 54% of new entrants to tertiary education there are still large differences in the distribution of students by gender across fields of study. As stressed in OECD (2016):

«Women are over-represented in programmes that will lead to relatively lower-paying jobs, namely teaching and nursing, while men are over-represented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields» (OECD, 2016, p. 319).

Working conditions themselves affect the capability of living a healthy life in relation to the work environment. Living in a unhealthy work space can reduce the development of the capability of living a healthy life and the health status can also prevent the capability of being employed.

Gender differences and gender inequalities should be taken into account in the analysis of the development of the capability of work. Feminist economics recognizes the role of unpaid care work on the social reproduction process (Picchio, 1992 and 2003) and can therefore be analysed as allowing paid work and as an activity that must be accounted for in aiming at the individual's well being.

Figure 4. **CAPABILITY OF WORK IN THE INTERACTION WITH OTHER CAPABILITIES**



Source: Our elaboration.

The synergistic link between work and human development is explicitly recognized in the United Nations Development Programme last report that is centred on work.

«Work enhances human development by providing incomes and livelihoods, by reducing poverty and by ensuring equitable growth. Human development— by enhancing health, knowledge, skills and awareness— increases human capital and broadens opportunities and choices». (UNDP, 2015, p.3).

UNDP (2015) highlights that, to improve the development of positive links between paid work and human development, work should guarantee the rights and benefits of workers and address the imbalances in paid and unpaid work. As shown by UNDP figures human development is unevenly distributed by gender with women having a lower level of Human Development Index, women report a higher level of HDI only in 14 countries (amongst them in Poland and Estonia).

The tension between paid and unpaid work can determine work-life imbalances to the detriment of one's capability of paid or unpaid work. This imbalance in a gender perspective can reveal inequalities in the conversion of entitlements in the *sense* of entitlements as discussed more in depth by Hobson, Fahlén and Takács (2011) with inequalities determined by a different access to individual resources that translate into inequalities in the capabilities to make claims in institutional settings where gender equality ideologies have been transferred into laws and policies to promote work-life balance.

To contribute to the improvement of work-life balance in these settings (where laws and policies for reaching a better work-life balance are at work) it becomes important to understand who are more likely to be subjected to inequalities in making the claim for work-life balance in order to invest in policies that, in the capability approach, could contribute to develop his or her sense of entitlements and his or her agency to translate rights into actions.

But what is the setting to keep when analysing the capability to work? And what are the relevant conversion factors?

The broader attention to the interaction between paid and unpaid work should bring the focus to an extended area where women and men have different constructed roles in the process of social reproduction that, as stressed by Picchio (1992, 2003), translate in inequalities in paid work that, in the capability approach, can be persistent.

But then if on one hand one important setting to look for the roots of gender inequalities in the workplace is an extended macroeconomic framework and the laws and social norms conversion factors, attention should be paid also to the microeconomic setting within the workplace where women and men can have different access to rights, where they exist, to being equally paid for their work, to be able to progress in their career, to being respected, to increase their knowledge, to really develop their capability of working.

Taking into account the right for work-life balance then together with heterogeneity in the institutional contexts that allow women and men different rights to work-life balance (see for instance the reconstruction of this heterogeneity in terms of parental leaves or access to child-care services as shown in Moss, 2015) it becomes essential to analyse what happens at the work-place level where claims for work-life balance are made and can then be granted or denied (Hobson, Fahlén and Takács, 2011).

In the following section we will apply the capability approach in a feminist perspective to the case of Italy a country that, as the data reveal, is affected by deep gender inequalities in the access to work and with an increasing gender gap in pay trying to keep, in our analysis, a double perspective at the macro and micro level and to apply the capability approach to the analysis of the gender impact of a set of public policies at national and local level.

4. MEASURING THE CAPABILITY OF WORK IN A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE AND IN TIME OF CRISIS

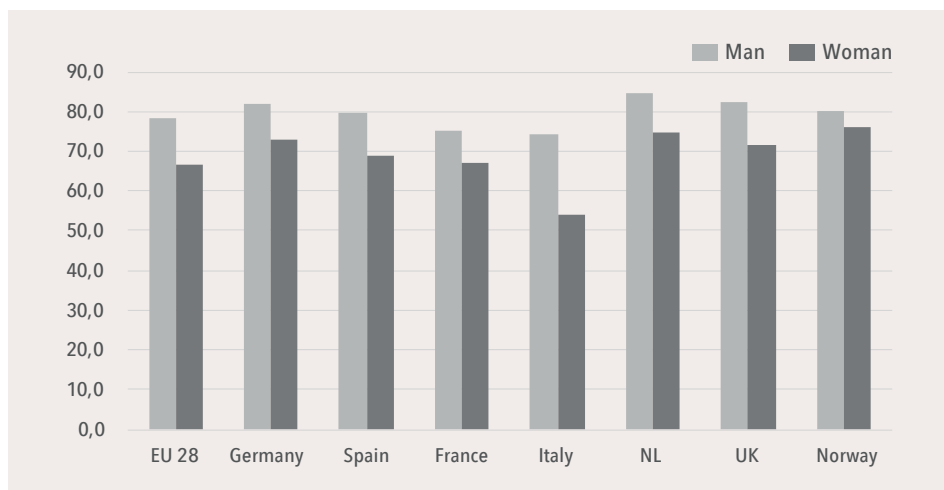
In this section we will measure paid work activities by using a set of indicators that express the functionings of paid work while in Section 4 we will apply the capability approach to the analysis of a selection of public policies affecting the capability of work in a gender perspective.

Primary data sources that aim at reconstructing the development of work capability by gender are not available in Italy and, to reconstruct its development one can use a set of indicators coming from secondary data sources that provide indirectly the realization of that capability in observable functionings. A set of these indicators are used in this Section to provide a preliminary context analysis of the capability of work and gender inequalities in its achievements.

First of all we use, consistently with UNDP GII index, a measure for gender equality in labour market participation.

Amongst the set of European countries analysed in Figure 5, women in Italy are characterized by a much lower activity rate and a larger gap with respect to men in terms of their labour supply. On average, according to labour force survey data in 2015, women participation rate (i.e. the percentage, amongst women aged 15-64, of women who are employed or in search for a job) in Italy was only 54% against a EU-28 average by 67%. Moreover in countries severely hit by the crisis as Spain the gender disadvantage in terms of activity rates for women is around 10 percentage points, whereas the gender gap is double in Italy with women's participation rate lower than 20 percentage points with respect to men (Figure 5).

Figure 5. **ACTIVITY RATES BY GENDER IN 2015 IN A SET OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. 15-64 YEARS OLD**



Source: Our elaborations from Eurostat metadata based on Labour Survey data.

However activity rates detect women and men who are willing to work but, since they include also the unemployed, do not give us a measure of those who are currently employed and succeeded in finding a job and in keeping it. To get to this second indicator of the capability of work we need to turn our attention to the employment rate that is the ratio of women employed in a given range of years and fe-

male population of that age group. Turning to the 20-64 years old people we can see that in Italy there is a high gender inequality in employment rates across regions in 2015. The measured employment rate at national level is 51% and ranges from 29.8% in Campania (region in the South of Italy) to 69.4% in Bozen (South Tyrol in the upper North of the country) (Table 1).

Table 1. **EMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER 20-64 YEARS OLD ITALY IN 2015**

	M	F
Piemonte	75,5	60,7
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	75,9	65,7
Liguria	73,6	59,9
Lombardia	78,4	61,2
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	81,0	67,0
Bolzano/Bozen	84,0	69,4
Trento	78,1	64,7
Veneto	78,7	57,9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	77,3	58,8
Emilia-Romagna	79,0	63,6
Toscana	76,3	62,4
Umbria	76,5	59,1
Marche	75,6	57,8
Lazio	72,2	54,5
Abruzzo	71,1	46,2
Molise	63,8	42,5
Campania	56,9	29,8
Puglia	61,4	33,0
Basilicata	66,9	39,4
Calabria	53,5	31,0
Sicilia	56,7	30,5
Sardegna	61,8	45,2
Italy	70,6	50,6

Source: Our elaborations from ISTAT metadata from Labour force survey.

The different labour market outcomes can be connected to the differences that also in Italy can be observed by field of education (rather than by level since women represent 55% of the new entrants in tertiary education as shown by OECD, 2016). Actually 30% of those students in tertiary education in the field of engineering, manufacturing and construction are women and 9% of new entrants in the field of education; 32% in humanities and arts and 31% in health and welfare are men (OECD, 2016).

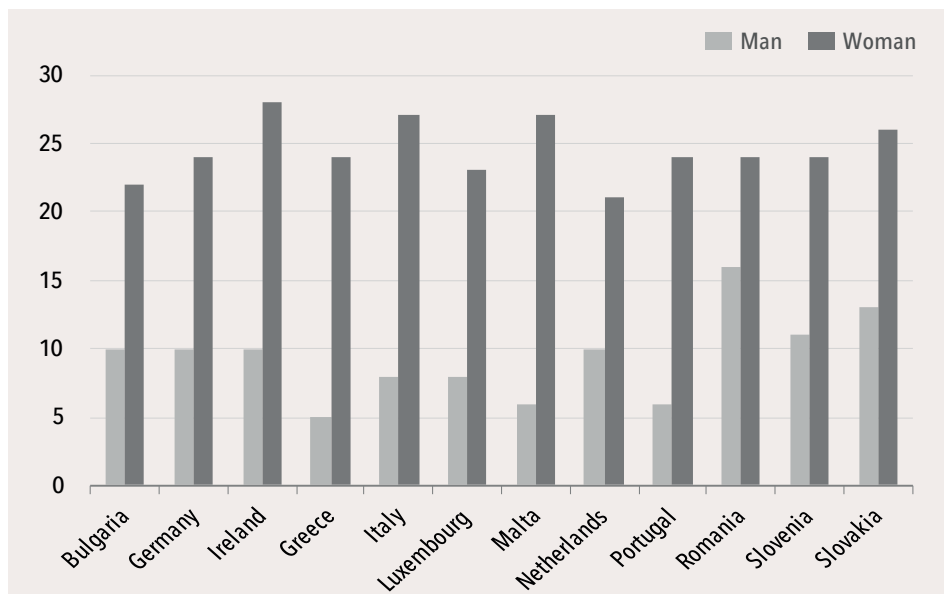
Turning to the gender inequalities observed in the distribution of paid and unpaid work, a joint analysis of paid and unpaid work activities by gender in the capa-

bility approach can allow to detect the links between individual working activities and his/her well-being in the interaction with other individuals' well-being.

Given the crucial importance in a feminist perspective of women and men's role in unpaid work we need to show what is the level of inequality in this unpaid work area.

Essential to this purpose is the reconstruction of the degree of intrahousehold symmetry in the distribution of time. The figures summarized in Figure 6 show how, amongst the countries that have taken part to the 2010 *ad hoc* European Survey on Income and Living conditions, Italy is characterized by a high gender gap in terms of the average weekly hours of unpaid work with a substantial larger burden on women as the average weekly unpaid working hours data show us (Figure 6).

Figure 6. **AVERAGE WEEKLY UNPAID (CARE AND DOMESTIC) WORKING HOURS BY GENDER**



Source: Eu Silc 2010 ad hoc module metadata.

A finer analysis made on time budget data amongst employed shows that, by taking into account time budgets, women with children who are also performing paid work activities enjoy on average 1 hour less of leisure time a day with a much larger share devoted to unpaid work than their partner (Table 2). By comparing the last two time budgets surveys available ISTAT (2015) shows how the small decrease in women's unpaid working time devoted to unpaid work has taken place together with a weak entry of men into unpaid work and with an increase in women's paid working hours. Moreover, in families with children women tended to decrease domestic work to increase care work activities.

Table 2. DAILY TIME USE OF EMPLOYED PEOPLE LIVING IN A COUPLE WITH CHILDREN AND A WOMAN AGED 25-49 YEARS

Time Use	M		F	
	2002-2003	2008-2009	2002-2003	2008-2009
Domestic	00.49	00.53	03.30	03.16
Care	00.34	00.38	01.13	01.18
Paid	06.20	06.19	04.06	04.18
Leisure	03.40	03.33	02.34	02.34

Source: Table selection from Tav. 5.2. in Istat (2015): 128.

Table 3. UNADJUSTED GENDER WAGE GAP

	2008	2013
EU (27 countries)	17,3	16,4
Belgium	10,2	9,8
Bulgaria	12,3	13,5
Czech Republic	26,2	22,1
Denmark	17,1	16,4
Germany	22,8	21,6
Estonia	27,6	29,9
Spain	16,1	19,3
France	16,9	15,1
Italy	4,9	7,3
Cyprus	19,5	15,8
Latvia	11,8	14,4
Lithuania	21,6	13,3
Luxembourg	9,7	8,6
Hungary	17,5	18,4
Malta	9,2	5,1
Netherlands	18,9	16
Austria	25,1	23
Poland	11,4	6,4
Portugal	9,2	13
Romania	8,5	9,1
Slovenia	4,1	3,2
Slovakia	20,9	19,8
Finland	20,5	18,7
Sweden	16,9	15,2
United Kingdom	21,4	19,7
Iceland	20,7	20,5
Norway	17	16
Switzerland	18,4	19,3

Source: Selection from Eurostat metadata computed from the Structure of Earnings Survey.

Moreover the index of asymmetry, that is close to 1 if all unpaid working time is done by women and to 0 if it is done by men, shows that asymmetry in the Italian couples is still very high. Actually, as the data from the last time budget survey show, 78% of domestic work and 67% of care work are performed by women in couples where both partners are employed and women are 25 to 49 years old (ISTAT, 2015).

Another indirect indicator that can reflect the interaction between paid and unpaid work is the degree of work-life balance difficulties suffered by individuals in their daily activities. This information has been retrieved in Italy in the Istat survey on new mothers and it shows that during the crisis, Italian young mothers find themselves more exposed to the risk of problems in work-life balance and to a higher risk of interruption of their working profile (ISTAT, 2012).

Table 4. **UNADJUSTED GENDER WAGE GAP BY COUNTRIES AND OWNERSHIP. 2008 – 2013**

Countries	Public Ownership		Private Ownership	
	2008	2013	2008	2013
Belgium	-3,0	-0,5	14,1	10,6
Bulgaria	20,3	19,2	11,5	12,8
Czech	23,3	21,3	26,1	23,1
Denmark	15,1	12,6	16,1	16,2
Germany	16	13,4	26,2	25,1
Ireland	12,5	7,3	21,4	19,5
Spain	11,6	13,6	18,8	21,1
Italy	6,7	6,3	17,1	19,9
Cyprus	0,0	-3,3	27,5	23,8
Latvia	13,3	20,5	14,8	12,8
Lithuania	17,3	12,6	23,5	16,0
Hungary	17,5	22,4	17,2	15,0
Netherlands	18,6	15,0	19,3	21,7
Poland	7,0	3,8	21,2	17
Portugal	10,0	12,0	22,7	21,1
Romania	11,3	12,8	11,6	3,1
Slovenia	4,8	11,4	12,2	9,7
Slovakia	16,1	13,7	22,1	20,6
Finland	20,7	18,4	19,7	17,9
Sweden	15,0	11,9	14,8	12,8
UK	19,0	23,3	26,3	24,3
Iceland	19,0	12,0	22,4	17,2
Norway	12,8	19,2	20,2	17,5
Switzerland	12,8	15,3	21,7	21,7

Source: Selection from Eurostat metadata earn_gr_gpgr2ct

As stressed in Section 2, the capability of work when translated in the functionings of earning an income can enhance the conversion of achieved capabilities into functionings or to develop other capabilities. However, this effect can be unequal as long as women and men wages differ. As shown in Table 3 this is the unadjusted wage gap that occurs on average. The unadjusted gender pay gap is computed by the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees. The microdata used by Eurostat to compute it is the Structure of Earnings Survey. This is a rather imperfect measure of gender wage gap since it does not account for the impact of characteristics by gender and for the non random selection of women into employment. The latter, as shown in the literature (Addabbo, Favaro, 2007; Olivetti, Petrongolo, 2008) if not properly accounted for is bound to underestimate the gender wage gap at the disadvantage of women in countries, like Italy, characterized by lower female labour supply and by heterogeneity in the composition of employed and not employed women. As the unadjusted gender wage gap shows though largely underestimated the gender gap in wages in Italy is increasing from 2008 to 2013 differently from what happens at EU 27 level.

Even not accounting for non random selection into employment, when one disaggregate the unadjusted wage gap by type of ownership (Table 4), the observed gap shows a larger and increasing gender gap in firms with a private ownership in Italy denoting higher inequalities in the potential development of capabilities connected to earnings by gender in privately owned firms.

5. PUBLIC POLICIES IN WELL-BEING GENDER BUDGETING FRAMEWORK

Awareness of the different roles played by women and men in social reproduction requires attention to the presence of public policies that address the limit on women's access to paid work as main carer both by improving intrahousehold symmetry in the allocation of time and care responsibilities and in providing child care and elderly care facilities in order to allow main carers more time to devote to other uses (including paid work activities).

Actually the heterogeneity observed in the access to work by gender shown in Section 3 is reflected in the percentage of children 0-2 attending child care services across Italian regions (Table 5). Regions like Emilia Romagna in the North of the country are characterized by a higher women's employment rate (64%) and by a higher percentage of children attending child-care services (24.8%). Multivariate analyses on women's employment probability confirm the intuition behind these descriptive statistics (Pacelli, Pasqua and Villosio, 2013).

Public policies targeted to the development of childcare services or to ease work-life balance can be related to the presence of a lower gap in activity rates that

measure individual's labour supply by gender. By considering activity rates by gender in a set of European countries the observed differences and the gender gap in activity rates can be related to the heterogeneity in the presence of child care services and in the system of parental leaves (Moss, 2015; Gerecke, 2013).

A special focus on both parents' work-life balance in two different contexts in the capability approach (Stockholm and Budapest) allows Hobson, Fahlén and Takács (2011) to detect greater agency inequalities for work-life balance in Hungary characterized, with respect to Sweden, by weaker policies devoted to work-life balance that, together with cultural norms at the work place, in the capabilities approach, translate into limits in the individual agency for the allocation of time between paid and unpaid work activities. In this framework the different design of public policies and the different incentives for mothers and fathers to take the leave, intrinsic in the way the parental leave is designed, can determine inequalities in the distribution of time in paid and unpaid work activities by gender. The latter, in the capability approach, do transfer in different capabilities to care. A persistent effect in the capability approach that can limit the individual set of opportunities.

Even when the rights are into force the evidence provided by comparative studies as the one by Hobson, Fahlén and Takács (2011) should make the institutions - that are willing to improve gender equality in social reproduction - investing in the promotion, in contexts where one carer's work is predominant, of the responsibility of the underrepresented carer.

The Italian case in this regard is characterized by a context where care is still considered as the primary mother's responsibility and double earners households are still not as spread as in other industrialized countries to the point that even the law established that the right to the second day of paternal employment leave should have been bargained by the father with the mother.

In this context, by applying the former suggestions coming from the capability approach to gender inequalities in work-life balance, there should be a change in the design of public policies and an increase in the provision of child care services matched with policies (media campaigns and programmes in schools and child care services to discuss gender roles) to incentivate the active role of men in care work in order to balance the presence of men and women in care work with a positive spillover on gender equality in the capability of work.

Before the crisis a survey directed to a sample of households living in Modena (an Italian town in one of the Northern Italian regions more characterized by higher women's employment rates and presence of child care services) revealed that 35% of interviewed women and 29% of men did face work life balance problems (Addabbo, Baldini, 2005). However when it came to envisage policies that would have allowed them a better balance, around 50% of men and women suggested a decrease in paid working time as a first policy to be enacted to improve work life balance. Interest-

ingly enough 30% of fathers did require more flexible paid working time and 13% of mothers, whereas around 12% of fathers and 14% of mothers require a change in the opening times of services and shops. Rather in line with the unequal distribution of time that characterizes also double earners couples living in Modena 22% of women and 8% of men facing work-life balance problems would require a decrease in unpaid work to reach a better work life balance (Figure 7, and Addabbo, 2005).

Table 5. **CHILDREN 0-2 YEARS OLD ATTENDING CHILD CARE SERVICES IN 2012**

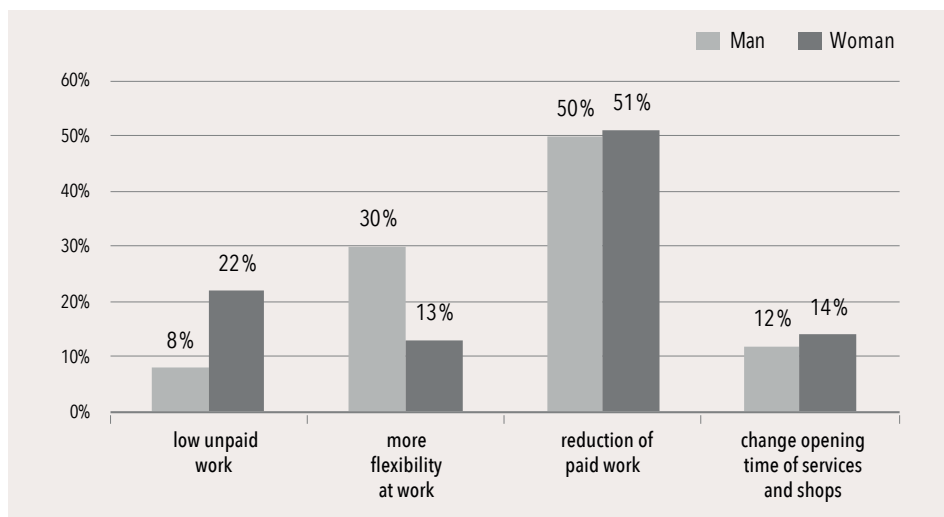
	%
Piemonte	12,8
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	16,7
Liguria	13,7
Lombardia	14,7
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	15,1
Bolzano/Bozen	10,3
Trento	19,9
Veneto	9,9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	13,8
Emilia-Romagna	24,8
Toscana	19,6
Umbria	13,9
Marche	15,8
Lazio	16,8
Abruzzo	8,7
Molise	10,3
Campania	2,0
Puglia	4,1
Basilicata	6,9
Calabria	2,1
Sicilia	5,4
Sardegna	11,7
Italy	14,2

Source: Our elaborations from ISTAT metadata.

Work-life balance problems at national levels extend with the crisis in fact, with respect to 2005 when 38,6% of new mothers (18-21 months since child-birth) did state to have work-life balance difficulties in their workplace in 2012 (the last Italian National Statistics Institute survey on New Mothers) new mothers showing difficulties in work-life balance were around 43% and 1 out of 4 is no longer employed

(Istat, 2015). The increase in the number of formerly working mothers who are not any longer employed after childbirth took place in Italy especially amongst women living in the South of Italy and amongst the less educated women (Istat, 2014).

Figure 7. **STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE WORK LIFE BALANCE DOUBLE EARNERS HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN MODENA PERCEIVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE PROBLEMS**



Source: Our elaborations from Survey on Income and living conditions of households living in Modena.

Moreover, fiscal austerity undertaken during the crisis is bound to exacerbate the observed gender gap in employment rates by reducing the supply of child care services or social services with the results of slowing down further employment rates and increasing the burden of care work on women.

The recognition of gender imbalances in the distribution of paid and unpaid work activities is at the basis of the application of well-being gender budgets to the analysis of the development of the capability of work addressing the impact of public policies.

The role of public policies in enhancing public child care services is essential in allowing, in a context of very unequal distribution of care work (with women having the main responsibility and burden in terms of hours of care and domestic work as reminded also in Section 3) by gender, women to develop other capabilities (including also paid work).

Policies that can allow to develop carers' capability of paid work and, given that women are the main carer in the context analysed, can directly affect women's work capability, can be found in the availability of parental leave on a hourly basis introduced in Italy in 2015 (Addabbo, Cardinali, Giovannini, and Mazzucchelli, 2016),

this opportunity by making more flexible the use of the leave for the employee can better allow continuity in work and, given the reduced amount of time on leave, can incentivate fathers (who are heavily under represented amongst parents who take the parental leave) in taking them given the shorter interruption in their working activity with a subsequent lower gender imbalance in the distribution of care work.

Actually, as shown by Hobson *et al.* (2011), in Sweden where parental leaves are not only more generous (in terms of percentage of former carer's wage) but also highly flexible (since the parent can take even just half a day of parental leave) fathers' take up of leaves is higher.

However more should be done also in terms of the design of parental leave in Italy to incentivate fathers' take up by changing the very design of the leave and increasing its generosity with respect to former carer's pay.

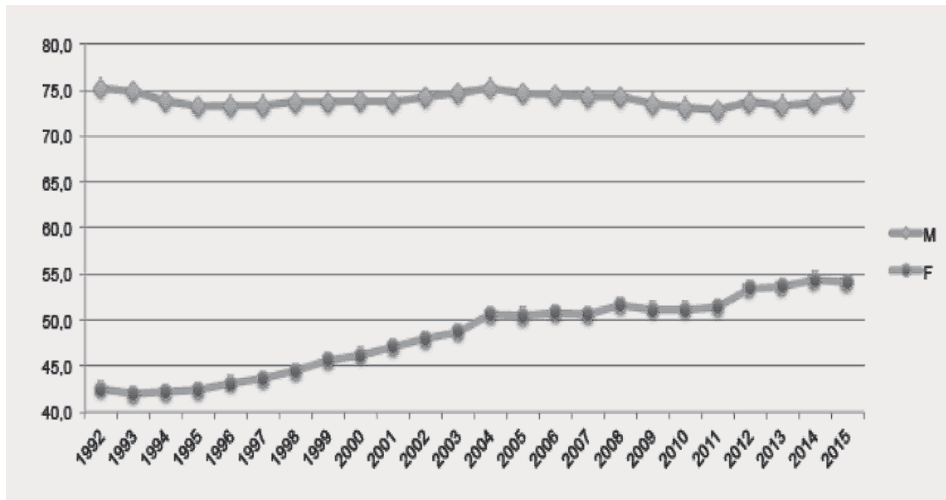
While planning public policies it is necessary to make more visible not only the different contribution of women and men to reproduction (by promoting the measurement of the intra-household distribution of unpaid working activities and its visibility in public accounting) but also the role played by firms in the contribution to social reproduction. This important point is stressed by Silvia Macchi and Angela D'Orazio (2009, p.199) in their well-being gender budget analysis of the District of Rome Urban Plan and on the Italian National Statistical Office (ISTAT) classification of the firms located in the analysed context. According to ISTAT firms are classified on the basis of their prevalent value added sector of production but no information and classification is provided on the social reproduction provision (in terms of kindergarten, work place canteen, housing, gym...). This, as stressed by Macchi and D'Orazio, is limiting the knowledge of the context in terms of the social reproduction mapping of the urban context and the design of tailored public policies. Moreover, as Macchi & D'Orazio show, the hypothesis at the basis of the Urban plan that they analyse is equality in needs and in tastes by inhabitants living in that area with the implications of resulting in a myopic planning of activities:

«The context report does not provide fundamental information to public actors. It says nothing on when and on how people address their basic services demand, neither on their level of satisfaction, nor on their strategies to overcome the obstacles related to limited access to services and what implications these limits and strategies have on women and men's life» (Macchi and D'Orazio, 2009: 200).¹

In their application D'Orazio and Macchi (2009) show how to implement a Care Urban Plan to be overlapped to the Urban Plan solely based on the paid work activities to better address public policies devoted to improve work-life balance, to better locate the services and invest in public transport and in addressing mobility.

¹ Our translation from Italian.

Figure 8. **ACTIVITY RATES BY GENDER IN ITALY.**
PEOPLE AGED 15 TO 64 FROM 1992 TO 2015



Source: Our elaborations from Eurostat metadata.

Public policies should be aware of the gender inequalities in the access to the labour market and, in the conversion of capabilities into functionings, should take into account the different characteristics of women and men looking for a job. As shown in Figure 8, since 2011 an increase in women's activity rate took place in Italy however this increase was related to the entry into the labour force during the crisis of women over 40 with a low level of education who tried to return to paid work after years of detachment. Public services devoted to match labour supply and demand should be particularly careful when facing a woman whose characteristics (lower education and lower attachment to paid work) expose her to a greater risk of not finding a job or of returning to 'inactivity'.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have focussed on the capability of work in a context (Italy) that is characterized by a high inequality in the measurable indicators of this capability. Public policies can be effective in enabling women's access to paid work and the development of this capability in the interaction with other relevant dimensions of well-being that appear to be connected to the development of the work capability as long as they are able to make visible and to address the observed inequalities in the distribution of unpaid work by gender. Not only policies with a direct effect on women's employment may play a role in improving gender equality in the development of working capabilities: fiscal austerity reducing access to public child care and social services increases gender inequalities in the development of working capabili-

ties and, as shown in the application of well-being gender budgeting to the analysis of the Urban plan in Rome district, the very classification of activities in a Urban Plan without taking into account the contribution to care by firms and public institutions are bound to reproduce the observed gender inequalities and to negatively impact on the human development of the area.

The application of the capability approach to the evaluation of the impact of policies within a feminist economics framework allows to disentangle the effects of public policies on the unequal development of different dimensions of well-being and on their interaction. Focusing on the capability of work, awareness of gender inequalities in the distribution of time and in the development of paid work and unpaid work activities by gender allows to take a different perspective in the evaluation of public policies.

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