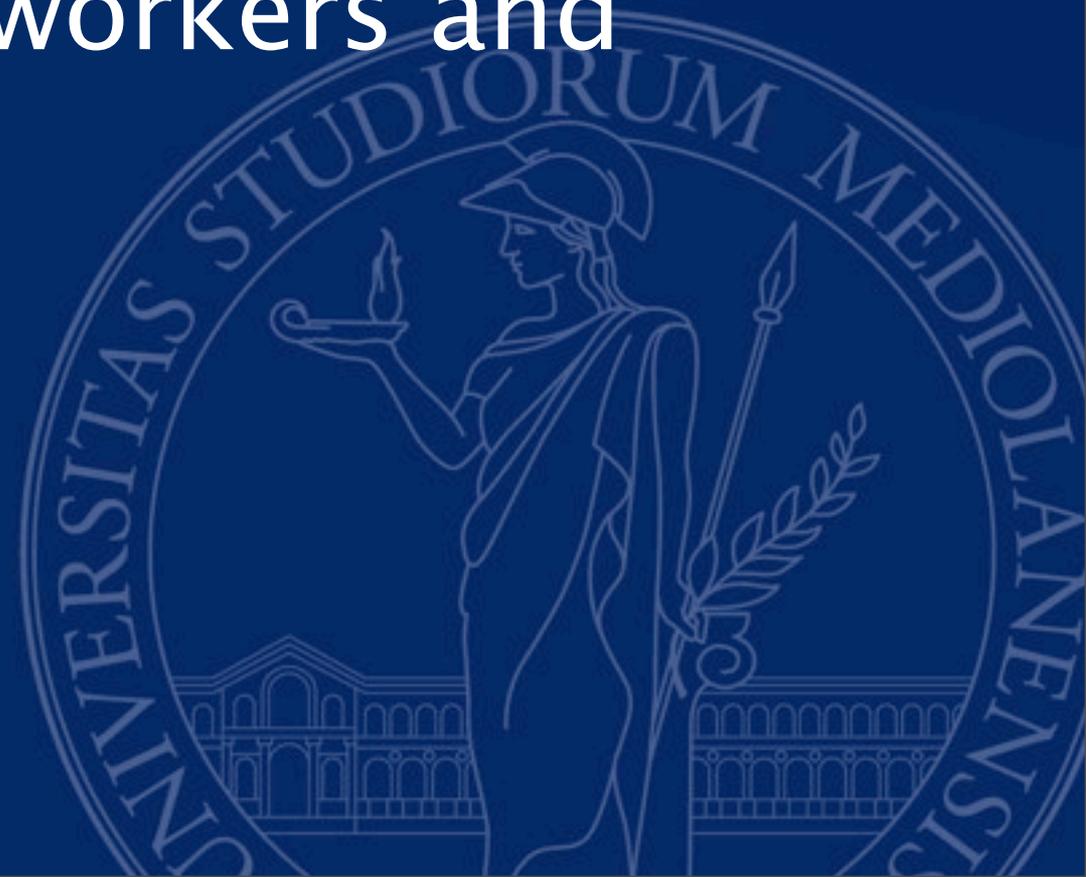




UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

DIPARTIMENTO DI  
SCIENZE SOCIALI E POLITICHE

# Living-in careworkers and homelessness



# The Italian case: irregular immigration and invisible welfare

- In Italy, as in other countries, a huge number of immigrants are employed as domestic workers, baby-sitters or carers of the elderly in Italian families (officially 700–800,000, in reality probably more than one million)
- The families, as employers, have been the main actors of the regularization processes: 7 amnesties in 25 years
- When it comes to women engaged in household chores and care, the unwritten rule is almost that of a generalized tolerance.
- One could say that they are not politically treated, nor socially perceived as illegal immigrants



# States and irregular

- The “three hands” of the receiving States: 1) they create the conditions for the demand: subcontracting, flexibilization, reduction of welfare provisions, etc.; 2) they declare to want to stop illegal immigration; 3) they regularize undocumented migrants (specially in the care sector)
- The irregular condition as a dynamic social construction, where different actors and structural forces are involved.
- See: M.Ambrosini, Irregular migration and invisible welfare, Palgrave–MacMillan 2013; or: M.Ambrosini, Immigrazione irregolare e welfare invisibile. il lavoro di cura attraverso le



# Ressources for surviving in the home care sector (1)

- Networks
- Work
- The assertion of social utility
- Involvement in familiar relationships
- Support from the solidarity institutions



# Ressources for surviving in the home care sector (2)

- Access to some public services
- Lack of effectiveness of the repressive apparatus and expectation to acquire a legal status
- Love ties and marriage alliances
- Caring and fronting
- Reverse remittances: the support from the left behind families



# Carework and homelessness

- Living-in careworkers find a roof in employers' households, but they do not find a home
- Lacking a private life and private spaces, distant from their family, is one of the biggest problems they have to face
- When they miss their job, as a rule they miss also their accommodation



# Responding to homelessness

- Three strategies:
- 1) to recreate a home in employers' house
- 2) to establish a kind of “familiar” relationship with their employers
- 3) to project their aspirations towards the homeland



# To recreate a home in employers'

- Careworkers often arrange their room or the angle where they have their bed, putting on show pictures of their family, religious symbols, banners, typical products.
- “For domestic live-in workers, whose work and privacy spaces often collide, a display of pictures from home often demarcates an asylum of what is really ‘theirs’, occupying a limited space on a shelf or bedside table (...) When the living space coincides with a workplace, these pictures together with all other objects are placed in such spaces on the basis of one criterion: they all mean home” (Fedyuk 2012: 286).



# To establish a kind of “familiar” relationship with

- Often employers declare to see their careworker as a member of their family: it is a situation fraught with ambiguities, but not without its advantages
- Many careworkers appreciate this friendly relationship: the employers’ house becomes a little bit more their own home
- The extreme case are love affairs and marriages



# To project their aspirations towards the homeland

- To invest to build or to buy a house in the homeland
- To travel back and forth: pendular migrations, jobs shared with relatives or co-nationals
- Caring at a distance their children, but in close contact



# Some ideas for policies

- To support family reunification, search for new jobs, search for affordable houses
- To support immigrant careworkers in managing transnational families: free internet points, IT training, consulting for educational problems
- To create transitional houses for unemployed careworkers
- To supply meeting points and social

