

***A way out o the gender-class inequality trade-off?***

***A longitudinal analysis of gender and class inequality in the labour market between different institutional contexts.***

*Paolo Barbieri, Giorgio Cutuli, Anna Zamberlan*

**Research question(s):**

In the last years, we assisted to a growing attention to the concept of gender equality, accompanied, in some national contexts, by policy measures explicitly aimed at enhancing its level. Particular attention has been paid on differences in labour market outcomes between men and women. Different labour market returns, indeed, are likely to translate into differences in life opportunities in several fronts: material wellbeing, social mobility, cultural and social capital, health, marital and fertility choices. This makes it necessary to understand what the determinants of differences in labour market outcomes are. In particular, we are interested in two specific outcomes, namely occupational prestige and income. These variables allow us to investigate both the perceptual and the actual economic components of inequality.

Several studies have underlined the fact that women are less likely to be part of the labor force and, when they are employed, they usually have jobs that are less economically rewarding and in lower positions than those of their male counterpart. The rising amount of public policies targeted to increase gender equality was expected to have a positive impact on female labour market outcomes. Nonetheless, there is extensive evidence that these macro-level changes are likely to influence in a different way men and women of different socioeconomic classes. In other words, gender and class appear to be two crucial and interacting determinants of outcomes in the labour market.

The aim of this analysis is to investigate longitudinal changes in terms of gender and class equality, as well as in their relationship, in European labour markets. Some scholars (e.g. Prince Cooke, 2011) have argued that gender and class equality are in an inescapable trade-off between each other. The consequence is that the state would be forced to deal with a “classical” issue of equality-efficiency trade-off, being eventually unable to make gender and class inequality decrease at the same time. On the contrary, the extensive literature on welfare and political economy regimes (see Esping-Andersen 1990; Hall and Soskice, 2001) underlines the role of the institutional setting in redefining such possible trade-off.

All this considered, our research questions are:

- Is there evidence of a trade-off between gender and class equality in European labour markets? In other words, does pursuing higher levels of gender equality in society (via targeted public policies) come at the cost of more class inequality (also within the same gender) - and vice-versa? Should we accept the fact that gender equal policies or pro-gender

measures end up favouring high class women's career chances, thus representing a new form of social inequality within and between genders?

- Do institutions (specifically, welfare and political economy regimes) play a role in redefining such possible trade-off? Are there contexts in which gender and class inequality have simultaneously decreased over time? What policies are better tailored to skip the gender-class equality trade-off and to reduce social inequality in western societies?

### **Hypotheses:**

At the micro level, we expect gender and class to significantly influence the considered labour market outcomes in all the studied countries. We also hypothesize macro-level changes in terms of gender equality to have an impact on the studied labour market outcomes, as well as on the relative effect of gender and class as explanatory variables.

For what the trade-off between gender and class equality is concerned, we do not reject the possibility to find evidence, in some contexts, supporting its existence.

Nonetheless, we expect this possible trade-off not to be fixed over time and to significantly differ depending on the institutional context. In particular, a simultaneous decrease in both gender and class inequality is expected in contexts characterised by public (welfare state) policies aimed both at relieving citizens from family responsibilities (defamilialization) and at making them independent from the labour market (decommodification).

### **Methods:**

A descriptive, comparative examination of labour market outcomes of men and women of different socioeconomic classes represents a useful starting point for the investigation of gender and class inequality in context and over time. In order to properly investigate the issue, comparisons are performed both within countries over time and between countries.

Further, panel analyses (with both fixed- and random-effects models) predicting occupational prestige and income are performed. Gender and socioeconomic class are used as the main explanatory variables. Moreover, macro-level indexes capturing different dimensions of gender equality are included in the models, in order to test the effect of changes in terms of gender equality on actual labour market outcomes, as well as to investigate their impact on the explanatory power of gender and class.

### **Dataset(s):**

EU-SILC cross-sectional and longitudinal data (2004-2015) are used for the construction of the main dataset (following the technical suggestions of Borst, 2018) for the inferential analyses; LFS data are used for the construction of macro-level indicators of labor force participation of different social and occupational groups; pooled EVS-WVS and ESS data are used for the construction of a macro-level index of gender equity (i.e. attitudes towards gender roles); ESS data are also used to check the modal values of occupational categories in order to correctly translate 2-digit ISCO codes (as found in EU-SILC data) into ESeC classes and SIOPS values; OECD and publicly available macro-level Eurostat data are used for the construction of other macro-level indicators of gender equality.

**Analysed countries:**

Austria, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

**Preliminary findings:**

Our preliminary findings confirm that the interaction between gender and socioeconomic class significantly predicts, net of observable characteristics of individuals and their households, occupational prestige and relative income.

By predicting the margins of such interaction in different countries, we also found significant differences between macro-level contexts with regard to the width of the gender gap inside each socioeconomic class. This represents a first evidence of the importance of the institutional setting for the study of gender and class inequality.

At present, we are working on the construction of macro-level indexes of gender equality. The introduction of a first draft of them in our inferential models suggests their significance in predicting both occupational prestige and income.