Joint Seminar

Work less, help out more? The persistence of gender inequality in housework and childcare during COVID-19

Thursday, 24 September, 2 PM
Sala Archeologica, Department of Sociology and Social Research, Via G. Verdi 26, Trento.

Chair:
• Mario Diani (Director, Dept Sociology and Social Research)

Speakers:
• Anna Zamberlan (Doctoral Candidate in Sociology and Social Research)
• Filippo Gioachin (Doctoral Candidate in Sociology and Social Research)
• Davide Gritti (Doctoral Candidate in Sociology and Social Research)

Discussants:
• Gabriella Berloffa (Dipartimento Economia e Managment)
• Luca Piccoli (Dipartimento Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale)

Abstract
This contribution documents the consequences of UK COVID-19 lockdown on the gendered division of unpaid labour within heterosexual couples. The paper examines the impact of changes in working hours on gender inequality in time devoted to housework and childcare. We evaluate competing hypotheses derived from time availability, relative resources, and “doing gender” perspectives, drawing on wave 9 of UKHLS and the first wave of Understanding Society Covid-19 study. Following the literature on the gendered division of unpaid labour, we account for heterogeneous implications by comparing couples with different partners’ relative contributions to household labour income. By adopting a counterfactual design, we provide empirical results indicating a stronger commitment to domestic chores (housework and childcare) for both men and women losing working hours. Nevertheless, this more rational and gender-neutral allocation of time does not rule entirely out gender inequality, which strikes back in female breadwinner families following a reduction of working hours for women. Overall, the paper provides insights on how theories of gender inequality in the division of domestic tasks could benefit from research on labour market shocks.

People willing to attend should write to davide.gritti@unitn.it in order to make a list of participants