

# **Work Inequalities between Global Transformation and Local Embedment. The Case of FIAT-Chrysler and the New Course at Melfi's Factory**

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## **Abstract**

Starting from an ethnographic longitudinal study on the Fiat-Sata Factory in Melfi (Italy - PZ), this paper focuses on the local change of production and work, due to the recent transformation of Fiat into the Fiat-Chrysler global enterprise (D'Aloisio 2003; 2014). The sense and the value of work for the local workers in the new global scene, where Melfi is now situated, with the unavoidable entailed changes, represent a relevant anthropological issue. Indeed, new (and old) inequalities need to be discussed: the local reduction of the production (from 2011 to 2014 with resort to income assistance) and then the recent organizational change, both comprised into the neoliberal processes of global transformation (of work and market) that increase insecurity and faster changes in the workers' life. This led us to question ourselves on the new role of classes (if we can use this term yet), and their re-configuration within a new geography of jobs (Moretti 2012, Marsh 2012), time after time established by different economic processes in different locations (based on new indicators and resources).

From the perspective of industrial anthropology (Selim 1991, Papa 1999, Mollona De Neve Parry 2009), we can analyze some local characteristics (such as the role of trade unions, the strong attachment to the work, the strong disposition to the sacrifices), and the livelihood strategies (Narotzky 1997), which have been able to contribute to and support the new production, to constitute new possible attractors and maintain the local site in the new global geography, with its new forms of embeddedness and local fittings.

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### **Melfi restarts with FCA (FIAT Chrysler Automobile). The new course**

In March 2015 a video appeared on the web and *Youtube*, coming from the FIAT-Sata factory in Melfi. It began as an object of several clicks and then ricocheted to all national media. The video is titled “Happy from Melfi”, and shows the local car factory metal and white collar workers, engaged in a funky dance, to the music of the hit song by Pharrel Williams, the famous American singer.

The metalworkers, in their new white suits trimmed with blue, roaming among the departments of the factory, boogying and jiving, passing through the wide corridors of the production areas, holding equipment for assembly, gloves for quality control, and someone bringing on production cards with indications for work; we can see in the background the assembly line, metalworkers next to car chassis, handling pieces to be assembled, tools for assembly, surrounded by mechanical arms; we can also see offices and desks, where several white collar workers are dancing and even the Director of the factory, dressed in his dark suit and tie participates in the dance video, standing up close to his desk, piled with papers. The video finishes with a dancing parade, just in front of the flowerbeds with the inscription “Sata”.

The video, that was broadcasted for some days by the most important national TV stations, establishes and advertises the return of production in Melfi, with the two new car models that FCA proposed for Melfi (Jeep Renegade and 500 X), and so the end of the long period of “cassa integrazione” (layoff period with reduced wages), that has affected the factory since Autumn 2011 to Spring 2015. Three long years of “cassa integrazione”, with a working week of only three days out of six, a steep reduction in salaries, a progressive impoverishment of Melfi and the surrounding areas with a widespread worry on the fate of the local factory that, together with allied industries, provides work for about 10,000 workers.

The resumption of the car production at Melfi is supported by important changes concerning FIAT Auto and the local factory: first, in January 2014, the conclusion of the international merger with American Chrysler, and the foundation of a new multi-national group FCA (Berta 2011, Volpato 2011), followed by the restructuring of the factory begun in Spring 2014 and ending at the end of the same year, eliminating one of the two assembly lines, complete fit out for the production of the two new car models, one of them for the US market; and finally, in March 2015, the recruitment of about 1,000 new young metalworkers, with short term contracts for six months.

In this way the factory has “shed it's skin”, as a Trade Union member told me, with a extensive renovation of: the production plant, job contracts, work organisation. Immediately after the release and the diffusion of the video, the recruitment began. It was administered by private agencies in Melfi, without the support of the local public job centre, and the positions

were designated, on one hand to young people up to 30 years old, holding only school qualifications, and on the other to university graduates without age limit. At the end of the short term contract (August 2015), almost all the workers were reconfirmed with new contracts in accordance to the new regulations of the so-called "Jobs Act" (by the current Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi), a new regime of work contracts based on increasing safeguards.

Two issues, typical of our times, have to be focused on: the new recruitments and their effects on the area; the new work and union order, established in the factory since the new production phase. Both these issues have helped us to understand the direction and the effects of the "skin change" operated by the plant, and the way in which the current trends are connected with the global change in the car business and market, and overall where we position the local metalworkers and the local plant in this scenario.

Ethnography, meanwhile, allows us understand how the macro-changes of the enterprise really declines in the life horizons for the workers, the new sense of work, the daily life of the pawns (the protagonists of these processes) are embodied on the global chessboard of labour and enterprise.

But before all of this, we have to outline some focus points regarding the anthropological perspective on the enterprise and on the current crisis, and its specificity in analysing and understanding the anthropological core of the ongoing change in work systems and their aftermaths on social subjects.

### **Anthropology and industrial change. Theoretical issues and research questions**

Only recently Anthropology has approached the issue of industrial work. Beginning in the 1990s, some anthropologists such as Sélim and Althabe begin to outline an idea of enterprise as a special observatory of the intersection between global processes and local practices; yet in 2000 Sélim observed that enterprise and work were fields disregarded by the majority of anthropologists, in need of a more precise theoretical definition (Sélim 1996, 2000). At the same time she drew attention to the need to distance from the American business anthropology, opting for positioning these studies totally in current anthropology: from this point of view, enterprises are considered as elective places for studying economic and political processes of global change. Also from the scholar come some fundamental methodological indications, since, as we all know, access to enterprise and the possibility to observe from within is never easy, and causes difficulties to the intent of the participative methodology goals of the anthropological approach. According to Sélim, inside enterprise the anthropological attention has to be directed to the "social field" of enterprise and its basic function

of a crystallisation matrix of tensions and the objectives of the protagonists. However, at the same time, we need to walk away from enterprise and observe its players from the outside, “during the construction of their existence”, that is, in her perspective, the original focus of anthropological research: only this approach, in fact, allows the anthropologist to connect different areas of life and research related (in and out of enterprise), while it allows him/her to avoid a total assimilation into the internal hierarchies and, I would like to add, their ideology (Sélim 2000, pp. 70 -71).

More recently Mollona, in his book *Industrial work and Life* (2009), remarked the importance of the anthropological approach and the ethnographic methodology for studying industry, for its ability to describe small issues, internal to work processes, but also because, at the same time, enterprise and its changes place weighty questions about global assets: first the new characteristics of the industrial models, always more distant from a single Western core, but rather moving towards trajectories with several centres and peripheries, forcing us to abandon the idea of a global convergence; second, he raises the issue of the end of the totalising and encompassing ideology of modernisation, that is “the crisis of the Western ideal of industrial democracy” (Mollona 2009, p. XXI).

As the scholar underlines, the non-western countries, a traditional focus of anthropological research, are already characterised from industrial economies; in addition, we can say, we are able to explain the change of industrial work in western countries only in the interconnection between western and non-western production, through the increasing circulation of workers and new typology of know-how. It is true especially for enterprises that have transited from a national to a multi-national organisation (i.e. FIAT). The increasing change of work characteristics, such as the increase of working hours, the cognitive specialisation and the strong precariousness, call for new reflections on the relationship between work and democracy<sup>1</sup>: analysis on the new shape of work compared with social life, at private and public levels, on the redefinition of the labour rights, on the fronts of factory negotiations increasingly difficult and damaging to the rights of workers.

In Italy, where anthropological perspectives on enterprise has a sort of tardiness, a special focalisation comes from Papa, who in the late 90s in an examination of different approaches, underlined the necessity to make this field a proper field in which to study, like other social sciences, the globalisation processes and their characteristics. Remembering the limits and the precautions in managing concepts like “global” and “local”, due to the risk of reification and polarisation, the scholar thinks cultural anthropology has to take into account the increasingly rapid interrelationship of information,

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<sup>1</sup> The first article of the Italian Constitution, states: «Italy is a Republic founded on work».

people and capital, starting from the local context typical of the ethnographic approach, because it is in these contexts where it is possible “to seize new connections and establish new differences” (Papa 1999, p. 64).

The study of enterprise and work, in the case-study object of this paper, ranks in the general framework of the economic crisis which has been hitting the United States and Europe since 2008. Apart from the analysis of the crisis, out of the competence and the possibility of this paper, it is important to remember that, according to many analysts of social sciences, it is nonetheless the result of a huge growth, which occurred in recent decades, the financial capitalism and its detachment from the real economy (Gallino 2013). The current phase of crisis has shaken the basic ideas of global neo-liberalism, or rather the principle that markets regulate themselves was the best way to achieve human aspiration, relegating states and politics within levels of lower influence. The crisis and its effect have not produced a collapse of neo-liberalism, but on the contrary it has been strengthened, accomplished exactly by the countries more affected by the crisis, this is the interesting thesis by Colin Crouch, useful to compare in the study-case of Melfi car factory (Crouch 2012).

Within this charge of neo-liberalism, a central role is covered by work and its configuration: from the principle of work as a right, sanctioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, it appears increasingly as an achievement, obtained starting from personal force, released from the old certainties of stability, sufficient income to ensure a dignified life, goals of satisfaction and gratification. Faced with the ongoing macroeconomic and global processes, the role of Anthropology stands, in S. Narotzky's perspective, in the exploration of current relationships between work and capital, embedded in local cultures. Therefore, ethnography is able to explore syncretic adaptations of the dominant models of the relationship work/capital, giving account of a wider kaleidoscope of the different declination of capitalism in local forms (Narotzky 1997). Overall, Anthropology is able to analyse, from the bottom, the strategies the subjects activate to remould their work and themselves in new working conditions, re-sketching needs, opportunities, adjustments that allow them to organise their lives with new conditions.

The main focus in this paper, with an ethnographic approach, during several research periods over 15 years, is to analyse the way in which the crisis has changed the meaning of work in Melfi, the sense the workers attribute to it after the crisis, the strategies they enact to readapt themselves to the new forms of work. Finally, enlarging our view to the global scene of work, we have to ask ourselves: what position will the Melfi factory and its workers take, and also are taking, in the new inequalities of the current capitalistic system?

## **Work representations in Melfi from the crisis to today. Forms of work and global insecurity for old and new metalworkers.**

Ethnography of work in Melfi<sup>2</sup>, held outside the factory, is composed by two different research periods: first from 1999 to 2002, years full of production and intensive work, then starting from 2011, when the factory began the decline of its production and resorting to layoffs. From Autumn 2011 the working week was reduced from six to three days a week, and it has continuing until January 2014, when the C.E.O. Sergio Marchionne announced the launch of two new car models and the use of a new period of “cassa integrazione” (reduced salary and working hours) for restructuring.

The work reduction, compared with the intense rhythms which had characterised the factory in the past, did not result immediately in concerns among the workers: with the productivity higher in Europe and the shifts never experimented before (Saturday work and night shift on Sunday) the metalworkers of Melfi (all of them had began working there before the age of 32 years old) had already experienced, during twenty years, strong physical problems, such as diseases related to work and reduced earning capacity. Moreover, the general climate and the strong media news about crisis allowed them to think that sooner or later it would be their turn to draw on “cassa integrazione”, in Autumn 2011. At the same time, the crisis also represented the first moment to take stock, to try to understand what was really changing inside the factory:

As I see it, many things are changing, and they have already changed because there is a crisis upstream, it almost seems as if we have to accept everything because of the crisis. This is the thing that perhaps should not be (...) In my opinion because we have a large crisis Marchionne is doing different politics, against the unions, because, all in all, if the unions are there or not, people say: why do I have to stay in the union? I can't defend myself, I can defend nothing, you can defend your job if it stands here. But if there is no work, what can you do? (Luana, age 46, secondary school education, works in production engineering, married without children, employed in 1993; interview October 2011)

Later, urged to talk about what the factory really gave the neighbouring towns and what the local community has received in terms of changes, Luana speaks explicitly of a missed opportunity:

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2 The ethnographic research was conducted in the first phase (of participant observation and in-depth interviews) from 1999 to 2002; the second phase, also including a longitudinal ethnography and sampling, from Autumn 2011 to the end of 2014. The final phase of in-depth interviews (Summer 2015) includes the small group of the younger generation metalworkers, hired a few months before my fieldwork.

Yes, we have missed an opportunity. We have missed an opportunity because, considering we are now almost... I don't want to say we are in a declining phase, but today the crisis commands, the opportunity of integrating with the territory has been missed. Furthermore we are also afraid, we are here, us, allied industrials and FIAT, we are 10.000 workers alone. If we want to repair the tarmac on the road, often we have to ask the unions, even if we know we have a consortium called ASI which has to take care of the industrial areas. (...) In this Region we have had a big opportunity, because a stable salary automatically means secured taxes for the Region and State, there is a whole turnover producing tranquillity. Instead now many people are saying: if the factory closes soon, I want to understand where it will go to produce... (Luana, age 46)

Luana expresses, by herself and in a more diffused opinion, a primary concern on well known processes, such as delocalisation of the production, but also possibility of business setups. During those years, from 2011 to 2014, many urban legends circulated not only on new company structure but also on its international connections: the corporate merger with Chrysler had not yet been concluded but the dark side of the industrial plan was pumping more fanciful hypotheses of the Melfi plant being bought by several foreign companies. Metalworkers and unionists, on and off, retold the possibility of the plant being bought by the Toyota Company, for others by Volkswagen. The latter, according to the locals, would establish some local production sectors there, precisely due to the high productivity of the workers and the advanced technologies, the jewels of the Melfi plant.

As usual, urban legends are an example of oral narrations, very interesting from an anthropological point of view because in their contents, and also in their format *di bocca in bocca* (by word of mouth), they draw inspiration from real events and mix them with symbolic and mythic elements (Bonato 2004). So they take a syncretic form of realism and mythmaking with an important task of containing the anxieties, of reassurance and indicating pedagogical lines to manage problematic events and situations.

To understand better the meaning that work has had for metalworkers during the long phase of reduced working hours and its outcomes, we have to compare its value at the startup of the plant in 1993, and twenty years later, when for two long years it continued its dark phase: dark because, we have to remember, the absence of information by the managers on the industrial plan and the conditions of the international crisis made it impossible to make predictions about the near future, and even more on the long-term future.

The arrival of FIAT at Melfi was greeted as a revolutionary event able to raise an economically depressed area, that had never had a real industrialisation, with very high rates of unemployment and migration (D'Aloisio 2003).

The sense of the recruitment in FIAT, for the lucky ones who were hired in 1993 and 1994, was such as an existential turnabout, compared to a very contrary past. The memory of mostly rural origin households, characterised by toil and hardship, and also the old workers previous work experience, characterised by precariousness and moonlighting, finally the uselessness of higher education (a high percentage of the unemployed are graduates), no longer expendable for public employment (which is now a totally saturated labour sector), and work in the construction industrial exhausted: all this draws an overall scenario of nonexistent opportunities (Leonardi, Nanetti 2010)<sup>3</sup>.

From this point of view working in FIAT, was seen as a secure job, protected and guaranteed by the old image of the historical *Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino*, it was a launching pad from which to finally build a future programmable: buying a home, marriage, children, the path which had characterised most of the old workers.

As we can understand from the words of Luana, the situation, during the years of crisis and layoffs, is totally different, and it opens to a bleak future, of which the metalworkers are becoming more aware. The first effect is the deterioration of living conditions:

Here we are doing more and more “cassa integrazione”: this month we will work only seven days, three days a week for two weeks, and then two weeks at home, while in December we will work only eleven days. Then we will do “cassa” (stop) from 23<sup>th</sup> December to 9<sup>th</sup> January. And we think, rather we know, that the stops will increase. Unfortunately, as the situation is now, we must abandon many things by the side of the road. Last year I took my little girl to ballet school, because she had a problem with her feet, with a bit of ballet it should be corrected ok. Then it was, forty euros a month: there was the insurance, then another forty euros because I had to buy the tutu. This year I didn't take her, because for the first month it would have cost 110 euros. With my present situation, how can I possibly afford to take her to ballet school? What can I cut back on? I need to put food on the table for all my family, of course I want to cut back on my personal expenses, but that's the most I can do! I can't make any other sacrifices for my child. (Giovanni, age 44, secondary school education, worker on the assembly line, married with a daughter, employed in 1993; interview November 2012)

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3 Yet in 2010 the study of Leonardi and Nanetti on the relationship between institutions and regional development in Basilicata Region documents a local labour market that does not offer adequate opportunities to the residents that, progressively, have completed an ever higher training, with the consequences of increasing migration of educated young people. In 2007, as reported by the authors, the youth employment rate (15-24 years) was 31.4%, slightly lower than in the South (32.3), but well above the national average (20.3, Istat 2007) (Leonardi, Nanetti 2010, pp. 85-86).

The daily narrowness and the end of a certain well-being consolidated in previous years are the first tangible facts deriving from the new work situation: no more certainties, therefore, no longer peace, but worry, also anxiety, heightened by the lucid awareness of the total impossibility to make predictions about future. The global crisis, in recent years, makes predictions difficult for a future scenario of the work situation, and this generates more consciousness of a personal position of solitude, also due to the impossibility to act on these large and uncontrollable processes, from which the workers' futures strictly depend: this situation recalls the concept of insecurity described by Bauman (2000), in which the rampant flexibility, the new typology of job contracts, the increasing risk of business failure redefine the perception that human subjects have of themselves and their status in the world.

As Standing describes, neo-liberal precariousness also extends its effects on salaried workers, until recently considered "stable": they may discover - he argues - they have lost their jobs because the company in which they work has been bought out or because it has become part of a broader restructuring, or because of relocation or outsourcing of some productive sectors can suddenly reconfigure roles and tasks, and with them all the job roles. It's the process Standing calls "commitment", from which the commitment-relationship traditionally established between the workers and their company falls, leading to a loss of cognitive and emotional investments, that increases the condition of precariousness (Standing 2011). To this process we have to add the so-called re-commitment of work, typical of every recession, through a continuous search for additional flexibility: flexibility that requires working relationships to be totally dependent on the law of supply and demand, based on the offer price (the wage), with the result of introducing other types of precariousness, not only reducible to job security, but also to the downturn wage (Standing 2011, pp. 56-57). Similarly, Sennet has remarked the dark consequences of the increasing fragmentation of work experience, not only on individual personality, but also connected with the impossibility to maintain a long-term goal in the frame of a society with a more and more short-term organisation (Sennet 1999).

To understand better, however, what forms uncertainty can take, it is useful to analyse the forms of labour in the contemporary stage, i.e. from February 2015, when the phase of restructuring was completed and production of the two new models had already started, welcomed by the market with some enthusias<sup>4</sup>. The publicity video described in the first part of this paper

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4 The models produced since 2014 are: Jeep Renegade, destined mainly for the US market, and the 500 X. We have to remember that in January 2014, FIAT signed a merger with Chrysler and the US took on a multinational structure, while in the summer of the same year the registered legal office was moved to Holland, closing the long Italian season of

ranks in this stage, and reflects the full return to work of all the workers, and also the recruitment of around a thousand new young workers, that took place in March with a fixed short term contract, according to the increasing current contract safeguards (approved in December 2014).

To enter into the new meaning of work, at the stage where the company returns to full capacity production, cars on the market are good proposals and the news of new recruitment increases, also for other Italian plants, it is good to use as example two extracts, one by a worker of the older generation, who was in the factory from the beginning and has gone through all the phases of the crisis, and another one by a young worker, who started work in March with the new recruits. The first one, Antonio, 45, worker on the assembly line, says:

My impression, as a worker, is that there is no enthusiasm, to say ... well, let's do this thing all together, so we improve, we make a better car. Unfortunately this is not true, although I have the impression that some workers are now maturing. Because when we began we were kids, sometimes rebellious, the disappointment in many workers has produced an aversion to FIAT, to the car. I think that we are changing a little for the better, in the sense that we have become more aware that it isn't FIAT the real problem, but our jobs. So strangely you have to know what can happen, the workers are more interested in working for the quality of the product. More than our leaders are, they are really interested only in numbers. (...) No, there isn't competition in the company: why should there be competition? There could be competition if at the end of the month who worked more or better could take home a bonus, a prize, or whatever ... We have a performance award that is always given to the same three or four people ... When we entered in the factory we had big hopes, after almost twenty years, I don't have prospects of progress. And now I'm quiet and just work. Now I shut up and work! But now who will ever go on strike? That is, how do you go on strike? What do you think about? It's not a problem for Chief Marchionne he can go elsewhere to make cars. They can do anything. Are you able to rebel against this? I'm asking you, to have a guiding light: could you ever rebel? I think that in the other industrial areas it's the same! A total domination! (Antonio, 45, junior school education, assembly worker, married with two children, employed in 1996, interviewed March 2015)

The description given by Antonio allows us to enter into key features of the new course of the multinational FCA in Melfi: first, a sort of internal relocation, where Melfi takes on a different role in the global business scenario, finalised to produce top car models for an international market,

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FIAT. In January of 2015 C.E.O. Marchionne announced a thousand new job positions in Melfi.

without neglecting some constituent characteristics of the plant, which are at this stage particularly useful: firstly, the high productivity of the plant, directly measured in the ability to withstand the intense rhythms, to bear personal and social outcomes; then, the weakening of the unions and the following limitations of their power, through episodes of conflict but also symbolically educative for all workers, which happened during previous years<sup>5</sup>; lastly some carelessness by both local and national institutions, towards the industrial site, which contributed to the possibility for the company to carry out a hard and uninhibited trade policy. From this point of view, the intense pace of the current work, the speed of the production line, the ductility of the workers in adapting to the new tasks, even within the limits of the repetitiveness and simplicity of operations, have meant that the new course of FCA was relatively easy.

The price of all this is, of course, in the aspects described by Antonio, which correspond to the processes explained by Standing (2011), that characterise work in the contemporary world: the workers isolation and demotivation, lack of control over their work, not only with regard to the productive process (use of expertise, time of production, intensity, etc.), but also frustration connected with the difficulty/impossibility of career advancement and, last but not least, the inability to develop safeguards to keep their work role (abrupt transfers or even the total loss of work).

Finally, the voice of the new younger workers can help us to understand the different condition of the workers but, anyhow, some similar outcomes, in a generational perspective<sup>6</sup>:

I did a psychometric questionnaire, I did (medical) visits and then they called me. After that, we went down to begin our work. No, I am not convinced

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5 The deterioration of the trade unions role at FIAT, in the opinion of the expert Francesco Garibaldi, started a long time ago, that is, in the 1990s (Garibaldi 2012). Impossible to summarise it here, you should try at least to remember the long string of spectacular layoff examples which occurred in Melfi, which started from the FIOM delegate Paolo Laguardia and arriving to the delegates Barozzino, La Morte and Pignatelli in 2010 (the latter reinstated with a sentence of the High Courts in February 2012). The climax of this conflict was that, after the failure to sign the unions agreements in 2010, the FIOM delegates were unrecognised and ousted from their trade union functions, by appealing to an old law of 1970. The striking business decision and the consequent challenge, was resolved in July 2013 when the Constitutional Court pronounced the illegality of excluding FIOM representatives, and provided for the reinstatement (see D'Aloisio 2014, p. 97 et seq; Barozzino 2011)

6 The interview with Francesco is part of a small group of pilot interviews conducted in July 2015. They are not sufficiently numerous for a true comparison between the two generations of workers, which will be possible with a larger corpus of interviews, currently ongoing. They are however an indication of some changes that have arisen as a path for further employment and especially for the continuation of the fieldwork.

that it is a replacement position of the worker. I think that now they need new workers, then when they no longer need us, we will go home. If you follow a bit of politics, you are able to understand. This is the situation: they must produce a certain number of cars, I think as long as they do not fill all the parking lots. When the parking lots are full, one of two things will happen, or produce other cars or send us home. This "Job Act" is a colossal swindle! It is a hidden short term contract. (...)

I think a lot of people complain of fat (too much extra): the workers are coming from a two-year layoff, they never know what can happen next. They could lose their jobs. Instead now you have a salary that, right now, nobody else provides, about 2000 Euros per month, I am speaking about people who have been there for twenty years, nobody offers you something similar, not even a new graduate who starts working now, so it is really useless complaining." (Filippo, 26, single with no children, an engineering student, worker on the assembly line with short term contract, hired in March 2015; interviewed July 2015)

What emerges from this extract is his condition, very different from colleagues who have been working permanently in FIAT from the start: Filippo begins work already with a clear awareness that this is a temporary job, which depends not only on its short term contract, but also by a more general vision of the labour situation as flexible, according to the production requirements, more and more short term and changeable; in addition, he also has the consciousness that his generation, although possessing high qualifications, will have to accept lower qualified jobs, both in tasks and wages. This implies, at first the lack of understanding of the complaints by the older workers, complaints, it should be noted, linked to the rhythms and general working conditions. His view of work is therefore a situation where everything is possible, where the shortage of jobs, if there is one, and its increasing precariousness, wipe out every possible claim or even the mere negotiating addressed to the substance of work, its characteristics, its present or future configuration.

## Conclusion

The globalisation of the company and the restructuring of the FIAT factory in Melfi in the name of FCA, ended the long fall in production and the hardship and insecurity that for three years had gripped the workers. However, the conditions of older workers and new employees (at the beginning of their working experience), are full of contradictions.

The perception of insecurity, both work and existential, does not seem ousted from life's horizon nor one nor the other, although in different forms and with different accents. The first ones, the workers of the old intake, even in with the consciousness that they have passed the toughest phase, con-

tinue to have a perspective of short-range, and the certainties about the present, related to the new production phase, are still tied to a variety of factors which overall are beyond the understanding and predictability of workers.

It is the widening gap between work processes and the possibility of controlling it, described by Standing, meaning that workers are no longer able to think about their professional careers as reliable and continuous in the future (Standing 2011); but it is also the increasing precariousness and insecurity that makes the job an entity with different meanings, as we can find in a rich literature on “capitalism without work” (Beck 2000), “lavoro minuscolo” (tiny work) (Accornero 2000), or “flexible man” (Sennett 2000). It's clearly apparent that many unknown factors, including the conditions of an anonymous market, acting jointly on the lives of workers, a market which, as noted pointedly by Crouch, is increasingly coinciding, in the perspective of neoliberal ideology, with the enterprises exclusively (Crouch 2012).

As Narotzky reminds us, “the economy and the market concern real people in different positions of power, with different life projects and the ability to mobilise different kinds of resources within different timeframes” (Narotzky 2012, p. 629). As seems to be happening in Melfi, the older generation workers, who have spent twenty years within the factory, have enabled several strategies to adapt themselves to the rhythm of hard work, to make the most of the years of economic stability for their life projects, to resist wage cuts and the crisis also leveraging, once again, on their dedication to work and their stamina.

However, the transition of local labour is not unscathed, many achievements in terms of labour rights have been left behind, many things have been lost in terms of work democracy: the most striking are the new labour frameworks, in force since 2012, the great battle against the unions, which however has resulted in a substantial transformation of its negotiating power in defence of the workers, and lastly the new contracts for new employees, which in fact make precarious the new workers in respect to the old, employees who have permanent contracts.

Again Narotzky considers fundamental understanding “how are ‘expert’ concepts re-configured and understood and how do they mediate practice in the lives of ordinary people?”: the scholar refers explicitly to the way in which the idea of crisis has been diffused in the common sense, remarking “this creates the methodological environment of the research in economic anthropology” (Narotzky 2012, p. 630).

Among the workers of Melfi, the old and new, we can conclude that the perception and the idea of the crisis has led to a different idea of accepted and acceptable work in worse conditions than in the past, against the inevitable data of increasing job shortages and the constant possibility to see work slip away. On the scales we have, on the one side, work as a resource increasingly

rare and difficult to access, which has gradually moved away from the idea of a fundamental right (as the Italian Constitution states), and on the other the specific conditions, that in times of crisis have heightened intensity of rhythms, reduction of wage, precariousness and instability in contracts, reduction of safeguards: in this way the transformation of the company and its neo-liberal rationality seems to be heading increasingly towards a perspective of Foucault's "*corporatization of the social life*" (Leghissa 2012, p. 117). For the scholar,

it is the tendency to govern every social practice and every process of subjectivation under the same rules and the same techniques of government that we apply to the company. In this way, the company becomes the largest educational institution of neoliberal society (ibid).

The precariousness of life, therefore, connotes a pervasive and growing number of workers, breaking down the generation barriers, covering also workers originally employed on permanent contracts and in a situation that, only some time ago, were prefigured as stability. At the same time, the new geography of the world of work, according to the analysis of E. Moretti, constantly defines new places as attractors of business and work, based on new indicators such as high skills, strong concentration of financial business support (Moretti 2012). On the other side of the coin, we have to add however also new peripheral areas where are relegated the low skilled jobs, with lower costs and more deregulation, according to increasingly rapid fluctuations placed outside the outdated distinction between the West and the rest of the world. In fact, right in the old core West, given the crisis, it is possible to foreshadow useful niches for these types of work (Mollona 2009). Just like the new metalworkers in Melfi.

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