Social Mobility in Italy since the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

Antonio Schizzerotto - Sonia Marzadro
University of Trent and Opes, Trent

The article deals with the main features of social mobility processes in contemporary Italy and their changes during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Both absolute (intergenerational and career) mobility and patterns of associations between class of origin and destination in three birth cohorts are studied. The analyses confirm a quite modest shift towards greater social fluidity in the allocation of individuals among the different occupational positions. Nevertheless, ascription still prevails over achievement, and this prevalence is strengthened by the process of family formation, which is based on rather effective mechanisms of social closure. [JEL Classification: J62, C10]

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1. Introduction

Social mobility refers to people's movements through the

* <antonio.schizzerotto@unitn.it>; <sonia.marzadro@unitn.it>.
system of social stratification. In contemporary sociology a key distinction is drawn between absolute and relative mobility (or social fluidity). Absolute mobility concerns the observed flows of individuals from each class of origin to different classes of destination (or arrival). Relative mobility concerns the disparities in the chances of arriving at certain destinations between people from different social origins.

In very general terms, it can be said that in societies with a market economy and a democratic political regime, absolute social mobility depends jointly on changes over time in the dimensions of the various social positions making up the system of social stratification and the degree of openness of the latter. In its turn, the openness of a stratification system – that is to say, the pattern of relative social mobility – depends on the extent to which social inheritance counts in determining the social positions arrived at by individuals. The higher the net association between origins and destinations, the lower the degree of fluidity of both social stratification and society, and vice versa (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992).

Two types of both absolute and relative social mobility are usually recognised by sociologists: intergenerational and intragenerational (or career). The former refers to the movements that individuals make with respect to the social class of their family of origin when they completed their compulsory education. The latter refers to the movements that people make with respect to one of the social positions in which they arrived after leaving the family of origin. Both inter- and intragenerational mobility can be accomplished via occupation or via marriage.

In principle, social mobility should be determined by taking account of both occupational and matrimonial mobility. Yet most empirical studies have focused only on occupational mobility, doing so on the reasonable assumption that, in a society based on a market economy, occupation is the main factor affecting individuals' positions in the social stratification system (Parkin, 1979; Goldthorpe et al., 1980; Rose and Harrison, 2009). However, we will not adopt this approach and will instead study, albeit separately, occupational and matrimonial mobility. The reason for
this choice concerns the contrasting effects produced in Italy by occupation and marriage on patterns of overall social fluidity. As we shall show later, relative intergenerational and career mobility patterns based on the occupational channel have became somewhat fairer and more fluid during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, while relative matrimonial mobility patterns have not changed over time.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. The next section provides some basic information about the measures and statistical techniques for analysis of mobility processes adopted in the article. The third section illustrates the data and variables used in the empirical analyses. The fourth summarizes the results obtained from the main research studies on social mobility carried out in Italy in the recent past. The fifth, sixth, and seventh sections report the results of our analyses, while the final section summarises them.

2. - Measures and Techniques of Analysis of Social Mobility

The study of occupational and matrimonial mobility requires a preliminary scheme representing the class structure of a society. In this article, we use a slightly adapted version of the standard EG sevenfold class scheme (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). The seven classes are as follows:

I-II: Entrepreneurs (more than 4 employees), managers and professionals;
IIIa: Routine non-manual employees, higher and middle grades;
IVab: Self-employed (with 0-3 employees) not in agriculture;
IVc: Self employed (with 0-3 employees) in agriculture;
V-VI: Foremen and skilled manual workers;
IIIb+VIIa: Unskilled non-manual and manual workers not in agriculture;

The above schema cannot be interpreted as a strict hierarchical order. Social classes refer mainly to social relations
of power (though also distributive inequalities are taken into account). Unfortunately, power relations are rather complex, and they often do not produce unambiguous positions of dominance (or subordination) of one class over (or under) all the others.\footnote{This is clearly the case of the middle and working classes. It can be said, for instance, that class IIIa dominates over classes IIIb+VIIa and class VIIb. But there is no reason to state that either class IIIa dominates class IVab, which in turn dominates class IVc, or conversely. The same statement holds for classes V-VI, IIIa+VIIa, and VIIb.} Nevertheless, social classes can be partially ordered from a hierarchical point of view. In this partial ranking, class I-II is placed at the top; classes IIIa, IVab, and IVc, in the middle; and classes V-VI, IIIb+VIIa and VIIb at the bottom.

Rates of mobile (or immobile) individuals are used to measure absolute mobility flows. In what follows we examine rates of overall, upward, downward, and lateral mobility. The rate of overall mobility is the ratio between individuals, belonging to a representative sample of the adult population of a society, who arrive in a class different from that of their origin and the total amount of the sample. The rate of upward mobility is the ratio between individuals who succeed in moving from a lower to a higher level of the class hierarchy and the total amount of the sample. By contrast, the downward mobility rate is the proportion of individuals who move from higher to lower levels of the class hierarchy. Finally, the rate of lateral mobility is the proportion of individuals who experience movements between classes at the same hierarchical level.

All the above rates are computed from a squared matrix where the rows comprise the classes of origin (O) and the columns the classes of arrival or destination (D). As a consequence, the frequency \( f_{ij}^{O} \) of each cell of the matrix expresses the number of individuals descending (or starting) from class \( i \) who have entered class \( j \). By computing the relative frequencies of all cells of the same row, one can determine the overall distribution of classes of arrival \( j = 1, 2, \ldots, 7 \) among individuals of the same origin \( i \). Obviously, this procedure can be repeated for each class of origin \( i = 1, 2, \ldots, 7 \). Hence comparison can be made of the distributions...
of arrivals between subjects of different origins. This approach to the study of mobility is usually referred to as the ‘outflow perspective’.\(^2\)

Turning to relative mobility, it should be borne in mind that this concerns the association between classes of origin and class of arrival net of the effects (on the frequencies of individual cells) of their respective marginal distributions. Specifically, relative mobility expresses the inequalities between the descendants from two different classes of origin (\(i\) and \(i^*\)) in their chances of being found in one class of destination (\(j\)) rather than another (\(j^*\)). These inequalities are measured by means of odds ratios:

\[
\omega_{ij^*j^*ij} = \frac{f_{ij}}{f_{ij^*}} \frac{f_{i^*j}}{f_{i^*j^*}}
\]

Given the very large number of odds ratios that can be computed for a standard mobility table,\(^3\) social fluidity (or relative social mobility) is usually analysed with log-linear models (Goodman, 1979; Hout, 1983; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Xie, 1992). Each individual parameter (or set of homologous parameters) of a log-linear model applied to an origin-by-destination matrix expresses a specific effect on (the logarithm of) cells counts appearing in the matrix. These effects are attributable respectively to: i) sample size; ii) marginal distributions of classes of origin and classes of destination; and iii) possible interactions between classes of origin and classes of arrival.

A saturated log-linear model applied to an origins-by-destinations table (i.e. a model stating that each origin displays a different effect on each class of arrival) can be formally expressed as follows:

\[^2\] Obviously, mobility events can also be studied from an inflow perspective. In this case, the relative frequencies of cells belonging to the same column are considered. Taken together, they express the distribution of classes of origin within each class of destination, i.e. the composition by social origin of classes of destination. We will not treat this problem in the present article.

\[^3\] The number of independent odds ratios in an \((R)\times(C)\) table is equal to \([{(R)\times(C)\times(R-1)\times(C-1)}]/4\) where \(R\) and \(C\) respectively represent the rows and the columns of the table.
To be noted is that the algebraic sum of the four interaction parameters of a saturated log-linear model expressing the net associations between the origin $i$ and the destinations $j$ and $j^*$, respectively, and the associations between the origin $i^*$ and the same couple of class of arrivals, corresponds exactly to the logarithm of the relevant odds ratio. Formally:

$$\ln(\omega_{ij,j^*/i,j^*}) = \lambda_{ij}^{\text{OD}} - \lambda_{ij^*}^{\text{OD}} - \lambda_{i^*j}^{\text{OD}} + \lambda_{i^*j^*}^{\text{OD}}$$

The overall patterns of both absolute mobility flows and net associations between origins and destinations can vary according to different micro, meso and macro variables such as time, geographic area of residence, gender, age, birth cohort, and so on. Of especial interest, because they highlight the direction of possible social changes, are the variations over time in the proportion of mobile people and the regime of social fluidity (i.e. the net associations between origins and destinations). Analysing these variations requires one to move from two-dimensional to three- (or four, five, etc.) dimensional mobility tables. As stressed in the opening section, this article focuses on changes in Italian mobility processes during the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. Because of the very few mobility surveys carried out in Italy, we have been compelled to use birth cohorts as proxies for time periods. Hence, to analyse possible changes in the Italian fluidity regime, we arranged some origin-by-destination-by-birth-cohort (C) contingency tables. The cells frequencies of such tables can be reproduced by means of the following saturated log-linear model:

$$\ln(f_{ijk}^{\text{ODC}}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^O + \lambda_j^D + \lambda_{ik}^C + \lambda_{jk}^{OC} + \lambda_{jk}^{DC} + \lambda_{ij}^{OD} + \lambda_{ijk}^{ODC}$$

Whatever the dimensionality of a mobility table, saturated log-linear models (i.e. those including all possible interaction effects) are not of particular interest and parsimony because they perfectly
reproduce the observed cells counts and use all the available degrees of freedom. Of much greater interest are more parsimonious models (i.e. models that fit cells counts reasonably well by means of a reduced number of parameters) specified on the basis of some hypothesis regarding the features of a society's relative mobility regime and the mechanisms of social closure underlying that regime.

Several unsaturated log-linear models have been developed by sociologists (Goldthorpe et al., 1980; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Breen, 2004), and they have been used either as reference models or as real tests for specific hypotheses. In this article we use four different models.

1. The conditional independence model. This is based on the assumption that Italy (or any other society) is a completely meritocratic society, so that there is no association between origins and destination (i.e. all odds ratios are equal to 1 in all birth-cohort mobility tables), although the marginal distributions of both classes of origin and classes of destination differ between birth cohorts.\(^4\) Its formal structure is as follows:

\[
\ln(F_{ijk}^{OC}) = \lambda_i^O + \lambda_j^D + \lambda_k^C + \lambda_{ik}^{OC} + \lambda_{jk}^{DC}
\]  

2. The quasi-perfect mobility model. This hypothesises that no association exists between origins and destinations, except for the cells on the main diagonal of the mobility table. In other words, the quasi-independence model assumes that destinations are independent from origins only in the case of mobile individuals. The equation specifying this model is:

\[
\ln(F_{ijk}^{DC}) = \lambda_i^O + \lambda_j^D + \lambda_k^C + \lambda_{ik}^{DC} + \lambda_{jk}^{DC} + \lambda_{ij\neq j}^{OD}
\]  

3. The constant social fluidity model. This assumes that the

\(^4\) In the next and the following equations, cells counts are expressed by \(F\) rather than \(f\). This is so because unsaturated log-linear models do not reproduce the observed frequencies but, as stressed in the main text, estimate them under specific hypotheses about the workings of mobility processes in a society. Obviously, specific measures of the goodness of fit of estimated frequencies to the observed ones have been developed. For a short review of these measures, see Breen R. (2004, pages 23-25).
distributions of origins and destinations do vary across birth cohorts, while the net associations between origins and destinations remain unchanged. Formally:

\[
\ln(F_{ijk}^{ODC}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^O + \lambda_j^D + \lambda_k^C + \lambda_{ik}^{OC} + \lambda_{jk}^{DC} + \lambda_{ij}^{OD}
\]

4. A log-multiplicative layer effects model (Xie 1992), commonly known as the “uniform differences” model or, more shortly, the “unidiff” model (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Wong and Hauser, 1992; Breen, 2004). This model hypothesises that all the net associations between classes of origin and classes of destination display a similar tendency to become stronger (or weaker) over time or, in our case, across birth cohorts. Put otherwise, the unidiff model states that i) the associations between origins and destinations display the same pattern in all the cohorts; and ii) the strength of these associations differs between cohorts. This model takes the following formal structure:

\[
\ln(F_{ijk}^{ODC}) = \lambda + \lambda_i^O + \lambda_j^D + \lambda_k^C + \lambda_{ik}^{OC} + \lambda_{jk}^{DC} + \phi_k^C \psi_{ij}^{OD}
\]

where \( \psi_{ij}^{OD} \) is a set of baseline interactions common to all cohorts, and \( \phi_k^C \) is a cohort-specific multiplier that increases or diminishes the overall intensity of all the origin-by-destination associations in a uniform manner. Conventionally, \( \phi_k^C \) is set equal to 1 for one cohort (in our case the oldest). Hence, its set of parameters \( \psi_{ij}^{OD} \) coincides with the baseline set. Cohorts whose scale parameter is less than one show greater social fluidity than the first cohort, and conversely a lower level of social openness if the scale parameter is greater than one.

3. - Data and Variables

To study social mobility processes in contemporary Italy we used data from the Italian Households Longitudinal Study (Ilfi), a prospective panel survey begun in 1997 and carried out for five biennial waves on a national representative sample of about 11,000 adult Italian men and women. The first wave gathered retro-
spective information on all significant events occurring to the members of the sample in the period between their births and the date of the interview. The four subsequent surveys updated this information, recording all significant events occurring to the members of the sample in the period between the previous interview and the date of the current one.

As mentioned earlier, we analysed changes over birth cohorts in absolute and relative intergenerational occupational mobility, absolute and relative career mobility, absolute and relative occupational homo-heterogamy, and intergenerational matrimonial mobility. All these analyses were carried out by means of either mobility (and homo-heterogamy) tables (rates of absolute mobility and levels of homo-heterogamy) or log-linear models (relative occupational and relative matrimonial mobility patterns).

Intergenerational and intragenerational occupational mobility were studied by means of two contingency tables made up of 147 cells deriving from the cross-tabulation of 7 classes of origin by 7 classes of destination and 3 birth cohorts.

We have already listed the seven classes of origin and destination, but further information is necessary to clarify how they were concretely coded in the various empirical analyses that we conducted.

In those analyses concerning intergenerational mobility via occupation, the class of origin of each interviewee correspond to the occupational class of the head of his/her family when s/he was fourteen. In turn, the class of destination of respondents is defined either by their current occupation (if at their last Ilfi interview they were working) or by their last occupation (if, in their first or last interview, they declared themselves unemployed, retired, or no longer in the labour force). This means that we studied intergenerational occupational mobility only for the 8,000 Ilfi interviewees who had experienced at least one employment spell during their lifetimes.

In the case of career mobility, the class of origin is that of

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5 As well known, until two years ago compulsory schooling in Italy ended at the age of 14.
the interviewee’s first occupation and the class of destination is that of their occupation ten years after the first one.\textsuperscript{6} Hence, the sample for the analysis of variations across cohorts of intragenerational mobility consisted of the 6,293 interviewees whose work histories had lasted at least 10 years.

Mobility processes via marriage (or stable consensual union) were studied in three steps. First, we looked at occupational homo-heterogamy rates by means of a cross-tabulation of the occupational classes at marriage of the 2,053 husbands and wives belonging to Ilfi sample who, as just said, were both working at the beginning of their union or had been working before getting married. Second, we cross-tabulated the above homo-heterogamy table by birth cohorts and fitted the resulting three tables by log-linear models. Third, we cross-tabulated husbands’ origins by husbands’ destinations by wives’ origins and by wives’ destinations and – once again by means of log-linear models – tried to highlight the respective weights of spouses’ occupational classes and their classes of origin in the process of couple formation.\textsuperscript{7} In the first two steps, classes at marriage of both spouses were classified according to the sevenfold class schema described in the second section. In the third step, because of the reduced size of the sample, the classes of destination were grouped into four categories: i) higher class (I-II); ii) white-collar middle class (IIIa); iii) self-employed middle class (IVab and IVc); and iv) lower class (V-VI, IIIb+VIIa, VIIb). The classes of origin were instead grouped in three categories: higher class (I-II), middle class (IIIa, IVab, and IVc), and lower class (V-VI, IIIb+VIIa, and VIIb). Moreover, again because of the small size of the sample, we did not control for birth cohorts. Hence, the effects of individuals’ origins in the process of mating selection were studied on the basis of a table made up of $4 \times 3 \times 4 \times 3 = 144$ cells.

\textsuperscript{6} We considered the class arrived at ten years after the first job as the class of destination (instead of the current or the last occupational class) in order to avoid the effects deriving from different lengths of individuals’ work histories.

\textsuperscript{7} Unfortunately, some members of the above-mentioned 2,053 couples did not report their class of origin. As a consequence, the sample used to study intergenerational mobility via marriage was reduced to 1,813 couples.
The last variable to be commented upon is birth cohort. As said, all the samples selected to carry out the analyses of intergenerational mobility, career mobility and homo-heterogamy propensity in couple formation were divided into three birth cohorts: i) 1900-1937; ii) 1938-1967; and iii) 1968-1987. As stated at the beginning of the article, birth cohorts were treated as proxies for three different periods in Italian economic and social history: the period spanning the two world wars and the predominance of the agricultural sector; that of the economic boom and of welfare state expansion; and that of the economy's tertiarisation and globalisation, labour-market deregulation, and welfare system retrenchment.8

4. - Previous Italian Research on Social Mobility

Recent empirical research on social mobility in Italy has shown the coexistence of high overall rates of absolute mobility with strong inequalities in relative mobility chances. The high level of absolute mobility has depended largely on the constant upgrading undergone by the Italian occupational structure during the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. However, people from diverse origins have proved differently able to exploit the opportunities offered by the above structural changes. As a consequence, the chances of arriving in privileged classes and the risks of avoiding the disadvantaged ones appear to be distributed in a deeply unequal way.

The authors of the first nation-wide analysis on Italian social

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8 We are fully aware that birth cohorts are not identical to historical periods. We also know that Ifi interviewees belonging to one cohort can be conceived neither as a representative sample of the Italian population in a given historical period nor as representative of all members of that cohort. They can simply be considered representative of its survivors until 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003 or 2005. Yet we are confident that the mobility processes experienced by the members of our three cohorts are reasonable proxies for the actual mobility processes and regime in Italian society during the periods that the cohorts are taken to represent. In the worst case, our data overestimated upward mobility episodes, above all in the oldest cohort, because mortality rates are higher among individuals belonging to lower classes.
mobility (Indagine nazionale sulla mobilità sociale), carried out in 1985, stated that the Italian stratification system was rigid and produced strong disparities in mobility chances. Moreover, they maintained that the low degree of openness of the Italian stratification system remained stable over birth cohorts (Cobalti and Schizzerotto, 1994).

However, more recent research based on comparison between the data of the Indagine nazionale di mobilità and the first wave of Ilfi (1997), while confirming the main findings of the former study, has shown a statistically significant, though modest, increase in social fluidity (Pisati and Schizzerotto, 2004).

The latter result is consistent with findings of some recent studies on social mobility carried out in other European countries such as Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Yet in these countries the trend towards increasing social fluidity appears to be definitely stronger than in Italy (Breen and Luijkx, 2004; Müller and Pollak, 2004; Ganzeboom and Luijkx, 2004; Jonsson, 2004).

A further interesting feature of mobility processes in contemporary Italy is the low level of intragenerational mobility (Pisati and Schizzerotto, 1999; Schizzerotto, 2002; Müller and Gangl, 2003). As stated by Pisati and Schizzerotto (1999) a bureaucratic and corporatist approach prevailed in the regulation of career advancement by people hired by medium-sized and large firms and the public sector. As a consequence, work careers have displayed a quite flat pattern because they were linked mainly to seniority, rather than to personal ability and commitment to work. In addition, non-manual employees and manual workers in Italy's innumerable small firms have had very few chances to experience career mobility episodes. The reason for this has been the small size itself of these firms and the consequent lack of any real internal hierarchy of positions.

All the above-mentioned results have been obtained by analyses concerned with the occupational component of social mobility. But as stressed earlier, individuals may experience intergenerational social mobility also through marriage (or stable cohabitation). In regard to this channel of intra- and intergenerational mobility, the relevant analyses (Schadee and Schizzerotto, 1990; Cobalti and
Schizzerotto, 1994) have shown a quite strong incidence of occupationally homogamous couples and a high propensity to occupational homogamy. More recent studies have corroborated these results and, moreover, recorded a marked trend towards increasing educational homogamy among younger Italian birth cohorts (Schizzerotto, 2002; Bernardi, 2003). Also to be noted is that, in Italy, the propensity to homogamy does not concern only men’s and women’s respective educational qualifications and occupational positions. Also apparent is a tendency to form couples that are homogamous also with respect to the social origins of the spouses (Schadee and Schizzerotto, 1990; Cobalti and Schizzerotto, 1994; Lucchini, Saraceno and Schizzerotto, 2007).

Whilst more than twenty years have elapsed since the first Italian nation-wide mobility study, only five years have passed since the second. Hence one might wonder as to why we decided to replicate these former studies. There were two main reasons. First, we possess new and more updated data than those used in the previous studies. Second, some major changes occurred between 1997 and 2005 in the regulation of the Italian labour market, the workings of the welfare state, and the economic situation. Hence, some changes may also have taken place in mobility processes. Moreover, we can currently take advantage of all the data collected in the five waves of Ilfi and reconstruct, as stated in the previous sections, the main features of mobility processes in Italy during the very wide time span from 1900 to 2005. Put otherwise, we are in a far better position to determine the extent to which these changes affected the features of mobility processes in Italy during the twentieth century. Expressly, we should be better able to investigate whether the Italian mobility regime really displays a robust tendency towards an increased openness of the mobility regime and whether Italy is really becoming less prone to the effects of social heredity in the selection of the individuals to be allocated in the various social positions. Finally, we should be able to check the roles played by the economy and the labour market, on the one hand, and the family formation process on the other, in shaping mobility flows and chances in contemporary Italy.
5. - Intergenerational Mobility via Occupation

Starting with intergenerational mobility via occupation, we would stress that a very large proportion (almost three quarters) of Italians born between 1900 and 1987 experienced a mobility event by arriving in a class different from the one to which they belonged when they were fourteen years old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobility rate</th>
<th>Birth cohort</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1900-1937</td>
<td>1938-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall mobility rate</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward mobility rate</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral mobility rate</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downward mobility rate</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The rate of overall mobility varies across birth cohorts. It increases from the first to the second and then slightly declines (Table 1). But the striking result is that the rate of upward mobility dramatically grows from the first to the second cohort and remains definitely high in the third one. By contrast, lateral mobility declines monotonically across cohorts. These trends seem to indicate that it was mainly around the Second World War that the Italian occupational structure started to upgrade and the middle and lower agricultural classes began to decline. Also to be noted is that rates of downward social mobility are constantly lower than those of upward and lateral mobility. Obviously, this is a further effect of the just-mentioned expansions of the higher and middle classes and the retrenchment of the lower ones.

We are able to prove more directly and convincingly that the main structural changes in the Italian occupational structure started in the late 1930s and began to slow down during the 1980s, that is, the period when the first and the second cohort entered their adult lives. This proof is provided by the dissimilarity indexes.
between the distribution of origins and that of destinations, which show that this difference was definitely stronger among the first and the second cohort rather than the third one (Table 2).

Because the upward mobility rate among members of the second and the third cohort is definitely higher than that observed among people born between 1900 and 1937, one can reasonably hypothesise that, besides structural changes in the occupational system, changes took place in the degree of social fluidity during the twentieth century. However, before this hypothesis is tested, comment is required on both disparities in the destinations of individuals from different classes of origin and variations across cohorts in these disparities.

### Table 2

VARIATIONS IN THE SIZE OF CLASSES OF ORIGIN AND CLASSES OF ARRIVAL BY BIRTH COHORT. DISSIMILARITY INDEX BETWEEN THE RELEVANT MARGINAL DISTRIBUTIONS. ITALY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth cohort</th>
<th>Dissimilarity index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900-1937</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1957</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-1987</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(Breen, 2004, page 24) between the distribution of origins and that of destinations, which show that this difference was definitely stronger among the first and the second cohort rather than the third one (Table 2).

Because the upward mobility rate among members of the second and the third cohort is definitely higher than that observed among people born between 1900 and 1937, one can reasonably hypothesise that, besides structural changes in the occupational system, changes took place in the degree of social fluidity during the twentieth century. However, before this hypothesis is tested, comment is required on both disparities in the destinations of individuals from different classes of origin and variations across cohorts in these disparities.

### Table 3

INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY TABLE: OUTFLOW RATES. ITALY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I+II</td>
<td>I+II</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVab</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVc</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V+VI</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIb+VIIa</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIIb</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,609</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>1,147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The row percentages of the three mobility tables show that, on average, the main diagonal cells bear the greatest counts (Table 3). This means that, despite the high rates of intergenerational mobility mentioned earlier, a substantial proportion of Italians born during the twentieth century have strictly followed in their fathers’ footsteps. Moreover, in each cohort, the experience of intergenerational immobility is higher among the descendants from classes I-II and IIIa, that is, from the most privileged ones. However, the influence of class of origins on individuals’ destinations is not restricted to the case of immobility. Whatever the cohort, the children of entrepreneurs, managers and professionals are very seldom observed among the ranks of manual workers, whether skilled or unskilled. The same applies to the offspring of routine non-manual employees. Conversely, the children of blue collars are quite infrequently found in the ranks of both service-class and white-collar workers. Yet it is interesting that the proportion of persons originating from working classes and arriving in the most privileged classes increases from the older to the younger cohort. Moreover, we have already noted (Table 2) that the upgrading of the Italian occupational structure has been faster and more effective among the first and second cohort, rather than the third one. Does this mean, as suggested in the previous paragraph, that Italy is moving toward a more fluid stratification system?

To answer this question we studied the relative mobility patterns using the log-linear models described in section two. In the light of their fitting values, it can be said that Italy was not in the past, and is not currently, a meritocratic society (Table 4). Indeed, only models containing interaction terms between origins and destinations seem adequately to fit the mobility tables. Consequently, both the chances of arriving in the privileged classes

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9 For the sake of brevity, the three O by D by C mobility tables are not reported here. We report only the table collapsed over cohorts to give a general idea of the main features of the mobility processes we are dealing with.

10 The proportion of descendants from the working classes (i.e. V-VI, IIIb+VIIa, and VIIb) arriving in classes I-II and IIIa grows from 24.0% in the older cohort to 40.0% in the younger cohort.
and the risks of arriving in the disadvantaged ones are strongly conditioned by the class of origin in all the cohorts studied.

**Table 4**

GOODNESS OF FIT STATISTICS FOR SELECTED LOG-LINEAR MODELS APPLIED TO THE ORIGIN (O) BY DESTINATION (D) BY BIRTH COHORT (C) TABLE. ITALY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>G²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Bic</th>
<th>Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditional independence</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi perfect mobility</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant association</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-514</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform difference model of OD associations</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-532</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) The formal structure of the log-linear models listed in the table and their substantive meanings are described in section 2.

The model that hypothesises a stability of the OD associations across cohorts, namely the constant social fluidity model, greatly improves over conditional independence and quasi perfect mobility. Its G² is only 6.4% of the conditional independence model (i.e. 134/2091) and 14.4% of the quasi perfect mobility model (i.e. 134/929). Moreover, the constant association model explains 94% of the observed OD association and misclassifies only 4.3% of the individuals (Table 4). Substantively, its parameters indicate that today, as in the past, the class positions arrived in by Italians are strongly conditioned by their classes of origin.

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the constant association model does not adequately fit all the table counts. Inspection of standardised residuals showed that those greater than 2.0 (in absolute value) concerned immobility episodes for service-class and skilled manual workers within the older cohort; and, within the second and the third cohort, mobility episodes by i) unskilled employees to the self-employed; ii) service class to unskilled employees; iii) agricultural petty bourgeoisie to white collars. We then decided to allow the OD associations to vary across cohorts and sought to reproduce the mobility table by the uniform
difference model. Although neither did this adequately estimate all the cells frequencies, its fitting was definitely better than that of the constant association model (Table 4). Moreover, it misclassified only 3.6% of individuals and only one cell displayed a statistically significant residual.\textsuperscript{11} Hence, we decided not to specify further models and chose the uniform difference model as our preferred one. On its basis we can answer our question about the change of OD relationships across birth cohorts in the affirmative. It can therefore be stated that the strength of all the net associations occurring between origins and destination diminishes homogeneously on moving from the older to the younger cohort. More precisely, on setting the scale parameter of the net association between origins and destinations observed in the older cohort to 1, it takes the value of .89 in the intermediate cohort and the value of .69 in the younger one. This means that over the twentieth century the weight of social inheritance in Italy reduced, on average, by about one third.

In order to give a more concrete idea of the effects of this change in the thickness of the inequalities of opportunities for social mobility, we now present five different odds ratios computed using the relevant parameters of OD associations in the uniform difference model (Table 5).\textsuperscript{12}

The strongest and most striking reduction in the inequality of mobility chances has occurred in the disparities between the offspring of the service class and those of unskilled non-manual and manual workers in the chances of remaining (or arriving) in a service class position rather than descending to (or remaining among) unskilled workers (Table 5). To be stressed is that this specific inequality in mobility opportunity reduces its intensity by two thirds between the older and younger cohort. Quite marked, though weaker than the one just commented upon, is the decrease in the disparities between the descendants of white collars and

\textsuperscript{11} The cell mentioned in the main text concerns the very uncommon movements from white-collar positions to the agricultural working class.

\textsuperscript{12} To prevent misunderstandings, it should be stressed that, quite obviously, the constancy of variations in the OD associations within individual cohorts holds for log odds ratios, not for odds ratios.
the children of unskilled employees in their chances of staying in white-collar positions or of reaching them (Table 5). There is a similar decrease in the inequalities between the children of the self-employed and those of the unskilled working class in their chances of arriving in self-employment positions (Table 5). The same applies to disparities in the chances of arriving in entrepreneurial, managerial and professional occupations from self-employment origins rather than from service class origins (Table 5). Far less pronounced, but still sizeable, is the decrease across birth cohorts of the disparities in the chances of arriving in the service class between the offspring of this same class and the children of white collar (Table 5).

However, the increased fluidity that has affected the allocation of individuals among the various occupational classes during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries should not be overrated. Suffice it to point out that, even among the younger generations, the descendants from the service class have chances of following in their fathers’ footsteps more than 11 times greater than those of the children of unskilled manual and non-manual workers of arriving in that class (Table 5).

### Table 5

**Variations Across Birth Cohorts of Inequality in Mobility Chances. Selected Odds Ratios**

*Based on the parameters expressing the $\Psi^\Phi_{ij}$ interactions of the Uniform Difference Model. Italy 2005*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couples of origins and destinations</th>
<th>Birth cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{I-II(I-II/IIa),IIa(I-II/IIa)}$</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{I-II(I-II/IVab),IVab(I-II/IVab)}$</td>
<td>6.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{I-II(I-II/IIIb+VIIa),IIIb+VIIa(I-II/IIIb+VIIa)}$</td>
<td>33.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{IVab(IVab/IIIb+VIIa),IIIb+VIIa(IVab/IIIb+VIIa)}$</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{IIIa(IIIa/IIIb+VIIa),IIIb+VIIa(IIIa/IIIb+VIIa)}$</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(a) Odds ratios are indicated by $\Omega$ rather than by $\omega$ because they have been computed not from the observed frequencies but from those estimated by the relevant log-linear model.

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All in all, to be stressed once again is that between the beginning of the twentieth century and that of the twenty-first, the overall degree of openness of the Italian occupational structure has constantly increased. Nonetheless, Italy is still far from being a meritocratic society because social origins still exert a strong influence on individual occupational destinations.

6. - Career Mobility

Turning to career mobility, to be emphasised is that, on average, a very small proportion of employed people (less than one third) experience episodes of career mobility during their first 10 years of work history (Table 6). The low overall intrageneration mobility rates recorded for all cohorts indicate that the first occupation represents, today as in the past, a crucial step in the mobility episodes experienced by individuals. In other words, people from different social origins are more likely to change their social position when they enter the labour market for the first time rather than during their subsequent permanence within it. This statement holds for all the birth cohorts that we studied (Table 6). Even more impressive, however, is the substantial stability of the structural features of career mobility, which is generated mainly by upward and lateral movements, while downward ones are quite uncommon (Table 6). By and large, this confirms the results of the previous studies mentioned in the fourth section. But it should be stressed that, despite its structural stability, the proportion of career mobile individuals exhibits some remarkable changes across cohorts. First, this proportion increases monotonically from the older to the younger cohort (Table 6). Second, this growth is generated mainly by a constant rise in the upward mobility rate and, though to a lesser extent, by a fluctuating increase in the lateral mobility rate (Table 6).

Obviously, all the above changes have been influenced by the already-mentioned upgrading of the Italian occupational structure. Yet the occupational upgrading occurring across ten years – i.e. the time span during which we observed the career mobility
episodes experienced by the members of each cohort – is usually far less pronounced than that occurring in the period separating the generations of fathers from those of sons, as in the case of intergenerational mobility. It can therefore be hypothesised that, besides structural changes, the workings of Italian labour market and, above all, the process by which individuals are selected for occupational promotion have undergone changes during the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Support for the above hypothesis is provided by the career mobility tables. It is true that in every cohort-specific table the main diagonal cells bear the highest values, indicating the presence of a largely self-recruiting process, which is even more pronounced in the case of the service class and white collars (Table 7). Nonetheless, unskilled non-manual and manual employees prove to be the most mobile, and this is all the more the case among the younger cohort. One half of people born from 1958 to 1977 and whose first job belonged in that class experienced a career mobility episode. Obviously, most of these episodes were short range. Hence, almost absent are transitions from class IIIb+VIIa to entrepreneurial, managerial and professional occupations; and those to white-collar positions are quite uncommon. Yet it is interesting to note that the proportion of

13 For the sake of brevity, the three cohort-specific career mobility tables are not reported here. We report only the table collapsed over cohorts to give a general idea of the main features of career mobility in contemporary Italy.
Stronger support for our hypothesis regarding changes in the career mobility patterns is provided by the analysis of variations over cohorts in the strength of net associations between the class of first occupation and that of the job carried out 10 years later (Table 8). As in the case of intergenerational mobility, only log-linear models bearing interaction terms between origins and destinations seem adequately to fit the career mobility tables. However, the uniform difference model of OD associations shows a marked improvement over that of constant association. The former fits the data very well, because its $G^2$ accounts for 99% of the observed OD association and misclassifies only 3.1% of unskilled non-manual and manual workers arriving in the service class and the higher and middle grades of routine non-manual employment increases over cohorts.\footnote{The proportion of unskilled non-manual and manual workers at first job who arrive in service class positions increases from 0.4% in the older cohort to 1.4% in the younger. Similarly, the proportion of these individuals who reached white-collar positions grew from 7.4% to 14.4%.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First occupation</th>
<th>Occupation 10 years later</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I+II</td>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>IVab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I+II</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVab</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVc</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V+VI</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIb+VIIa</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIIb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>1,751</td>
<td>891</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

individuals (Table 8). But even more interestingly, the uniform difference models indicate a change towards a slight decrease of inequality in career mobility chances across cohorts. Specifically, on setting the scale parameter of the net association between origins and destinations observed in the older cohort to 1, it takes the value of .91 in the intermediate cohort and the value of .83 in the younger one. This means that in the younger generations individual careers are less influenced by the occupational position from which a person starts.

**TABLE 8**

GOODNESS OF FIT STATISTICS FOR SELECTED LOG-LINEAR MODELS APPLIED TO THE FIRST OCCUPATION BY OCCUPATION AFTER 10 YEARS BY BIRTH COHORT TABLE. ITALY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modela</th>
<th>G²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Bic</th>
<th>Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditional independence</td>
<td>9,426</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>8,480</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi perfect mobility</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-157</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant association</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-526</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform difference model of OD associations</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>-537</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) The formal structure of the log-linear models listed in the table and their substantive meanings are described in section 2.

As for intergenerational mobility, we can furnish a more concrete idea of the decline in the thickness of the inequalities of opportunities of career mobility by computing the corresponding odds ratios from the relevant parameters of the above unidiff model (Table 9).
Consistently with our previous remarks about the variations across cohorts in the flows of absolute career mobility, the most marked reduction in the inequality of career chances concerns those regarding permanence (or arrival) in the service class, rather than descending to (or remaining in) the ranks of unskilled non-manual and manual workers, occurring between people who started their work history from the same service class and individuals who, on the contrary, entered the labour market from unskilled non-manual and manual jobs (Table 9). This specific inequality of career mobility opportunities reduces in intensity by more than three quarters from the older to the younger cohort. A similar decrease characterises the disparities in the chances of arriving among the ranks of the service class between persons who started from self-employment and those whose first occupation was in the service class. Also quite strong is the reduction across birth cohorts of the disparities in the chances of i) reaching white-collar positions between people whose first occupation was white collar and those whose first job was unskilled; \textsuperscript{15} ii) becoming self-

\textsuperscript{15} Moving from the older cohort to the younger, this specific disparity of opportunities has reduced in intensity by more than two thirds (–0.62)

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**Table 9**

VARIATIONS ACROSS BIRTH COHORTS OF INEQUALITY IN MOBILITY CHANCES. SELECTED ODDS RATIOS\textsuperscript{a} BASED ON THE PARAMETERS EXPRESSING THE $\Phi^C_{ij} \Psi^D_{jk}$ INTERACTIONS OF THE UNIFORM DIFFERENCE MODEL. ITALY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couples of origins and destinations</th>
<th>Birth cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{I-II(I-IIa/I-IIa)}$</td>
<td>106.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{I-II(I-IIb/Ib-Ivab)}$</td>
<td>2,465.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{I-II(I-IIb/Ivab/Ivab)}$</td>
<td>8,604.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{Ivab/Ivb/Ivab/Ivb/Ivb}$</td>
<td>129.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Omega_{Ivb/Ivb/Ivb/Ivb/Ivb}$</td>
<td>307.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ilfi, waves 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2005. Authors' own calculations. (a) Odds ratios are indicated by $\Omega$ rather than by $\omega$ because they are computed not from the observed frequencies but from those estimated by the relevant log-linear model.
employed between persons who started from self-employment and those whose first job was unskilled working-class\textsuperscript{16}; and iii) arriving in the service class between individuals whose first job fell within this same class and those who started from white-collar positions.\textsuperscript{17} Nonetheless, the very high values of the odds ratios reported in table 9 reveal that first job position strongly affects opportunities to be career mobile even among the younger cohort.

All in all, the results of career mobility analyses confirm the previous finding of an increase over time in the fluidity of the Italian occupational structure, even though the opening of career chances during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries appears to be lower and slower than that of opportunities for intergenerational mobility. This slower pace is perfectly understandable, however. As said, the time span elapsing from fathers’ to sons’ generation is much longer than that elapsing between episodes in individual life courses. Moreover, children may differ greatly from their parents but have lower probabilities of profoundly changing their personal characteristics.

7. - Homo-Heterogamy and Intergenerational Mobility via Marriage

As stressed in the previous two sections, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the fluidity of the process in Italy by which individuals are allocated among the various occupational classes has increased, albeit to a quite limited extent and at a rather slow pace. But, as already said, occupation is not the only mobility channel. At least in principle, individuals can also move through the stratification system via marriage or cohabitation. The problem then arises as to whether the increasing openness of the allocation of individuals among the different occupational positions is matched by the process of family formation.

\textsuperscript{16} Between people born in the period 1900-1937 and those born in the period 1958-1977, the inequality mentioned in the main text has declined by more than one half (–0.56)
\textsuperscript{17} In this case the reduction in disparities in career mobility chances is about one half (–0.54).
The need to analyse the role played by marriage or stable consensual union in social mobility processes can be better clarified by saying that if classes of arrival (and origin) at marriage of husbands are different from those of their wives, family formation may contribute to the growth of absolute intergenerational mobility rates and, perhaps, the level of fluidity in a society. By contrast, if homogamy prevails over heterogamy, absolute rates of intergenerational mobility may remain unchanged and inequalities of mobility opportunities can become stronger.

To check what has been happening in Italy in regard to this issue during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we started by scrutinising a homo-heterogamy table (Table 10).

**Table 10**

HOMO-HETEROGAMY TABLE. OCCUPATIONAL CLASS OF HUSBANDS (AT MARRIAGE) BY OCCUPATIONAL CLASS OF WIVES (AT MARRIAGE). PERCENTAGES REFERRED TO HUSBANDS CLASSES. ITALY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Husband class</th>
<th>Wife class</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I+II</td>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>I+II</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>IVab</td>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVab</td>
<td>IVc</td>
<td>IVab</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVc</td>
<td>V+VI</td>
<td>IVc</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V+VI</td>
<td>IIIb+VIIa</td>
<td>V+VI</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIb+VIIa</td>
<td>VIIb</td>
<td>IIIb+VIIa</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIIb</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>VIIb</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At first glance, it seems that mating selection based on the individuals’ occupations strongly contributes to the social mixing of classes. Indeed, the proportion of heterogamous couples (63.6%) is more than twice as large as the overall rate of career mobility (see Table 6 above). However, the rate of heterogamy
based on spouses' occupations at marriage is strongly influenced by gender-based occupational segregation. Consequently, some men and women who do not want to remain single are compelled to form heterogamous couples. Put otherwise: it may be that the real contribution of heterogamy to the level of both absolute intergenerational mobility and social fluidity is far lower than appears from a homo-heterogamy table. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that people usually get married (or begin a consensual union) after finding an occupation. Hence, the problem arises as to whether marriage promotes further mobility steps for individuals who are otherwise intergenerationally immobile or mobile only via occupation.

To address the above question, we first computed the proportion of people who, besides being upwardly mobile via occupation, experienced a further upward mobility episode because they married a person allocated to a destination class higher than their own. We then computed the proportion of individuals intergenerationally immobile via occupation who married a person who had arrived in a higher class (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobility channels</th>
<th>Spouses</th>
<th>Whole mobility sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both occupation and marriage</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only marriage</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,915</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As immediately evident from table 10, wives are less likely than husbands to be observed in the ranks of the service class, the non-agricultural self-employed and the skilled working class. The opposite holds as regards the proportion of wives in white-collars position, unskilled non-manual and manual occupations, and unskilled jobs in agriculture.

We took account of only the contribution of marriage to episodes of absolute intergenerational upward mobility because it is much more likely that the level of living of a spouse in a lower class of arrival is pulled up by that of his/her partner who has reached a higher class, rather than the other way around (Erikson R., 1984).
Marriages or consensual unions prove to be an upward intergenerational mobility channel for about one sixth of husbands and one quarter of wives (Table 11). This is not the net contribution of assortative mating to absolute mobility rates, however. People who are mobile both via occupation and via marriage cannot be taken into account because, in their case, marriage simply widens the stratification space that they have covered. By this we mean that the overall mobility rate does not take account of the range of mobility episodes, but only their number. As a consequence, the net contribution of marriage to overall intergenerational mobility rate should be restricted to the proportion of people whose sole intergenerational mobility channel has been marriage. On this basis, it can be said that the increase in the overall intergenerational mobility rate attributable to marriage or cohabitation is rather small (Table 11).

| Table 12 |
| GOODNESS OF FIT STATISTICS FOR SELECTED LOG-LINEAR MODELS APPLIED TO THE HUSBAND’S CLASS AT MARRIAGE (H_D) BY WIFE’S CLASS AT MARRIAGE (W_D) BY BIRTH COHORT (C) TABLE, ITALY 2005 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>G²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Bic</th>
<th>Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditional independence</td>
<td>782.3</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-42.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant association between H_DW_D</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-489.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) The formal structure of the log-linear models listed in the table and their substantive meanings are described in section 2.

20 Put otherwise: only individuals who would have been intergenerationally immobile if they were not married have to be added to those intergenerationally mobile via occupation.

21 To be stressed is that, in order to compute the amount of husbands and wives mobile via marriage, we referred, as said in the main text, to either their occupation when they got married or their last occupation before marriage. Instead, the intergenerational mobility table refers to either the current or the last occupation (before leaving the labour market) of interviewees. Hence it may be that some respondents experienced career mobility episodes after getting married. However, upward career mobility rates are very low and those of downward mobility are negligible (see Table 6 above). It can consequently be argued that occupations at marriage are quite reasonable proxies for the current or last occupations (before leaving the labour market) of individuals. Hence, computing the ratio between individuals intergenerationally mobile only via marriage and the total amount of individuals analysed when we studied intergenerational mobility via occupation can be considered as a substantially correct procedure.
To improve our analysis of the contribution of marriage to the shaping of mobility processes in contemporary Italy, we also looked at the net propensities to homogamy and heterogamy. For this purpose we used, as is usual, log-linear models (Table 12).

The results from the models are quite interesting. Firstly, the goodness of fit measures show that the constant associations model fits the data very well. This implies that the interactions occurring between the occupational classes of husbands and those of wives at marriage are stable across birth cohorts. In turn, the above stability means that, on having controlled for the difference between the marginal distribution of occupational classes at marriage among husbands and the corresponding distribution among wives, as well as the variations across cohorts in both of them, the propensity to homogamy and heterogamy has not changed throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Secondly, the large majority of parameters (of the above model) expressing the chances of forming homogamous couples display higher values than those expressing the chances of forming heterogamous couples. Thirdly, the chances of giving origin to heterogamous marriages are stronger when spouses belong to classes at the same hierarchical level or at two different but very close hierarchical levels. Definitely fewer seem to be opportunities to form heterogamous couples whose members belong to hierarchically very distant classes. Hence it can be concluded that most heterogamy is short range.

To provide a more concrete measure of the strength of the propensity to homogamy in contemporary Italy, we used, as is usual, a set of estimated odds-ratios (Table 13). For the sake of brevity, we shall not comment on these in detail and restrict our discussion to two of them. The opportunities for members of the service class to form a homogamous couple are almost four times greater than those of marrying a white-collar man or woman (Table 13). But if we compare the chances of a service-class member forming a homogamous couple rather than marrying an unskilled non-manual or manual worker, we obtain a quite astonishing result: the former chances are more than 273 times greater than the latter (Table 13).
It is not difficult to understand why people – whatever their class – are more inclined to homogamy than heterogamy. It is certainly easier to get along with and court a person with a level of education, tastes and level of income close to one’s own (Schizzerotto, 2002; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003). But it is definitely surprising to find that, besides occupational destinations, social origins also count a great deal in the choice of spouse. This finding turns out from the four-dimensional homo-heterogamy table described in section three. The table is very well reproduced by a log-linear model comprising all the two-way symmetrical interactions between the relevant variables: that is, the classes of origin and classes of arrival of both husbands and wives (Table 14). Three consequences can be drawn from this result.

Firstly, the propensity to homogamy extends – as said – beyond the spouses’ social classes and involves those of their fathers and fathers-in-law. Secondly, despite the well-known disparities between men and women in the labour market, the chances that a man belonging to a given social class will marry...
a woman who has arrived in the same or a different class is identical to that of a woman marrying a man belonging to her class or a different one. Thirdly, the latter statement also holds in the case of fathers and fathers-in-law: the chances of a woman of a given social origin marrying a man descending from the same or a different class are identical to the corresponding chances of a man.

A further reasonable conclusion can be added to the above, although we are not able to prove it directly. We have already shown that the intragenerational propensity to homo-heterogamy is stable over time (see above Table 12). Because both intragenerational and intergenerational propensities to homo-heterogamy prove to be symmetrical, it can be hypothesised that also the intergenerational propensity to homo-heterogamy is stable across cohorts.

Turning to our preferred log-linear model and its parameters, those expressing the propensity to homogamy and heterogamy referred to the spouses’ destination classes (Table 15, lower panel) tell the same story as recounted by the corresponding

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23 Not to bore the reader we have selected and commented upon only two odds-ratios expressing the propensities to homo-heterogamy: those regarding the most common and the most uncommon situations of heterogamy.
parameters of the model regarding the stability over time in these propensities shown at the beginning of this section. The narrative arising from the parameters regarding the associations between spouses’ origins is rather similar to the one above (Table 15, upper panel). The chances of a son (or a daughter) of an entrepreneur, a manager or a professional marrying a daughter (or a son) of this same class of origin are almost four times greater than the chances of him (her) starting a family with a daughter (son) from white-collar origins (Table 15, upper panel). Clearly, we are dealing with a sizeable effect. But even more striking is that the parameter in question is equal to that expressing the strength of the associations between the corresponding couple of destinations (Table 15, lower panel). This means that, in the marriage decisions of descendants from the service class, the origins and destinations of their future spouses are of almost the same weight, at least in the case of the alternative (service class versus white collars) considered here. This statement does not hold when the alternative classes of origin and destination are represented by class IIIb+VIIa. The chances that the off-spring of entrepreneurs, managers and professionals will start a family with the

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**Table 15**

INEQUALITY OF HOMO-HETEROGAMY CHANCES. SELECTED ODDS RATIOS\(^a\) BASED ON THE PARAMETERS EXPRESSING THE \((H_OW_0)^b\) AND THE \((H_DW_D)^b\) SYMMETRIC INTERACTIONS. ITALY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>Odds ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(H_0W_0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\Omega_{I-II(I-IIa),IIa(I-IIa)})</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\Omega_{I-II(I-IIb+VIIa),IIb+VIIa(I-IIb+VIIa)})</td>
<td>9.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H_DW_D)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\Omega_{I-II(I-IIa),IIa(I-IIa)})</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\Omega_{I-II(I-IIb+VIIa),IIb+VIIa(I-IIb+VIIa)})</td>
<td>133.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(a) Odds ratios are indicated by \(\Omega\) rather than by \(\omega\) because they are computed not from the observed frequencies but from those estimated by the relevant log-linear model.

(b) \(H_0\) and \(W_0\) indicate, respectively, the classes of origins of husbands and those of wives while \(H_D\) and \(W_D\) their classes of destination.
descendants of the same class rather than of unskilled non-manual and manual workers are about thirteen times smaller than the chances that a current member of the former class will marry a current member of the same class rather than a member of the unskilled non-manual and manual working class. At any rate is really impressive to see that the chances of the current members of the service class marrying a person of the same class are about 133 times higher than those of his/her forming a family with a member of the unskilled working class (Table 15).

The conclusion to be drawn is quite straightforward. Between the beginning of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, the process of family formation has not contributed to opening the Italian stratification system. On the contrary, matrimonial decisions have generated a mechanism of double social closure in that system. The first closure refers to the mating selection process based on the classes of destination of spouses. The second one regards the conditioning of matrimonial decisions exerted by spouses' social origins. In relative terms, this means that the propensity to homogamy has been far more pronounced than the propensity to heterogamy. But more importantly, the prevalence of homogamy over heterogamy, and the strength of the underlying double closure mechanism, have not declined across birth cohorts.

8. - Conclusions

The main findings and conclusions of our analyses can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, in the period between the beginning of the twentieth century and that of the twenty-first, Italy has strongly upgraded its occupational structure and shifted towards a fairer process by which individuals are allocated among the various occupational classes. This statement holds for both intergenerational mobility patterns and those relating to career mobility. Unfortunately, the above shifts prove to be rather slow and faint.

Secondly, it seems that the timings of occupational upgrading
and that of the increase in the fluidity of the Italian mobility regime have been quite different. The opening of the Italian stratification system becomes really sizeable in the late 1980s. By contrast, the main structural changes in the occupational structure took place from the late 1930s to the late 1970s. This means that the modernisation of the economy has not generated an immediate drive towards greater social fairness in allocation of individuals among the classes of destination. Changes in both a society's institutional arrangements and power relations between social classes are needed to increase social equity.

Thirdly, contemporary Italy's difficult progress towards meritocracy or, as we prefer to put it, towards a situation of reduced inequality in the opportunities and risks of ascending and descending the stratification system, has affected only the workings of the labour market and the economy.

Indeed, we have shown that since the beginning of the twentieth century the processes of mating selection and family formation have acted as mechanisms of social closure contrasting the faint movements towards the greater equality of opportunities observed in the occupational sphere. Put otherwise: family has been a quite strong obstacle against the opening of Italian society. Owing to the weakness and the residual character of the Italian welfare regime, the family has counted a great deal in shaping individuals’ life courses. It has represented the main protective resort against both the minor inconveniencies of everyday life and the more serious difficulties deriving from economic hardship, physical disease or psychological malaise. Hence, still today, Italian families act as highly effective agencies of reproduction of ascriptive inequalities. They thus avert the need for the fairer process of structuring inequalities that emerges, albeit with difficulties, from the economy.
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