

Original research paper

WOMAN PIONEER SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MICRO FACTORS REGARDING THE ROLE OF MIGRATORY WOMEN FROM EASTERN EUROPE

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Abstract

The 90s were the stage of a new type of migration from Eastern Europe that saw women for the first time in the sociological role of pioneer.

The countries of origin most interested in the phenomena were mostly the Russophone ones, above all Ukraine.

On the other hand, the favored receiving country within the European Union has been - since the beginning - Italy. In fact, following the Eurostat data of 2020, of the approximately 800,000 Ukrainians residing in the EU, we see that over a quarter are in Italy with an overwhelming majority on the female front. The 177,000 residents are about 37% of all Ukrainian women in Europe.

One of the macro-sociological reasons envisioned by the expert was the fall of the Eastern bloc, but what were the causes at the micro sociological level that led these social actors to choose one destination rather than another? What are the causes that have favored this type of immigration in the area?

The paper aims to analyze the social changes that invested the European countries and above all Italy, which have been prepared the ground for these new migratory movements since the 1980s. The case study is based on the Russophone community of Cagliari, main city of Sardinia region, an Italian island in the center of the Mediterranean Sea, where the Russophone immigrant community had the opportunity to integrate and start an active cultural exchange thanks to the work of some Cultural Associations which were already active in the area.

Keywords: *Sociology, Migration, Microsociology*

This paper is part of a broader research in the field of sociology of migration, which has its case study on the Russophone community of Cagliari, the main city in the regional island of Italy: Sardinia.

This is the reason why, in this paper, Sardinia has a special focus within the regional context inside Italy. In the last ten years, the community in the island was able to build – with the help of some Cultural Associations, quite a network of activities

in the field of intercultural exchange. The local press has repeatedly praised their cultural initiatives, which have been portrayed in a photographic exhibition called “*the Russian-speaking Diapora in Sardinia*” and in a short documentary film, “*From the east with love*”, by Karim Galici. On a more institutional level, they were able to create a bridge between the Catholic diocese of Cagliari and the patriarchate of Moscow, which led to the creation of the first Sardinian Orthodox church, housed in one of the historic chapels of the Cagliari’s cathedral.

1. Women Pioneer: an identikit

The 90’s were the stage of some great historical changes with important sociological consequences. The Fall of the Soviet Union - a reality that hosted 293 million inhabitants, with the size of the whole North America - was completely unseen. The economic crisis that accompanied the Eastern Europe countries throughout the decade of transition (culminating in the ruble crisis of 1998), can represent what the literature of international migration calls “push factors”: something that makes migrants willing to move abroad.¹

However, what really caught the attention of the researcher in the field, was the fact that the protagonists of the migration were women. Indeed, if we analyze the literature, we will easily find that the portrait figure of the migratory “pioneer” is assimilated with the idea of a young male. As Cvajner stated: “An entire narrative has evolved on these bases: males initiate migration and settlement: women follow, after having passively waited for the return of their men or even actively resisted moving”.²

In this case, instead, we face the opposite situation in which women are the pioneer and the breadwinners, in charge of the family in the sending countries.

Another important factor that should be underlined is the working sector in which these two different pioneers get employed. Male pioneers usually get a job in the manufacturing and constructions sectors, while women pioneers are usually employee in the care work sectors as “*badanti*” (caregiver) or *colf* (a profession which is in between a maid and a cleaning lady).

Without generalizing too much, we can underline an identikit of these women as the following: born in the mid 1950 or later in the Soviet Union as part of the “*new Soviet middle class*”, Russian speakers, usually high educated and involved in professions such as nurse, teacher, social assistance, or economist, usually married or divorced, with children left in their hometowns. They don’t have any previous experience in the care working sector aside from the common practice of taking care of their own older family members.³

¹ Cvajner M. (2019). *Soviet Signoras: Personal and Collective Transformations in Eastern European Migration*. University of Chicago Press

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

After arriving in the country, these new pioneers settle down, building a series of relationships that made possible for their other peers (the followers) to arrive. Their role in establishing stable and relevant migratory flows should not be underestimated. Indeed, it is their “task” to create a network of acquaintances capable of attracting the figure of the followers from the sending to the receiving country.

Even if the experience of the followers is perceived as quite uneasy, it cannot be compared to the cultural shock the pioneers are subjected to. As a matter of facts, the followers arrive in a social world which appear in order, with a network of aids already established by the senior members of the community which build them from scratch.

For this reason, in Sociology of Migration a great amount of literature is now being dedicated to the study of these figures.

2. Why Italy? European data about Eastern Europe migration flow

Today, according to the 2020 World Migration Report, Ukraine is one of the most migration-affected countries in Europe, with a diaspora of up to 20 million people, and 2.5 million labor migrants contributing remittances of US\$11 billion, or one tenth of the country’s GDP.⁴

Looking at the European data in February 2022 (before the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war), we can agree that the migration flow from Eastern Europe, which began in the 1990s, is not only stable, but growing.

If we make an analysis based on both types of residence permits granted in EU (residence permits and residence permits in the EU with a duration of at least 12 months), the main reasons to go abroad seems to be: employment-related reasons (54.3% and 44.8% respectively), family reasons (21.6% and 27.4% respectively) and other reasons (21.2% and 25.7% respectively).⁵

Concerning Europe, of the 5.9 million Ukrainians that have been reported as migrants living abroad, we find as main destination: Poland (an estimated 2 million) and Italy (234,000).⁶

Without doubt this is quite interesting, since according to a neoclassical economic theory, the countries that should be evaluated the most for emigration, should be the ones with higher expected net returns: Austria, Germany, or Scandinavia, for example.⁷

⁴ Migrants & Refugees Section (2020). Migration Profile UKRAINE. Retrieved from <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2020-CP-Ucraina.pdf>

⁵ Eurostat (2022). Ukrainian citizens in the EU. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ukrainian_citizens_in_the_EU#Ukrainian_citizens_authorized_to_stay_in_the_EU

⁶ Migrants & Refugees Section (2020). Migration Profile UKRAINE. Retrieved from <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2020-CP-Ucraina.pdf>

⁷ Fedyuk O., Kindler M. (2016). Ukrainian Migration to the European Union. Lessons from Migration Studies. Springer Nature

In fact, following the literature on the subject, the main driving force to go abroad seems to be the desire to improve the living standard of oneself and one's family, since in the country of origins the wages are quite low.

However, research conducted by Hormel and Southworth (2006)⁸ conclude that people do not choose destinations exclusively based on expected economic gain.

They also use cultural capital (encompassing language, traditions, and education) and social capital.

In her research “International Mobility of Ukrainian Teaching and Research Professionals”, Kupets (2013)⁹ revealed similar conclusions, according to which the most popular reasons for choosing a particular destination country were “having relatives/friends abroad” and “better employment and/or income opportunities compared to other countries”, followed by “knowledge of language of that country” and “geographical/cultural proximity of the country to Ukraine.

This explain why in the European context, Poland is one of the countries more sensitive to this immigration. Following the economic boom of the 2000s, Poland has become quite attractive for Ukrainians, above all for the younger generation.

A March 2021 statistic by the Polish Office for Foreigners shows how: most migrants from Ukraine settling in Poland are young people under 40 years of age. Those aged between 18 - 40 constitute 61% of all migrants from Ukraine, and children and youth under 18 years of age constitute 12%. Ukrainian migrants most often arrive in Poland to work (73%), but also for family purposes (12%) and to study (5%).¹⁰ They are slightly more men who constitute 54% of the population.¹¹

But if this premise is true, then why is Italy, in this framework, so attractive?

If we look at the statistics and at the interviews related to the preferences of the Ukrainians toward a destination rather than another, we found that Italy, at first, doesn't fit the schemes. While Poland is now in its economic boom, the Italian economy is somewhat stagnant, with a pressing phenomenon of brain drain. Also, Poland is geographically and culturally near Ukraine, while Italy is not.

Nevertheless, following the Eurostat data of 2020, of the approximately 800,000 Ukrainians residing in the EU, we see that over a quarter are in Italy.

However, what really strikes from the data is not the mere number, but the overwhelming majority on the female front. The 177,000 Ukrainian female residents in Italy are about 37% of all Ukrainian women in Europe.¹²

⁸ Hormel, L. & Southworth, C. (2006, Jun). Eastward bound: A case study of Post-Soviet labour migration from a rural Ukrainian town, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 58(4), 603–623.

⁹ Kupets, O. (2013). *International mobility of Ukrainian teaching and research professionals*. Kyiv/ Budapest: ILO/ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe.

¹⁰ Lesinska M. (2021) Poland: New statistics on Ukrainian migrants in Poland. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/poland-new-statistics-ukrainian-migrants-poland_en

¹¹ Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców (2021). Obywatele Ukrainy w Polsce – raport. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/obywatele-ukrainy-w-polsce--raport>

¹² Melis V. (2022) In Italia 236mila ucraini (l'80% sono donne). È la comunità più grande in Europa.

The latest data made available by Istat in 2020 reveals how the first sector of employment of these ladies is that of caregivers, followed by other tasks in the context of domestic work.

According to the Domina Observatory on domestic work, this trend is destined to grow further. The forecasts on the need for caregivers in 2050, based on the increase in the population over 80, see two areas of Sardinia in the list of the provinces most sensitive to the increase: Olbia + 130.3% and Cagliari + 123.4%.¹³

At this point, a simplified answer would be “*the demographic winter of the Italian peninsula*”, a term coined by sociologists, and loved by the church¹⁴, to indicate the aging of the population in the face of an ever-lower birth rate.

However, it would be a mistake to ascribe to this factor the sole reason for this trend.

Indeed, it has been since the 1960s that the problem of the demographic winter (or of “*demographic suicide*” to quote Michel Rocard, French Prime Minister, at the end of the conference called “family” of January 20, 1989¹⁵) concerns the entire West European continent and not only Italy.

Focusing on the Sardinian case study, we will now try to explore the sociological micro-factors that may have influenced and prepared the Italian ground for these new migration movements since 1980s.

In this sense, the research highlights: the difference in the General Physical Health of the elder population between northern and southern Europe, the gradual transformation of the Italian family, and the general perception of the ideal accommodation for an elder who is no longer self-sufficient.

The last point analyzes the assessment over the preferences of Sardinians in the choice between RSA (Retirement home) or a caregiver, based on a survey on a basis of 207 participants.

3. Older but not Healthier

The problem of elderly care arises in case the elder is no longer autonomous or self-sufficient.

Aside from the onset of illnesses for which the elder needs a specific medical care which usually lead to hospitalization, society generally interprets “*no longer autonomous*” with mobility issues which could lead to home accidents. It is in these case scenarios that usually the offspring insist with their parents to take a caregiver into service. A professional figure different from that of a nurse (and in this way far

Il sole 24 ore. Retrieved from: https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/in-italia-236mila-ucraini-quasi-l-80percento-sono-donne-AEFgNvFB?refresh_ce=1

¹³ Osservatorio Nazionale Domina sul lavoro domestico (2021). Terzo Rapporto annuale domina sul lavoro domestico 2021.

¹⁴ Montoya R. (2022) Papa Francesco, l'inverno demografico e le nostre fragili relazioni. Rai News. Retrieved from <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2022/01/papa-francesco-linverno-demografico-e-le-nostre-fragile-relazioni-4f6c6177-bdf5-416d-b632-29c4cd8c17fa.html>

¹⁵ Schooyans, Michel. *Le crash démographique*. Paris: Le Sarmant-Fayard, 1999

from the psychological idea of “*being sick*”), but still able to assist the elder in the everyday household chores.

Looking at the data offered by the SHARE research infrastructure (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe) concerning the “*prevalence of age-related health problems*” we see a considerable difference between the countries in the Northern part of Western Europe, compared to the one in the South. Using as evaluating factors the walking speed and the grip strength (which are considered by researchers as less likely to be affected by cultural differences,) we see how prevalence of low walking speed and grip strength is higher in the South, above all in Italy, Spain, and Greece.

*It is interesting to note that the high life expectancies observed in the three Mediterranean populations represented in SHARE are not mirrored by their walking speeds and grip strengths—perhaps the low mortality rates have permitted relatively frail people to survive in these countries.*¹⁶

Sardinia in particular is acknowledged as one of the four “*Blue Zone*”, regions of the world thought to have a higher than usual number of people who live much longer than average.¹⁷ Without wishing to give easy answers, the data supports a possible connection between this great longevity and the onset of age-related health problems which consequently lead to the need for assistance to the elder at home.

4. The evolution of the Italian Family

To quote Ginsborg: “There is no such thing as the Italian family, but there are many different families, each with its own history, its own secrets, passions, disappointments”¹⁸.

Although this is a fact, it is also true that - throughout history - the perception of “*what a family is*”, “*what makes us a family*”, has undergone countless changes, interconnected with great social ones, from Industrialization to the Youth Movements, passing through the Feminist Revolution. Nowadays the idea of being a family is quite broader compared to the one Italians had a few generations ago.

However, the aim of this research is not as much to evaluate the concept of the family *per se*, as to analyze the relationship between parents and offspring, how this has undergone an evolution, and how this evolution had a consequence in the issues concerning the assistance to the elder in case this one would be no longer autonomous or self-sufficient.

¹⁶ Mackenbach J. (2022). Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). Health and Health Care. Retrieved from <http://www.share-project.org/share-research-results/health-and-health-care.html>

¹⁷ Poulain M., Pes G., Grasland C., Carru C., Ferrucci F. (2004), Identification of a geographic area characterized by extreme longevity in the Sardinia Island: the AKEA study. *Experimental Gerontology*, Elsevier 39 (9), pp.1423-1429

¹⁸ Ginsborg P. (2001) *La società italiana, 1945-2000. Ritratto dell'Italia*. Laterza

4.1 Interregional migration and the Housing problems

Under this framework, it is quite relevant to begin our analysis emphasizing the “*problem of housing spaces*”.

Socio-historical research has shown how the family begins to substantially change due to the break of the connection between “home” and “work”. Historically, this is the moment when peasants left the countryside to go to work in the urban factories, and the rigid inheritance of the family business crumbles.¹⁹

In Italy this change has been slow and gradual. The offspring get married and moves to urban centers where the possibility of a factory job appears as a sound prospect. Instead, parents remain at home in the countryside – often under the eyes of the community or of a relative.

In case the elder gets sick, the offspring is forced to make a choice: give up a stable work in the city to return to the hometown and take personally care of the sick parent or bring the elder to live with his family in the urban house.

What I think is important to stress here, regardless of the subjective choice of the person, is how the two solutions bring great stress, whether for the parents or the offspring, since both lead to a certain degree of sacrifices which should not be underestimated.

Returning to the hometown means giving up a safe work or put the future of the family at risks. On the other hand, bringing the elder to the city, means submitting oneself to a domestic situation in which the lack of space and privacy can lead to clashes and relational exacerbations. From the elder’s side, the idea of leaving the house and the familiarity of the village means great psychological and – sometimes – physical discomfort.

4.2 Lower birth-rate and feminism

According to many sociologists and demographic historians, another factor that had an impact on the evolution of the family has been the decline in births.

Historically, all over Europe (and beyond) the idea to perceive one’s own children as a “*safe retirement plan*” and an investment for old age was quite common. Indeed, having several children meant wealth, because - at least one of them - would have taken care of the family house, and of their parents in their old age.

Usually it was the last child, or to be exact, the last daughter, who had the duty to remain at home to look after the aged parents.

Although without doubt this fact had an impact to the evolution of the family, if we look at the Italian scenario, we see how this issue - up to the 1980-90s - affected the North more than the South:

In the North we therefore find the smallest families: on average they have 2.8 members, but one out of five is made up of a single person. On the other hand, in the South there are more numerous family units: families made up of six or more members make up 12%, the norm is 3.7 members. It is in the big cities of the Piedmont, Liguria,

¹⁹ Calanca D. (2005). Storia della famiglia italiana. Ruoli e passione nel XX secolo. Metauro.

and Lombardy we meet the great solitude of the elderly [...]. In these regions, the percentage of childless couples and single-parent family units is higher.²⁰

For this reason, having as the linchpin the “parent-offspring” relationship - I believe it is important to link the evolution of the idea of a “*child as a retirement plan*” close to another factor that has significantly impacted the family over the course of the twentieth century: the Feminist Movement and the gradual emancipation of daughters.

The great Feminist Movements, hand in hand with the Youth Movements of 1968s, highlighted equal opportunities and equal duties for both sexes, stressing the idea that women should be able to free themselves from the social chains that inhibit them.

Under this perception, it seems logical how a daughter gradually loses the idea that she has a moral duty – just because she is a woman and the youngest - to look after her parents while her older brothers and sisters marry or move out of the nest.

The idea of equal duties and shared responsibility had also an impact on the evolution of the interrelationship between brothers and sisters regarding the responsibility for the well-being of the older parents. In this sense this idea of “duty” evolves from a merely “moral” to an “emotional” one.

4.3 “I love my parents, but I could not stand to live with them”

The last fact in the evolution of the relationship between parents and offspring regard specifically the last generations, those born between the 1980s and 1990s.

It is a social as well as a psychological one that is often underestimated, which tries to answer the following question: *why do I want to detach myself from my parents?*

Indeed, the desire to leave the nest is something that belongs to every generation, however – due to the nowadays particular Italian socioeconomics situations –

I believe that this desire is felt with more urgency by the young generations of adults born between the 1980’s and the 1990’s.

With the decline of the *patriarchal family* - characterized by the presence of a rigid separation of roles between members based on sex and age, with a relational style based on the unconditional authority of the head of the family - and the rise of the *intimate marital family* characterized, instead, by more flexible roles, and by more symmetrical personal relationships, based on affectivity and intimacy between the various components - a thesis emerges. It states how the individual members of this “new” family develop and accentuate a greater propensity for autonomy and individual freedom.²¹

Today’s parents – borne after 1958s - belong to a generation which no longer base their family relationships on a hierarchical and authoritarian base, but on dialogue and understanding. The current young adults, age between 20-30 years old, benefit from this new relational system.

²⁰ “La Repubblica” (1985). 14 settembre 1985.

²¹ Calanca D. (2005). Storia della famiglia italiana. Ruoli e passione nel XX secolo. Metauro.

This change leads to a process of negotiation, mutual tolerance, informal bargaining which allows parents and children to continue living under the same roof even after the latter's majority age. Thus, we speak about the "long family of the young adult", that is, prolonged cohabitation of the children.²²

The Istat 2021 research on "aspects of daily life" found that the percentage of young people between 18 and 34 who live in a family with at least one parents is equal to 67.6%. The majority concentrated in the south and the islands (Sardinia and Sicily).²³

Researchers tend to connect this new family phenomena with a positive change in the inter-family relationship system, with an increase in intergenerational communication skills.

In 2020, a Forbes' article, based on American research by Caring Advisor, explores how "Millennials are really stepping up for their aging parents", showing how they seem to be the generation which cares most about the wellbeing of their parents and that are already planning to care for them.²⁴

However questionable this observation may be, the study makes us reflect on the willingness to "settle one's parents", in a situation that is as opportune and desirable for the parent as it is for the offspring.

With adequate living space and time available, many of today's parents belonging to the 60's generation would not negatively view the idea of having an elder parent nearby.

G., female, age 46+ said: "*I will be glad to have my dad at home if only I had the space*".

M., female, age 46+ said: "*I assisted my parents in their home with the help of my sister and of good caregivers. It was very difficult, my mother after 2 strokes needed continuous assistance. [...] Then we took care of my father who died in 2019. Unfortunately, those who care for their loved ones at home receive very little external help. However, I would do it again. There remain indelible memories of the experiences lived.*"²⁵

Instead, young adults above all believe that the "most desirable solution" is the one in which the privacy is not compromised, and this could be related to the long coexistence they had to endure with their parents.

In fact, no matter how largely positive this long coexistence may appear, if we look at the Italian scenario (above all in the South), we see how this depends by a social problem more than by personal choice. The young adults feel ready to leave the nest, but, for most of them this is almost impossible. The general economic crisis,

²² Ibid.

²³ Istat (2022). Aspetti della vita quotidiana. Retrieved from <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=17631>

²⁴ Perna M. (2020) Millennials Are Really Stepping Up For Their Aging Parents. Forbes Career. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markperna/2020/04/07/millennials-are-really-stepping-up-for-their-aging-parents/?sh=429405cb3909>

²⁵ This interview is part of the survey prepared for the RSA perception. Since the interview was anonymous, random letters of the alphabet were reported to indicate the interviewees.

the growing unemployment even for the most educated, and the increasing housing prices, keep the idea “to leave the nest” just a dream.

In this way, the long coexistence in a place where the young adults are still forced to follow rules that are not their own and where the spaces do not belong to them, leads to frustration – even if the parents-children’s relationship is the rosiest.

For them, the idea of a possible lack of privacy in a future already so difficult to achieve lead to distress, to a choice that is interpreted as “compulsory” and not “voluntary”.

They love their parents, and they want to take care of them, but in a way in which the sacrifices are reduced to the bone: for them and the parents.

All these factors lead to a management of the elders different from those implemented in the past.

Gradually, over the generations, also thanks to the great socio-economic changes, the solutions adopted in the past are not perceived as feasible anymore. The offspring reaches the conclusions that they need a new way to manage the elder – possibly a cheap and a decent one for their parents.

As stated, this has been neither sudden nor fast. In the early 1990s, when the caregiver market began to flourish in Italy due to migrations from Eastern Europe, many families found themselves doubtful about leaving their loved one in the hands of a stranger.²⁶

However, after a short period of time, the gradual recognition of the considerable comfort that resulted, led families to increasingly prefer this type of assistance over other solutions.

5. Case-study: Perception on RSA in Sardinia

We will now evaluate as case study, a survey lead on a population of 207 participants, with a sampling error 7%, on the perception of Sardinians over the RSA (retirement home) in comparison to the accommodation of the elderly at home with a caregiver.

By carefully exploring their preferences and bias, I believe it is possible to outline the reason why within the European Union, Italy has the primacy as far as it concerns women’s immigration from Ukraine, whose citizens are for the 65% involved in the domestic work sector with assistance to the elders.

In Italy the idea of the retirement home is strictly connected to the RSA even if between the two exist a big difference: while the retirement home is designed to take care of elderly which are self-sufficient, the RSA is better suited for elders who are no longer self-sufficient. In Northern Europe, the perception on retirement places seems not so unreasonable, as a survey conducted in UK by Clarke Willmott in 2021 shows how over 50% of respondents would consider moving to a retirement development before the age of 75.²⁷

²⁶ Cvajner M. (2019). *Soviet Signoras: Personal and Collective Transformations in Eastern European Migration*. University of Chicago Press

²⁷ CW Later Living Report (2021). *Perceptions of Retirement Living Report 2021*

On the other hand, in the mind of Italians, RSA and retirement home are strictly connected, seemingly because the idea to leave one's home in old age is linked to the assumption that you could no longer provide for yourselves without help.

Also, the accommodation in RSA is considered extremely costly and demeaning for the elder. The idea to send one's parents to a medical structure – in most of the case - is considered only in the case the general health of the elder is at risk and there is the need for hospitalization.

In this framework, the prospect to employ a caregiver reveals itself as the ideal situation.

The survey was proposed to a sample of 207 participants, the majority who agreed to answer are women (73,9%), age 46+ (79,7%). The participants between age 30-45 have been only the 15% and the rest were younger. At a first look the difference between generation didn't seem to alter the general perception over the RSA (retirement home), however since most of the sample is part of the generation born in between the end of the 50's to the end of the 70's, we can concentrate our analysis on their perception also in the optic that they are the one that right now are in the situation of caring directly for their parents.

For what concerns the opinion of the young adults (the generation born between the 80s-90s), their answers seem to mirror the one of their parents, however a further study should be done, since the sample is too small.

What emerges from the opinion poll is the fact that most of the sample has a strong preference over the accommodation of the elder at home with a caregiver. At the question: "In case one of your parents would be no longer self-sufficient, you would prefer for him: an accommodation in RSA or at home with a caregiver", 80,2% answered that they would prefer to employ a caregiver.

Even if the RSA is perceived as "safer" for the elder, the general opinion over the structures is still considered negative. P., 46+, men, said: "*RSA are supposed to be places of well-being and recreation for the elderly, but are perceived as squalid parking places.*"

Taking into assumption what the elder would prefer for his/her own sake, the 58,9% answered that they would prefer to employ a caregiver, the 29,5% would prefer to be left alone just in the care of their offspring and only the 11,6% said they would like to go in RSA.

The accommodation in RSA, compared to the caregiver is also considered costly, and the 80,2% of the sample believe that the elder's pension is not enough to cover the cost of the general assistance. Over the subject F., women, 46+, claimed: "*As for myself, I would have no doubts, I would choose the RSA, but surely, when the time comes, my retirement will not be enough*", however she was sure that her elder would prefer to be left alone just in the care of her offspring.

Regarding the pandemic by Covid-19, it seems that the event didn't affect the opinion of the sample. Indeed, the survey didn't reveal any change in favor or against

the RSA. This is interesting because in Sardinia, and all over Italy, the news talked a lot about the increasing deaths inside RSAs and the phenomenon of the “abandoned elderly”.

6. Conclusion

A middle-aged woman, usually loving, but also firm, of fair complexion, Christian (or better, from a Christian country), without a family to take care off, inclined to tight working hours living in the home of the elder - this typical idea of a Ukrainian caregiver is highly attractive to Italian families looking for domestic help for their parents.²⁸

Indeed, this professional figure helps tons of families to achieve their duty to look for their elder without oblige them to tons of sacrifices.

Above all, they found themselves in the ideal condition to help their elders without forcing them to leave their house or their normal habits, which is perceived as the most demeaning.

Even if, at the beginning, there was some concern about leaving one’s parents in the hand of a stranger, time and word of mouth have not only normalized this profession, but made it highly necessary.

The Ukrainian pioneers have established a strong network both between themselves and in collaboration with no-profit and cultural associations which were able to safeguard their interests and help them legitimize their presence in Italy according to the law.

This allowed the migratory flow to stabilize, as word of mouth did not occur only between families in Italy, but also between the migrant and her peers in the sending country. Several of them insisted with their daughters to come in Italy to work in the sector knowing that in the sending country the wages were not as good.

Of this we have the example of Janna, one of the pioneers of the Cagliari’s community, arrived in the Island in the early 2000’s, who after 15 years of work asked her older daughter - a former teacher - to come in Sardinia to work as a caregiver for a family, and she accepted. Their plan, before the war, was to reunite the whole family as soon as the opportunity arose.

However, this is not just Janna’s story, this is the story of tons of Easter European women pioneers and followers.

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