

PhD in Urban and Regional Development

Research Title: Social Listening & Digital Suburbs: a guide to break the Digital Divide.

Digital Divide: Listening the Suburbs.

Funded by	DIST/Ateneo fondi CRT
------------------	-----------------------

Supervisor	Sara Monaci (sara.monaci@polito.it)
-------------------	--

Contact	-
----------------	---

Context of the research activity	<p>According to the Sustainable Development Goal 11.3, the research aim is to promote inclusive and sustainable urbanization and to enhance the opportunities for the planning and the governance of human settlements, as much participatory, integrated and sustainable as possible in every part of the world. The recent pandemic enlarged pre-existing forms of exclusion - for example digital inequalities which emerged as serious obstacles to the possibility of relationships and socialization - and revealed how some phenomena - eg. smart working - can evolve from desirable opportunities to forms of existential peripheralization (Ruzzeddu, 2020; Bolisani et al., 2020)¹. Here</p>
---	--

the concept of digital suburbs corresponds not only to a spatial context - the house, the neighborhood, the city - but also to a social and symbolic periphery where the individual is psychologically “at the borders” of a social system (Papa, 2021)². It is also interesting to reflect on the role of media in spreading imaginaries and narratives aimed at enhancing *home* as a new *social hub*, but also highlighting its limits and contradictions. We are facing an epochal transition that the traditional media apparatuses are struggling to frame, but which is taking shape in recent months with a decisive character. These processes are difficult to grasp in a systematic way, because they are in a phase of ascent and in constant change, and because they are composed of many minor phenomena that may sometimes interfere.

How to investigate the effects of transitions in relation to inclusion?

The operational problem arising for many States in the promotion of social policies is inherent in the conceptual categories and indicators once applied to European countries which hardly reflect the realm of countries with relatively simple and emerging economies. To integrate the knowledge allowed by the eminently quantitative indicators, it is useful to proceed in a complementary manner through qualitative analysis tools. This constitutes a possible approach for a society that is changing, in relation to structural and emergency factors, in ways and forms that are sometimes still difficult to grasp.

Focusing on Italy, this approach could be useful to grasp internal differences among regions, in a country that historically presents structural differences and inequalities. Breaking the Digital Divide can be seen as a way to exit the dichotomy and bring the north and the south closer.

Ruzzeddu M. “Corona virus e smart working: gli scenari possibili” in: Marchetti, M. C., & Romeo, A. (Eds.). (2020). #Noirestiamoacasa: Il mondo visto da fuori ai tempi del Covid-19. Mimesis.; Bolisani, E., Scarso, E., Ipsen, C.,

Papa, R. (2021). Digital divide e disuguaglianze digitali: periferie sociali ed esistenziali nella network society. *Sociologie: teorie, strutture, processi*, 223.

Objectives

The project analyzes smart working as a complex urban phenomenon articulated into some characterizing dimensions - changes in production dynamics, social relations, the reconfiguration of working contexts - and of which the pandemic has accelerated and influenced the present transitions. The phenomenon involves multiple dimensions of inclusion processes: the technological dimension linked to digital inequalities, the spatial dimension relating to the reconfiguration of workplaces and its relations with wider contexts such as the neighborhood and urban realities and finally the dimension linked to discourses and the communication strategies framing the contradictions.

According to this perspective, the project will be divided into 3 objectives focused on the Italian territory:

1) Definition of a map of the dominant narratives on the smart working theme seen as opportunity or marginalization, social hub / electronic cottage vs digital periphery, in social environments such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. It is also intended to identify the dominant voices: subjects (e.g. women, young professionals, representatives of associations etc.) active or "much mentioned" in social media to be subjected to a more in-depth qualitative analysis. Particular attention will also be paid to the analysis of the lexicon used to identify communication drifts related to hate-speech or gender discrimination.

2) Based on the themes that emerged from the previous objective, the project wants to focus on the new forms of digital inequality (Van Dijk, 2003)³ in relation to the reorganization of work in smart mode, in the post Covid19 city. Particular attention will be paid to the condition of women, to understand whether smart working is, or may be, a new process for (re)producing gender inequalities and which strategies could be undertaken to mitigate them.

3) Starting from the results of the analysis conducted in the previous points, the reconfigurations of urban work spaces will be analyzed in relation to the emerging forms and needs of smart-working. These processes will also be investigated to identify digital peripheries or areas that are particularly marginalized from

	<p>the point of view of digital infrastructures and / or socially characterized by a poor literacy to smart working tools and which often do not correspond to places and territories historically characterized as such.</p>
--	---

<p>Skills and competencies for the development of the activity</p>	<p>The candidate should have transversal skills to combine IT knowledge related to Social Network Analysis tools and Social Media Analytics with a good attitude towards social and communication issues.</p>
---	---