Industry 4.0. Autonomy and control at work: the Italian case

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVE

“AUTONOMY” AND “CONTROL” OVER TIME:  
• The elementary symptoms

SUMMARY INDICATORS OF AUTONOMY AND CONTROL:  
• Methodology  
• Analysis

CONCLUDING REMARKS
Theoretical framework and general objective

- Reorganization processes related to technological development will lead to an increase in the demand for qualified work (Autor, 2015, 2019; Kiley, 1999).
- Knowledge and human capital become key factors to ensure the solidity and sustainability of enterprises (Tronti, 2015) → Industry 4.0 Programmes.
- Use of knowledge and skills in human resources involves production changes and reorganization of labour (Sai, 2017).
What about the quality of work?

Use of technology is an input in the cognitive professional activities often associated with **higher autonomy and control at work**

We need to monitor in which way technological changes impact on **organizational models**, on the **work processes** and on the **quality of work**
In Italy a conceptual framework started between the late '70s and early ‘80s Luciano Gallino and Michele La Rosa

"self-determination" and “self-regulation” at work (Sai, 2017)
Theoretical framework and general objective

Research questions:
- How the dimensions of autonomy and control have changed over time?
- Which types of workers were most affected by this trend?
- How (and which) technologies impact on these two dimensions?

Methodology:
Analysis of a set of "elementary symptoms" and of two composite indicators related to “autonomy” and “control” dimensions

Data: Inapp - Quality of Work Survey (sample survey) launched in 2002 and carried out in 2006, 2010 and 2015

Inapp conduces the QW-survey and operationalizes the dimensions according to Gallino and La Rosa approach and taking the cue from the Eurofound - European Working Condition Survey (EWCS)
The elementary symptoms over time: 2006 – 2010 - 2015

**AUTONOMY OF WORKERS**

Increase (slowly) of repetitive/routine tasks especially for temporary contracts, women and less educated

More chance to choose/change order of tasks and duties (who cannot choose decline from 45% in 2006 to about 30% in 2015)

The direct supervision has not decreased especially for women and small companies (in Italy we record an historic rigidity in self-determination of work schedules)

Decrease of workers who can choose or change “work intensity” and pace: (before 2010 following market demand - after 2010 following performance target and direct supervisor)

more automation and flexibility → more supervising?
CONTROL ON WORK

General increase in the possibility for workers to choose strategies to be adopted and the objectives to be pursued (from 25.3% in 2006 to 42.2% in 2015)

Increase of workers who declare to coordinate one or more colleagues (more responsibilities → Industry 4.0 & Supervising model?)

less participation during the economic crisis, defined as chances to choose strategies and goals (2010 wave)

Decrease the share of workers having the possibility to plan their activities and to change work techniques and methods (in 2015 = 26.8%)
Summary indicators of autonomy and control

Methodology:

Single variables are dichotomized by assigning to different responses a value equal to 1 in the cases of more autonomy and more control and zero in the other cases.

The algebraic sum of the elementary symptoms generates the two composite indicators assuming values from 0 to 10.

For a better understanding of the indicators and to compare them with some variables representing workers characteristics and their job (age, gender, profession, sector, etc.), the two indicators are reclassified in three levels:

- From 0 to 4 = low
- 5 = medium
- From 6 to 10 = high
Summary indicators of autonomy and control

Elementary symptoms and comprehensive indicators

Elementary symptoms:
1. Routine tasks
2. Chance to choose or change the order of tasks
3. Work directly supervised
4. Flexible working time schedules
5. Chance to choose or change working speed and paces
6. Pace of work dependent on the work done by colleagues
7. Pace of work dependent on demands from customers, passengers, pupils, patients, etc.
8. Pace of work dependent on the numerical production targets or performance targets
9. Pace of work dependent on the automatic speed of a machine or movement of a product
10. Pace of work dependent on the direct control of your boss

Comprehensive indicators:
1. Chance to choose strategies and goals
2. Chance to choose methods and techniques of work
3. Chance to choose the plan of the activities
4. Responsibility and number of workers supervised
5. Work in a group or team that has common tasks and can plan its work
6. Job involving a personal assessment of the quality of the own work
7. Motivating work
8. Involved in improving the work organisation or work processes
9. Chance to apply new ideas in your work
10. Presence of a worker representative
Summary indicators of autonomy and control

Employers distribution among summary indicators of autonomy and control
Year 2015 (%)

High and medium autonomy levels have a higher concentration than the corresponding levels relating to control.

Source: own calculations based on INAPP-QdL
Autonomy and control: the key determinants

Autonomy and control by some characteristics of the worker, Year 2015 (%)

Source: own calculations based on INAPP-QdL
Autonomy and control: the key determinants

Autonomy and control by characteristics of the enterprises in which the worker is employed, Year 2015 (%)

Source: own calculations based on INAPP-QdL
Autonomy and control: the key determinants

Autonomy and control by use of technologies, Year 2015 (%)

Source: own calculations based on INAPP-QdL
The analysis of the **elementary symptoms** (historical trends) of autonomy and control highlights a scenario with

- **continuing transformations** that influenced the ability of workers to affect the performance of their work activities as well as those of the company.

- In general, the **years of the crisis seem to be a break point** between a starting period (2006) in which workers were polarized between high and low levels in autonomy and control and a final period (2015) in which a higher concentration is observed into intermediate levels.

The analysis of the **composite indicators** (2015) pointed out how some characteristics are still qualifying workers as more disadvantaged in their degree of autonomy and control:

- **Young people, women and workers with fixed-term contracts are the categories most penalized.** This confirms the well-known segmentation of the Italian labour market.

New trends are emerging in the relationship between autonomy, control and use of new technologies. **The impact of technologies is non-neutral for the working life:** the **use of computer** equipment or software is associated with high levels of autonomy and control, while **automation** affects both indicators negatively.


