

## *Editoriale*

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In 1946, when the World Health Organisation pointed out the physical, psychological and social factors in the establishment of a definition of health, which went far beyond the mere absence of disease, a long journey began that has led to personal development and growth as key factors in one's own experience of health. Although there has subsequently been much talk about this definition by referring to it in a static, perhaps utopian sense, and numerous ways to redefine it have been proposed, we should say that, at the time, it was a real revolution in healthcare systems to introduce psychic and social factors as being inescapably tied to the purely physical and, by additionally adding the concept of wellness, as an integral element to be desired and sought after by the individual. Perhaps, it is the greater and greater awareness that the general population has of these aspects that has made health as a subject so much more present in the minds of many.

Aquilino Polaino-Lorente speaks of a new salutogenic model that does not consider health and disease as two mutually opposing forces, but rather as a *continuum*. He does not begin by addressing the reasons why certain individuals become ill, but rather what the factors are that make certain individuals from a particular population not acquire this or that disease. It is therefore about anticipating the behavioural strategies to optimise or stabilise health and integrating them into a culture of prevention. If, as it has been said that, "one becomes ill according to how one lives", then it is of vital importance that individuals and communities become aware of this as being the driving force behind one's wellbeing.

But the principle of prevention is not something new. We can trace it back to the hippocratic oath of the medical profession: *primum non nocere*. Neither the problems themselves or concerns over them are new. Plato, Lucretius, and later Galen had already described some occupational diseases

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that occurred in mining. Agricola and Bauer also speak of the ailments of metal mining workers. Paracelsus refers to diseases experienced by smelters in 1567. Of course, we cannot fail to mention Bernardino Ramazzini with his *De Morbis Artificum Diatriba* (1690), who was already talking in his work about the term hygiene as we conceive it today, describing up to fifty-four different professions and their main risks, and establishing a cause-effect relationship between the presence in the environment of certain agents and the emergence of the disease. Ramazzini carried out an epidemiological systematisation, until then unpublished, distinguishing between work-related diseases and those merely aggravated by the work. And obviously all that concerns the world of work is a key element in this construction process for the intended health system.

In the nineteenth century, and as a result of the Industrial Revolution, several scholars began to discuss the impact of new ways of working in health. Villerme, Guépin, Penot and Benoiston de Chateduneuf, among others, show in their studies how worker mortality in those new factories became so alarming that only turning to the peasant population allowed one to “replenish” the workforce. The intervention of legislative power in the field of social protection of workers, that started primarily in Britain, was therefore due to both the organised struggle of the nascent labour movement as well as the influence of social reformers, philanthropists, physicians, and humanists. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it is fair to recognise the pioneering role played by the Italians in occupational medicine (already understood as a discipline) and the driving force behind the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the post-war popularisation of Occupational Health Services in companies around Europe.

In 1973, Daniel Bell had already predicted the progressive transformation of our societies into post-industrial environments. In his social prognosis work he sets out how in the United States up until the start of the Second World War employment was balanced, and how after that point the growth indexes began to separate in an accelerated manner. Between 1947 and 1968, there was a growth of 60% in services and less than 10% in industry. This society, anticipated by Bell, is that of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, exemplified by industrial hubs with an almost ghostly appearance, controlled by only a few engineers and maintenance staff, alongside a human swarm that occupies the new office buildings. This situation has come to pass but coexists with areas that are underdeveloped economically, where archaic forms of work persist which are now

empowered by the relocation of chemical industries, manufacturing or footwear from the first world.

These are the inconsistencies of our globalised world, where industries even have to watch over the mental health of their employees in the first world as a result of the powerful social control that is exercised in many countries, and where all kinds of contaminants are used without adequate controls, or where they are very precarious. But the fourth industrial revolution is already underway. Our societies are being affected, in recent decades, by numerous transformative factors that work to loosen the social structures built in the previous century. These are fundamentally the impact of information and communication technologies, digitalisation, automation and industry 4.0. Those who generate these new forms of labour organisation develop in this definitively globalised environment and present questions for work stability, legislation, global governance and even for traditional models of representation for workers and businesspeople.

Many thinkers of the past century pointed out from an optimistic point of view, that the world was walking towards a leisure society, where computers and machines would be able to take on the more repetitive and burdensome tasks, thus allowing for a creative leisure time for most people. The idea of the “end of work” held a prominent place in discussions about the future. However, work – even highly modified in all its forms and mechanisms – remains a core element in the development and welfare of the people. Machines have permitted a widespread increase in productivity, but have not freed people from the need to work to survive in the majority of cases, or to enable one to develop oneself personally.

All indications are that this will continue. Work is changing and will change profoundly, and in ways that may be unexpected from our current outlook, but it will continue to be the main coordinating element in our societies in the medium term. Now, how should we deal with the challenges that the future of work raises? In what direction is the business world heading and what impact could this have on the health and wellbeing of the workers? We understand that we need to develop a new explanatory paradigm, which would be able to respond to this increasing complexity from the world of work and that would help to improve governance and workplace risk prevention within this context of change.

In the first place, one must deal with changes in the labour market that suggest that the majority of the work force will end up being autonomous in a little more than a decade. Formulas such as telecommuting, working to objectives, part-time and fixed-term contracts will prevail, and pressure

workers to live in an environment of instability and increased competitiveness that may worsen their working conditions.

Social classes have not only not died out, but have been reconfigured, generating different worker groupings: a new creative class, supported by new technologies and possibilities that are opening up to increase their social and economic position, a wide base of workers in the service sector with low qualification, financial remuneration and even worse working conditions. There will also be a significantly large part of the population, that will live in precarious or marginal employment conditions, or with no employment at all, for whom the need for social assistance or a basic rent begins to be seen more and more clearly as the only possible guarantee of surviving in minimum conditions of dignity. Another challenge is the ageing of the working population at the global level. People are increasingly living longer and in better health conditions, which puts a huge pressure on protection and social security systems. The answer is that states propose postponing the access to retirement more and more as a means of containing costs, and which must necessarily be accompanied by continuous training processes and of ergonomic adaptation of work areas as the development of diversity and people's competitive level obviously continues to alter with age and experience.

In addition, training of workers as a group cannot be understood as mere continuous instruction on a previously established rigid basis with subsequent small modifications, but rather the changes begin to be so profound and drastic that a much more flexible initial training is demanded, oriented toward the development of competencies that favour the capacity to learn on a long-term basis.

As we can see, this new revolution in the world of work is involving a change in the socio-economic paradigm with enormous implications for the labour market. The challenge now is to cope with all these changes in a rational manner, while respecting universal rights and safeguarding decent work. This monographic number from *Sicurezza e Scienze Sociali* magazine points in this direction and is intended to provide an interdisciplinary approach to some of these phenomena. We will try to better understand the interactions between the search for constant improvement of overall company results and the contribution that human resources management policies, innovative organisational models and new management cultures can make to worker motivation and to improving their working conditions.

A safe and healthy working environment has to become increasingly integral and connected to a general concept of health that goes beyond the traditional one of prevention of occupational risks in the company, and to-

wards a much more comprehensive promotion of health and safety in all areas. As the WHO recognised in the Adelaide Declaration (2010) the causes of health and well-being are of economic and social origin and although many sectors already contribute to better health, there are still some important gaps. The ILO has also repeatedly declared in many of its documents that, to start with, work should not make people ill or kill, it should on the other hand promote human and labour rights for those who perform or contribute to it in some way.

In addition, alongside this statement of principles, we should once again reiterate that there is a great deal of macroeconomic evidence that suggests that there is a positive correlation between the improvement of living conditions, work, health, and overall productivity: an increase of 508 kilocalories per day in the diet of the population of a country contributes to an increase in its per capita GDP of 0.7%, the increase in 10% of life expectancy can increase the economic growth of a nation by 0.4%. Several studies carried out by various actors such as EU-OSHA, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and the World Economic Forum confirm a return on investment ratio ranging between 2 and 3 euros, on average, for each euro invested in the prevention of occupational hazards.

So, today, it is urgent to encourage a reflection on the part of the Social Sciences about this process of organisational, social and economic change and to try to identify those practical elements that enable global development, with special attention to the social dimension and respect for the environment. It is about building theoretical reflections, identifying good practices and encouraging empirical research that show the path toward a world of sustainable work, which will encourage good productive results in synergy with social innovation, the prevention of occupational risks and the health and safety of the people.