



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI ROMA TRE
DIPARTIMENTO DI ECONOMIA

**GENDER DISPARITIES IN ITALY FROM A HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE**

Valeria Costantini and Salvatore Monni

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Gender Disparities in Italy from a Human Development Perspective

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Abstract

(1) All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions.

(2) It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country.*

Sixty years after the first political election in which women voted in Italy (1946), and considering that the Article 3 of the Italian Constitution reminds the role of the republic to promote formal (art. 3.1) and substantial (art. 3.2) equality of Italian citizens, the aim of this paper is to analyse, which is situation of the gender disparities in Italy and how such disparities are distributed among Italian regions. In order to quantify such disparities a comprehensive framework for assessment is required. First, we will compare at national and regional level traditional indicators as income per capita, employment and educational level. Secondly, adopting a human development perspective, we will build some regional Gender Human Development indices with the aim to catch the disparities in terms of capabilities for men and women. Finally to better understand our results, we will build an index of empowerment using data concerning number of seats in national parliament and regional assemblies, in order to catch such existing disparities from a different point of view. In our opinion, the gender disparities in the empowerment dimension and the gender disparities in the other social dimensions are mutually reinforcing, where lack of equally distributed political power corresponds to less gender-related policy actions, and therefore wider disparities in daily life.

Keywords: Gender disparities, Human Development, Empowerment

JEL Codes: I3, J16, J21, O15, R1

*Translation from Italian is by the Italian government official web site:
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1. Introduction

The 2nd June 2006 was the Anniversary for sixty years after the first political election in which women could vote in Italy.¹ In 2008 it will be the Memorial Day for the adoption of the Italian Constitution. It is the Constitution itself which remembers the role of the Republic to promote the formal (art. 3.1) as well as the substantial (art. 3.2) equality of all Italian citizens.

Up to date, differences among individuals (citizens and not) still remain hard to reduce in Italy. In particular, gender disparities, as well as regional disparities, remain strongly evident, with a long-term dynamic trend, hence stimulating a great concern about the political process of the last sixty years.

Far from a political paper, this work aims at analysing gender disparities in Italy with a specific geographical focus, the Italian Regions. In our opinion, the well-known North-South regional divide highly debated in Italy could be further analysed adopting such a gender perspective. Furthermore, the aim of the paper is to analyse gender disparities and inequalities adopting the capabilities approach initially developed by Amartya Sen, and afterwards elaborated by many scholars and international organisations.

The empirical investigations on a gender-capabilities approach receive inspiration from the so-called human development paradigm, described in the annual Human Development Reports published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Moreover, starting from the first contributes provided by Sen in 1970s, Martha Nussbaum helped to clarify the strong relationships between the capabilities approach and a gender-oriented idea of human well-being. Therefore, the concepts of welfare and utility analysed within a neoclassic utilitarian framework are completely reviewed in the capability approach, where classic utility definition based on achievement of high income levels is substituted with the concepts of capabilities and functionings. In this new theoretical framework, the concept of poverty itself appears as a substantially different one, where it is not lack of income that matters but lack of capabilities. In-

¹ The exact reference is the political vote on the 2nd June 2006 for the referendum Monarchy-Republic and for the composition of the Constituent Commission (the official political institution responsible for the formation of the new Italian Constitution).

come represents a means to acquire higher well-being levels, while other dimensions of human life are evaluated as necessary in order to guarantee a decent standard of living. Access to resources, a long and healthy life, and access to education are the three basic dimensions chosen by the UNDP to quantify the human development level, starting from the capabilities approach. What strongly emerged is the reduced role of policy actions devoted exclusively to increase income per capita, if they are not sustained by policies oriented towards wider development goals.

Another important issue closely related to the necessity to implement policy actions oriented to a capabilities approach is the problem of differentiation. It is true that not only higher human development should be achieved but even a more equally distributed well-being is a necessary goal. At the same time, the capabilities approach allows to understand that well-being levels should be related to the specific context taken into account. Capabilities could be different in different times and different societies; hence the lack of capabilities could correspond to different deprivation for different individuals. What we would like to stress here is the necessity to account for the relative environment in which each individual lives, in order to assess the real deprivation and lack of freedom.

This line of reasoning is especially true for the analysis of disparities in a developed country such as Italy, and furthermore in a gender disparity context. In practical terms, the evaluation of gender disparity at regional level in a developed country requires some methodological assumptions about the empirical data adopted, necessarily different from the same analysis implemented in a developing country.

At this purpose, the empirical investigation will be carried over considering as a methodological basis the Human Development Report (HDR) of UNDP with the wide range of synthetic indices developed during last decade, but complementary empirical investigations will be adopted in order to go deep into the Italian context.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 gives a general description of the capabilities approach and the human development paradigm from a gender perspective. Section 3 presents the methodology adopted in the paper and the indices developed for this purpose. In Section 4 the first empirical results based on simple and composite indices are illustrated, giving a general description of regional gender disparities in Italy. Section 5 concludes with some policy implications.

2. Capability Approach as a general framework to explain gender disparities

Capability framework introduced by Amartya Sen in a series of paper and book that following the 1979 Tanner lecture (1979, 1982, 1983, 1985) represents an alternative development approach that has completely changed the vision of economic theory for social scientists and practitioners.² We can define it as a normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements and the design of policies for social improvements (Robeyns, 2005).³

According to Sen (1992), the central question in all the approaches to the ethics of social arrangements is “equality of what?”. In Sen’s opinion, theories like Utilitarianism, Liberalism or Rawls’ justice theory (Rawls, 1972) have only given a partial answer to this question by reducing the problem of equity to “equality of income” or “equality of well-being”. The capability approach has replaced the traditional idea of utility with functionings and capabilities concepts, where “functions” are indicated as attainments of different attributes and capability as the ability to attain (Sen, 1985, 1987).

Furthermore, in the capability approach, a central point is that of conceptualising the notion of agency: what the person is free to do and achieve, whatever goals or values he or she regards as important (Sen, 1985). The concept of agency was helpful in obtaining an informational basis for assessment of inequality, poverty, justice and development (Robeyns, 2005).

Hence, poverty can be defined as the lack of capabilities with a specific distinction between earning income and using income with a completely different point of view from the other economic and social well-being analyses. According to this approach, not only low income determines a lack of capabilities and, consequently, simply concentrating on an increase in income to reduce poverty might be an inefficient policy action.

The relationship between income and capabilities changes according to the reference point for society, households and individuals.

² The capability approach is not exactly a theory but provides a tool to conceptualize and evaluate phenomena like poverty, inequality or well-being. Capability approach is not a theory but a framework (Robeyns, 2005).

³ Origins of this approach can be found in Aristotle and Marx writings, as fully described in Sen (1992), Nussbaum (2000), ul Haq (2003).

Even Karl Marx in his division of society into classes, based his parameters exclusively on the working process of the production and avoided considering wages as the only criterion to pursue the equality goal (Sen, 1992). Sen puts the expansion of freedom both as the primary goal and primary means of development at the centre of his analysis (Sen, 1999).

Nonetheless, even in the capabilities approach, scholars express different opinions on which functionings and inequalities to value. Sen points out that individuals should have the freedom to determine what they value themselves and, at society-wide level, he maintains that open, pluralistic debate should shape which basic functionings are to be valued by society (Sen, 1994, 1999). In contrast, Martha Nussbaum - using the capability approach as the basis for a partial theory of justice - tries to understand the relation between gender and development, by defining a list of basic capabilities in order to formalise the gender inequality and the vulnerability of the women in the Western society (Nussbaum, 2000).

The Nussbaum's approach is clearly in contrast with Sen's idea of freedom to determine functionings. In particular Sen underlines that such a fixed list, emanating entirely from pure theoretical thought, could bring to misleading policy actions, because it denies the possibility of fruitful public participation on what should be included in the list itself (Sen, 2004).

But why this framework is better than other for an analysis of gender disparities?

In our opinion within the capability approach, differently from other approaches, the gender question is a central point of the framework. The mainstream approaches, until the 1980s, have not considered gender as a key factor in measuring development (Peinado Cespedes, 2004). In these paradigms, focused more on the growth process than on development aspects, gender - when it is considered inside this models - represents only a marginal dimension of the analysis. In these models women are seen as vulnerable victims and mothers, rather than as agents of development. By contrast, the capability approach and the human development paradigm focus the analysis on individuals and their freedom. As a consequence, the gender analysis becomes a key factor to understand the complex phenomena of development. As stated by the HDR 1995: “[h]uman development is a process of enlarging the choices for all people, not just for one part of the society. Such a process becomes unjust and discriminatory if most

women are excluded from its benefits. And the continuing exclusion of women from many economic and political opportunities is a continuing indictment of modern progress (UNDP, 1995, pp. 1).

Robeyns (2003) gives an explanation of the reasons why the capability approach results particularly sensitive to gender issues. She underlines three aspects of the framework: (a) the role of individualism; (b) the idea of functioning and capabilities; and (c) the role of human diversity.

(a) In this approach, functioning and capabilities are related to individuals. The approach assumes an ethically individualistic nature and, as a consequence, the unity of analysis for the normative judgement is the individual and not the household or the community. At the same time, the capability approach is not ontologically individualistic. This double nature of the capability approach makes it particularly indicate to measure gender disparity, because if the individualistic interpretation refuses the idea that women's well-being is conditioned by elements like household or community, on the other side being not ontologically individualistic helps studying the gender impact on the social life, the institutions and the relationships inside the family.

(b) The capability approach is non limited to the market structure, but it allows considering also the non-market framework . This is important especially for gender disparities, if we consider that domestic work, household care, and other non-market activities are all carried over by women.

(c) Finally, the capability approach considers the human diversity based on race, gender, and nationality. The false gender neutrality of the justice theories where the household is an institution and solidarity is the normal rule does not constitute the best way to explain the role of the women inside the family.

As a consequence of this theoretical approach, development policies should be focused on enlarging women's capabilities. At this purpose, according to Martha Nussbaum, "[w]omen have all too often been treated as the supporters of the end of others, rather than as ends in their own rights; thus, this principle has particular critical force with regard to women's lives" (Nussbaum, 2000b, pp. 223). Using the capability approach instead of mainstream models should help us to see each person as an end in itself.

3. The Methodological framework

In this analysis we have calculated various composite indices on the basis of the methodological framework provided by the HDR over the last fifteen years. The first index accounts for per capita GDP at constant 1995 €, based on the normalisation criteria adopted for income dimension in the HDI. In order to calculate an index comparable with those provided by the UNDP, the maximum ($\log(40,000\text{US\$})$) and minimum ($\log(100\text{US\$})$) values used in the normalisation procedure were converted into € units, just for an accounting reason.

Therefore, an HDI at regional level has been calculated relative to 2002.⁴ As we have seen, the HDI has been built considering a wide range of countries with large differences in terms of development level in all the considered dimensions. In a specific context as the Italian Regions, this broad definition of human development reduces the capacity of a composite index to underline existing disparities in a highly advanced economy. Recalling the intuition of Sen (2004), capabilities are different in different times and in different places, requiring a flexible measurement framework.

In this light, we have included in our analysis other composite indices, and some simple indicators, in order to better represent some partially hidden features of the Italian context. In the same venue of the Human Poverty Index calculated for developed countries (HPI-2) within the last HDRs, a regional HPI-2 has been considered accounting for three out of the four dimensions included in the original HPI-2.

The exact formula of the HPI-2 explained in the methodological appendix of the HDR (UNDP, 2005) is as follows:

$$HPI - 2 = \left[1 / 4 \left(P_1^\alpha + P_2^\alpha + P_3^\alpha + P_4^\alpha \right) \right]^{1/\alpha} \quad [1]$$

where:

P_1 = Probability at birth of not surviving to age 60 (times 100)

P_2 = Adults lacking functional literacy skills

P_3 = Population below income poverty line (50% of median adjusted household disposable income)

P_4 = Rate of long-term unemployment (lasting 12 months or more)

⁴ Unfortunately, there are no available data at regional level useful for building a time series, and this limits the analysis in a long-term development perspective.

$\alpha = 3$

The HPI-2 built for the Italian Regions accounts for living a long and healthy life (given by the probability at birth of not surviving to age 60, P_1), a decent standard of living (expressed as the percentage of population living below the income poverty line, P_3), and social exclusion (given by the long-term unemployment rate, P_4).⁵ As for the HPI-2 calculated in the HDR, the regional HPI-2 is computed as a power mean with r equal to $1/\alpha$ and α equal to 3. The value of α has an important impact on the value of the HPI-2. If $\alpha = 1$, the HPI-2 is the simple average of its dimensions. As α rises, greater weight is given to the dimension in which there is the most deprivation. Thus as α increases towards infinity, the HPI-2 will tend towards the value of the dimension in which deprivation is greatest (UNDP, 2005). As suggested by the HDR 2005, a value of 3 is used to give additional but not overwhelming weight to areas of more acute deprivation.

Furthermore, in order to direct the analysis towards gender disparities, we have computed at regional level the so-called Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).

While the HDI measures average achievement, the GDI adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between men and women exactly in the same dimensions considered for the HDI. The calculation of the GDI involves three steps. First, female and male indices in each dimension are calculated according to the general normalisation formula. Second, the female and male indices in each dimension are combined in a way that penalizes differences in achievement between men and women. The resulting index, referred to as the equally distributed index (EDEP), is calculated according to this general formula:

$$EDEP = \left\{ \left[\text{female population share} (\text{female index}^{1-\varepsilon}) \right] + \left[\text{male population share} (\text{male index}^{1-\varepsilon}) \right] \right\}^{1-\varepsilon} \quad [2]$$

The parameter ε measures the aversion to inequality or, in other words, it represents the size of the penalty for gender inequality. The larger the value, the more heavily a society is penalized for having

⁵ The second dimension considered in the HPI-2, represented as the number of adults lacking functional literacy skills (P_2), is not available at regional level.

inequalities. With $\varepsilon = 0$ the GDI and HDI values coincide. In this paper, as explained in Technical Note 1 of the HDR 2005, the GDI is calculated with $\varepsilon = 2$ in order to give comparable results with the HDR methodology. It must be noticed that in a developed country context this is a low value, and the difference between the HDI and the GDI is not so large, even at regional level.

As a final step, the GDI is calculated by combining the three equally distributed indices in a simple average.

In this specific exercise, the regional GDI is based on three dimensions, as well as the original GDI, but the income-related index has been replaced with an employment-related index. This choice takes place for two reasons. The first one is that there are no homogeneous data at regional level for the estimated earned income for male and female. The second reason is related to the initial assumption described in Section 2. As well as capabilities are different in different places and times, in our opinion in an advanced economy the difference in real access to resources concerning women is not well represented by earned income. As a matter of fact, when two individuals – male or female – achieve the same job qualification, the wage disparities between the two are not so high. The greatest difficulty for women in Italy is to achieve the same job qualification, and only as a consequence the same salaries. In order to catch further dimensions explaining gender disparities at regional level, we have preferred to use the employment rate as the general capability to participate to the productive sphere.⁶

A further comparison among different indicators describing the job market, a part from the construction of composite indices, would give some interesting details about this aspect. The methodology used for calculating the equally distributed employment index is the same as for the other dimensions. In the same venue, the dimension describing access to education is represented only by the secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratios, because the adult literacy rate and the primary enrolment ratio have not a wide variance both among Regions and genders.

Although a GDI is a widely accepted measure for representing gender inequalities in a capabilities approach, it is worth noting that there is not a wide differentiation between HDI and GDI for Italian Regions. Consequently, we have tested the possibility to better de-

⁶ For a quantitative assessment of wage disparities in Italy see Tab. 4.

scribe regional disparities modifying the HDI, including as indicators for the education dimension only the secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratios, and as indicators of access to resources the employment rate (the indicator is quoted as HDIM). This modification allows comparing an HDI homogeneous with our GDI and at the same time provides a more useful quantification of divergences among Regions. Even with these changes, GDI and HDIM still remain quite similar, and the corresponding ranks of the Italian Regions are quite similar. Rather than changing the value given to ε (equal to 2), we have calculated other two indices, a separate HDIM for women and men. These last two indices give us a number of suggestions for the empirical investigations and the descriptive analysis.

In order to give a quite complete description of gender issues related to the human development paradigm, a GEM index is provided, focusing on women's opportunities rather than on their capabilities (UNDP, 2005). The GEM captures gender inequality in three key areas:

Political participation and decision-making power, as measured by women's and men's shares of parliamentary seats.

Economic participation and decision-making power, as measured by two indicators - women's and men's shares of positions as legislators, senior officials and managers and women's and men's shares of professional and technical positions.

Power over economic resources, as measured by women's and men's estimated earned income.

As well as for the GDI, building a GEM at regional level is quite a hard task, and some adjustments are required. Concerning the first dimension, there are available data for women and man covering seats in Regional Councils. Regarding the second dimension, the economic participation and decision-making power can be measured by an alternative indicator, based on the women's and men's shares of positions in the Regional Committees, representing the core bureau for the decision-making process at regional level. The last dimension is represented by the employment rate, as well as for the GDI calculated in this paper.

A full comparison among all the alternative indices calculated in this analysis derives from the construction of alternative rankings correspondent to the different indices here considered. The Region with the highest value will be positioned on the first place, while the Region with the lowest value will be the last one of the list. Calculating

the difference between the ranks achieved by each Region using alternative indicators allows understanding if the capabilities approach and the measurement methodology provided by the human development paradigm are useful tools in order to describe a wider concept of development. At the same time, such comparison gives some indication about which are the dimensions influencing divergent performances, thus recognizing if the policy actions are oriented towards the extension of the capabilities and freedom for all individuals, without discrimination in terms of territorial dimension and gender equality.

4. Empirical results for regional disparities in Italy

Looking at results, it strongly emerges the difference between the income-based approach and the more widely defined human development paradigm. Looking at the ranking for GDP index, the first places go to Northern Regions like Valle d'Aosta, Trentino Alto Adige, Lombardy, the most productive and dynamic areas in Italy. The North-South divide is evident and the GDP index decreases going from North to South (Table 1).

Focusing on the other indices, the situation changes a lot, noting that the Regions from the Centre are characterised by the higher values of human development (HDI). Emilia Romagna (+3), Marche (+9), and Tuscany (+7) occupy the first three positions, while the first Northern Region (Friuli Venezia Giulia) is in the fifth position. Lombardy loses six positions from the GDP to the HDI ranking, while Trentino Alto Adige loses 11 positions (Table 2).

Within both the two rankings, the South remains behind the average, but there are some positive signals, as for instance Abruzzo or Calabria gaining few positions in the HDI ranking.

Comparing the GDP index with the HPI further differences emerge, where Friuli Venezia Giulia and Molise lose positions in the HPI ranking, while in the comparison between GDP and HDI they appear at least equal or slightly better. On the contrary, Veneto and Umbria both gain 7 positions from the GDP to the HPI ranking, due to low long-term unemployment rate and percentage of population living below the income poverty line.

Looking at the single dimensions for the Southern Regions, in most of the cases these two indicators allow understanding that there are social exclusion and a scarce access to resources, quite higher than in

the rest of Italy.

Therefore, these first results show that the simple GDP per capita is not sufficient to fully describe the development process at local level, and other dimensions should be accounted for a complete descriptive framework. The capabilities approach and the human development paradigm partially help to discover the real lack of freedom and functionings, thus underlying policy failures of territorial planning.

Focusing on gender dynamics, the comparison between GDP and GDI does not give further inputs than the previous one between GDP and HDI (Table 2). In our opinion this specific result suggests that the GDI applied to developed countries may be an imperfect representation of substantial gender inequalities, which really give a description of the possibility for women to exercise their functionings and to use their freedom of choice. Therefore, a separate HDI is calculated for women and men on the basis of the modified HDI (HDIM) described in Section 3. In many cases, differences in rankings between HDIM for men and HDIM for women are larger than differences between HDIM (general) and GDI (Table 3).

As a general remark, we can observe a sort of paradox in the conditions of women in all Italian Regions: while women are better performing than men in terms of education levels (especially at tertiary level), at the same time the job market is far away from equally absorbing female and male labour force, with noticeable discriminations for the access in the job market, for the career and for the salaries, rather lower for women.

Table 1: Alternative composite indices for Italian Regions (absolute values)

MACRO-REGION	REGION	GDP	HDI	HPI	GDI	GEM	HDIM	HDIM-F	HDIM-M
North	Piedmont	0.919	0.896	11.358	0.656	0.154	0.663	0.642	0.687
	Valle d'Aosta	0.942	0.905	11.336	0.675	0.171	0.681	0.668	0.696
	Lombardy	0.937	0.901	10.948	0.660	0.160	0.668	0.644	0.696
	Liguria	0.912	0.904	10.908	0.670	0.134	0.678	0.652	0.709
	Trentino Alto Adige	0.938	0.896	11.507	0.643	0.174	0.653	0.640	0.668
	Veneto	0.919	0.901	10.899	0.668	0.160	0.678	0.652	0.707
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	0.915	0.906	11.683	0.684	0.152	0.691	0.669	0.718
	Emilia Romagna	0.933	0.910	10.744	0.690	0.166	0.695	0.676	0.717
Centre	Tuscany	0.912	0.907	10.943	0.684	0.150	0.691	0.669	0.717
	Umbria	0.891	0.902	10.681	0.683	0.145	0.690	0.669	0.715
	Marches	0.896	0.909	10.924	0.697	0.152	0.704	0.685	0.726
	Latium	0.912	0.907	11.295	0.678	0.135	0.690	0.660	0.724
South	Abruzzo	0.872	0.900	14.780	0.680	0.129	0.695	0.665	0.728
	Molise	0.855	0.894	19.382	0.668	0.119	0.682	0.658	0.710
	Campania	0.822	0.857	19.022	0.590	0.093	0.612	0.568	0.660
	Apulia	0.828	0.868	16.963	0.607	0.100	0.630	0.588	0.675
	Basilicata	0.837	0.883	20.068	0.641	0.102	0.660	0.628	0.695
	Calabria	0.817	0.872	22.047	0.621	0.093	0.639	0.604	0.677
	Sicily	0.830	0.864	17.821	0.590	0.090	0.613	0.571	0.659
	Sardinia	0.848	0.881	14.570	0.635	0.113	0.654	0.635	0.676

Source: our elaboration on dataset from ISTAT (Italian National Institute for Statistics).

Table 2: Rankings for Italian Regions from alternative composite indices

MACRO-REGION	REGION	GDP	HDI	HPI	GDI	GEM	HDIM	HDIM-F	HDI-M	BORDA
North	Piedmont	6	12	10	13	6	13	13	14	12
	Valle d'Aosta	1	6	9	8	2	9	6	11	6
	Lombardy	3	9	7	12	5	12	12	12	11
	Liguria	8	7	4	9	12	10	11	9	10
	Trentino Alto Adige	2	13	11	14	1	16	14	18	13
	Veneto	5	10	3	11	4	11	10	10	8
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	7	5	12	3	8	5	5	4	5
	Emilia Romagna	4	1	2	2	3	3	2	6	1
Centre	Tuscany	10	3	6	4	9	4	4	5	4
	Umbria	12	8	1	5	10	6	3	7	3
	Marches	11	2	5	1	7	1	1	2	2
	Latium	9	4	8	7	11	7	8	3	7
South	Abruzzo	13	11	14	6	13	2	7	1	9
	Molise	14	14	18	10	14	8	9	8	14
	Campania	19	20	17	20	18	20	20	19	19
	Apulia	18	18	15	18	17	18	18	17	17
	Basilicata	16	15	19	15	16	14	16	13	16
	Calabria	20	17	20	17	19	17	17	15	18
	Sicily	17	19	16	19	20	19	19	20	20
	Sardinia	15	16	13	16	15	15	15	16	15

Source: our elaboration on dataset from ISTAT (Italian National Institute for Statistics).

Moreover, comparing rankings from HDIM and GEM, the gender disparities are exacerbated, where most of the Northern Regions gain positions (Piedmont, Lombardy, Trentino Alto Adige, Veneto), while the Southern Regions generally lose (Abruzzo, Molise, Basilicata, Calabria) or gain few positions (Campania and Apulia).

A comprehensive evaluation of all the dimensions here considered could be derived computing a ranking order using the so-called Borda rule. The Borda rule provides a ranking order on the basis of the sum of rankings for each component. Countries are ranked according to each single component, and then the resulting ranks are added. Finally, countries are ranked on the basis of their composite scores. In this exercise, the indices considered for Borda ranking calculation are HPI, GDI, GEM, HDIM-M, and HDIM-F, and the differences between GDP and BORDA rankings are not so far from distances between GDP and HDI.

Some general assumptions should be derived from these results. There is a regional divide between the North and the South both considering only the income dimension and accounting for the human development dimensions. Nonetheless, performances of the Central Regions are quite higher in terms of human development, gaining the first positions in the HDI ranking. In this sense, policy actions oriented exclusively towards economic growth could miss the wider goal of development in terms of enlarging individuals' capabilities. At the same time, the decision-makers should account for substantial disparities in daily life, even in the policy design of actions oriented to enhancing human development dimensions. The small differences between HDIM and GDI and the contemporary higher differences between the HDIM and GEM reclaim the need for reducing divergences between formal and substantial gender equality (or access to capabilities for all individuals). Some interesting results about regional disparities emerged from the analysis of composite indices in terms of general human development and in terms of gender inequality. At the same time, a certain degree of difficulty emerged as well especially in the gender analysis, denoting the necessity for alternative measurements of gender disparities. In the light of these uncertainties, a deeper investigation has been carried looking at the single dimensions, with a particular attention to the job market and tertiary education levels.

Table 3: Differences in Rankings for Italian Regions

MACRO-REGION	REGION	GDP-HDI	GDP-HPI	GDP-HDI	HDIM-GDI	HDIM-GEM	HDIM-M-HDIM-F
North	Piedmont	-6	-4	-7	0	7	1
	Valle d'Aosta	-5	-8	-7	1	7	5
	Lombardy	-6	-4	-9	0	7	0
	Liguria	1	4	-1	1	-2	-2
	Trentino Alto Adige	-11	-9	-12	2	15	4
	Veneto	-5	2	-6	0	7	0
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	2	-5	4	2	-3	-1
	Emilia Romagna	3	2	2	1	0	4
Centre	Tuscany	7	4	6	0	-5	1
	Umbria	4	11	7	1	-4	4
	Marches	9	6	10	0	-6	1
	Latium	5	1	2	0	-4	-5
South	Abruzzo	2	-1	7	-4	-11	-6
	Molise	0	-4	4	-2	-6	-1
	Campania	-1	2	-1	0	2	-1
	Apulia	0	3	0	0	1	-1
	Basilicata	1	-3	1	-1	-2	-3
	Calabria	3	0	3	0	-2	-2
	Sicily	-2	1	-2	0	-1	1
Sardinia	-1	2	-1	-1	0	1	

Source: our elaboration on dataset from ISTAT (Italian National Institute for Statistics).

The relatively better performances of the Central Regions are partially explained by the female employment rate (EMP-F), generally higher than the national average (e.g., Emilia Romagna with 43.5%, Marches with 39.5%, and 38% for Tuscany). For the tertiary education the situation is quite similar (EDU-TER), where the Centre and the South have consistently higher enrolment ratios than the North. Comparing the same data for men, it is worth noting that while employment rates are rather higher for men than for women, the exact contrary applies to education level, where male gross tertiary enrolment rates are lower than female rates within all Regions.¹ In our opinion, this is a clear demonstration of divergences between formal and substantial gender equality. While women are fully included in the education system, thus reaching the same (or higher) education levels as men, and consequently acquiring the necessary knowledge to become high-skilled labour force, at the same time the real participation of women to the job market is rather lower than one can expect, and in particular rather lower than the employment rate for men. Looking at the unemployment rates (UNEMP), this divergence appears reinforced. The difference between the female and male unemployment rates in the North is rather lower than in the South, where in most of the cases there is a difference of more than 10 percentage points. Regions like Campania, Calabria, and Sicily have female unemployment rates triple of the national average (Table 4).

Looking at the wage disparities, computed as the difference between the male and female average wages as percentage of the male average wage, the gender gap seems to go in the opposite direction, where the Northern Regions show higher disparities than the South. These results are highly affected by two separate factors. The first one is the reduced activity rates in the South that naturally produces a reduction in the wage disparities. The second and most important factor is related to the role of public sector in the overall employment rate. In those regions, typically the Southern ones, where the public sector is larger, wage disparities are structurally lower due to the role of the collective bargaining system which is the foundation of the salary conditions.

Comparing these descriptive statistics with indices of empower-

¹ Women present higher levels of education, and better quality of their studies, with low abandonment rate, especially for tertiary education, achieving rapidly graduate diplomas with higher degrees (Battistoni, 2005).

ment such as the share of women covering seats in the Regional Councils or Committees (CONS-REG-F and GIUNTA-REG-F respectively), there is a certain correspondence between Regions with high female employment rates and Regions with high participation of women to the political system. Therefore, three out of the eight Northern Regions have a female share of Regional Council seats higher than the national average, while just one of the eight Southern Regions (Abruzzo) exceeds the national average. Even in the case of gender empowerment, the Centre has by far the best performance with the all four Regions well above the average. Looking at data concerning participation of women to the decision-making process (share of women with seats in the Regional Committee), the situation is quite more complex, and a more heterogeneous framework emerges for the Italian Regions. Nevertheless, the great divide between the North-Centre and the South still remains, confirming our observation about divergences between formal and substantial gender equality.

Considering a medium-term perspective, in Table 5 the percentage change rates of the dimensions analysed in this exercise are reported, both in terms of pure economic growth, and in terms of human development and gender equality. Considering the annual GDP per capita growth rates, there are no huge differences among Regions, as well as among macro-areas (North, Centre, South). Looking at the job market (the dimension here considered as the best representation of substantial equality), it seems to us that the Italian Regions are on a development path not sufficiently oriented towards a reduction of regional gender disparities.

The female employment rates have increasing trends in the considered time period (1991-2003) quite higher than the increases in the male employment rates for the same period. The same applies for unemployment rates, where those related to women have a decreasing trend while those related to men have most of the times an increasing trend. The reduction of gender inequality in the access to the job market seems to go in favour of the Southern Regions, thus reducing the regional disparities.

Table 4 – Education, Job Market, Empowerment in the Italian Regions

MACRO-REGION	REGION	EMP-F	EMP-M	UNEMP-F	UNEMP-M	EDU-TER-F	Wage Disparity	EDU-TER-M	CONS-REG-F	GIUNTA-REG-F
North	Piedmont	39.20	58.60	6.83	3.30	32.40	17.6	26.50	11.29	33.33
	Valle d’Aosta	43.90	62.50	5.41	3.05	36.30	24.1	26.90	8.57	12.50
	Lombardy	41.80	63.50	5.16	2.50	33.50	14.6	27.30	13.92	6.25
	Liguria	34.20	54.10	8.39	4.33	45.20	14.3	37.60	10.26	15.38
	Trentino Alto Ad.	44.90	65.85	3.29	1.85	28.20	16.1	21.80	20.00	20.00
	Veneto	39.80	64.10	5.04	2.31	35.30	16.4	27.80	10.17	15.38
	Friuli Ven. Giulia	38.00	58.90	5.59	2.71	44.80	15.2	34.40	13.33	9.09
	Emilia Romagna	43.50	61.00	4.49	1.93	38.40	17.6	30.60	10.20	14.29
Centre	Tuscany	38.00	58.60	7.35	2.76	44.00	15.1	34.60	26.56	21.43
	Umbria	37.10	56.10	8.75	2.59	45.20	15.0	33.20	13.79	20.00
	Marches	39.50	58.70	5.57	2.45	45.70	14.6	34.40	15.38	9.09
	Latium	36.40	58.40	12.01	6.55	49.90	19.9	39.40	15.71	29.41
South	Abruzzo	32.50	55.40	8.21	3.58	56.80	16.7	39.90	15.38	18.18
	Molise	28.10	52.30	18.76	8.46	56.00	12.8	39.50	3.33	0.00
	Campania	23.50	52.90	28.03	16.42	38.60	12.9	29.20	8.33	23.08
	Apulia	22.70	52.20	21.14	10.23	38.10	16.4	27.00	2.90	26.67
	Basilicata	26.00	51.90	25.44	10.72	49.70	13.4	34.10	10.34	0.00
	Calabria	24.60	50.20	33.30	17.74	48.90	10.0	35.90	4.08	8.33
	Sicily	21.10	49.90	28.90	15.89	37.00	12.4	27.30	4.44	0.00
	Sardinia	29.90	54.80	23.36	13.02	46.80	12.5	27.90	9.41	50.00
	Italy	34.30	57.70	11.62	6.78	40.00	12.2	30.40	11.48	17.57

Source: our elaboration on dataset from ISTAT, and ISFOL for Wage Disparity (Battistoni, 2005).

Table 5 – Dimensions of human development in the medium-term in the Italian Regions (% change)

MACRO-REGION	REGION	GDP growth rate 1991-2003	ACT-F 1991-2003	ACT-M 1991-2003	EMP-F 1991-2003	EMP-M 1991-2003	UNEMP-F 1991-2003	UNEMP-M 1991-2003
North	Piedmont	1.09	9.79	-4.15	11.11	0.84	-21.49	13.79
	Valle d' Aosta	0.21	5.50	-4.24	9.10	3.94	-1.64	30.17
	Lombardy	0.90	10.10	-3.74	11.88	2.12	9.79	31.58
	Liguria	1.17	12.00	-3.61	14.80	2.83	-23.73	3.10
	Trentino Alto Adige	0.89	4.15	1.43	9.78	0.61	-35.62	-17.41
	Veneto	1.43	13.58	-3.15	10.19	1.73	-10.00	5.00
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	1.80	15.21	-1.35	9.95	1.83	-23.42	12.92
	Emilia Romagna	1.47	9.76	-4.45	7.35	1.28	-29.84	13.53
Centre	Tuscany	1.43	8.90	-3.89	10.47	3.19	-31.31	-25.41
	Umbria	1.36	1.21	-8.48	15.47	1.19	-39.24	-33.59
	Marches	1.78	7.72	-8.53	9.72	2.16	-37.42	-25.76
	Latium	1.23	1.52	-5.18	25.34	3.91	-6.17	3.97
South	Abruzzo	0.79	-6.81	-8.07	20.19	1.65	-42.99	-12.68
	Molise	1.40	-17.50	-8.57	12.09	0.89	3.08	-9.03
	Campania	1.11	-7.28	-7.67	25.33	7.24	3.43	21.63
	Apulia	0.97	-12.07	-7.95	20.04	-0.93	7.31	3.33
	Basilicata	2.09	-14.47	-8.06	12.51	6.35	-7.49	1.13
	Calabria	1.83	3.04	-5.43	35.24	9.82	24.25	24.06
	Sicily	0.82	-4.44	-8.76	24.26	2.80	-10.80	28.15
	Sardinia	1.26	6.34	-8.92	29.10	6.66	-10.84	24.00
	Italy	1.20	4.51	-5.39	15.18	2.87	-11.97	11.15

Source: our elaboration on dataset from ISTAT (Italian National Institute for Statistics).

Nonetheless, a deeper look into the job market reveals that the principal reason for these trends is strictly related to the reduction of activity rates (ACT), especially for women. Activity rates explain how many individuals are effectively inside the job market, both with a working position or searching for a job. If the activity rate decreases, this means that the number of people in the overall job market is reduced. Therefore, the Northern and the Central Regions show increasing activity rates for women and decreasing activity rates for men, increasing employment rates for women (rather higher than the changes in the male employment rates) and decreasing unemployment rates for women in opposition with a more heterogeneous framework for male unemployment rates.

All these information putted together allow affirming that there is a general trend in the North and in the Centre of Italy towards an increasing inclusion of women inside the productive system, and a better gender-related distribution of capabilities.

At the same time, the regional divide between the North-Centre and the South is far from being reduced, because the great part of the increase in female employment rates and decrease in the female unemployment rates are explained by the reduction of female activity rates.

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper, a gender analysis of regional disparities in Italy has been carried, adopting a human development approach. Assuming the theoretical framework of the Human Development, we have analysed disparities affecting Italian Regions accounting for the lack of formal and substantial gender equality. From our empirical results, Italian Regions present the widely known disparities in the economic growth rate, but there are stronger disparities if we look at gender issues, in terms of real access to resources, accountability and participation in the active life. For instance, looking at social inclusion in the political and working spheres, in terms of activity rate and employment rate, it is worth noticing that the distance between the Italian labour market features and the medium term goals defined by the Lisbon strategy is still substantial. In our opinion, gender disparity in a socio-economic context goes hand in hand with lack of participation for women to political and managerial systems. Our advice is that a more consistent participation of women into the political and decision-making process

could be the initial step in order to reduce gender disparities not only at formal but even at practical level.

In Italy there is a strong necessity for regional and national policies oriented towards increasing aid for working women, assistance for children care, part-time jobs and other specific actions in the labour markets which could promote the participation of women into the productive and socio-political life.

There are many examples of best practices in the European context that Italy could follow to implement policy actions in this direction. The European Union legislation on gender discrimination in the labour market and on the political and social participation has an old and consolidate tradition. Moreover, there are also examples of national legislations that Italy could use as guidelines, such as the *Swedish Equal Opportunity Act* adopted in 1991 that requires companies to make public their wage structures by gender and to take actions to overcome problems of gender inequality.

The problem of gender disparity in the political sphere is actually under debate in the Italian Parliament, and many political forces declare that incisive actions to enhance women participation to the decision-making process constitute the very first step to align Italy to the other European countries. We hope that this debate will be carried seriously, bringing to concrete actions promoting formal and substantial gender equity.

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