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WELFARE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZED CAPITALISM: THE TRENDS OF TANG PING, QUIET QUITTING, GREAT RESIGNATION

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Welfare in the Era of Globalized Capitalism: The Trends of Tang Ping, Quiet Quitting, Great Resignation

Mirella FERRARI[1]

Abstract

Has global capitalism reduced inequality and poverty? How do today's young people reactto cultural changes in organizations in a world that demands more and more flexibility? How do organizational and social transformations impact the lives of individuals? These and other questions are the starting point of our reflection which will attempt to investigate, through theoretical sources and research on the field, the possible correlationbetween the social phenomena of Tang Ping, Quiet Quitting and Great Resignations. Today, the capitalist model, with its promises of global progress and social equity, is showing its first cracks and needs to be redefined. Similarly, the concepts of growth anddevelopment need to be rethought. If globalization encourages welfare models that shift the boundaries between public andprivate, in the same way 'flexible capitalism' triggers new dynamics of individuals' exploitation. Are cultural and organizational models of our recent past still effective in keeping the promise of development and progress?

Keywords: Hustle culture; Tang Ping, Quiet Quitting; Great Resignation; domestication ofwork; work-life balance; social organization.

Introduction

By reviewing the various social, economic and environmental crises that have defined the current era, we will try to understand if the modernization processes that have seamlessly involved the modern and contemporary ages have to some extent contributed to reducing inequalities and socialconflict and whether they have created paradigms of individual well-being through the proposed social and organizational models.

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In order to explore these trends and reconstruct the social scenario within which the Tang Ping, Quiet Quitting and Great Resignation phenomena occur, we will ask about the emerging individualization processes and the construct of flexibility. We will inquire about social reproduction work and how it impacts the construction of capital, as well as the role of women. Wewill explore the new trend of domestication of labor and entrepreneurial subjectivity aimed at the biographical construction of individuals.The description of these and other events, which will be particularly considered in the course of this scientific paper, pursue the purpose of recomposing the complex, fragmented andfluid scenario that, in our opinion, underlies Tang Ping, Quiet Quitting and Great Resignation. In particular, the effort put in this brief investigation is primarily aimed at understanding whether there is a possible interconnection between global capitalism and the three aforementioned phenomena, since they emerge precisely where capitalism radicalizes social relations and organizations.

Literarture Review

The West: capitalism and Hustle Culture, the transformation of welfare

Capitalism has defined itself over the centuries as a system for the resolution of poverty and social inequality with the goal of improving individual and social wealth as well as the emergence of new models of public welfare. It has undergone continuous changes, during which the primary elements constituting it were born, developed and ended due to uninterrupted remodernization processes (Cole, 1998).

The various crises that have gripped us over the past three decades, namely the global pandemic, financial, ecological and energy crisis, are just a few aspects that have impacted the concepts of development and prosperity capitalism promised us. Among the multiple changes experienced in the recent decades we particularly highlight: (1) the *demographic decrease* caused by falling birth rates and the aging of the population; (2) the "*issue of care*" which is a critical social issue to be attributed mainly to children andthe elderly; (3) the *transformation of health care needs* in a context in which medicine, thanks topharmacological and technological innovations, increasingly enables life extension; (4) the *feminisation of work,* which is a phenomenon that goes beyond the quantitative dimension of women entering the world of work and rather indicates the deterioration oflabour relations and their precarisation (Simone, 2008; Morini, 2010) as well as the exploitation of relational and emotional qualities traditionally recognised as 'feminine'; (5) *family transformations*, which see families, consisting of an increasingly small numberof members, that are unstable as a result of divorce and that need to deal with the separation that living away for work implies; (6) the effects produced by a *restructuring of welfare*, offering a decreasing quantity ofservices, which are increasingly replaced by "economic bonuses"; (7) the unprecedented *centrality of*

debt, which over the decades has produced the vertical fall of "wages" (Regini, 2015) and the precarization of labor contracts. Indeed, debt through capital "cannibalizes" labor, extracting value from the domestic sphere as well as from families, communities and nature (Casalini, 2016); (8) the ecological crisis, caused by global warming, the depletion of environmental resources, the devastation of ecosystems and the indiscriminate release of pollutants.

The sociological debate on these issues can provide some insights so that post-modernsociety can achieve sustainable socio-economic development. While technical and economic progress has stimulated an improvement in the quality of lifeand intensified the processes of civilization, the latter have not succeeded as effectively in meeting the new needs of individuals (Conroy, 2024; Lunghini, 1995). Capitalism has implicitly contributed to creating a new social paradigm, in which the construction of individuals' biographies and collective identities challenge previous systemic models. While wealth has increased, at least in countries with high technological development, new family expectations have also emerged, generating in many cases a sense of inadequacy and discomfort in individuals.

Social action has crumbled in the face of globalization and has given way to processes of exaggerated individualization. Individualization in a world of uncertainty has become the preferred way to survive the continuous changes. Institutional, economic and financial deregulation has amplified the lack of sustainable public welfare models. Flexibility has qualified as a great way for supporting the processes of globalization.The progress-recession dialectic, latent in the capitalist model, becomes apparent in new forms and risks (Beck, 1992). Within this flexible restructuring of work, a narrative of freer workers has emerged, able to change themselves and their work position at will, freed from the repetitive and standardized mechanisms of the traditional work model.

The project of technology-mediated and 'domesticated' work flexibility, as in smart working, led in some cases to changes in daily practices, resulting in bewilderment and lack of control over one's social actions. Today the construction of identities goes beyond the sphere of work that defined Fordianman: work loses at least part of its centrality in traditional identity construction.

The enfranchisement of individuals from social units, such as family and social class of origin, means that the individual's biography is mediated by secondary agencies and institutions inthe exercise of daily struggle for survival (Beck, 2016). Constructing one's existence becomes a complex task. It is in this scenario of existential precariousness that we believe we need to trace the roots of the *Great Resignation*, *Quiet Quitting*, and *Tang Ping (*which anticipates both of these on a temporal level) (Yikilmaz, 2022). One transits from one existential project to another, and long-lasting ties, such as rootedness, are complicated to pursue. The only possible rootedness is in oneself, that is, in individualization.

Indeed, in a competitive and conflictual society, cooperative practices become less viable and defensive elements, which individuals bring to bear, increase (Sennet, 2012). Added to this existential precariousness is the inability or the impossibility to provide for those works of social reproduction, which until a few decades ago were performed by women. The Luxemburgian perspective (Rose 2014) and Nancy Fraser's analysis of the contemporary female condition (Rigo, 2022*; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006; Gill & Baker, 2004) demonstrate how capitalism almost exclusively offloads the work of care and social reproduction onto women.

The issue, then, complexifies the trends of Quiet Quitting, Tang Ping and Great Resignation phenomena, in which women play a particular role (Fraser, 2017). 'Flexible capitalism' seems to trigger new dynamics of exploitation and coercion of individuals. Flexible labor is often accompanied by the idea of digitalized labor: a radical change that has been taking place for a few decades and has been accentuated by the pandemic. The accelerating process of digitalization of human activities has brought heavy repercussions on acting and organizing lives. In the world of work it has gone far beyond the goal of technological augmentation. Smart working represents far more than a shift of activity from the office to home.

Work has embarked on a real path of *domestication*. The domestication of labor has created new temporal and spatial boundaries, strengthened the fusion between private and professional spheres, and between work time and leisure time. In particular, it has accelerated the phenomenon of "entrepreneurial subjectivity", according to which the individuals perceive themselves as the ones who alone forge their own destiny and compete with other individuals, immersed in a society of losers and winners and whose ruler is "merit" in a supposed existential contest. The one who resists and makes the choices adherent to social expectations is rewarded: this is what Foucault called the "exercise of neoliberal governability" (Foucalt, 1978).

Along the frontiers of insecurity and precariousness are social actors, who move to redraw the institutional map of capitalist society (Fraser 2017). New alienations and survival strategies emerge: burnout, mass resignation, Quiet Quitting, Tang Ping e Great Resignation become a possible response to the socio-economic patterns stimulated by capitalism. The continuous negotiation between work time and leisure time, the imposition of new standards of productivity and the advance of hybrid work gives the idea that new forms of work bring with them new forms of alienation. It is in these social circumstances that a certain amount of work disaffection also arises, which is caused by the fragmented nature of new productivity patterns, not only invading work spaces but also personal life times. It is in this context that the first cracks in the granitic wall of *hustle culture appear* (Balkeran, 2020).

The West: the phenomenon of Great Resignation

The term Great Resignation (GR), coined by Anthony Klotz at Bloomberg Businessweek in 2021, refers to the phenomenon that since the beginning of 2021 has produced an unprecedented amount of voluntary resignations by American workers. Indeed, the Bureau of Labor Statistics recorded about 4 million Americans resigning in September 2021 (Tessema et al., 2022). The trend soon began to spread like wildfire globally, impacting domestic and international economies, exploiting, among other media, Tik Tok, much like the QQ phenomenon, which we will address shortly. To understand it, since it has not been explored in as much depth yet, we examine the REBR (Randtsad Employer Brand Research 2020; 2021) Study, published by the Randstad agency in the United States, not only because it pays attention to the social changes occurring in the context of the labor market and it is one of the world's leading HR research service companies, but also because there are no other studies comparable in order of magnitude and availability of analyzable data to date. In the REBR, 31 countries are analyzed, those in which the agency is active. It collects data pertaining to desires, perceptions, and motivations in the workplace. Reviewing the Report, it emerges that the main motivations that drive workers in their conduct in the workplace are: (1) salary; (2) benefits; (3) work-life balance; (4) job security; (5) the opportunity to train and grow individually; (6) the presence of structured and established leadership within the company.

Going deeper into the report's analysis, age-related differences between these values can be noticed. For example, the 55-64 cohort gives more importance to salary and company benefits (Generation X). On the other hand, the 18-24 cohort (Generation Z) considers this to be unimportant and leans toward work-life balance becoming a priority for more than half of the sample. A third also expresses a willingness to change job within six months, with the majority represented by men (27 percent) and young people aged 18-34.

The premises for a GR were beginning to emerge even before the pandemic (REBR, 2020, 2021). Premises which, once loosened by the measures implemented by the U.S. government, turned into an unprecedented reality. This was due to the emergence of new types of jobs but also the rise of remote work. Suffice it to say that before the pandemic only 5% of American workers worked from home, while in May 2020 the percentage soared to 60% (Bayraktar, 2022), and more and more workers expressed the desire to leave their jobs at the company (Serenko, 2022).

The pandemic prompted an existential reflection, which was latent in the majority of Americans, and which found fertile ground in the global shutdown of the production model hitherto experienced by the majority, to make way for mixed or even almost totally domesticated work models through smart-working. After difficult months many Americans began to become unwilling to settle for their jobs with fixed schedules and rigid employers. Thus they began to focus more on a future in which personal and family needs became a priority (Hopkins & Figaro,

2021). Some sectors were affected more than others. In particular, from March to September 2021 the hospitality and restaurant industries lost more than 40% of their workforce. However, there is also no shortage of resignations in knowledge-intensive sectors such as engineering, technology, and healthcare (Serenko, 2022). More than 40% of workers in the United States started thinking about changing jobs in the early 2021, reaching 24 million in just six months (Sull et al., 2022). Donald and Charles Sull, supported by Ben Zweig (ibidem), in order to understand the origins and extent of the GR phenomenon analyzed the online profile of 34 million American workers, identifying all those who had left their employment for various reasons. What emerged from the research was that resignation rates proved to be high on average but uneven across industries. For example, in the aerospace industry, the quit rate at Elon Musk's Space X is 21.2% of the total calculated by sector and three times higher than at Boeing (6.2%). Similarly, in the media and entertainment sector Netflix has a six-month churn rate of 14.2%, while Warner Bros is around 6.2% (almost half).

It is noticeable that companies that guaranteed more benefits and were more focused on health and wellbeing experienced lower levels of turnover. Parker, Morin and Horowitz (2019) of the Pew Research Center analyze the phenomenon and try to give an answer to the conduct of American workers. We report here in an illustrative way the summary of the data available to us. As we note among the main causes we identify: low salaries (63%), poor social mobility (63%), inability to reconcile work time and childcare time (48%), poor flexibility of hours in and out (21%), to which we add other concomitant causes such as not feeling respected in the workplace, and willingness to change roles.

In the United States alone 71.6 million people left their jobs from April 2021 to April 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Italy was hit by this wave of resignations later than the United States, and far less markedly, although it was also felt to some extent in the Belpaese. The resignation rate was around 3%, a far less remarkable figure and less impactful on the Italian economy (Beronia, 2022). It would need to be understood, then, how much the frailty support measures and welfare put in place by the central government with various social bonuses have affected these resignations.

If we take the REBR Report (2021) and compare the data collected by country, we note that Italy differs from the U.S. in terms of the driver of choice. In first place Italians consider work- life balance followed by workplaces characterized by a pleasant atmosphere. While salary and benefits' rated among the most important for Americans, for Italians they are in third place followed by security of the workplace and career opportunities. Training and the presence of a solid managerial class do not seem to be considered so relevant. Data made available by EUROSTAT (2023) and the Ministry of Labor 2023 show that the most conspicuous voluntary resigned workers come from the construction industry, mineral extraction, agriculture and fishing. Manufacturing and health care are also among the sectors with higher resignations (Farina & Vincenti, 2022).

Thus, some substantial differences from the U.S. emerge. Mostly low-skilled workers, with greater outplacement opportunities in manufacturing, resign (Sowels, 2022). Comparing the phenomenon, as well as its extent in the U.S. and Italy, we see that in the U.S. it has taken on significantly greater proportions than in Italy. In our country it is not even a phenomenon that can be ascribed exclusively to the post-pandemic social context. As the data (Brunetta & Tiraboschi, 2022) show, it has been an ongoing trend for many years.
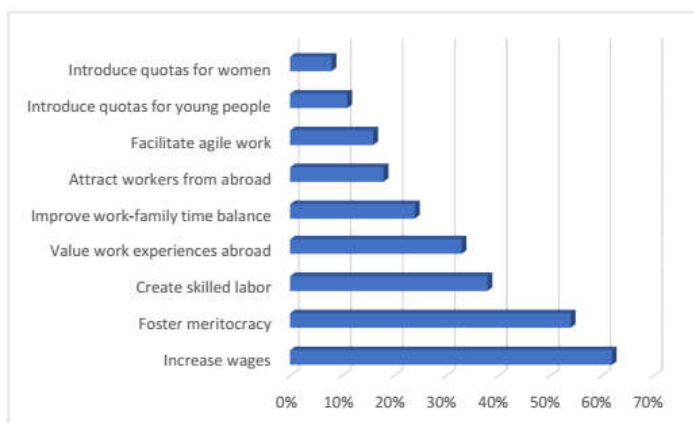

Figure 1: The causes of non-return of expats to Italy. Source: Graph made from data of the Ch'Europa Association

The East: The Tang Ping phenomenon

The Chinese Tang Ping (TP) movement, literally lying down, encompasses a group of individuals who have decided to lower their economic and professional ambitions by simplifying their goals in order to prioritize their mental health and psychophysical health over economic wellbeing (Aydin & Azizoğlu,2022; Zhang,Wang, et al. 2021). Some intellectuals believe that this movement inspired the U.S. trend, Great Resignation, which then has spread globally since 2022, and similarly exploited social media to make its way among young people (Campton et.al., 2023). The Tang Ping movement did not emerge in a social, economic, and cultural vaccuum. According to the latest data published by the National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the youth unemployment rate in China reached an all-time high in July 2022. The youth employment crisis in the PRC seems to be just one of the reasons behind the existential reflection that millions of Chinese youths are facing, which inevitably includes speculation about their professional and personal ambitions.

Today, China's middle class experiences socioeconomic precariousness. It is stifled by social and family pressure, which in some cases leads some young

adults to join the movement (Ponzini, 2020). If we analyze the Oxford University Study (Ponzini, 2020) on Weibo, we note that this by no means reflect an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, there appears a widespread sense of powerlessness over one's own economic and social fulfillment possibilities, to the point that Chinese sociologists speak of social protest (Chen, 2021). Upon closer analysis it is noted that the movement is not just a protest, but also a real way of life among Generation Z youth in China. Young people born in the 1980s in China find themselves leading a worse existence than their parents: they face several challenges. We briefly list below the major issues that create hardship and social exclusion in contemporary China: (1) The highly competitive school system: young people are pushed to be increasingly competitive by their families of origin in order to ensure a deprivation-free and successful future. Academic failure can cause a real family tzunami (Hung, 2022; Sheck, 2008). The less affluent individuals cannot access quality levels of education or the most prestigious universities. Competition in the educational field is fierce, and gender inequality is increasing; (2) Marriage and traditional family values still tend to relegate women within their houses. It becomes very difficult for young Chinese women to combine work time with care time, and social expectations push them into care and social reproduction roles anchored in archaic social models (Ponzini, 2017). Although in China the average age for marriage has gradually risen, giving women the opportunity to study and begin to assume paths of individual, social and labor affirmation, the family demands time for study, socialization and social reproduction to such an extent that young Chinese women are prevented from a free identity construction. Furthermore, the housing issue draws symbolic boundaries between individuals of different statuses (Bourdieu, 2001). Marked social distinctions thus emerge between different social classes; (3) Society and individual rights: the difficulties faced by young people on a daily basis are given little consideration by local governance and central political institutions, especially since self-sacrifice is considered a real value in Chinese society; (4) The strong socioeconomic inequalities: the wide gap between rich and poor gives the weakest no means to emerge socially; (5) The strong presence of informal social forms which favor wealthier social groups in the placement of their children at higher levels of society, creating major inequalities.

From the scholarly exploration of the literature and the few data in our possession (Yin, Ji, & Ni, 2023; Wei, 2022; Jingyi, 2022; Hsu, 2022), due to the relative recent nature of the phenomenon, it emerges that the Tang Ping phenomenon responds to the attempted ideological repositioning of Chinese youth, promoted by the leadership of the TP movement, which represents a different ideological stance compared to that promoted by Chinese cultural traditions. The individual seeks in self-construction to disengage from collective pressures and identify new social existential and developmental patterns. The aspiration to lead a less stressful lifestyle, characterized by less material desire, has become increasingly preponderant among the younger generations (particularly Generation Z), who are

leaving the big cities to rediscover a slower lifestyle in contact with nature, less consumption-driven and less environmentally impactful, even embracing ancient crafts and farm work.

Research: What is "Quiet Quitting?"

Quiet Quitting (henceforth QQ) (Formica & Sfodera, 2022; Detert, 2023) is usually described as a recent generational phenomenon predominantly affecting (the cohort of those born between 1981 and 1996) *Millennials* and *Generation Z* (i.e., the cohort of those born between 1997 and 2012). In spite of this, in our research the trend emerges, albeit to a lesser degree, among *Generation X* as well. It is impossible at present to have a true snapshot of how many and which people are involved in the phenomenon in Italy and Europe, although the first studies in the East concerning Japanese work culture have been published (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023; Ressler, 2022; Taya, 2021), because similar cases occur there as well.

The goal of Quiet Quitters is to do their part within the corporate environment, but refusing to adhere to the so-called *hustle culture* (Ellis and Yang, 2022), which has characterized baby boomers and Generation X for decades, giving more space to work-life balance. QQ is a trend that is emerging everywhere, especially among young people, and it unites some other of the world's largest economic superpowers. It is a phenomenon that spreads from the far West to the East, even reaching the Far East. QQ is defined as an attitude enacted by employees who voluntarily limit their work activities (Serenko, 2023), putting work second, third, or fourth on their list of priorities. Capable, competent, reliable, but seemingly unmotivated, and certainly not very competitive.

QQ, especially in its more social form, is described as a defense mechanism to protect oneself from *hustle culture* (Carter, 2016) and its consequences on mental health. Especially youths belonging to generation Z no longer give so much weight to money and job position for their identity construction at the expense of a personal space that increasingly revolves on processes of subjectivization (Ferguson, 2008), as our research contribution shows.

Quiet Quitting and Literature Review

We wondered what the causes of this trend might be, and analyzing the very recent literature available to us (Dill & Yang, 2022) some reasons emerged: (1) Social mobility blocked in Italy for decades, as in other EU countries (Pisati & Schizzerotto, 1999); (2) Excessive work rhythms from the United States (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milke, 2006) to the Far East (Taya, 2021; Widarahesty, 2020); (3) Lack of benefits and health insurance, covering unexpected medical expenses; (4) Stagnant wages and not keeping up with inflation; (5) Gender disparity in wages distribution (Öztürk et al., 2023); (6) Childcare-related problems. These last two issues particularly affect the female cohort (Ferragina, 2019) and bring

us back to the issue of social reproduction); (7) Poor relations with superiors and an uninspiring work environment (Serenko, 2023); (8) Disappearance of the bourgeois social utopia, which had for decades pointed to employment as the solution to social inequalities and the possibility of social redemption for those who did not belong to the upper class.

There has been no lack of criticism of the ongoing trend, first and foremost that of productive laziness (Levine, 2003). In Italy, however, these manifestations have not, as in the United States, generated the phenomenon of Great Resignation, i.e. mass resignation. Therefore, it would be necessary to explore the phenomenon in depth with research actions in the field. We can in this context draw a response from the little data we have. The hustle culture in Italy has been in question for a few decades and the processes of extreme individualization helped to provide a response, perhaps less blatant than mass resignation. Despite this, they built a solid base for putting into practice the culture of refusal to work on any terms. Better to opt for a job that gives satisfaction than to accept any job, better to demand something more challenging and profitable than to perform a generic task in the services, in the manufacturing sector or in the industry. Better to earn less and have time to make room for personal life trajectories outside the work dimension.

The scientific literature shows that the causes to be identified as underlying the phenomenon are: job dissatisfaction (Alsereidi, Almarzooqi, & Amer, 2022), health risks caused by work overload (Boy & Sürmeli, 2023) and the increased weight given by individuals to their personal time (Hartanto, 2024). Indeed, we think that the change in the socioeconomic, cultural political context and in the perception of the role of work in constructing individuals' lives has massively contributed to the three phenomena mentioned in this brief survey, namely Quiet Quitting, Great Resignation, and Tang Ping.

Methodology

Taking the only source to date that can be explored for this phenomenon, namely Tik Tok, its videos and posts, through a twofold analysis: (1) Keyword Analysis; (2) e-Content Analysis. We were able to account, at least in part, for the phenomenon in Italy. In order to explore the phenomenon, we selected and analyzed 15 videos and 200 posts from August 2022 to February 2024 according to Krippendorff's (2012) relevance sampling criterion, compared to the initial material consisting of 35 videos and 470 posts coming from Tik Tok, which is the social that first conveyed communication regarding QQ in Italy.

The selection took into account the demographic data, i.e. the posts of Generation Z, which best represents, the phenomenon and makes extensive use of socials, confirming the ongoing trend. We then chose among the posts, published from 2022 to 2024, those that were most significant in terms of content and that took into

account the gender issue, also giving voice to those who practice QQ, although no longer very young (the over 40s of Generation X and the Millenials). The cohort investigated, then, is represented by a 60% of males, as the original cohort was presented on Tik Tok (in the videos and posts), a 40% of females, a 80% of the Generation Z and a remaining 20% of Millennials and Generation X. We first transcribed all videos and posts and in a second step used NVIVO for keyword analysis and content analysis.

Results

There are numerous references in the posts to the changing traditional patterns of family and work. We can think of the increasing amount of single-parent families, the high number of divorces, the continuous emergence of extended families or the impact of domestication of work, which is frequently practiced by individuals and companies.

Table 1: Frequency of the most frequently used words in the sample (selection 15items out of 1001 NVIVO)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
work	4	125	3,51
quiet	5	56	1,57
quitting	8	56	1,57
people	6	36	1,01
life	4	32	0,9
years	5	31	0,87
one	3	30	0,84
time	4	30	0,84
working	7	26	0,73
company	7	24	0,67

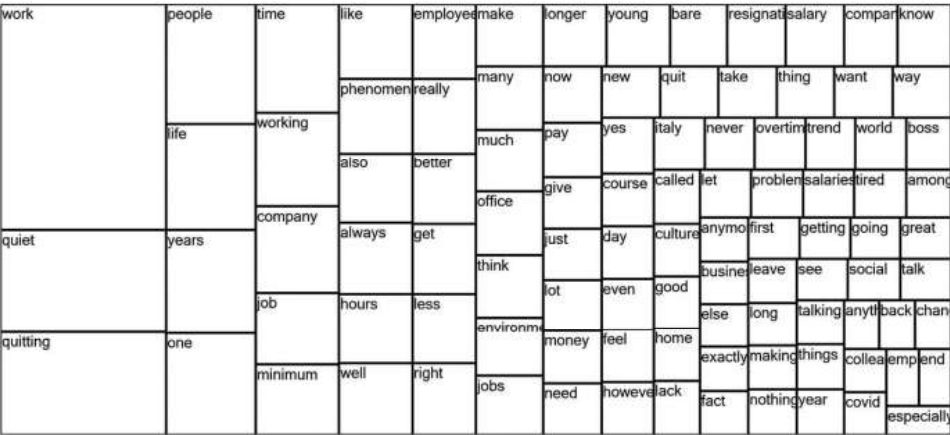| job	3	20	0,56
minimum	7	19	0,53
like	4	18	0,51
phenomenon	10	18	0,51

Figure 2. Tree Map (NVIVO)

We see that work understood as an opportunity to practice quiet quitting emerges throughout the first quadrant on the left, to which Quiet Quitters correlate better work-life balance, more time devoted to themselves and their personal interests, to the pursuit of well-being and of a living spaceoutside the work dimension. The trend is even more evident when looking at the word cloud, in which *quiet quitting,* along with the quest for a more minimalist life (*life*) inspired by a lower rate of goods consumption, environmental impact (*environment*) and by a much more subjectivization (*people*), together with amostly self-directed use of time (*time*), appear immediately at first glance. *Salary*, *covid* and *resignation* are among the latest concerns of Generation Z.

Figure 3. Word cloud of the sample review (NVIVO)

Discussion

Four recurring themes were identified. We report here some posts that more than others represent the ongoing phenomenon. The posts are representative of the different target groups involved in the research and bear fictitious names.

The changing perception of work among young people, who see it as less and less structuring in the construction of their biography, or rather as a component just like others.

> *"I think that work is one of the many things one does in life. I am not my job and my life fortunately does not consist only of my work. There are hobbies, friends, boyfrien. (Tiktoker Generation Z, female, 24 years old)*

Quiet Quitting represents a real way of life and not an option until one reaches their dream job.

> *"I don't do QQ because I don't feel like working. Doing QQ means for me to adhere to a more relaxed lifestyle. I just do...Many people, seeing that we don't give all of ourselves to work, think that we don't feel like doing anything. That's not the case. It's just that I think it's better to do as much as required and no more; because then we feel good. I prefer to dofewer things and have more time and energy for something else [...] my interests, my passions come first"(Tiktoker Generation Z, male, 28 years old)*

The individual, understood as a *subjective being* not perfectly comparable to a worker,increasingly driven to extremely competitive processes of individualization, from whichQuiet Quitters prefer to shy away.

> *"I have been doing QQ for a while and I feel better. I no longer have the anxiety attacks,every time my boss called me, I felt bad. I have seen that upsetting less and doing the things I have to do without rushing, makes me feel better. I feel less in competition withothers. I am not just a worker. We can't all be slaves". (Tiktoker Generation Y, female, 35 years old)*

Work life balance is the other recurring reason.

> *"I have been doing QQ for years, so I have time for me, my family and my son. Timeis priceless". (Tiktoker Generation X, female, 45 years old)*

At a different level and with much less weight are mentioned salary and resignation, which are not,indeed, the goal of Quiet Quitters. These 4 subject areas correlate perfectly with the first 5 terms, as seen in the word frequency results (WFR) and refer back, at least in part, to the Tang Ping and Great Resignation motivations.

The contribution that our research makes to scientific advancement is to be found in having pointedout, in addition to the causes indicated by the very recent studies and scientific literature mentioned above, other reasons. In the present case in our opinion, from the scientific evidence, there emerges: (1) A changed perception of work in the construction of one's biographical path; (2) Employment has over the decades become less and less central in terms of youth expectations, perhaps also as a result of its lower symbolic value with respect to the time of life dedicated to oneself, especially after the pandemic; (3) Young people are increasingly mindful of the environment and consumption of goods; (4) Which impact their choices and way of working. Environmental issues are particularlyfelt by Generation Z, who has directly or indirectly experienced several environmental catastrophes in just a few years (Weforum Report, 2024); (5) Globalization has missed the goal of equality and has not minimized social gaps, withyoung people being aware of this critical issue; (6) Family models, which for decades had been a stronghold in the existential journey of young adults, have collapsed under the pressure of new emerging individual and social needs caused by the social complexity of contemporary times; (7) The role of women and with it the traditions which had been entrusted to them for centurieshave changed, as the idea of social reproduction. The QQ constitutes only the tip of an iceberg quietly taking its first steps towardsbuilding new social models, pushing for new organizational assets in the world of work.

Conclusions

Has capitalism, which was presented in its early days as the solution to inequalities and social redemption with the ultimate goal of economic improvement and collective well-being, been able to hold to its original applications?

Understanding the modernization processes of the contemporary era and relating them to the growing phenomenon of inequality and social conflict is not an easy task to accomplish. This paper attempts to pursue this aim in part by recomposing the fragmented cultural scenario latent in certain social manifestations such as those analyzed here, namely Tang Ping, Quiet Quitting and Great Resignation.

The various and numerous crises, which have engulfed us over the past three decades, have contributed to the crumbling of traditional social models of well-being and the very concept of social development, generating in individuals a strong desire to break free from the established collectively normed models and, at a later time, to develop virtual communities. Contributing to a renewed push in this direction have been certain phenomena such as a demographic decline, the issue of family care, the feminization of work, the transformations of the classical family model, and finally the restructuring of public welfare. These have indirectly redefined the concepts of growth and development and oriented them towards new organizational models.

Ultimately, social action under the pressure of extreme individualization has, at least partly, crumbled in the face of uncertainty (Sennet, 2012) and the precariousness of working and relational conditions. The progress-recession dialectic, underlying the liberal capitalist model, has reached new dialogic forms (Beck, 1992). Today, the identity construction of individuals goes beyond the labor perimeter that defined Fordian man: work has lost some of its centrality in the existential construction. Globalization has encouraged welfare models in recent decades that have increasingly shifted the boundary between public and private, not only by privatizing education and health care, but also by mixing private and productive time. An example is the practice of smartworking.

The epidemic has accelerated the phenomenon of "entrepreneurial subjec-tivization" according to which each person, on their own account, forges his own destiny, while success and failure represent the cardinal points of human experience. In our view, burnout, resignation and disaffection with work are the first symptoms of more macroscopic phenomena that are globally carrying away our contemporary times. The rejection of hustle culture is the first indication of the undermining of the model based on material accumulation and work success. Generation X youth, as scientific evidence shows (Ellis and Yang, 2022), place much more emphasis on work-life balance. Voluntarily limiting one's work activities is not a defeat. Productive denial is loaded with new meanings at the cultural and organizational levels (Serenko, 2023): despite being capable and competent, people have little motivation for global competition.

The disappearance of the bourgeois utopia that for decades had pointed to capitalism, stable employment for every individual and mass production as the possibility of social equality and redemption, is slowly revealing its criticalities. The common thread linking the social manifestations of Tang Ping, Quiet Quitting, and Great Resignation, as our modest scientific contribution points out, lies in a legitimate culture of refusal to work and denial to productive action, geared towards the production of non-essential goods and services. If work does not gratify, one decides to do something else or to do the bare minimum.

From our theoretical exploration, empirical research and comparison of the data in our possession, it appears that the three phenomena analyzed (QQ; TP; GR) are related to different dimension: (1) a different perception of work in the biographical construction of the individual compared to the past; (2) lower and widespread expectations of the globalization process among young people(Generation Z); (3) a transformed culture of the use and consumption of material goods; (4) a process of individualization increasingly present in the identity constructs of young adults; (5) the change of traditional models of work and family; (6) the changing role of women with respect to the issue of care and social reproduction; (7) social reproduction; (8) increased attention to the environment and consumption. These variables, together with the crises that capitalism itself cyclically triggers (Jessop, 2000), would compose the ideal scenario for rethinking global development models that are more attentive to the environment and the lives of individuals as well as more shrewd models in balancing leisure and work time, even going as far as 'bucolic' models of returning to agriculture and country life, as in Tang Ping. Indeed, there are many young people in China who make this choice, escaping organizational cultural patterns aimed at competition among individuals.

The pandemic has then probably prompted an existential reflection already underway in the U.S., as the mass resignation (GR) of 2021 reveals. Well-being would no longer coincide, as in hustle culture, with the accumulation of goods and capital, but with more authentic, slow and reflective lifestyles, where the needs of individuals come before social success and material possession. Although different in mode, scale and geographical origin, the three phenomena extend from the far West to the far East, recently touching India. Our research has attempted to focus on these three new social manifestations, which express in forms, not yet organized, conflict and dissent from traditionally normed patterns.

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