

# UNEVEN PATHS. WOMEN IN ITALY AND SPAIN

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# Italy & Spain: Southern countries

- Always together in the same cluster:  
Welfare regimes, Care regimes, Gender regimes

Often as a SPECIAL CASE

- Italy first, Spain behind in an implicit evolutionary process

# Italy & Spain

## **SIMILARITIES**

- Low female activity (in EU comparison)
- Low fertility
- Low expenditure in social policies and family
- Strength of family networks
- Catholic Church

# Italy & Spain

## **DIFFERENCES**

- Italy= democracy since 1945
- BUT no social democracy in power except 3-4 years
- Italy strong civil society (+ Catholic Church + Mafia), weak state organisation
- Persistent strong North/South divide

# A LONGITUDINAL APPROACH

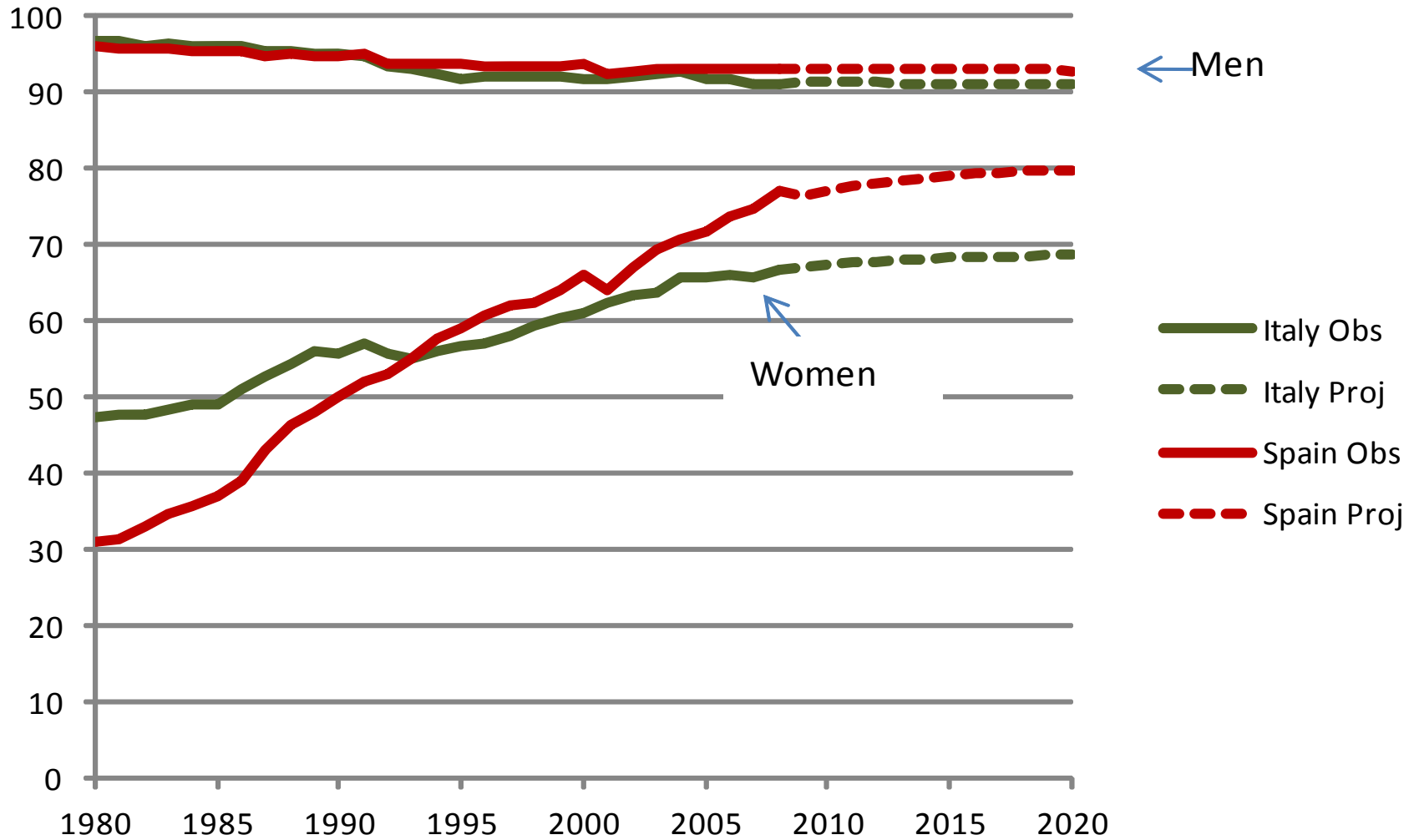
- Looking at processes of social change
- Path towards gender equality
- Empirical indicator: women's activity rate

# FAMILY TRANSITIONS

- The approach used by Leira, Trifiletti & Tobío in the longitudinal comparison between NORWAY, ITALY and SPAIN on family transitions in different historical moments
- Empirical indicator:
  - Female activity as the new SOCIAL NORM

Figure 1

### Activity rates at 25-49 in Italy and Spain observed (1980-2008) and projected (2009-2020)



Source: ILO Statistical Database (<http://laborsta.ilo.org/>)

# WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN ITALY?

- Or what has NOT HAPPENED?
- Or what HAS HAPPENED in Spain?
- .....



# THE MAIN HYPOTHESIS

- The path towards gender equality slowed down in Italy, and even backlashed after the 80s
- Whereas in Spain gender equality boomed since the 80s
- .....

# EXPLORING CAUSES

- LABOR MARKET
- WELFARE STATE
- POLITICS
- FEMINIST MOVEMENT
- THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
- THE FAMILY
- NORTH/SOUTH

# 1. The labor market

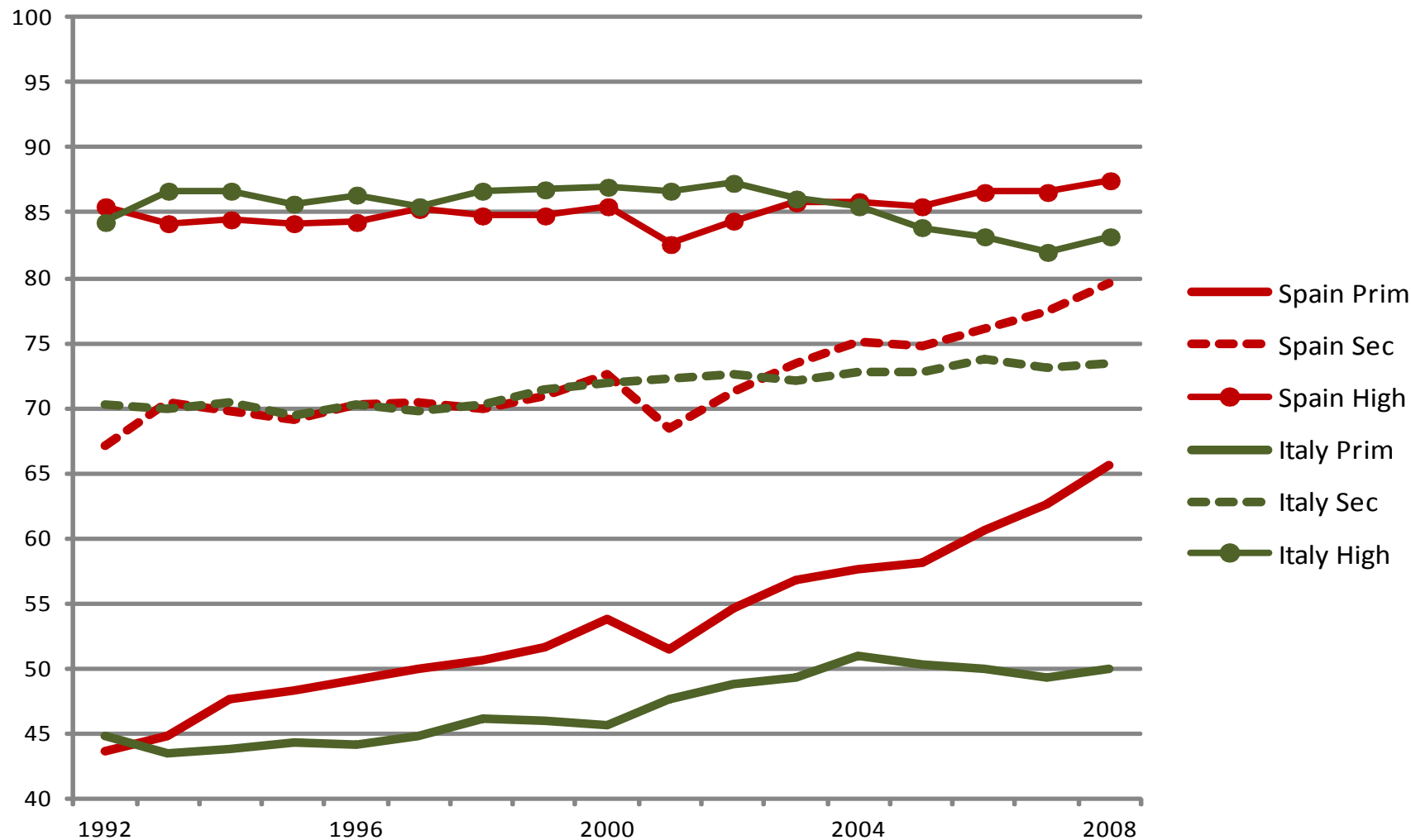
- The Spanish sorpasso in female activity:
  - 1980: 30%
  - 2008: almost 80%
- Italy:
  - 1980: almost 50%
  - 2008: 70%

## EDUCATION AS AN EXPLAINING VARIABLE

- A majority of Spanish **less educated women** (**65%**) are in the labour market
- Only **50%** in Italy
- Italian women with **higher education** have dropped their activity
- The Spaniards' continue to increase

Figure 4

### Activity rates of women aged 25-49 by educational level, in Italy and Spain, 1992-2008



Source: EUROSTAT-Labour Force Survey (Internet Database)

## EDUCATION AS AN EXPLAINING VARIABLE

IN ADDITION,

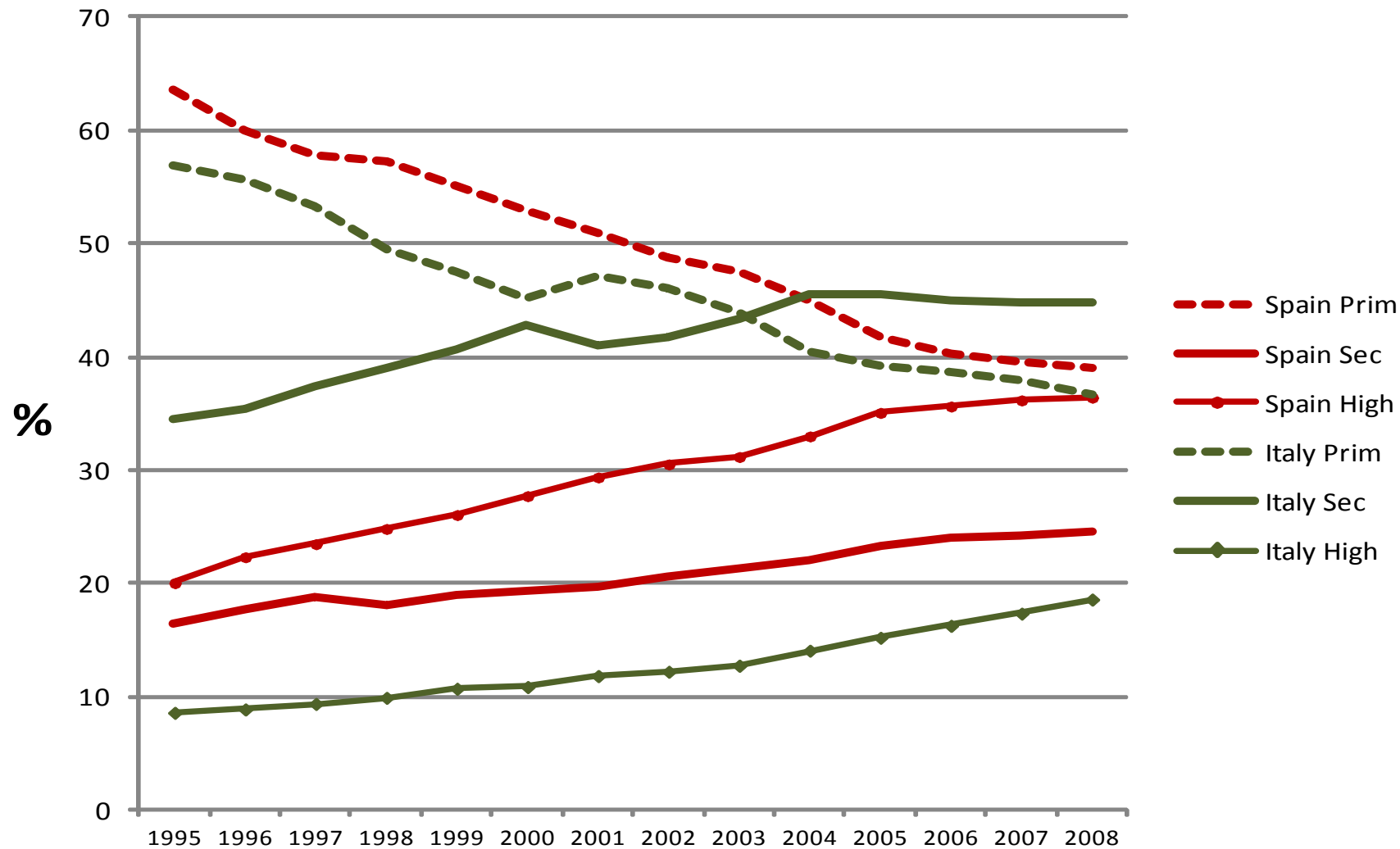
educational levels are higher in Spain: 37%  
women aged 25-49 hold a university degree

Italy: 18%

Same trend for men.

Figure 5

### Distribution of women aged 25-49 by educational level attained, Italy and Spain, 1995-2008

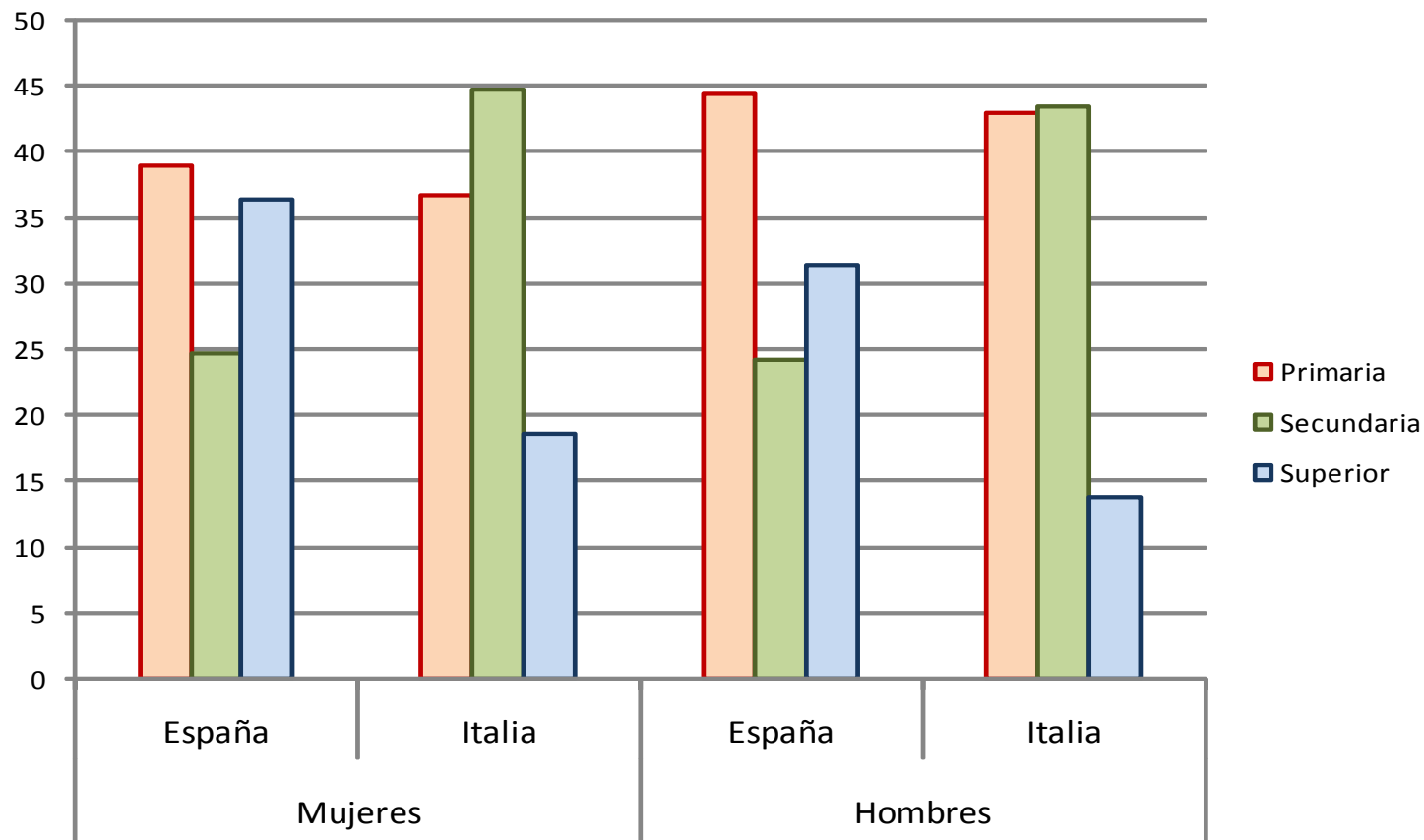


Source: EUROSTAT-Labour Force Survey (Internet Database)

Gráfico 13

Distribución de las personas de 25-49 años  
según sexo y nivel de estudios alcanzado  
Italia y España, 2008

2008



Fuente: EUROSTAT-Labour Force Survey (Internet Database)



# ATTACHMENT TO THE LABOUR MARKET AS AN EXPLAINING VARIABLE

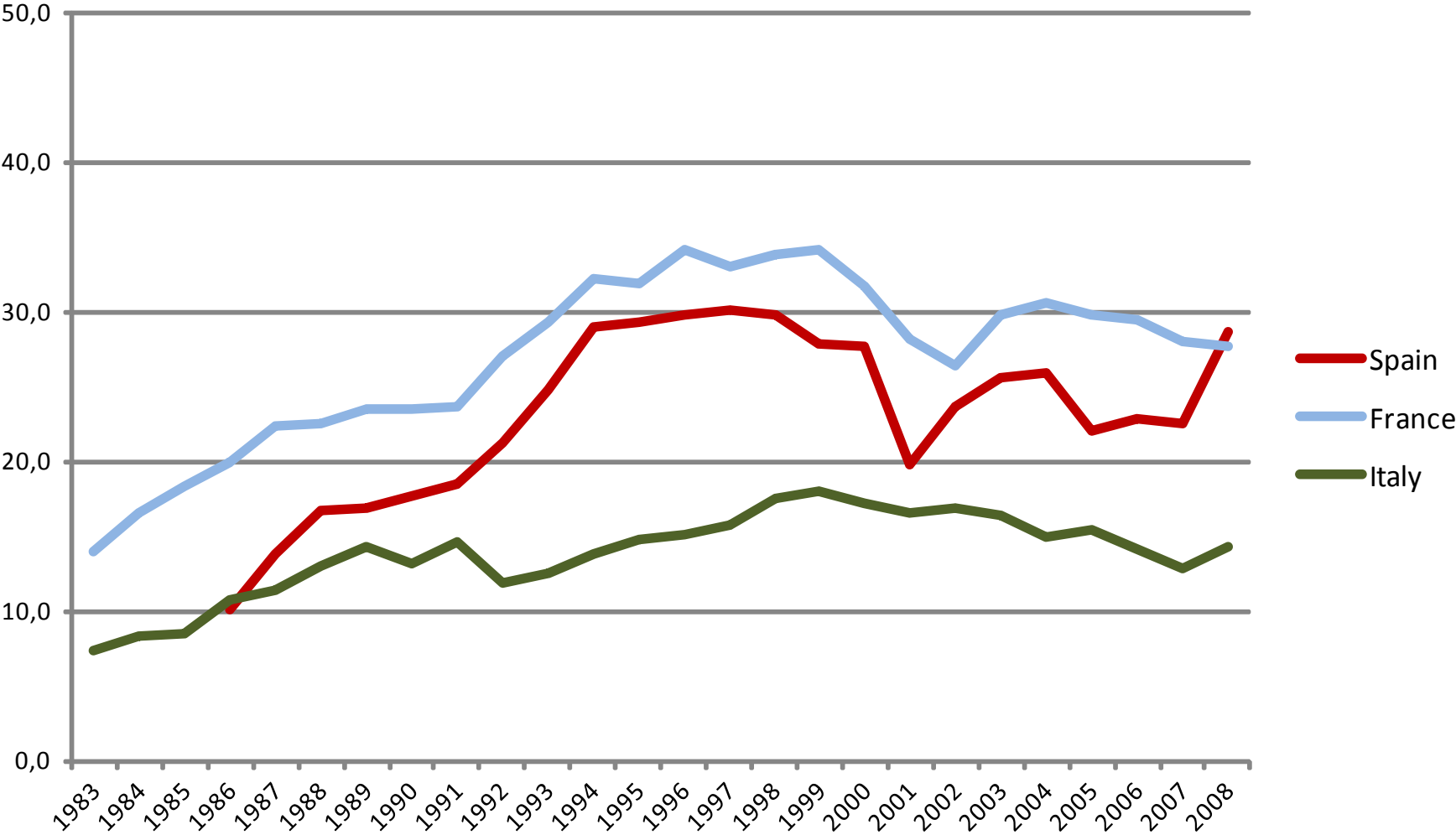
One more indicator:

Unemployed women/Non working women

To what extent they prefer to stay in the labour market or go back home if they are not employed?

Figure 6

### Proportion remaining in the labour market (unemployed) among non working women aged 25-49



Source: EUROSTAT-Labour Force Survey (Internet Database)

## 2. The welfare state

- Italy: an **old welfare state**, set up in the 40s after WWII
- **50s**: generous but unequal pension system
- **60s**: national health system (totally established by the 70s)
- **70s**: economic and fiscal crisis, high endebtmnt

## 2. The welfare state: what about support for working mothers

- 1971: Demonstrations of women's movements asking for childcare
- New laws on maternity leave AND crèches (public asili nidi for <3s) Agreement between PCI and DC. Il compromesso storico.

## 2. The welfare state: what about support for working mothers

- Long maternity leave since then BUT only a decreasing number of women are eligible
- ASILI NIDI. A more complicated story: State, Regions, Municipalities... (Franca Bimbi)

### OUTPUT:

- ONLY BY THE 2000 10% <3s in public childcare services (almost all of them in the NORTH).

## 3. Politics

- After 1945 decades of the right in power
- 70s: increasing social support for the left
- But the left does not arrive to the government (until later and for a short time)

# Political choices: no support for care

- Investment in social policies towards the family and support for working mothers was expensive: there was nothing
- Agreed preference for support to the male breadwinner (PCI, DC, Trade unions): salaries and pensions
- Regardless of policies, the family will continue supporting its children and its elderly

# Political choices: effects

- Low fertility + low female employment: women cannot cope.
- Labor market work + care work = higher than most EU countries
- Private and informal strategies
  - Private childcare
  - Badantato for the elderly
  - Kinship support



## 4. The feminist movement

- Strong and relevant in the 70s
- Backlash in the 2000

**WHY?**

## 4. The feminist movement: WHAT HAPPENED?

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**70s** feminism connects with women and people's concerns: divorce, abortion, childcare, women's rights

## 4. The feminist movement: WHAT HAPPENED?

**80s** feminism does not achieve across parties alliances.

The story of PCI-UDI relations (Beckwith). The former PCI feminists breakd down with PCI and shifts to autonomous non political action

## 4. The feminist movement: WHAT HAPPENED?

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**90s** radicalisation of feminism. Increasing distance from its social basis

**From EQUALITY to DIFFERENCE?**

## 4. The feminist movement: WHAT HAPPENED?

**2000** How do young women relate to feminism?

- The lives of the 70s generation was too difficult
- And they were only partly successful
- But their contribution to what women have achieved is acknowledged
- It is the past
- Feminism divides

# 5. The Catholic Church

**A key political actor and social institution in Italy**

“La parola della chiesa e’ sempre attesa” (Franca Bimbi)

“L’influenza della chiesa cattolica e’ stata molto forte (...), in fondo ha portato in questo punto il paese” (Giovanni Sgritta)

“Contro la chiesa da noi non lo hai mai fatto nessuno” (Laura Balbo) EXCEPT FEMINISTS.

## 5. The Catholic Church: THE FAMILY IS THEIRS

The family is perceived as their “natural space”:

- In **ideological terms**: the natural society, non dependent on the State
- In **institutional/economic terms**: Private religious childcare centres financed by the State, private religious elderly homes financed by the State. Solution finder for the problems the family is facing (badanti)

**“THE SYSTEM IS NOT GOOD, BUT IT WORKS”**

## 5. The Catholic Church: AN AMBIVALENT DISCOURSE

- Rejection of State interference in the family i.e. public policies in welfare
- BUT promotion of religious institutions state financed in poverty, education, health, childcare, elderly care... (explaining low investment in public welfare)

**WELFARE IS A SPACE WHERE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS COMPETING (quite successfully)**



## 6. The Family

- **A key resource for working mothers, elderly, young people**
- PARADOXICALLY kinship support for working mothers is higher in the North of Italy
  - Female activity rates are higher
  - Combined with other resources (private or public crèche, childminder... (which do not exist in the South))

## 6. The Family. A resource for social change

- The extended family does play a role to sustain social change (dual earner households) IN COMBINATION with other resources.

## 7. The North/South divide

### **An old unsolved problem: two countries?**

- Regarding women's involvement in paid work, in the South
  - No public places in crèches (1-2%)
  - Low female activity (30%)
  - Low educational skills
  - Emigration to the North of skilled young people

# The Spanish story

## 2. The welfare state:

- Practically non existent until 1975
- Set up during the 80s and 90s
- Continues expansión until 2008
- Two important effects for women:
  - Rapid extension of higher education
  - Jobs for women

# The Spanish story

## 3. Politics:

- Left wing governments 1982-2008 most of the time at state level, as well as at regional and level
- The construction of the Spanish welfare state, focusing on education, health and pensions, is its main achievement.

# The Spanish story

## 4. The feminist movement:

- Traditionally weak and dependent on the parties of the left
- Since 1982, institutional feminism grows through women's policy offices at all levels of government
- Women's issues become central issues for parties of the left

# The Spanish story

## 5. The Catholic church

Having actively supported the 1939-1975 francoist dictatorship, loses power and influence

# The Spanish story

## 6. The Family

- With few care policies and rapid increase of women in paid work
- Kinship support becomes the key resource for dual earner families



# The Spanish story

## 7. The North/South divide

- Left wing parties are especially strong in the less developed regions of the South.
- Welfare state policies have been for decades their identity (e.g. Andalusia)
- The North/South divide has decreased substantially

# Conclusion

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What happened or did not happen in Italy?

Many causes but **one connecting logic.**

# Conclusion

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## **Italy 70s**

Women's issues (care, divorce, abortion) become everybody's issues

Increasing power of the left

Alliance between feminism & the left

New policies for care

1970 Divorce Law: the Catholic Church defeated

# Conclusion

## **Italy 80s-90s**

High endebtment: no care policies, limited social policies

Decreasing power of the left

Feminism moves toward difference

The Catholic Church remains

North/South divide remains

# Conclusion

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**Italy 70s = Spain 80s-90s**

# Final Conclusions

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**Backlash does happen**

**Politics matter**



**Thank you for your attention!**