

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



IN HER WORDS



WITH CHIARA CERTOMÀ

Assistant Professor in Political-Economic
Geography at the Memotef Department at
University Sapienza Rome

Editorial Board Member – *Ocean and Society*

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CHIARA CERTOMÀ

BIOGRAPHY

I am passionate about visionary and enthusiastic people who practice disruptive social alternatives and shout them loudly, with an appetite for adventure and a genuine curiosity for life. In the academia, I am Assistant Professor in political-economic geography at the Memotef Dep. University Sapienza Rome, with a 20 years experience as nomadic engaged researcher.

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

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What made you want to go into your field of research and when did you decide you wanted to become a researcher?

I actually didn't decide to become a researcher; it was research that stuck with me and wouldn't let go. I have always loved studying, as I was quite a lonely kid, and my grandma's bookstore was a treasure trove of enchantment. Years later, after participating in thousands of competitions both within and outside academia, I realized that academic positions were the best option in terms of freedom, income, and opportunities for discovery.

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So, one crossroads after another, I found myself becoming a researcher—without ever actually choosing it.

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

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Did you have an inspiring model that motivated you to follow this career path?

I had many inspiring role models. As a child, they were mostly men—writers, thinkers, heroes. But later, my actual life became filled with strong, self-confident, and stubborn—yet often lonely—women. Some of my teachers pursued research purely for the pleasure of knowledge. The women in my family—my mother, my grandmothers—managed everything on their own, constantly negotiating their space within the historical expectations of femininity and family, sometimes succumbing to them.

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

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And of course, there were scientists who not only embodied the creativity of scientific thinking but also championed free thought in personal, political, and social life. Who wouldn't be inspired by Marie Curie's persistence, combined with her honesty about the complex entanglement of a woman's mind with her desires, passions, roles, inspirations?

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

What are you most proud of so far in your work as a researcher?

People I've met – friends, colleagues, students – who have decided to share part of their story with me and told me that it has changed their lives. So, the richness of experiences and the imagination I hope have been so lucky to inspire around my work up to know. And places I change (hopefully) for better with adopting an engaged action research approach in the participatory process I'm engaged in.

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

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Did you meet any barriers during your career as a researcher? Do you attribute any of them to the fact you are a woman in your field?

Compared to other working contexts, academia is populated by educated people, relationships are often formal but correct, there is in general propensity toward progressiste trends, including about gender. Nevertheless, I can say that being a women makes things a bit more complicated for the following reasons: you are as good as a man, but often less bold and self-confident and this automatically shadows your competences.

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

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You are attentive to relationships sometimes in a such a strong manner that in order not to harm anybody's sensitivity, you prefer to shut up in order to mantain good relationships (this might be just my case); getting older, your life is often crowded with duties toward relatives, less time, and competition still very high. This also happens for men but women, including in cooperative contexts, keep on taking most of the organisational burden on themselves; being accomodating, smiling and enthusiastic often results in others taking advantage of it – it takes ages to become so strong, refuse the feminine stereotypes, and affirm your willingness (not merely in academia).

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

How would you describe the state of gender equity in your field, and have you experienced the implementation of any gender equality policies?

I haven't personally experienced the explicit implementation of gender equality policies, but in my experience I haven't seen discrimination due to existing career or recruitment policies.

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

What would you suggest for a better implementation of gender equality in your field of work?

In general, I think that the possibility to work remotely, a more result-oriented working attitude, straightforward communication and a drastic reduction of bureaucracy would be largely beneficial. Not merely for women.

CHIARA CERTOMÀ

What would your words of advice be to young women wanting to pursue a career in science production and academia?

Being passionate and smiling, caring and attentive should never impede you to affirm your willingness and pursue your view, whatever it takes.