

ITALY

Heading back south



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parallelzero



Dionisia, 23 years old.



Dionisia is a law student at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan and lives in the Lombardy city. She returned to Caserta on February 23, the day before Milan was declared a "red zone". She had brought with her only a few things as she thought that the situation would be resolved quickly. She continues to take her exams remotely and claims to have reassessed life in Caserta after having returned. Left, a childhood portrait in Dionisia's room.

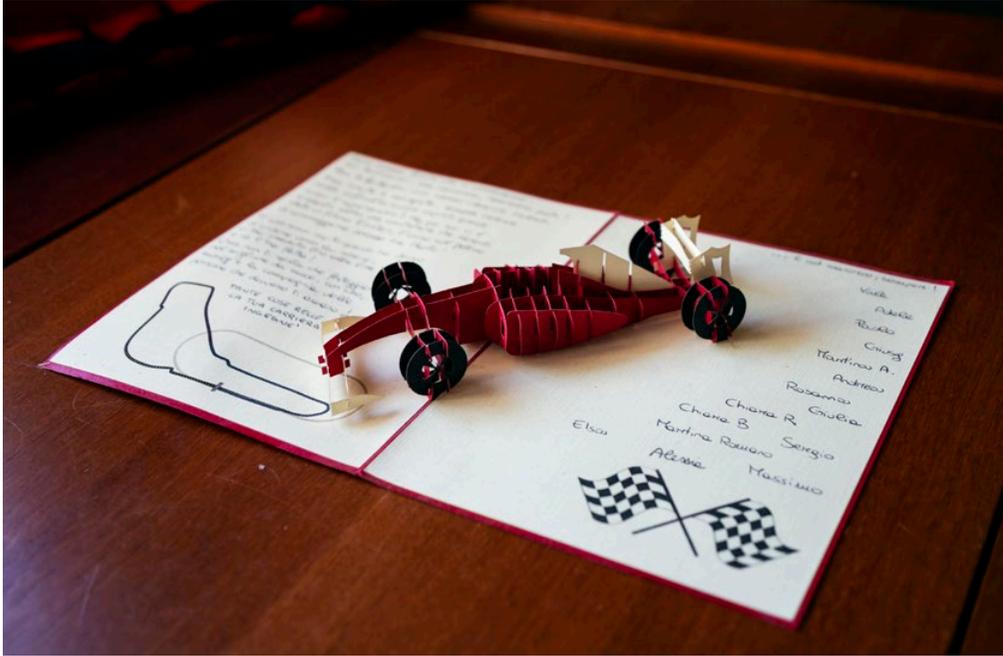
Il rientro dei fuori sede e il fenomeno del *south working*

- ▶ Covid-19 and the consequent lockdown triggered a notable counter migration towards the south, especially by young people.
- ▶ Having moved to the north to work or attend university, they returned to their childhood homes where they continue to work and study remotely.
- ▶ The phenomenon is of such notable proportions that it has given life to a new expression “south working”.
- ▶ The Treccani dictionary defines this as “working remotely or from home in southern Italy for companies located in the north of the country”.
- ▶ South working is slowly repopulating the towns and cities of the south, offering alternative jobs to the area’s young people.

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Antonio, aged 24, with his dog, Pixel.



On March 6, three days before the publication of the first lockdown legislation, Antonio returned to Caserta from his home in the province of Parma. He thought he would only be there for the weekend. Employed by an Italian racing car manufacturer, since May 11 he has been receiving furlough payments from the Wage Guarantee Fund along with most of his colleagues. He is currently in Caserta waiting for his employer to renew his contract. Left, a congratulations card celebrating Antonio's graduation; right, Antonio on the balcony of his home

Covid-19 and the consequent lockdown in Italy led to a counter-migration to the south. According to the Association for the Development of Industry in the Mezzogiorno, the phenomenon, which saw students and workers rush back to their home cities, involved more than one hundred thousand people. Most of these were youngsters who, where possible, continued their work or studies in the homes they had grown up in. Others found new jobs and began working for new companies.

The phenomenon was even identified by the Treccani dictionary that picked up on the term “south working”, defining it as “working remotely or from home in southern Italy for companies located in the north of the country.” South working is slowly repopulating the towns and villages of the south and is offering alternative job opportunities to the youth of the Mezzogiorno but, as sociologist Domenico De Masi explains, “it is a form of paid employment that is goal-oriented, without time constraints or spatial requirements and therefore necessitates modifications and updates to the current regulations.”

Is this just a temporary phenomenon or the beginning of a process that is decentralizing the big cities in favour of small towns and evening out the balance between the north and the south? These images show some of the stories of those who returned to the city of Caserta at the beginning of the lockdown: their faces, their childhood bedrooms, their pets and their day-to-day lives.



Alessia, 22 years old.



Alessia is a law student at the LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome. Alessia returned to Caserta on March 9, the night of the publication of the lockdown legislation. In spite of not having enjoyed her stay in her childhood home, she still managed to take various exams both from Caserta and Rome when she had the opportunity to go there. She returned to Rome permanently on September 28. Left, a dress that Alessia brought with her when she returned to Caserta. She had wanted to wear it at Easter but unfortunately, this year it wasn't possible to celebrate as she had hoped.



Ivan, 25 years old.



A student of Business Administration at the Tor Vergata University of Rome, Ivan took his final exam on June 9. On November 12 he attended his graduation in virtual form. Left, a detail of Ivan's room.



Valerio, 24 years old.



Valerio studies Territorial Management at La Sapienza University in Rome. Having commuted each week since September, on 5 March, four days before the lockdown, Valerio returned definitively to Caserta. During the quarantine he continued his studies and managed to take some of his exams remotely. His university allowed some students to continue to study in-person and remotely but field trips were obviously not possible. Left, in Valerio's room: a photo with his family and a bookmark given to him by his elementary school teacher.



Cristina, aged 25.



After some remote interviews, on September 21 Cristina began a remote internship with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees. On October 21 she returned to Caserta from Turkey where she had been working on a voluntary project with the European solidarity Corps. Left, an aerial view of the deserted streets of the historic centre of Caserta.



Stefano, 24 years old.



Stefano is an Economics student at the Catholic University of the Sacred heart in Rome. While finishing the last exams of his degree, on June 3 Stefano began a remote internship with the Milanese office of an international consultancy firm. He is currently in Caserta writing his thesis. Left, a detail of Stefano's home.



Mario, aged 24.



Mario studies Clinical Psychology at the Libera University Maria Santissima in Rome. Having always been a weekly commuter, on March 5, just a few days before the beginning of the lockdown, Mario returned definitively to Caserta. His university did not allow students the possibility to follow their courses entirely remotely. He has now moved back to Rome and continues to return to Caserta at weekends. Left, a corner of Mario's room, on the right is a detail of his thesis.



Laura, 25 years old, with her mum Bianca, 58.



On October 26 Laura returned to Caserta after seven years living away, first in Rome as a student and then in Milan where she had been doing an 18-month training internship at the Milan Appeals' Court. She is currently studying to become a magistrate and is also looking for a firm where she can practice law. Left, a photograph in Laura's room; right, Laura in her room.



Manuele, aged 24.



Manuele left for Barcelona on March 8, the night before the publication of the first lockdown legislation, to begin an internship as an affiliate account manager with a Spanish digital marketing agency. He found himself starting the lockdown in a new house with four housemates that he didn't know. He returned to Caserta on the September 1, a few days before the end of the internship, after which the agency offered him a new opportunity with the possibility to work remotely. Left, scout scarves in Manuele's room: he was a scout for 9 years; right, Manuele with his dog Schizzo.



Sonia, aged 29.



On March 10, after the publication of the first lockdown legislation, Sonia returned to Caserta from Paris to celebrate her father's retirement and intended to return to France soon after. The quarantine gave her the chance to reconnect with her family and she also decided to officially register her own fashion brand. After three remote interviews, on June 8 she was hired as a footwear designer and product accessories developer by a French fashion company. She isn't ruling out a permanent return to Italy. Left, paintings Sonia completed during the quarantine; right, Sonia's desk.



Vincenzo, aged 28.



At the beginning of the epidemic and the publication of the lockdown legislation on March 9 Vincenzo was already back in his hometown of San Prisco (CE). After an interview during the quarantine, at the beginning of May he started working remotely for the Milanese office of an international engineering firm, where he designs mechanical systems. The company currently allows him to work remotely from his hometown before an eventual move north. Left, Vincenzo at work in his room.



Marcello, aged 25.



After having begun the quarantine in Modena, on April 21 Marcello graduated in Engineering Management at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Marcello returned home to Caserta on April 24 and on July 13 began to work remotely for the Milanese offices of a technology consulting firm. Left, a view of the historic centre of Caserta. Right, a wall at Marcello's house is covered with photographs.

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