FIRST JOB

Gabriele Galimberti
One’s first job is rarely forgotten. It is the beginning of adulthood, a rite of passage and a turning point. For numerous workers, only 30 years ago, the first job was often the only one, as people could remain in the same company for a lifetime, just being gradually promoted or slightly changing ones positions with seniority. In today’s scenario all is temporary, as the dream of a life position has forever vanished. Usually the first job is the first of a long list that will follow. In the wake of the worst economic crises in modern history, where for many young adults there seemed to be actually no possibility for a first job at all, Gabriele Galimberti explores the world of employment of today’s youth. In the style that has become his trademark, this is a project that will be carried out in all the 5 continents where the global theme does not obscure, but actually heightens the local specificities. Each one of the subjects whose portrait has been taken has an individual story that feeds into a larger narrative on how the world we live in is changing. From China to Germany, from Colombia to the U.S. we get a personal introduction to tomorrow’s workforce.
Lord Osei-Ofori, 24, and Rayman Aryani, 24, both grew up in their respective countries. Lord was born in Ghana, while Rayman was born in Oregon to a Yemeni family who moved back to Yemen when he was just a few days old. They both returned abroad to study. Lord studied psychology at university in the USA, while Rayman went to Harvard.

Just two months after finishing university, they went for job interviews at Google. Lord recalls, “The interview with Google was really strange. They didn’t ask anything about work or what we had studied. They asked things like, ‘Explain a complex concept to me in simple words,’ and other things like that.”

They have been working in the same office for almost 2 years. They work 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. According to the contract they have with Google, they can’t disclose how much they are paid.
Dai Bo Ying is 15. She was born and raised in Xiamen, China. Her dream is to open a beauty salon. She quit school almost a year ago, when she inherited the little crab shop that her parents used to run. Since then, she has been working every day selling crabs on the street. She hired a friend to help her, Cai Zhi Bing. She pays him RMB 3000 per month, or about USD 450. Sometimes she takes a day off and lets her friend work alone.

She doesn’t have a real salary. Everything depends on how much she sells, but her average income is about RMB 5,000 a month, or roughly USD 700.
Montecchio, Italy - Fabrizio Cappelli, 25

Fabrizio was born and raised in a small town in the Tuscan countryside. His mother has always been a housewife and his father was a bricklayer, but, unfortunately, he died 13 years ago. Five years ago Fabrizio got a diploma from a vocational school, and now he’s an electrical engineer. For 3 years after finishing school, he couldn’t find a job. “There is a big crisis in Italy,” he says. Finally, 2 years ago, he found a job in a big factory that builds trailers for trucks. He has a 3-year apprenticeship contract and works in the factory’s assembly department. He works 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. He gets EUR 1,200, or about USD 1,500, per month.
Rio De Janeiro, Brazil – Paloma Pires Dos Santos Mariano, 19

Paloma was born 19 years ago in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. She grew up there, but one year ago she moved to Rio de Janeiro to find a job. “I studied to became an aesthetician. I went to school for one year in Brasilia, but then it was really difficult to find a good job there. That is why I decided to move to Rio. Here, almost everybody, girls and guys, likes to go to the aesthetician.”

Paloma has a 2-year-old son. “His father didn’t acknowledge him, so he lives only with me.” Paloma and her son live in a small house, which they share with Paloma’s mother. She would like to study medicine and become a dermatologist.

She found her first job, in a beauty salon in Copacabana, just 3 months ago.

Paloma works 9 hours a day, 6 days a week. She makes 3,000 reais (BRL), about USD 900, per month.
Regine was born and raised in the suburbs of Port-au-Prince. She’s the second of three siblings, all of whom are still living at home with their parents. She studied marketing and computer sciences at the University of Port-au-Prince and then, 5 months ago, her C.V. helped her to get this job. She has a 6-month contract with the electoral commission, a job which she’ll lose after the presidential election. It consists of sitting at her desk for 8 hours a day, where she works on a database, changing the addresses of voters who have recently moved to Carrefour (one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in all of Haiti). Every day, she meets around 100 people and takes down their new addresses.

She works 8 hours a day, 6 days a week, and she earns around USD 500 per month.
Kirsten was born in Michigan, but she grew up in North Carolina where she studied to become a graphic designer. A couple of months after finishing university, she found her first job, in Portland. She’s working as an “Experience Designer” for Second Story, a studio that works for museums and art galleries.

She works an average of 9 hours a day, 5 days a week. Sometimes she also works on Saturdays. She has a salary of USD 55,000 a year, which means around USD 28 an hour.
Shyamji Vishwakarma, 18 – Mumbai, India

Shyamji was born and raised in Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh. For 17 years he lived in the same house with his parents, 4 brothers, and 1 sister, but he moved to Mumbai a year ago. Now he lives with his cousin in Sangam Nagar, one of the city’s biggest slums. He’s a tool sharpener. He started this job, his first job, 7 months ago. His work basically consists of sharpening scissors and knives. He starts work every day at 10 a.m. and continues until 9 p.m., with a break of two hours for lunch. He has Fridays off. He gets paid on a per-day basis: 50% of whatever the shop earned that day. The daily average is between 0 and 450 rupees (7 USD). He says, “I want to learn this job in the best way possible and then I want to open my own shop.”
Chen Yun Bin was born and raised in New Taipei City. Ever since he was a kid, his dream has been to become a hair dresser. "Here in Taiwan, if you want to do this job, you need to have a license. To get that, you need to go to hair dressing school for 3 years," he told me.

Chen Yun has just finished his second year of school. For the third year, he has to do an internship at a hair salon, and so, 4 months ago he started to work in this place. He works every day for 8-9 hours, weekends included, but he can get a day off when he’s tired just by asking the owner for one. When the year is over, he would like to be able to open his own hair salon. His salary is 20,000 Taiwanese dollars (TWD), or about USD 600, per month.
Dubai, UAE - Al Emran, Mohdmehdi, Shanhin and Kobir are all 24, and they all come from Bangladesh. They moved to Dubai 4 years ago. They had never worked in Bangladesh. "We came here because we found a job in a company owned by an Iranian. We spend the day in the parking garage of the Mall of the Emirates, one of the most luxurious shopping centers in the country. We clean the cars of the people who come here to shop. We charge 18 Dirham (AED) per car (about USD 5). We give all the money we make to the company and we get a monthly salary of AED 1,900 (roughly USD 530). We also earn between AED 200 and 300 in tips every month. We work 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. We all live in the same house – actually with 2 more friends. There are 6 of us in the house, but this is the only way we can afford the rent."
Umar was born in Ga.Dhaandhoo, a very small island in the South Malé Atoll. He spent the first 17 years of his life there, before moving to Filahohi, another small island, where there is only one resort. He found his first job there, as a room cleaner. "I don't like this job, but so far it's the only one I have found. I always do the same things. First I have to check the fridges to see if the guests have consumed anything, then I change the sheets on the beds, and at the end I clean the room. It's boring!" Umar dreams of opening his own guest house, but he needs to save a lot of money before he can do that.

He works every day of the week, 8 hours (and sometimes more) per day. He only gets 3 days off a month. He makes MVR 8,000 per month, or roughly USD 500.
Bogotà, Colombia - Manuel Alvaro Quello Lopez, 20

Manuel Alvaro grew up in the southern part of Bogotà, where he was born 20 years ago. At the age of 18, after finishing school, he joined the army. Four months ago he completed his military service, and a week later he found this job. He works as a security guard for a high-end condominium in the northern part of Bogotà. He works 12 hours a day. He alternates between day shifts one week and night shifts the next. He spends most of his time watching TV inside the little guard booth at the condominium’s entrance. He likes his job, but he dreams of becoming a policeman.

He earns 36,0000 Columbian pesos (COP) per month, or around USD 200.
Mei Ling was born and raised in the south of China, in a little town close to Xiamen. When he was 18, he moved with his family to Shenzhen, one of China’s biggest and most famous port cities. He found a job immediately, on a cargo ship that transports wind propellers to the USA. That’s where he has been working for nearly two years now, and he has already gone back and forth from China to the USA almost 10 times. He works for 4 months without once getting off of the boat, but then he gets a month off in China. He earns RMN 3,000 per month, or about USD 450.
Ben was born in Austin, Texas, 17 years ago. He grew up there, in the city with an international reputation as “the world capital of live music.” He’s still in high school, but his dream for the future is to work backstage at concerts or as a sound engineer for live shows.

Two months ago, he found a part-time job working for a big store that rents musical instruments and PA systems. He’s in charge of collecting all the cables that get returned, then testing, rolling and storing them.

He works 4 hours a day, 3 days a week. He goes to work after school. He gets USD 10 an hour.
Mao Chao was born and raised in Hubei province, in China. When he was 17, he left school and moved to the Fujian province. “There are many more job opportunities here,” he told me. He found a job as a metalworker and has been working for the same construction company ever since. He’s specialized in cutting. He spends nearly the entire day in the basement at the construction site, cutting metal poles of different sizes. He works 8.5 hours a day. He doesn’t have a real schedule for days off. He works nearly every day, and he only asks the boss for a day off when he’s tired. He earns RMB 5,000 a month, or around USD 750.
Maria was born and raised in Alajuela, where she studied biology for one year at university. That one year was all she needed to realize that she didn't want to be a biologist, because she wanted to work with the animals instead, a job she knew she'd love. That was why she decided to move to Puerto Viejo, where there is a sort of animal hospital, where she applied for a job. After 6 months as a volunteer, she was given a contract. In those 6 months she specialized in “parrot and monkey rescue.”

“I love to work here. It is a magical place. Every day many people come here and bring us injured animals that they’ve found on the street. We rescue them, and when they are ready, we set them free in the forest.”

She works 5 days a week for about 8 hours a day. She makes USD 150 per week, but she gets a lot of tips from tourists who go there to visit. What’s more, she’s given meals and is able to live in a house on the hospital property.
Jasper was born and raised in Amsterdam. He’s still a student in high school, but his dream is to become an actor. He’s already taking some acting classes, and would love to go to acting and film school in Amsterdam once he’s done with high school. Four months ago, he also started his first job. “I need to earn some money and save it for film school,” he told me. He works as a fruit vendor in a small shop in the center of the city.

He works 2 days a week, 4 hours a day, for a total of 8 hours per week.
Taipei, Taiwan - Eva Prasiska, 24

Eva was born and raised in Indonesia, in a small town in the southern part of Sumatra island. She lived there until the age of 20, when she moved to Taiwan in search of her first job. “In Indonesia it was impossible for me to find work,” she told me. Ever since she first arrived here, she has been working as a caregiver for the elderly. Right now she’s taking care of an old woman who has not been able to walk for a year. Eva lives with the woman, and she is on duty 24 hours a day. She has no scheduled days off. Once every ten days she ask for a day to rest, and on that day the elderly woman stays with a younger sister. Eva dreams of going back to Indonesia one day.
She gets 15,000 Taiwanese dollars (TWD) a month, or around USD 450.
Malé, Maldives - Ahmed Sajid, 23

Ahmed was born and raised on Nilandhoo, a small island in the Faafu Atoll. Four years ago he moved to Malé, the capital, to study at the police academy. “I wanted to become a policeman. That has been my dream ever since I was a kid but, unfortunately, just a few months after I graduated, I had a bad accident. Now I have a physical problem that prevents me from working as a policeman.” Six months ago he found his first job, at the Malé airport. He works in the check-in, boarding, and arrivals areas.

He does both day and night shifts, working 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. He earns MVR 11,000, or about USD 700, per month.
Fribourg, Switzerland – Diana Roccardo, 31

Diana was born in Baden, a small city in the German part of Switzerland. She has always been an excellent student. For the past 5 years, she’s been studying for a PhD in neuroscience at the University of Fribourg. She’s doing research to find out where the instinct for laughter originates in the brain. Part of her research consists of tickling rats and recording their laughs. “Their brains are really similar to human brains. Nobody knows it, but rats can smile and laugh like humans. I’ve found out that they have positive reactions if they are tickled… they actually laugh! So, I do this and I record their laughter. Then, sadly, I destroy a little part of their brain, the part that is the source of the instinct for laughter. If I tickle them again after the operation, they don’t laugh anymore. I then use a medicine on them to see its effect on their brains, and to see if the instinct comes back.” She gets paid for this research, so this is actually her first job. She works 42.5 hours a week and she gets 4,100 Swiss Francs (CHF), or around USD 4,500, per month. Right now she is earning only 70% of the total salary that she’ll get once she has completed her PhD.
Las Vegas, Nevada (USA) - Berenice Hernandez, 20, and Iris, 9

Berenice is 20. She was born in Mexico, but when she was 3 years old her whole family moved to Las Vegas. She still lives with her parents, one brother and one sister. When she was 14, she got punched by a classmate at school. That’s when she decided to start training as a boxer. “I wanted to be able to defend myself. That’s why I started boxing,” she says. At the age of 17 she became the female under-18 boxing champion of Nevada. She attends university, but four months ago she also started her first job, working as boxing coach for kids at a little gym in North Las Vegas.

She works 4 hours a day, 3 days a week. She gets USD 10 an hour.
Jimei, China - Chen Ming Ya, 22.

Chen Ming Ya, 22, was born and raised in Xiamen, China. She studied to become a hotel manager, but her real dream is to become a member of the Communist Party and work for the government. She loves politics, and says they are her greatest passion.

Three months ago, right after she finished school, she started working as a receptionist in a sort of hotel owned by the state, which accepts only government people as guests.

She works 8 hours a day, and she can have 2 days off per week. She earns RMB 3,200, or around USD 500, per month.
Berlin, Germany - Jonas Hartlieb, 25

Jonas was born and raised on Rügen, a small island off the north coast of Germany. Four years ago he moved to Berlin to begin a three-year course in pedagogy. He wants to become an elementary school teacher, but he’ll need to study for 5 more years. However, he’s taken a year off school and now he’s working in a private kindergarten. He works from Monday to Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Every day, even when it’s really cold, he brings the kids outside to play.

He works 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. He earns EUR 1,400, or roughly USD 1,750, per month.
Silberth was born and raised in the state of Minas Gerais, in the central part of Brazil. When he was 15, he moved to Rio to find a job. “I’m from a really poor family. We always lived in a favela, and here in Rio I still live in a favela. My house is really small, but I have a nice view of Ipanema,” he says pointing towards Morro do Cantagalo, the favela that overlooks the beach. Silberth started selling caipirinhas on the beach a couple of weeks after his arrival in Rio, and now he’s been doing it every day for over 10 years. “This is not a legal job, but it’s my first and only job,” he says. He works 7 days a week, from 10 in the morning until sunset. He sells an average of 25 caipirinhas per day, at a price of 20 reais (BRL), or about USD 6, each.
The first time that I worked in my life, I was 18. A friend of mine brought me to the same club where she was working as an exotic dancer. It was my first day of work, that night on the stage. A few minutes after my performance, a man approached me. He proposed that we spend a month together. He was offering a lot of money. I accepted. He was actually a nice man. In the end, I spent more than 2 months with him. He paid me really good money and he also bought a lot of things for me but, strangely, we never had sex. After that experience, which I liked, I kept on doing that job. I’ve been an escort for the past 6 years. Now it’s different. With some of my clients I spend only an hour, just for sex, with others an entire weekend, or even a week.

She has no real schedule. She charges her clients USD 200 an hour, USD 1,200 a day, or USD 2,000 for a weekend.
Mercy, 40, is from a small village in Edo, a state of Nigeria. He came to Italy fleeing ethnic and religious violence. Boko Haram has attacked members of his family and burnt the church he used to attend. He crossed Nigeria and Niger, and he lived in Libya for a while before he managed to cross the Mediterranean, on a perilous trip during which numerous other refugees perished. He left behind his wife and four children – Grace, 12, Godbless, 10, and twin girls, Peace and Joy, 8. He landed in Sicily, but was soon moved to Trento, in the north of Italy. Through a regional program, he was able to get a job at a garage in Riva del Garda, where he can apply the skills he learned as a truck mechanic in Nigeria. He earns EUR 600, or roughly USD 750, per month, working 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. This is his first regularly paid job. He has applied for refugee status.
Sharjah, UAE - Waqas Asghai, 23

Waqas was born in Pakistan 23 years ago.
At the age of 10, he started to ‘work’ with his father, a mechanic, and he continued to ‘work’ with him for 8 years. That wasn’t actually his first real job, because he never got paid for his work. His father sometimes gave him some money, but never a real salary. At the age of 18, he took the advice of a friend who was living in Dubai and decided to move to the United Arab Emirates, where, together, the two of them opened a garage. He works every day but Friday.
He does 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the afternoon, with a three-hour break for lunch. His salary isn’t set, but he makes an average of AED 1,700, or about USD 500, per month.
Bolgheri, Italy - Sara Torti, 22

Sara was born in Montescudaio, a very small town on the Tuscan coast. She grew up there and studied at the "Istituto Tecnico Agrario" (Agricultural Institute) in Cecina. She would like to become a wine expert, but not a sommelier. Her dream is to make wine and work the land. Right after finishing school a year ago, she started to look for a job. She was lucky enough to find a six-month contract with Ornellaia, one of the best wine producers in Italy.

She would love to work with them for a longer time and hopes they will extend her contract. She works 7 hours a day, 5 days a week in the summer and 8-9 hours a day, 6 days a week during the harvest. She earns EUR 6.6, or about USD 8.25, per hour.
Dendi was born and raised in Beijing. At the age of 16, she went to study for a year in the USA, with an exchange program. She loved being abroad and, a few months after her return to China, she decided to apply to an American university. She ended up studying business at Ohio State University. Two years ago she graduated and came back to Beijing. More than business, her greatest passion is art, so she started to look for a job related to that field. Thanks to a friend, she got in touch with the “Three Shadows Gallery,” the most important photography exhibition space in the city. “They were looking for a person with international experience. I applied for the job and I got it. Now I work as a curator for the gallery.”

She organizes events, shows and workshops, and handles all the relationships with the artists.

She works 5 days a week, 8-9 hours a day, and makes RMB 7,000, or around USD 1,100, per month.
Evenson was born at home, in a small house on the beach of Timouyaj. Both he and his older brother still live at home with their parents. He started school in Jacmel 4 years ago, and he still has 6 years to go before he finishes. Every day, when he comes home from school, he works with his brother making small papier-mâché models of hummingbirds. Then, every weekend, he goes to the beach to sell them to the tourists.

He sells his papier-mâché models for 500 Haitian Gourdes (HTG), or about USD 8.5, each. He then divides the money with his older brother, who takes two-thirds of the income. On a good weekend he can sell about 15 of his birds.
Mei-Ling was born and raised in Yunlin. She’s the third of four siblings. After high school, she went to Tainan for four years to study pharmacology. She finished school at the age of 23 and started working immediately, in the pharmacy of one of her former teachers. She has worked there ever since. She’s now becoming an expert in traditional Chinese medicine. She dreams of opening her own traditional pharmacy one day.

She works 5 days a week, 8 hours a day, and she gets TWD 53,000, roughly USD 1,600, per month.
Andre was born and raised in Mexico City, and she hopes that she'll never have to go and live anywhere else. “I like living here. This city is so full of things to do and offers so many possibilities that there’s never any risk of getting bored.”

Andre wakes up early every morning to go to university. She is studying accounting and dreams of working as an accountant for a big corporation. In the afternoons, however, as soon as she finishes school, Andre goes to work selling sweets and chocolate at her grandmother’s stall in the market. She spends eight hours a day here, usually from 3 in the afternoon until 11 at night.

At this time of the year (October) she sells mostly skulls made of sugar or chocolate. “Los Dia de los Muertos is getting closer and people love to buy these sorts of things to decorate their tables for the meal.” Her grandmother doesn’t pay her a regular salary. Every week she gives her something, but the amount is always different. On average, though, she makes 2000 pesos (about 120 USD) per week.
Hawwa was born and raised in Malé. She has lived here for 25 years – her entire life. She left the country only once, when she went to India to get treatment for a health problem. She’s the fourth of nine siblings. Her mother has always been a housewife, and her father works for the Maldives government. She got her first job, as a receptionist in this hotel in the center of Malé, 5 years ago, and has been working here ever since. She recently decided to take lessons to become a cake decorator and soon she will open her own shop.

She works 6 days a week, 8 hours a day, and she does both day and night shifts. Her monthly salary is MVR 6,000, or around USD 400.
Jose was born in Barcelona, into a family of fishermen. At age 17, he went to work on his father’s boat. He has worked there ever since. The only thing that has changed during the last fifty years is that, at age 40, he took on the role of captain.

Jose takes the boat out at 4:00 a.m. He comes back to port at 4:00 p.m., so he works around 12 hours a day. There are three other people on the boat with him.

Jose works 12 hours a day, 5-6 days a week, and he makes around EUR 1,000, or about USD 1,300, per month (his income depends a lot on the time of year; during summer he makes roughly EUR 1,500, or USD 1,875).
Juan Carlos Salazan, 19

Juan Carlos was born and raised on the outskirts of Bogotá, where he still lives today. He attended school until the age of 18, then he decided to stop studying and start looking for a job. Nearly a year ago, he found a job at a small pharmacy in the northern part of Bogotá (the richest part of the city). He works as a delivery boy, using his bike to home-deliver medicines to the pharmacy's customers. He works 12 hours a day, and he makes an average of 35 deliveries per day. He's happy doing this for now, but he dreams of a job with the Air Force.

He works around 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, and he gets COP 32,000, or around USD 12, per day.
Cahuita, Costa Rica – Edder Alberto Kurlew Chavarria, 25

Edder Alberto was born in Limón, the largest city on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. He grew up there, but then, at the age of 18, he moved to Cahuita, a tiny town one hour south of Limón, because he had fallen in love with a girl who lived there. It was when he noticed that there were no hair salons in Cahuita that he decided to open one himself. That was his first job, and he’s still doing it. His shop is called “Barberia Cahuita”. Now, two people work for him at the shop.

Edder Alberto lives with his wife and 2 children.

He works 6 days a week, about 8 hours a day. He earns roughly 400,000 colones (CRC), or about USD 1,000, per month.
At 19 years of age, she works selling handicrafts to tourists on an island in the San Blas archipelago, where the indigenous Kuna people, like her, live. She works every day for around 12 hours, and she doesn’t have a real salary. “Sometimes I get 5 dollars in one day and other times I get 100 dollars. It really depends on the number of tourists that come here,” she says.