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# CONVEGNO GIOVANI SISEC

Il lavoro nel capitalismo  
contemporaneo:  
categorie, problemi,  
prospettive.

19 – 20 maggio 2023,  
Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e  
Sociali,  
Università di Catania

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## **Labour in Contemporary Capitalism: categories, problems, perspectives.**

**Call for abstract  
English version  
(February 18 - first of April)**

We believe that the social sciences, especially today, are invited to reflect on certain challenges that we are irremediably facing. We see, in particular, in the social transformations affecting labour and contemporary capitalism some signs in the face of which social research is invited to elaborate innovative trajectories of analysis and interpretative categories suited to the analysis of the technological, productive and social context that is taking shape.

Many of these signs point to the progressive transformation of social structures and bonds, which find in work - as an institution and as a social relationship - one of the most critical terrains.

The multidimensional deconstruction of work, which is taking place on the legal, economic and social levels, seems to undermine not only the social reproduction of individuals and families but also the very foundations of democratic societies founded precisely on work as a fundamental interest of the individual and an activity through which to contribute to social life.

Therefore, we invite young scholars who do not occupy a structured position within the academy (thus including positions ranging from master's degree holders up to RTD-A), who belong to the varied fields of the social sciences, to contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the challenges indicated in the five thematic panels proposed by the scientific-organising committee of the conference.

Participation in the Conference can only take place in presence, except for colleagues who are in a country other than Italy for research reasons or for colleagues unable to attend in presence for health reasons. For participation in the conference, an abstract (max. 800 words) is requested by 1 April to [convegnogiovaniSISEC@gmail.com](mailto:convegnogiovaniSISEC@gmail.com)

The outcome of the evaluation will be announced by the 14th of April.

The selected proposals will be organized within thematic sessions organized as follows:

- WORK AND ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGE
- WORK AND ORGANIZATIONS
- WORK AND MIGRATION
- WORK, REGULATION AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
- WORK AND TECHNOLOGIES
- WORK AND DISCRIMINATION

## WORK AND ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

**Coordinators: Giada Coleandro; Valentina Pantaleo**

The ecological and climate crisis requires rethinking the function and meaning of work, renouncing to the security that has driven the economy and society since the post-war period. Since work represents the main mediation between nature and society, it is a key element in the future configurations of this relationship. Many emblematic cases show a 'new' environmental consciousness: starting, for example, from the traditional class struggles for the health and safety of working men and women, to the various recent theoretical perspectives that highlight the continuity between the exploitation of human labour and the free appropriation of reproductive labour by capitalism. Both social reproductions, often at the expense of feminised bodies and subjectivities, and environmental reproduction, provided by nature thanks to its biophysical properties, are not considered as labour. Instead, this recognition is central to imagining new alliances between human and non-human labour.

The ecological challenge, the conversion of production cycles and the impact of these on working conditions, together with new social protection measures and the objectives of social and environmental economic sustainability, invite us to question old interpretative frameworks in order to understand the effects of these changes. In the context of the energy transition, issues such as the intensification of mineral extraction required for low-carbon technologies draw attention to the material requirements of the transition, calling into question the reconfiguration of global value chains and questioning the role of labour and its exploitation within them. Moreover, emerging paradigms such as the circular economy and sustainable design offer new theoretical and methodological frameworks for understanding the reorganisation of productive and reproductive labour.

Finally, among the many unresolved nodes for considering the quantitative and qualitative aspects of work, the focus on unpaid work, gender and racial inequalities is fundamental to combine emerging environmental protection needs with social equity objectives.

These are multiple issues presenting multiple opportunities for encounter and intersection. A few examples are suggested that may be useful for researchers to participate in the discussion:

- Theories and practices of work-environment contradiction
- conflicts and struggles in social and environmental reproduction
- just transition: union role, socio-cultural transformation, green skills
- green jobs and protection of the territory
- working activities, environmental degradation and new post-colonial logics
- ecological transition, resource use and global value chains
- social and environmental sustainability and centrality of the employment issue

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## WORK AND ORGANIZATIONS

**Coordinators: Beatrice Bianconi, Carmela Guarascio, Arianna Marcolin**

The current social and economic asset highlights to what extent certain organizational forms are no longer suitable and show the necessity of emerging ones. Political and institutional contexts are put to the test by an increasingly close relationship between local and global, further challenged by the pandemic from Covid-19. Furthermore, digitalization (Brynjolfsson, McAfee, 2014) challenges the organizational forms of work and industrial relations: a restructuring that leads to differentiated development paths between high and low road, not only between territories but also between working activities and therefore social protection. It is necessary to understand how labour organisation changes and what place the (new) social protections occupy.

With this call for abstract we want to investigate if and how new organizational forms are emerging and how labour policies are impacting on their organization. In fact, we welcome contributes that look at corporate organization, focusing on smart-working experiences and agile factory reorganization (Faioli, 2020; Saurin, 2022). In particular, we wonder about the validity of smart-working experiences after two years of pandemic and their response to a new need for work organization. Finally, we will carefully look at the abstracts that study the position of essential workers such as those in the service sectors (trade but also personal care) and how the new forms of protection relate to the reorganization of poor jobs or informal work.

Abstracts that take into account national or international comparisons are welcome.

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# WORK AND MIGRATIONS

**Coordinators: Costalunga; Pantaleo; Peterlongo; Quondamatteo.**

Migrant labor, in production and in social reproduction, has a structural centrality within contemporary capitalism. Covid-19 crisis, which led to containment measures to slow the spread of the pandemic, once again highlighted the relevance of labor mobility trajectories. The ethnic segmentation - often linked to the breakdown of production cycles, the erosion of Industrial Relations and regulatory mechanisms, the privatization and marketization of welfare systems - and the multiplication of exploitation channels emerge as the cornerstone of a renewed international division and hierarchisation of labor. On one side this affects workers, on the other can generate situations of conflict, resistance and union action (inside and outside the classical traditions).

In this framework, it's strictly necessary to analyze the complexity of labor mobility processes, looking at both institutional regulatory factors, the role of a set of phenomena and social actors (outsourcing, subcontracting, staffing agencies) defining production and social reproduction fluxes and the agency of migrant workers themselves.

We will appreciate contributions that, following a plurality of approaches and methodological/theoretical perspectives, aim to look at labor issues as a litmus test of the different dimensions of inequalities characterizing the national and international scenario. The invitation is to set the gaze onto effects on different geographical contexts, in the spheres of production and social production. These contexts are characterized as conflictual arenas traversed by the intersection of multiple axes of oppression (gender, *race*, class) affecting the employment structure.

Alongside the traditionally studied sectors (agriculture, constructions, care etc.) often marked by intense forms of exploitation, there are new production mechanisms and new kinds of vulnerability within the most innovative sectors.

Given such premises, in this session we accept both theoretical and empirical contributions on these issues. In order to provide some examples - but the thematic range is clearly wider - we invite researchers to deepen the following themes:

- the dimension of ethnic segmentation in different production sectors and national contexts;
- researches based on intersectional approaches, grasping the dimensions of gender, *race* and class in the labor market; for instance regarding to new trajectories of domestic work, considering the consequences of the digital technologies' impact
- different forms of exploitation of the migrant labor (gangmasting, subcontracting or informal labor markets)
- new challenges for social actors, Industrial Relation systems and lawmakers
- the relationship between access to work and citizenship rights
- labor conflicts driven by unions and social movements socially
- the impact of labor mobility on the territorial contexts, in both rural and urban environments
- processes of inclusion/exclusion of migrant workers characterizing contemporary capitalism; new colonial and postcolonial trajectories of labor fluxes

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# WORK, REGULATION AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

**Coordinator: Luigi Di Cataldo**

The 21st century is increasingly shaping up as a period of crisis, transformation and transition. The Great Recession, digitalisation, the green transition and the pandemic have profoundly marked the last two decades and laid the foundations for structural change in the economy, labour markets and society as a whole.

The transformative processes of our time find two specific and significant areas of impact in regulation and industrial relations.

The evolution in the dynamics of organisational action, towards an overcoming of the traditional bilaterality and of the purely hierarchical connotation of labour relations, together with the increasingly mobile and undefined boundaries of enterprises as a result of segmentation, outsourcing and delocalisation trends of production processes, not only make the legal framework of employment relations problematic but also impose numerous and diversified regulatory challenges, also concerning the organisation of collective interests.

The developing technological-productive scenario calls for an in-depth reflection on the need for permanence and renewal of the institutional framework in contemporary capitalism. In order to resolve these opposing needs, we cannot ignore the contamination and dialogue between knowledge, cultivating the relationship of complementarity, integration and interaction that exists between them. However, to make this relationship operational and fruitful, it is not enough to have shared themes and research objectives, we need to develop areas of exchange, taxonomies and categories suitable for inter- and trans-disciplinary analysis.

This section invites you to contribute to this reconstructive effort to produce research products that are useful for scientific reflection on these transformations and their implications in terms of policymaking, regulation and interest representation.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, we list below some topics :

- \* Legal framework and working conditions in the digital age;
- \* Time porosity and work-life balance;
- \* Algorithmic management and reputational profiling;
- \* Transitional labour market analysis;
- \* New markets and new rights (right to disconnection; right to digital reputation interoperability; right to human intervention in automated decision-making processes, etc.);
- \* Analysis of the challenges posed by the ecological transition to labour regulation systems and the role of collective actors;
- \* Regulation of industrial relations and adjustment of trade union action;
- \* Evolution in regulatory sources and paradigms;
- \* Trading zones, taxonomies and conceptual categories to facilitate inter- and trans-disciplinary analysis.

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# WORK AND TECHNOLOGIES

**Coordinators: Francesco Bonifacio, Marino Pezzolo, Giorgio Pirina**

While technology has always been a central issue in economic sociology and organization studies, the processes of digitalization (big-data analytics, machine learning, algorithmic management, Internet of Things, etc.) have further extended its scope and implications in unprecedented ways. The pervasive presence of digital tools has also been reinforced by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has fostered their introduction in areas apparently more reluctant to technological innovation, such as education and public administration. More generally, in the contemporary scenario digital technologies are framed as a qualifying feature of new ways of organizing production, work, and everyday life. In this sense, scholars refer to "digital labour", "digital organizing" and "digital platforms".

According to the enthusiastic narratives that accompanied the birth of the internet, digital technologies were initially praised for their empowerment potential, for their ability to build easier, more democratic and inclusive forms of access and connection. On the other hand, these promises have been challenged in a short time by processes of concentration and financialization of major digital platforms, and by the rise of critical approaches that look at digitalization not as an ahistorical process, but in continuity with other trends of contemporary capitalism, such as the flexibilization of the labour market and the construction of global value chains. From this point of view, the disruptive potential of digitalization processes is related to classical sociological issues, such as power, organizational control, automation, skills, and security within work contexts, as well as the construction of new subjectivities.

Moving longitudinally between different disciplinary perspectives (organizational studies, sociology of work, Science and Technology Studies, etc.), this panel aims to gather contributions that investigate the role of digital technologies in contemporary social processes, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Possible but not exclusive topics of interest include:

- The organizational changes associated with digitalization processes in companies and public administration, concerning the redefinition of roles, skills, and inter-organizational relations;
- Studies of 'technologies-in-use' within new (e.g., platform labour) and/or traditional work contexts;
- New forms of organizational control enabled by digital technologies (e.g., 'algorithmic management') as well as the individual and collective practices of renegotiation implemented by workers (e.g., 'algoactivism' practices) and more generally by users;
- The automation processes conveyed by algorithms and artificial intelligence and, nonetheless, the 'invisible work' and 'repair' practices often performed by human actors that enable the actual functioning of technological infrastructures;
- The way digital technologies reshape the construction of time and space in work and everyday life;
- How digitalization processes reconfigure conflict dynamics in work contexts.

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# WORK AND DISCRIMINATION

**Coordinators: Stefania Arianna Di Pietro, Carmen Ferrara, Maria Grazia Montesano**

Identity is the totality of a person's characteristics or self-awareness as an entity distinct from others and is defined through the combination of social categories, influenced by circumstances and the environment, as well as the capabilities that enable people to be in the world. It includes the concept of diversity and the resulting social classification, according to intersectional stratification, which may be based on gender, geographical location ethnicity, nationality, generational and economic status Starting from social identities and structural characteristics of the labour market, specific discriminations are delineated, affecting both the productive and the reproductive spheres, which concern, for instance the management of the care work.

Identity defines a need for recognition of one's individuality and sense of belonging, both within the social dimension, expressed in the identification of oneself with the community and in the relationship with others, and in the economic dimension, i.e. in the exercise of the right to work. The term work-life balance, for example, indicates a balance between work and private life: this balance appears to be particularly precarious in intellectual work but not only, and it is mostly women who have to take charge of it.

More generally, discrimination in access to the labour market, wages and working conditions may be enacted on the basis of specific personal characteristics (gender, origin, sexual orientation, state of health etc.).

Moreover, this reflection cannot disregard the centrality of care, understood in the broadest sense of the term, as a social need and a collective need. In fact, one of the most profound contradictions of contemporary capitalism - which has generated what is called the 'crisis of care' - is generated by the subordination of the reproductive system to the productive system. Many of the services considered essential during the pandemic crisis, are very often carried out by workers in precarious or undeclared employment conditions. In particular, the massive presence of female migrant workers in the domestic and care sector unveils a system of exploitation between northern and southern countries that generates the so-called global chains of care.

This panel aims to gather contributions from various disciplines on the topic of discrimination in the workplace from an intersectional perspective, regarded as mobbing against people with disabilities, racialised or identified as belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community. Studies from various disciplinary perspectives (economic sociology, psychology of work and organizations, labour law, anthropology of work, history, philosophy of work and others) on the burden of care work, sex work and on labour inclusion of people with disabilities, prisoners or ex-prisoners are particularly welcome but not limited to these.

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