

International School of Higher Education in
Labour and Industrial Relations

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SOCIAL JUSTICE
DECENT WORK

Call for Papers

“LABOUR IS NOT A COMMODITY”

TODAY

The Value of Work
and its Rules
between Innovation
and Tradition

Bergamo | 28-30 November 2019

X Edition

Supported by



**WORLD
EMPLOYMENT
CONFEDERATION**
The Voice of Labour Market Enablers

In collaboration with

**CIELO Laboral
Network**

The world of work is undergoing disruptive change, an aspect that has become the subject of many international reports and research addressing the transformation and future of work. Although from different perspectives, which depend on context and level of discussion, the analysis concerns technological factors and their social consequences, new forms of work organization, the actors and the places related to its regulation and the protection needed by workers featuring ever-diverse identities, needs and expectations.

The values underpinning work and the consideration that work is itself rewarding are issues which still play a central role. The 100th anniversary of the ILO brings to mind this critical dimension, with the principle that “labour is not a commodity” that is brought to the fore again, as it has inspired labour legislation in both developing and developed countries. In Kaufman’s words, this implies that “society has a legitimate and compelling rationale for using laws and institutions to modify or replace terms and conditions of employment that are inhumane, anti-social or in violation of basic human rights”.

While pointing out the centrality and relevance of this principle, the ILO’s centenary also prompts us to go back to the discussion about what is work today, an aspect which has always been given momentum in legal and socio-economic research. Bringing this question to the fore again has become an urgent matter due to the uncertainty resulting from current transformations, especially if we leave the narrow perspective we tend to use in advanced economies to take a broader view. This helps us to understand that work is becoming an increasingly important category in sociological terms, a social fact, the regulation of which is susceptible to change. As law intertwines with the individual and their values, culture and environmental and social background an awareness arises of the global challenges resulting from significant economic, demographic, ecological changes, coupled with new complexities marking the social and economic dimension of work.

This is further compounded by the fact that the social contract is underdeveloped in many countries and in need of reinvigoration in others. This state of affairs has led scholars to evaluate the advisability to create new work identities, focusing on values, thus adopting the perspective which is based on social justice and sustainability, moving on from the long-standing dichotomy between people and market and capital and labour. It is thus necessary to reflect upon the validity and the evolution of the principle “labour is not a commodity”. Equally important is to examine the ways and the means through which this principle is developed and their practical implications, to understand the ongoing socio-economic changes and their impact on such

policy, and to analyze the role of public institutions and private stakeholders operating in the context where this principle is implemented.

Drawing on the report by the ILO's Global Commission on the Future of Work *Work for a brighter future*, which was published on 22 January 2019, this conference aims to deal with the topics discussed above, focusing on the aspects examined in the report, which are the same around which ADAPT's International School of Higher Education in Labour and Industrial Relations revolves. Specifically, this implies considering the following aspects:

- a. 'taking responsibility', which is a watchword in that all those concerned must assume responsibility to build together a more equitable and fairer future of work, along with helping people in the shift from the old to the new world of work;
- b. redefining a new social pact that ensures that the wealth produced is equally distributed among workers, protecting their rights and providing them with effective social security systems in return for their contribution to the economy;
- c. moving beyond the concept of salaried employment, in that all workers, irrespective of their employment status, should enjoy fundamental labour rights (e.g., fair remuneration, sustainable working time, protection/promotion of occupational health and safety);
- d. investing on people's capabilities (in a sense given to this word by Amartya Sen), supporting labour market institutions, among which is employee representation, and promoting decent and sustainable work;
- e. adopting a 'human-in-command' approach which, based on artificial intelligence, ensures that decisions about work and the economy are made by humans and not by the machine.

Organised in partnership with the ILO, this year's conference follows up from the last events promoted by ADAPT: **The Great Transformation of Work** (Bergamo, 6-7 November 2015); **The Future of Work: A Matter of Sustainability** (Bergamo, 11-12 November 2016); **Industry 4.0: Triggering Factors and Enabling Skills** (Bergamo, 1-2 December 2017); **Professionalism, Employment Contracts and Collective Bargaining in the Context of Social Innovation** (Bergamo, 30 November-1 December 2018). Drawing on a well-established approach taken by ADAPT, thanks to the support of the World Employment Confederation (WEC) and CIELO Laboral Network too, emphasis will be given to the occupational transitions of individuals and stakeholders, an aspect which has been discussed at length in the ILO report referred to before. This will be the starting point to deliver a model through which workers' professionalism is

valued and safeguarded, moving beyond the obsolete distinctions and contrapositions that have long marked reflections on labour.

Given the above, the ILO and ADAPT's International School of Higher Education in Labour Law and Industrial Relations invite professors, researchers, graduate students, professionals and all those who have an interest in the conference topics, from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, to present their contributions on the following issues. They will help to examine from an international and comparative perspective, the practical implication that the principle "labour is not a commodity" has had, or will have, on their work.

1 – Worker Status, Work Classification, Organisational Flexibility

Emphasis will be given to new forms of work organization (e.g., autonomous/salaried work, working without a contract), new contractual arrangements and new protections against unfair dismissal. This theme will thus focus on the analysis of patterns of work organization, with particular reference to new forms of on-demand work and digital platforms, employees' grading systems, working time flexibility, *jus variandi* and to the exertion of employers' organizational and managing power.

2 – Economic Value of Work

This conference topic is devoted to the examination of remuneration and rewarding systems, with particular attention that will be paid to the links between pay, productivity, and performance and remuneration differences arising among industries and workers' categories. Besides looking at the mechanisms determining compensation, their sources and arrangements, the aim here is to explore new dimensions and to find links between the redistributive, the social and the macro-economic functions related to remuneration dynamics. Economic value of work will be also investigated in the perspective of looking beyond the GDP as a parameter to measure socio-economic development in favour of new indicators capable to capture more adequately quality of life as well as social and environmental sustainability of productions.

3 – Welfare, Work Settings, Health and Safety

In the context of this theme, attention will be given to the institutions and the provisions regulating occupational protection, with particular reference to work-life balance and measures promoting people's well-being. Emphasis will be also given to social security systems and models governing workers' health and safety, stressing the relevance of new risks emerging from technological

changes (also unknown ones), environmental changes (natural disasters, digitalisation of work, the end of the 'workstation') and demographic changes (ageing of the working population).

4 – Actors and Tools Governing Occupational Transitions

Here the focus is on the institutions governing the labour market, active and passive labour market policies and the role of public and private stakeholders, who are tasked with promoting and managing occupational transitions. Emphasis will be given to the evolution of agency work, which is widely referred to in discussions concerning the commodification of labour, and to research and prejudiced views which are still in place nowadays. Examples include Guy Caire's well-known definition of '*merchandise d'hommes*', the new ways employment agencies have been portrayed, and the fact that they have been recently rebranded as "enabling actors for the labour market and professionalism".

5 – Occupational Training and Development

This topic encompasses the links between training and employment in one's life, including career paths in which skills development might enable people. Special attention will be given to tools and strategies prompting systemic changes in organizations, professional categories, industries, specific areas, among which are school-to-work alternate programmes, training and retraining schemes, lifelong skills certification.

6 – Representation, Participation and Collective Bargaining

This topic is concerned with the analysis of employee representation at the company level, the different dimensions of participation and the structure and content of collective bargaining. The role of the State and legislation in the context of industrial relations will also be touched upon, as will the possibility to internationalize or to decentralize their powers. Special attention will be paid to alternative forms of organisation due to increasing precariousness and new forms of work.

7 – Protection against Poverty and Social Exclusion

The focus here is on the tools helping to tackle inequality, poverty and social exclusion, with particular reference to the strategies examining the relationship between need and work, considering the nature, functions and characteristics of such a link. Taking the idea of work as a starting point, an attempt

will be also made to examine this aspect against the background of the reflections on the relationship between the individual, work and society and the delicate balance between the qualitative and quantitative dimension of work, which has been given momentum in discussions taking place at the European level.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Members of the **ADAPT International Scientific Committee** and ILO's officials

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Abstracts shall be sent to news@adaptinternational.it, indicating **Abstract Bergamo** in the subject line.

DEADLINES

- Submission of abstracts: **13 September 2019**
- Notification of selection: **4 October 2019**
- Confirmation of participation: **8 November 2019**
- Submission of final papers: **22 November 2019**

PAPERS

The best papers presented at the conference will be selected and, depending on the topic, evaluated for publication in **Professionalità Studi**, **Diritto delle Relazioni Industriali** and **E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies**. Editors will also consider for publication the papers by those who are unable to attend the conference but are willing to provide their contribution just the same.

COSTS

Participation in the conference is free. Participants must bear the expenses of travel and accommodation. A limited number of grants to cover part of the travel costs will be made available for students or doctoral students whose abstracts are particularly worthy of originality and scientific quality.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information will be available on the website of the event. For other details send a mail to news@adaptinternational.it.