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31st Annual Conference of the International Working Party on Labour Market Segmentation (IWPLMS)

14th to 17th, July 2010, Valencia University

National Models of Employment and Economic,
Environmental and Social Sustainability

Call for papers

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The 31st Annual Conference of the International Working Party on Labour Market Segmentation (IWPLMS) from 14th to 17th, July 2010 in Valencia (Spain) will be organised under the heading

National Models of Employment and Economic, Environmental and Social Sustainability

The current economic crisis, and the resulting massive unemployment, has reinforced the importance of the economic insecurity, poverty and social exclusion problems that were already part of the basic problems in several countries. Today, unemployment is one of the main social challenges in developed economies, but not the only one. The challenge of environmental sustainability, as evidenced by the problems of climate change, is an old problem that requires ambitious solutions. Furthermore, demographic imbalances and their effects on social life: the limits on pension systems, massive migration processes, gender inequalities in domestic work and so on, are major problems that need to be addressed. These are issues that, although may appear as independent, have a high level of interrelation. Any solutions that are adopted in one area will influence the rest of them, as is evident when considering, for example, the relationship between economic growth and environmental deterioration, or that which arises from increases in labour market participation and tensions on the demography and domestic sphere.

Finding solutions to these challenges means adequate and consistent transformations and policies in many fields. Employment models constitute one of these fields, in which the labour market and its articulation with public policies and domestic work space should be considered. Papers and discussions from previous IWPLMS conferences have showed the existence of a huge diversity of national employment models, associated both to the predominance of different productive structures and models of economic organisation as well as different models for structuring public policies and family domestic space. This diversity produces different results in issues like economic inequalities, educational levels, satisfaction of basic needs, gender inequalities and so on. Nevertheless, there are no national employment models protected from the ups and downs generated by the dynamics of economic globalization, environmental crisis and social change. All models are being reshaped by these forces and, at the same time, forced to carry out transformations that allow current challenges to be met. The possibility to maintain and improve the social outcomes achieved by each country depends on their ability to respond and to adapt solutions to these pressures. This challenge is one that can be considered as a whole, together with the challenge of sustainability, which has three sides: economic, environmental and social.

Economic sustainability implies the ability of economic systems to be able to proactively ensure economic security for its members. This can be understood as a flow of resources (monetary, services, etc.) sufficient to ensure the coverage of needs and an appropriate degree of stability thereof. Sustainability in economic terms should be considered from a spatial (countries, regions, urban areas) and personal perspective: the possibility each person has to achieve a satisfactory standard of living.

Economic sustainability is constantly challenged by the forces that generate dynamics of change: technology, markets, changes in social lifestyle, etc. The competitive dynamics is in itself a destabilizing element. The individual level is also affected by health-related ups and downs and personal relationships. Some of these factors have achieved a crucial role in recent years: the dynamics of technological change, economic globalization, the role of financial speculation and demographic changes. Analyzing sustainability in economic terms leads to a discussion on which mechanisms to deal with these challenges can generate more stable economic environments.

Ecological sustainability is based on other considerations but it has economic implications. The compatibility between economic processes and the material conditions of our natural environment is what makes them possible. An ecologically sustainable economy is one that perpetuates over time without causing serious environmental degradation. There is sufficient evidence proving that today's economies include elements of unsustainability: climate change, oil depletion, biodiversity-related problems. The effects of this crisis are mixed but potentially disastrous in key issues such as production and supply of food or health. Moving towards a sustainable economy means introducing technical change and transforming organizational as well as production and consumption patterns in order to make high levels of welfare compatible with the preservation of an essential ecosystem for human life.

There is a third perspective of sustainability, which is related to the maintenance of human life throughout the life cycle. A reality that requires daily persistence in care activities which vary with age (childhood, old age) and personal circumstances (health, illness). Care and human life reproduction activities include a diverse set of tasks, from simple fitness activities to emotional support and socialization. It is a space that has been largely occupied by the domestic sphere in general and women in particular. Changes in family structures and gender roles in relation to labour market have altered this situation and raise the need for a revision of policies and regulations. Part of the international migration processes are related to these changes and, in turn, raise new issues regarding the organization of care and social policies.

The challenge that today's societies face is to find satisfactory outlets in these three areas, which are diverse and strongly interconnected, recognizing that any changes to any of them influence and condition the rest of them, and vice versa: for example, environmental regulations affect occupational structures, organization of work patterns interfere with domestic and social activities, etc.

Many of the problems put forth have a regional or national scale, but we cannot lose sight of the global nature of many of the dynamics that influence

these realities. Globalizing dynamics manifest themselves in flows of trade, finances and people which directly influence national patterns of employment, in the same way that many of the problems of environmental sustainability have to do with dynamics that go beyond national frameworks, and at the same time, global regulatory processes influence national dynamics. Therefore, any attempt to develop a comprehensive vision of sustainability must count both on local and global dynamics.

The threefold problem of sustainability puts / places the analysis of national employment models in a complex perspective. On the one hand, employment problems are, in part, problems generated in other areas requiring adjustments in working patterns. On the other hand, the way in which labour structures respond to these issues, can induce different trajectories depending on the response pattern raised. Also, the reorganization of national employment models can help to resolve or to relocate many of the problems pointed out.

The objective, therefore, is to analyze a series of related questions. First, how economic dynamics influence current national employment models and to what extent these influences affect the three dimensions of sustainability. Secondly, to discuss ways to tackle common problems of sustainability and their foreseeable effects on the regulation of national employment models. Thirdly, to ascertain which types of national employment models could support sustainable strategies.

In this regard, we encourage the presentation of papers on (the list is obviously not exhaustive):

- Theoretical works on the concept of sustainability in its triple dimension and its relation with the structure of the National Employment Models.
- Analytical works on the impact of the policies undertaken in the current economic crisis on the employment models.
- The crisis and its effects on sustainability in its triple dimension.
- Analytical works on environmental policies and their impact on employment and productive changes.
- Works on social policies, their relation with the transformations of the labour market and on the organization of daily life.
- Works on the systems of social protection, their relation with economic policies and their impact on social sustainability.
- The role of migrations in the process of productive and demographic adjustment and in their social impact.

Submission of Abstracts

Please submit abstracts for a conference paper via email by 15th March to iwplms@uv.es

We recommend a document with approx. 250 words and, preferably, pdf format (if it is not possible doc or rtf format).

The selected abstracts will be announced on 31st March.

Final papers

Final papers should be sent via email by the 15th June to iwplms@uv.es

More information about the conference:

<http://www.uv.es/iwplms>