Call for Papers - SINAPPSI

Technological changes, labour market transformations, industrial and labour policies

SINAPPSI is launching a call for paper for a special issue on Technological changes, labour market transformations, industrial and labour policies. Peer reviewed articles are intended to provide advancements, from both a theoretical and an empirical perspective, investigating the current technological transformations, their impact in terms of tasks, skill requirements and demand for labour, addressing the role of industrial and labour policies conceived as an opportunity to promote technological upgrading but also social development.

The CfP is motivated by the deep structural change affecting our economies. Italy shows a long-term trend of stagnation in productivity and wages, and a composition of the workforce concentrated in sectors of activity with low innovative content, often regulated by part-time employment relationships and temporary contracts, particularly when referring to women in less developed areas. Given the pre-existing trends, the explosion of the pandemic makes even more urgent to pursue medium and long-term objectives via industrial policy schemes aimed at promoting technological upgrading but also better working conditions.

This attention toward industrial policies coalesces with a potential new reconfiguration of the welfare state, the supply of public goods and services, the role of the national innovation systems in promoting research and technological development, and also the need for appropriate policy measures in order to counterbalance the potential inequality enhancing effects of technological change.

Similar deep transformations affect the European productive structure as a whole. Additionally, the “latter structural changes” also advocate the need to consider the European Union as the primary actor in promoting innovation and industrial policies, since the pandemic has revealed a new scope for coordinated economic policy interventions.

A non-exhaustive list of themes and research questions regarding the Italian and the European economy follows.

Theme 1: Nature, production, adoption and diffusion of new technologies

Technological transformations, primarily attributable to the automation and digitalization of firms, have been spreading in recent years, also as a result of Industry 4.0 plans promoted at the national level. Who are the innovative actors producing those technologies? Where are they located? What are the ongoing adoption and diffusion processes across sectors and companies? Which are the company drivers of technological adoption, as diverse as they can be, ranging from labour-saving needs to acquisition of market and commercial opportunities? How adopters have faced the pandemic? Have they been more resilient because of higher organizational routines and competences, or alternatively less resilient because more integrated along value chains?

Theme 2: Working conditions, industrial relations and employment impacts

Given this latest wave of technological diffusion, what are the underlying effects that are unfolding upon workers in terms of wages, contractual conditions and job quality? What role has second-level bargaining played in modulating the processes of technological transformation, by e.g. favouring gain sharing? How trade unions have influenced the process of adoption? How have been tasks

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1 SINAPPSI is the quarterly scientific journal of INAPP. The most recent issues can be accessed online: https://inapp.org/it/sinappsi
reconfigured by technological and organizational changes? How is the smart working approach going to reshape business organization, job content, and social life? Did innovative firms promote hiring strategies favouring highly educated and younger workers? Have training programmes been put in place? With reference to non-innovative firms, how processes of restructuring due to plant closures impacted on labour expulsion? At the macroeconomic level, how the combination of labour coefficients reduction, due to technical progress, with the production of new goods and services is going to impact on the demand for labour and on the level of employment?

Theme 3: Tertiarization and casualization of work enhanced by the adoption of new technologies
From industry to services, given the emergence of digital platforms and forms of non-standard employment, the CfP welcomes contributions that provide evidence of the extent of this phenomenon, investigating types and forms of digital platforms, whether concentrated on the provision of services with high or alternatively with low technological content. Both digital platforms business models and their impact on employment conditions, precariousness and intermittent career paths are welcomed.

Theme 4: industrial policies, labour policies and the need for policy actions
From technology to employment relationships, from job losses to productive specialization, what is the role of industrial policies in coping with the impact of technological development, with attention to both what is produced and how the benefits of innovation are distributed? Contributions highlighting the role of industrial policies and addressing policy strategies regarding specific sectors of activities are invited. However, backed by history of innovation, contributions highlighting episodes and motivations of failing industrial policies are welcomed as well. Finally, contributions addressing labour policies, such as redistribution of working hours, contractual regulations, proposals to overcome gender segregation in low paid occupations, training programmes, role of industrial relations are highly encouraged.

Interested authors are invited to submit an extended abstract – in Italian or in English – of between 500 and 1,000 words to sinappsi@inapp.org by March 1st, 2021. Authors of selected proposals will be invited to submit a full draft of between 5,000 and 8,000 words by April 12th, 2021. This deadline is required for publication on the issue number 2/2021. Double-blinded reports are expected by May 31st, 2021 and revised versions of non-rejected papers by June 15th, 2021. The final deadline for accepted articles will be July 2nd, 2021. Accepted papers which will arrive later or will not fit in this issue will be considered for publication in a subsequent issue of the Journal. Contributions in English will be privileged, although papers in Italian and single-country case studies (in Italian or English) will be considered too. The usual peer-reviewed double-blind process will apply after a pre-screening done by guest editors. Authors are encouraged to mark the preferred theme when doing the submission.

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