

Envisioning the Economy of the Future and the Future of Political Economy

AFEP-IIPPE Conference, with participation by ADEK, AHE and EAEPE

Date and place : IEP and University of Lille (France), 3-5 July 2019

Call for Papers

Our economies and the academic discipline of economics, which examines how those economies work, have for many years been facing a twofold crisis: an 'economic' crisis, of course, but a crisis of 'economic theory' as well. These crises, of which it might well be asked whether they are not in fact simply profound changes in the functioning of our economies and, as a corollary, in the way in which they are perceived, are forcing all those who 'study' matters economics to reconsider their foresight projects.

Of course we are not referring here to standard economic forecasting projects, the difficulties of which we are all increasingly aware of, but rather to a necessary exercise in introspection that will enable us to understand both what is profoundly 'changing' in our economies in such a way as to identify the driving forces of the economy of the future and what is changing in the way in which academic disciplines, and in particular the social sciences (sociology, history, geography, political science, law, management), perceive, describe, formalise, analyse and conceptualise the economic sphere.

Thus the purpose of this conference is to investigate this twofold process of change and in particular, though not solely, to forge links between the crisis in economic theory and the crises economies across the world are experiencing (financial crisis, social crisis, in particular the migration crisis, environmental crisis, etc.).

This conference is being jointly organised by AFEP (L'association française d'économie politique/ French Association For Political Economy), which will also be celebrating its tenth anniversary, and IIPPE (International Initiative for the Promotion of Political Economy), with the participation of ADEK (Association for the Development of Keynesian Studies), AHE (Association for Heterodox Economics) and EAEPE (European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy). Economists and, more generally, researchers in the social sciences wishing to attend are invited to submit papers that fall within the scope of this general theme and of the following, non-exhaustive list of questions and topics.

I. Envisioning the economics of today and of the future

a. *Theories overtaken by the changes in capitalism?*

All economic theories are having to confront, sometimes despite themselves, the major issues of the day, and in particular the profound changes taking place in capitalism. How are economic theories innovating conceptually and rethinking their analytical frameworks and the tools used to analyse and to measure?

We are thinking here of all the different traditions in economics, from mainstream economics, in so far as it is reforming itself, to the institutionalist and political economy approaches: post-Keynesian economics, the *convention* school, regulation theory, socio-economics, historical institutionalism, Marxism, evolutionary economics, feminism, and so on.

How are the changes in capitalism leading to changes (if any) in economic disciplines and knowledge about the practical economy: what developments are taking place? How do these various bodies of knowledge and disciplines overlap with each other?

What analyses of the social construction of the 'new' academic disciplines in economics are being carried out and what theories, concepts and instruments of observation and measurement are being developed in order to envision the contemporary world and its future?

Is there still a unified body of economic theory to be drawn on? Is there still a body of knowledge common to all economists, or are we reduced to simply accepting a myriad of specialisms (transport economics, environmental economics, labour economics, the economics of services, the economics of competition, etc.) that no longer constitute a single discipline?

b. *The social sciences and the future of economics*

To what extent are not only sociology but also law, geography, political science, history or even philosophy allies of political economy? For some of them, indeed, might it even constitute one of their approaches?

How are these human and social sciences conceptualising not only the market economy but also the capitalist economy? What conceptual innovations are they developing in order to envision the economy of the future?

What is the relationship between these disciplines and economics and its frequently criticised tendency towards hegemony? Is economics still a social science? Is there still a common approach to the economic sphere or rather a division of labour? How should these complex relationships between economics and the social sciences evolve?

More generally, has the time not come to reunify the social sciences? Is the infinite division of knowledge, particularly about the economy, between a multiplicity of sub-disciplines and sub-problems of any heuristic value? Is this the future?

How is the link between thinking about economic phenomena and thinking about economic philosophy to be envisioned?

c. The international organisation of political economy

The discipline of economics is also structured by institutions that it helps in turn to shape. How are economists organised, intellectually and institutionally, in order to envision the economics of the future?

Their exploration of the future is marked by institutional struggles as well as by more epistemological deliberations on what economic thought is or should be. Should it be unambiguously defined or diverse? Is there still a division between economic orthodoxy and heterodoxy?

How do we identify and measure what belongs to the discipline of economics and what does not? How is the 'quality' of our research to be evaluated?

How can the general public be helped to decipher economics and help the discipline to evolve? What training in economics do we want for the future, particularly in Europe?

II. Envisioning the economy of today and tomorrow: multidisciplinary perspectives

This re-examination of the economic practices and the economic objects of contemporary capitalism is leading to a renewal of concepts and methods, sometimes at great cost.

Economic objects are not inert, 'remote' things that can be investigated from above; is this not the distinctive feature of the social sciences? Economic objects interact with the person observing them, including in time and space. Where is capitalism going? What are its limits and its supports, and where are we heading if we extrapolate from present trends? What are the macroeconomic scenarios?

Without claiming that this list is exhaustive, the new approaches to the economy include the economy and its relations with nature (environment, ecology), the 'sustainability' of our systems of production, consumption and distribution; ownership issues and, more generally, "common" goods and resources; industrial economics, particularly in sectors such as the chemical, nuclear, pharmaceutical and microelectronics industries, food industry, as well as recycling, etc.; economic practices in the circular and functional economies, etc.; production, work and consumption in the digital economy; employment, work and economic activity, particularly from the perspective of the grey zones that have arisen because the standard categories, classifications and concepts are undergoing radical change as a result of the upheavals in capitalist practices; inequalities, whether perceived in terms of the distribution of value added (in agriculture, in the digital economy, in services) and/or globalised value chains, as well as the resolution of those inequalities, whether through a reform of fiscal policies or by means of more innovative mechanisms, notably the rediscovery of the firm as an economic object in its own right.

a. *How do economists innovate to envision the future of capitalism ?*

The profound changes taking place in our economies, with which economic theory is not unfamiliar, are undoubtedly compelling us to radically reform the concepts and interpretative frameworks that are used to consider the present and the future. How are economists putting these innovations into practice? What innovative methods are they using in both their research and their teaching (e.g. in the Core manual)? Are these methods producing real innovations? How are the institutional pressures that all too often prevent the unlocking of researchers' imaginations being circumvented – if indeed they are?

b. *Multidisciplinary approaches to contemporary market economies (capitalism as a socially embedded system)*

Can the changes that are necessary be achieved – and this is our hypothesis – through a new dialogue between economics and the other social sciences? Can the questions we have just raised (from shared resources to globalized value chains) be conceptualized academically if they continue to be treated solely as economic issues? How can the multidisciplinary dialogue and interdisciplinary approaches around these questions be conceived in practice? What are the institutional conditions that will have to be met if this dialogue with the other social sciences is to be developed?

III. From the field of possibilities to utopias

The AFEP/IIPPE conference will be looking to the future and the question of utopias will undoubtedly arise. How are utopias to be envisioned and given meaning in economies marked by multiple crises? Are we condemned to produce dystopic narrations?

Again without claiming exhaustiveness, we can cite the renewal of macroeconomic policies, the prospects for the solidarity, circular and functional economies, the 32-hour week, the universal or basic income, industrial citizenships, regions with “zero unemployment”, “Occupy Wall Street”, “Podemos”, etc. Can we be more ambitious, envisioning utopias as way of thinking, an opening on imaginary, and hope, ranging from convivialism, to *buen vivir* (‘good living’), degrowth, zadisme (militant blockade or occupation of a zone as a form of protest), etc.

What do economics and the social sciences more generally have to say about these ‘utopias’ from the perspective of the economic practices to which they give rise, the new economic and societal models (sociological, urbanist, geographical, political) they make it possible to envision and the new knowledge gathered from the experiments that have taken place?

How can researchers in the social sciences give hope to a global population that of necessity seeks a sustainable future for itself but is nonplussed by economic issues?

a. *Searching for the good society: Alternative visions of the future - economic systems and utopia*

Can modern capitalism and the multiple problems it poses for all those who live and work within it be fixed? Is there, in other words, any such thing as “capitalism with a human face”? Are the ideas of Marx and Engels on desirable post-capitalist societies of use in considering such societies, or have the failures of the USSR and China to create liberating and desirable societies (notwithstanding the achievements they did make) demonstrated that those ideas are unworkable? Are other and different visions of desirable post-capitalist societies preferable to those of Marx and Engels? Given that socialism and communism (like capitalism and indeed all social systems) could take many different forms at any given time and would evolve over the years, what would characterize or define them? Given that socialism like all social systems will need to be built, and that this will be a process starting with capitalism, what differentiates socialism from “building socialism,” from the “transition to socialism”?

b. *Between Market and Utopia: Efficiency vs Equality, Competition vs Cooperation?*

What will the role of the market be in the future society? Can the market be harnessed or socialised? And if so how? Can economic efficiency be combined with economic equity? What about property relations (self-management, cooperatives etc.)? Will competition be the rule of the day in the future society? What form will it take? What role for alternative economic mechanisms (e.g. centralised or decentralised planning etc.)?

Format of the proposals

Proposals (**individual papers, complete panels, networks**) can be submitted from **November 1, 2018** onwards. The Web site with Electronic Proposal Forms for submitting to this joint conference is here: <https://afep-iippe2019.sciencesconf.org/>.

Planning

- Deadline for proposals for individual papers: **January 15, 2019**
- Deadlines for various types of panels will be given on the Electronic Proposal Forms which will be posted **November 1, 2018**
- Notifications of accepted proposals will be sent to the authors by **February 15, 2019**
- Full papers are expected by **May 30, 2019 and will be put online.**

Registration for accepted proposals will open on February 15, 2019
Preferential registration rate until March 15, 2019