

EN RLMM Newsletter – December 2019

Dear Members and Supporters of the Network,

we are very pleased to have experienced yet another year with many interesting events, exchanges and meetings in the Network. The highlights of the year included the theme of informal employment and the expertly organized ***Annual Meeting, hosted by our Russian colleagues headed by Prof. Bobkov of the Russian Academy of Science.***

Aside from the many positive and constructive experiences this year, we also received with shock and deep grief the news of the early passing of a founding member and active Network member ***Prof. Patrizio di Nicola of the Sapienza University in Rome.*** We will hold Patrizio in our memories as an important scientist, combining inspiring ideas, his humor and his personable nature. As an attachment no. 1, we have included a Memorial from his colleague and friend Prof. Renato Fontana.

In 2020, we will be turning our attention to the ***Small and Medium Size (SME) companies.*** We believe that these companies have a high innovations potential with regard to the sustained inclusion of different employee groups. There are initial indications showing that they can be much more flexible in adapting to changes. They are also a source of new and impressive techniques for securing of skilled employees. Perhaps the SMEs are the hidden modern enterprises. Attached here is also a Call for Articles for the new Anthology covering this topic (attachment no. 2). This was created by the members of the Scientific committee under the lead of Aline Valette-Wursthen.

At the next Annual Meeting; to be held September 17-18, 2020 in Sardinia; we will also be focusing on the SME area. Prof. Marco Ricceri from EURISPES will be hosting the Meeting.

There is another important change in the Network. **Sigrid Rand** will assume at the start of the New Year a new position in the Department of Human Geography, and will thus be leaving IWAK. This also means that she will no longer be serving in the function of Network Manager. We thank her deeply for the many years that she managed the Network so capably and wish her all the best for her new endeavors. (attachment no. 3) The search for a successor is still underway, thus Christa Larsen will take over this function in the interim. Sigrid wrote a note of farewell that is also attached to this mail.

Finally, I would like to wish all our dear Network members a wonderful and relaxing Christmas time and I look very much forward to our exchanges in the New Year.

With best Wishes,

Christa Larsen

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Managing Director, IWAK

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Attachment 1

Ricordando Patrizio, ricordando il lavoro di Renato Fontana

- *Lo studente*. Patrizio, poi il prof. Di Nicola, veniva da lontano. Era riuscito a toccare vette molto alte nella sua professione. Egli veniva da un padre ferroviere e ha risentito per tutta la sua vita della cultura tipica dell'aristocrazia operaia. Quella dei macchinisti, così efficacemente descritta da Francesco Guccini in *La Locomotiva*. Quella cultura che ti porta a essere istintivamente dalla parte dei poveri e degli esclusi. Essa era ed è tipica degli operai *skilled* piuttosto che quelli *unskilled*, per usare una terminologia usata da Engels (in *La situazione della classe operaia in Inghilterra* del 1845). Questa propensione si esprimeva attraverso una forma di solidarietà che lo ha portato a interessarsi di chi sta male e studiare con grande attenzione il lavoro e le sue degenerazioni dal taylor-fordismo in avanti.

Patrizio, dunque, aveva una particolare sensibilità sociale per le questioni più gravi del nostro sistema socio-economico. Non credo sia un caso che – ancora molto giovane ma con idee già ben chiare in testa - abbia scelto di iscriversi alla facoltà di sociologia. E neppure un caso che abbia deciso di laurearsi con Aris Accornero, dal quale ha attinto a man bassa tutto quello che poteva, confrontandosi, non di rado, in modo diretto e franco con un maestro di chiara fama. Patrizio si laurea nel 1981 con una tesi sulla “gioia del lavoro” di Henri De Man, un famoso politico belga vissuto nello scorso secolo. Comincia a frequentare la cattedra, a partecipare ai vari seminari che docente e assistenti svolgevano in uno stanzone (bruttissimo) di via Magenta per pochi studenti volenterosi e motivati (bellissimi). Quei seminari rappresenteranno un motivo di formazione importante per i suoi partecipanti, un vero e proprio *think tank*. La metodologia era la stessa che si usava per gli incontri organizzati dalla Sezione ricerche sociali del CESPE (il Centro studi del Partito Comunista Italiano). La differenza consisteva nel fatto che qua ci si poteva esprimere assai liberamente, là il profilo dei partecipanti e il luogo imponevano più accortezza nell'esposizione.

Con il tempo Patrizio cresce e guadagna uno spazio di autonomia e di ricerca. Insieme con il suo maestro scrive tante cose straordinarie: forse la più preziosa è stata un contributo sulla flessibilità e gli orari di lavoro in un testo curato dalla Confindustria nel 1996 (1). Un anno prima Patrizio aveva condotto una conversazione con Accornero pubblicata nel relativo libro uscito per i tipi della Ediesse (2).

- *Il ricercatore*. Egli ha manifestato, da che io ricordi, una speciale attenzione per la tecnologia e le sue conseguenze nel mondo della produzione. Per questa ragione è alquanto naturale che si getti a capofitto nello studio del telelavoro (3). Lo fa insieme a un altro grande nome della sociologia, Domenico De Masi, entrambi rapiti dalla convinzione che si stesse per realizzare un'utopia perseguita da decenni nella società industriale, ovvero la possibilità ricongiungere quei luoghi che il taylor-fordismo aveva separato e reso incompatibili – la casa e la fabbrica. Purtroppo Patrizio non è stato gran che assecondato dalla storia. Ha proseguito poi con le ricerche sulla flessibilità dell'occupazione e sulla precarietà dei giovani, delle donne, dei marginali. *Storie precarie* (4) è un testo che va letto con attenzione.

Continuando con determinazione e con orgoglio il suo percorso di ricerca, Patrizio si è inoltrato nelle questioni relative allo *smart working* e all'industria 4.0; un altro modo per affrontare le complesse relazioni tra le persone e la tecnologia sul posto di lavoro, e le conseguenze che queste implicano nella vita quotidiana. Gli obiettivi che ha perseguito nei suoi tragitti di ricerca sono, quindi, chiari: era ammaliato dalle potenzialità insite nelle innovazioni tecnologiche e dalle loro promesse al punto di restare deluso quando ha constatato che la realtà dei fatti andava da un'altra parte.

- *Il docente*. Egli è stato anche un attento docente e ha saputo portare i dipartimenti che nella sua vita ha attraversato in una dimensione internazionale, al di qua e al di là dell'Atlantico. La propensione a conoscere nuovi mondi non l'ha tenuta per sé, l'ha voluta condividere con tanti di noi, ma soprattutto con tanti studenti organizzando una miriade di *Summer School* in diverse università americane, compresa la New York University, la UCLA University e il CUNY College.

È stato un protagonista di primo piano anche in un'importante rete internazionale – l'European Network on Regional Labour Market Monitoring (EN RLMM) associata a un Istituto di ricerca dell'università di Francoforte – dove ha contribuito a rendere più ricchi i meeting che ogni anno sono organizzati in questa o in quella città europea.

Credo che avesse chiaramente in testa che il nostro è un paese piccolo e di periferia rispetto ai centri vitali di studio e di ricerca che si trovano al di fuori dei confini nazionali.

Patrizio è uscito e entrato dall'università. La sua personalità vulcanica e guizzante non gli consentiva di attenersi alle regole imposte dalla struttura accademica, men che meno negli ultimi anni nei quali i sistemi di valutazione rischiano di soffocare le curiosità e le creatività dei ricercatori (dovuta a un modello burocratico che ammantava di grigio la ricerca scientifica). No, un ambiente del genere non era fatto per lui!

- *L'uomo*. Patrizio si è mosso sempre con determinazione e orgoglio, due importanti connotati ferrigni dell'aristocrazia operaia. La cultura dell'acciaio che ha modernizzato l'Italia dagli anni Cinquanta in poi ha toccato anche Patrizio e lo ha segnato nel suo modo schietto e diretto di rapportarsi agli altri. Lui non si spaventava mai e era capace di affrontare qualunque situazione con una buona dose di sagacia, sia nella ricerca, sia nelle attività didattiche che nei meeting internazionali ai quali abbiamo partecipato molto spesso insieme con reciproca soddisfazione e piacere.

Patrizio era una brava persona, era un caro amico, se n'è andato troppo presto. Lo abbiamo perso. Ma non abbiamo perso la sua propensione alla curiosità, la conoscenza e il piacere per la vita.

In questi giorni molti hanno sottolineato il suo sorriso e il suo *warm heart*.

Era un gran chiacchierone, ironico e sorridente. E così a noi piace ricordarlo.

1) A. Accornero, P. Di Nicola, *La flessibilità e gli orari di lavoro*, in G. Galli (a cura di), *La mobilità della società italiana*, Confindustria, SIPI, Roma, 1996.

2) A. Accornero, *Ancora il lavoro*, Conversazione con Patrizio Di Nicola, Ediesse, Roma, 1995

3) P. Di Nicola (a cura di), *Il manuale del telelavoro*, Seam, Roma 1997.

4) P. Di Nicola et al., *Storie precarie. Parole, vissuti, diritti negati della generazione senza*, Ediesse, Roma, 2014.

Attachment 2

EN RLMM Anthology 2020

Call for Papers

The Importance of SMEs as Innovators of Sustainable Inclusive Employment: New Evidence from Regional Labour Markets

Each year the EN RLMM publishes an Anthology. The topic for the next call is “The Importance of SMEs as Innovators of Sustainable Inclusive Employment: New Evidence from Regional Labour Markets” and we are now looking for new contributions from labour market researchers and practitioners. A number of papers from the Anthology will be presented at the Annual Meeting of the EN RLMM taking place 17th and 18th September 2019 in Sardinia.

Regional and local labour market observatories provide information on the current and prospective developments in the labour market, for example on employment structures or the matching of labour and skills supply and demand. This monitoring is based on the classical classes used for presenting the business ecosystem which separates small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with 1-249 persons employed from large enterprises with 250 or more persons employed.

SMEs are often referred to as the backbone of the European economy, providing a potential source for jobs and economic growth. In 2015, following Eurostat, enterprises employing fewer than 250 persons represented 99 % of all enterprises in the European Union (EU). Among them, a vast majority are micro-sized firms, that is to say with less than 9 employees.

Indeed, in 2017, they represent 93% of the total of the 24.5 Million SMEs of the EU¹. If we look in terms of number of employees, SMEs employ 66.3% of total EU employees in 2015².

A special SME envoy has been set up in the European Commission Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry with the objective of better integration of the SME dimension into EU policies. In its SME regional policies, the EU explains that *“maintaining a broad base of small and medium-sized enterprises is very important for the economic development, wealth and sustainability of a region. To help create a business friendly environment and boost SMEs' competitiveness on a regional level as well, the European Commission provides analysis, shares best practices, programmes and policy initiatives.”*³

All these elements illustrate, as do others discussed below, the important but specific contributions of SMEs. For its 2020 anthology, the EN RLMM decided to highlight SMEs' potential role as innovators of sustainable inclusive employment as demonstrated by the means of evidence and knowledge produced by regional and local labour market observatories.

A number of European or national statistics exist to analyse SMEs' but they generally use the same categories as for large firms and are, in general, constructed from a large firm perspective or in any case not from a framework based on SME characteristics. Many academic papers focusing on SMEs show that they cannot fully be understood using the same categories as with large firms. The general idea is that firstly, SMEs are same as large ones, just smaller. Secondly, the assumption that they will grow up to become Midcaps, then large firms, is incorrect. Torres and Julien (2005) start their article explaining that *“Most, if not all, researchers in small business have accepted the idea that small business is specific (the preponderant role of the owner-manager, low level of functional breakdown, intuitive strategy, etc.)”*. A 2019 French publication directed by Bentabet and Gadille tackles the issue of SMEs focussing on their specific “social worlds”, their “action models and logics”, while elsewhere the influences of institutional logics and multi-rationalities of SMEs have been considered. The entry of social worlds highlights the great diversity of micro-enterprises and SMEs, which often makes it difficult to analyse them. As a counterpoint, specific knowledge of these companies is required because they are at the heart of the debates on flexibility, labour market dynamics, skilled labour shortage and disruptions in the vocational training system.

While public policies, both European and national, have made business creation and SMEs key elements to support employment growth, these companies are still struggling to hire and retain the necessary skilled staff. How do they recruit? What are the specific forms of labour relations and management in these structures? Are we witnessing the emergence of a modernized human resources management? As the title of the call says, are they innovators of sustainable inclusive employment? This question could also be linked to the 2019 Anthology of the EN RLMM topic which was the informal employment. Indeed, political,

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/878412/number-of-smes-in-europe-by-size/>

² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_small_and_medium-sized_enterprises#General_overview

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/regional-policies/>

fiscal and economic support of SMEs in their structuration, development and strategy could give an alternative for workers being in informal jobs.

Regional labour market monitoring is a relevant level to tackle the issue of SMEs because many authors show how SMEs are closely linked with their territories, especially small and medium-sized cities, deeply engaged with them in terms of activities but hiring and training too.

Over the years, regional and local labour market observatories have provided reliable and targeted labour market information and intelligence for regional and local decision-makers (Larsen et al., 2013). To extend this support to decision-makers in the fields of the peculiar actors which are SMEs, they need both to integrate their specificity in their data, analyses, productions and to pass on this idea to decision-makers.

As an example of this point, Métailler (2016) examines the links between human resource management (HRM) and knowledge management (KM) in the context of technological SMEs. While recognising that KM practices within SMEs are likely to be informal and not well documented, he found that the HRM processes set up by entrepreneurs do, in fact, demonstrate the adoption of implicit KM practices. The study shows that, while the role of the entrepreneur is central, it is supported by distributed expertise following implicit KM processes established through HRM practices. Other works from Métailler on technological SMEs also teach us that even if intermediaries and policies provide SMEs with norms and tools, this is not enough to ensure their usages and appropriation.

Consequently, we are looking for contributions which would address questions such as:

How can regional labour market observatories address SMEs issues?

- Which types of data do they use to produce SMEs figures in the territories/cities and sectors (agriculture, industry and services)? What data and methods do they use to measure and assess the contribution of SMEs to local development, the set-up of industrial districts, the spread of new social models in the territories in relation to the organization of different times of life and work and the related preferences of the people?
- What monitoring actions do they organize to assess the effects of national and regional public policies, programs of university and specialized centres as well as of business plans in relation to the spread of corporate culture, the promotion of SMEs with the creation of start-ups, the involvement of young people in such initiatives, in particular the inclusion of NEETs in the production processes? Which types of action do they set up to support SMEs' development?
- In which ways do they support or equip decision-makers concerning SMEs' issues?

How are SMEs Innovators of Sustainable Inclusive Employment?

- To what extent do SMEs contribute to changing value chains in current transformations of productive systems and manpower management? Examples in local or regional territories are of interest.
- To what extent are SMEs (start-ups) involved in the spread of new employment and new forms of work linked, for example, to the transformation of production systems induced by the digitalisation and robotization (smart working, platform working, etc.) as well as by regional, national and global competition? Will these processes generate more jobs in some regions and less in others and therefore support regional inequalities? Will these processes create better jobs in SMEs?
- How are SMEs embedded within local actor's networks in order to proceed with training and labour market supply policies?
- What type of innovative HR practices and work organisations, if any, do SME develop when they participate in sustainable development strategies? Examples from national, regional and local territories are of interest.
- How far are culture, structure and processes/governance of SMEs drivers for the better inclusion of women, foreigners, older and young employees, low skilled and other target groups of the labour market? What makes them different to large companies?

If you would like to submit a paper, please send the preliminary title of the contribution and a short abstract to Christa Larsen, by **1 March 2020**. The full papers should be submitted to Christa Larsen latest by **20 May 2020**. If you have any further questions, please contact Christa Larsen: c.larsen@em.uni-frankfurt.de. We look forward to your contributions!

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Attachment 3

Good Bye from Sigrid

Dear colleagues and friends,

For the next 1.5 years, I am going to work at the Department of Human Geography at Goethe University Frankfurt. While I am very much looking forward to the new project and experiences, unfortunately this also means that I will not be able to continue as the Manager of the EN RLMM.

It was an absolute privilege to work with you all over the past seven years – thank you so much for your motivation, creativity and reliability! Through your contributions to the anthologies and Annual Meetings I benefitted greatly from your expertise, ideas and experiences. In particular, I would like to thank those network members who organised the Annual Meetings from 2013-2019 and made them into very special events. Finally, I am grateful to you not only for academic and work-related exchange, but also for the funny, thoughtful, inspiring and exhausted conversations that we had over the past years.

I wish you a successful 2020!

With best wishes,

Sigrid Rand

Manager of the EN RLMM (2013-2019)