



ESHET-HDCA Joint session “How do human development and the capability approach reshape economics? A multidisciplinary perspective.”

The main topic of the 28th European Society for the History of Economic Thought (ESHET) Conference in Torino, Italy, 22-24 May 2025, Campus Luigi Einaudi, is the **changing face of economics**, or the “**end**” of a **traditional view** of the discipline under the impact of three main forces.

- First, a critical reading of the phenomena of **specialization and fragmentation in research** promoted by the prevalence of a find-your-niche approach in contemporary economics.
- Second, the ever-increasing prestige of empirical research and the “**applied turn**” in economics, favored by new techniques and (big) data, but also by economics’ policy orientation.
- Third, the new **interdisciplinarity** of economics and the transformative impact other disciplines are having upon it, as demonstrated by the variety of research programs in mainstream economics.

The **future** - and **present** - of economics is at a crossroads. The abovementioned factors are driving the discipline **away from theory** – from both standard theory but also, in general, from theory itself. On one side, economics seminars and papers increasingly appear as exercises in applied econometrics using hitherto unexplored databases for purposes of policy evaluations. On the other, the discipline’s mainstream seems characterized by unprecedented variety, populated by a series of research programs that deviate from the neoclassical core and have their origins in other disciplines. **From the monism of neoclassical theory**, during the decades of economics imperialism - when economics was mainly theoretical - **to today’s fragmentation: it’s (or may be) the end of economics as we know it**. While economics is now threatened by the risk of losing **identity**, with the fading out of (theoretical) foundations, it can explore an opportunity of **pluralism**, directing attention toward frontier issues, like innovation, sustainability, and gender, that most profit from the discipline’s applied turn and its new openness to neighboring social sciences. For more, see the conference website, [28th Annual Conference of the European Society for the History of Economic Thought \(ESHET\)](#).

Thus, the conference addresses the changing status of economics, but not just from a historical perspective. Other approaches and methodologies are more than welcomed. In this regard, the ESHET 2025 local organizing committee is strongly committed to establishing new connections with different economic and social sciences societies to offer a pluralistic perspective on the conference’s central theme. For this reason, the ESHET and the HDCA are launching this call for a joint session entitled “**How do human development**

and the capability approach reshape economics? A multidisciplinary perspective.”

This joint session aims to foster exchanges between the ESHET and the HDCA communities for discussing common research topics - based on our respective methodological approaches- to offer new interdisciplinary analyses on relevant themes in contemporary economic debate.

To trigger the discussion between these two communities, we invite you to submit abstracts based on the capability/capabilities approach that will be discussed by the ESHET members. Possible topics for this joint session include mainly, but not exclusively: the transformative impact of human development and the CA on the evolution of economic discipline and/or policies; the analysis of foundational conceptual issues about capability theory and related literature; applied works based on the CA which contributed to the mentioned above empirical turn in economics; multidisciplinary research (adopting perspectives that also include philosophy, health, education, law, government, sociology, and more) on human development and the CA; historical and methodological works on human development and/or the CA.

We invite interested scholars to submit an abstract (400 words max., keywords) by February 2, 2025 to valentina.erasmo@unito.it.

Session organizers:

Valentina Erasmo, University of Turin
Gianni Vaggi, University of Pavia