



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference 2022

### Cape Town: Disruption

#### Stream 8 :

#### ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND VALUE CONFLICTS IN ORGANIZATIONS AND IN THE PUBLIC SPACE IN AN ERA OF DISRUPTION

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Paper submissions for this stream to be emailed in Word format to:  
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Submissions to the stream can be in the form of long abstracts (up to 1500 words), developmental papers (3000-5000 words, including references) or full papers (no length restrictions) by the deadline of 15 March 2022. Please process your registration and paper submission online via the [EDI registration page](#).

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1. In the face of ongoing transitions, of which the climate crisis and the migration crisis are particular symptoms, we are entering a highly conflictual period. This situation does not only refer to conflicts of interest and/or to conflicts between antagonistic social forces that compete for income or resources: the conflicts in question are also conflicts between opposing values, axiological conflicts, *value conflicts*.
2. There are many "*spaces*" where this conflictuality is expressed. Among them, our attention is drawn to the workplace and the public space. From this point of view, we wish to go beyond the overly distinct boundaries between professional and public life. However, to avoid an overly abstract approach to these questions, we propose to characterize these places through the concepts of *organization* and *territory*.
3. These concepts will be approached openly. In this way, the organization is not limited to the figure of the private company, even if it occupies a predominant place in facts and representations. In our perspective, the *organization* refers to a configuration of people and resources giving each other rules in view of a common goal . It articulates the division of labor and wage relation, but also productivity, power relations, collective dynamics, etc. Similarly, the concept of *territory* cannot be limited to its geographical meaning. It also refers to the practices of production of identities, visions and representations in relation

to life space and lifestyles, conditions of habitability, our relation to environmental commons, and the role of public and institutional actors.

4. Such conflicts are multidimensional : they concern both the values through which individuals and groups have been socialized (i.e. family or faith-based traditions, educational trajectories, proximity socializations), but also values produced by organizations (i.e. organizational culture) or forged by work experience, notably through the experience of certain injustices (i.e. feeling of meaningless work, impossibility of mobilizing alternative values to those imposed, discrimination, contempt, etc.). Last but not least, these questions refer to different, even antagonistic, visions of a common future, in organizations as well as in territories.
5. This conflictuality is not necessarily prejudicial. The concept of “disruption” suggests that this conflictuality is both *inevitable* (major crises, starting with the health crisis, are moments of rupture in relation to previous assumptions, but also the source of new conflictuality) and sometimes *desirable* (in unilateral or authoritarian situations, it is important to make other voices heard to imagine other axiological horizons and to formulate *through conflict* what was not).
6. In this context, the field of ethical experience notably evolves. The ethical stake - or the ethical question in its wide conception - no longer consists in giving meaning to what is meaningless, as if all our activities were purely instrumental, as if it were a matter of attributing a moral meaning to what would be entirely devoid of it. Rather, it would consist of *overcoming* recurrent conflicts. Thus, it would be a question of settling conflicts between values of equal importance or with a fairly similar degree of legitimacy, while relying on frames of justice capable of maintaining a substantial normative horizon for the various actors concerned.
7. This generates a transformation of the relationship to politics. Politics would be played out less on the terrain of *will* (opposing those who want and those who do not) and more on that of *understanding* and *co-creation*. It would be important to understand the conflicts or dilemmas in which the actors are caught, but also to co-create with them the normative support they need to overcome conflicts, based on one or more frames of justice.
8. This perspective is true both in organizations (for leaders, workers, but also *managers*) and in territories (for public authorities, associations or activists, *citizens*). This politicization also has a transformative aim: the challenge of such an approach would be to succeed in transforming the "*status quo*" so that politics can be put at the service of justice and not the other way around.

Overall, in this stream, we look forward to discussing empirical papers, contextualized in *organizations* or *territories*, leading to topics and questions that could include, but are not limited to the following:

- What are the components of these different conflicts? How are values and interests articulated on the ground?
- We are used to say that organizations are not only driven by material interests, but that they are also spaces of learning and cultural resistance. What does this concretely mean? Similarly, if it is a question of not reducing the territorialized public space to "*simple*" cultural struggles, what are the material interests that underlie them?
- How do these conflicts arise or emerge? Could we define a typology of conflicts? Of what kind?
- On the ground, in organizations or on territories, actors act through agency. That is to say, they act using their creativity or resisting to multiple forms of domination. When it happens, to which normative supports do they refer? Which are the principles or frames of justice that they mobilize to act? Could we speak about "normative agency"? If so, under what conditions? And what does it imply?
- Where do these different frames of justice come from? A pragmatist perspective shows that they are always the expression of a singular context, that they are shaped by criticism or through struggles, that they come from the "field" in a broad sense. But is it that simple? What is the place and what are the uses of law in these different frames of reference? What are the other dimensions at work?
- In this perspective, is political action likely to take on new meanings? If so, which ones? Would the Foucauldian notion of "governmentality" still be adequate? Could we speak of "organizational governmentality" or "territorial governmentality", as a way of overcoming conflicts by calling upon one or more frames of justice? Or are other notions to be invented?

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