



## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference 2022**

### **Cape Town: Disruption**

#### **Stream 11:**

#### **The future of work and precarity: Shaping a new normal for diversity and equality**

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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](#).

According to a recent McKinsey (2021) report: “The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated existing trends in remote work, e-commerce, and automation, with up to 25% more workers than previously estimated potentially needing to switch occupation.” Some of the changes that have taken place since the pandemic, such as increased remote work and virtual meetings, are likely to continue to some extent, same as the faster adoption of automation and AI often replacing low wage occupations, which are disproportionately carried out by migrants, ethnic minorities, and women. The pandemic has highlighted the deleterious effects of precarious work for vulnerable demographic groups worldwide with women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, among others, to experience in and out of work poverty and to be affected considerably more by precarious living. However, research on the future of work often treats diversity and inclusion challenges as an afterthought. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, and now the pandemic, recent policies of radical deregulation, technological change, and heterogeneous workforce have intensified shifts in the occupational structure, the place and the timing of work, and career patterns, putting a further strain on the standard employment relationship and promoting more commodified forms of labour (Rubery et al., 2018). The socioeconomic upheaval due to COVID-19 disproportionately affected the working conditions and livelihood of workers at the margins.

Precarity is defined as “the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks ... becoming differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (Butler, 2009: 25). Precarious work is characterized by low pay, insufficient and variable hours, short-term contracts rights, and is shaped by work-life balance considerations (Ayudhya et al., 2017) and the degree of regulatory protection (ILO, 2015; Kalleberg, 2011, Vallas, 2015). These characteristics are frequently found in what is known as part-time, temporary, and zero-hours contracts and dependent self-employment. Yet, while recent analyses of the precarity of work have unveiled certain aspects of labour market exclusion and marginality, scant attention has been paid to the gendered challenges of these changes (Vincent, 2016).

The socioeconomic upheaval has also led to nations becoming socially and politically more isolated, exclusionary, and protective of resources, leading to a climate that does not foster the inclusion of vulnerable demographic groups in organizations and society (Mor Barak, 2018). Research has shown vulnerable demographic groups bear the brunt of the increase in the fragmentation of work and changes in the labour market. Women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, among other groups, are more likely to experience precarity regarding work opportunities and resource accumulation. Intersecting categories of exclusion such as ethnicity/race, class, sexual orientation, and age as well as issues of migration embedded in life course trajectories complicate those of gender and have widened class and raced inequalities between and within communities (Acker, 2006, Walby, 2015). In turn, neo-liberal politics on equality and diversity in organizations have significantly decreased the repertoire of diversity management interventions in organizations in recent years (Özbilgin & Slutskaia, 2017).

However, in some cases, precarious forms of employment are the only way to secure work. Studies, for example, have demonstrated how in crisis economies, women have resisted a gender regime shift from public to domestic work by engaging in precarious labour market activities (Simosi et al., 2018). Given the limited opportunities for conventional forms of employment, precarious work, including through digital labour platforms (Gandini, 2018), may provide earning opportunities, allowing vulnerable groups to transcend local labour markets and secure employment during economic and social upheaval.

This proposed stream seeks to shed light into new and vital aspects of precarious work and diversity issues in the pandemic and post-pandemic world and to explore the links between precarity, diversity and inclusion and the following topics (but is not limited to):

- the variety of issues facing vulnerable demographic groups at work
- automation & AI and equality in organisation
- remote/virtual work, for example impact on organisational diversity management and equality
- algorithms and the future of organisational diversity and inclusion practice
- precarity and work and the pandemic and post-pandemic world
- Social marginality, diversity, and challenges to organizing labour
- Inequality, migration and future of work
- Precarity, sustainability, and disaster management

To further the discussion, we welcome papers which are theoretically and/or empirically informed from a broad variety of disciplines and geographical areas. We also invite papers adopting a multi-level perspective when studying migration and gender. A multi-level perspective bridges micro-individual; meso-team and organisational; and macro-national levels and reveals interconnections between these levels.

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