Introduction to HICSS-57 Minitrack on Inclusive Labor Markets and Work Practices

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1. Introduction

Technology and the use of digital platforms for work distribution are enabling new types of work relationships and structures. The tools and structures enabled by emerging digital labor platforms (DLP) present the potential for workers to experience both opportunity and exploitation [1].

This mini-track explores mechanisms that can be pursued in the development of new work environments to promote greater levels of inclusion for workers of various identities and capabilities. Across the workforce new developments in collaboration tools, digital labor platforms and artificial intelligence are changing the nature of work. Large-scale remote work activities during the COVID pandemic, coupled with ongoing economic uncertainty have accelerated adoption of a wide range of tools and practices that are altering how workers engage with stakeholders. The changing nature of work presents both challenges and opportunities to building more inclusive labor markets.

On the one hand, the changing nature of work allows a variety of tasks to be completed remotely, expanding access to work opportunities by individuals who may be marginalized by distance, access to reliable transportation or care responsibilities [2]. In this manner broader adoption of collaborative tools and digital platforms may enable meaningful employment opportunities to individuals who would otherwise be excluded from the digital workforce. On the other hand, underlying inequities in labor markets, derived from factors such as differing wage rates, ethnic/national origin/racial religious/gender/sexual orientation discrimination, differences in power among stakeholders, varying digital infrastructure across geography or regulatory variability, may be amplified and codified as work processes evolve. Further technology development, such as AI or robotics, may also automate tasks disrupting the number and nature of opportunities for future employment.

While technology may enable greater employment access, it also may foster environments of power asymmetry [3]: new technology may privilege the platform owners who have the power to control the digital work environments (such as the sourcing models, compensation models, and work policies) but disadvantage workers, particularly the marginalized [4]. This mini track presents research that critically examines current work conditions and policies on the changing nature of work and proposes new work processes, platform designs and polices to enhance digital work environments and foster social inclusion and equity.

We propose that it is important for both academia and industry to better understand the impact of the post pandemic transformation on changing nature of work. In the long term, technological developments at the intersection of remote work platforms and AI can potentially shape work at different levels. Research on the future of work and the essential skills and abilities of future workforce will update our knowledge and broaden our visions about the next generation of workforce [5].

2. Scope

This mini-track is focused on issues relating to how the changing nature may become a mechanism for enabling more inclusive work practices. This objective takes many forms, both in examining the socio-technical factors that enable inclusive employment as well as the factors that create barriers to inclusion. Increasing popular concerns regarding the changing nature of work are centering these topics in our global understanding of labor markets. Increasing oversight by regulatory bodies demonstrate the import for both academia and policy

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makers to not only understand emerging work conditions but to also articulate the impact of proposed interventions to the changing nature of work on labor markets.

Topics and issues presented in this minitrack include, but not limited to:

- Changing work conditions in technology centered work environments
- Changing nature of work in developing economies
- Changing nature of collective bargaining in a global workforce
- AI impact work labor markets and career pathing
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion in technology enabled work environments
- Discrimination in technology centered work environments
- Impacts of the digital divide on labor markets
- Employment relations in distributed work environments and digital labor platforms
- The engagement of marginalized groups in emerging work environments
- Worker identity and engagement in the changing nature of work
- Psychological aspects of emerging work environments on workers (e.g., Technostress, Well-being)
- Public policy for more equitable work practices
- Social insurance protection for marginalized workers in crowdsourcing
- Legal and regulatory issues in labor relations in changing work environments
- Ethical issues in labor relations in changing work environments

3. Summary of Articles

This mini-track presents two papers in HICCS-57. We introduce them briefly below.

First, scholars must note that emerging technology such as AI could lead to fundamental changes in the manner in which individual perceive themselves within the IT workforce. In their research, Despotovic and Bogodistov [6] examine the impact of ChatGPT on job seekers' identity in the job selection process. A discrete choice experiment with 296 participants from the UK revealed that job seekers prefer vacancies aligning with their personal identity over social or role identities. The study provides insights for organizations to enhance their recruitment strategies and create inclusive work environments in the context of evolving AI technologies.

Our second paper examines how technology-enabled flexible work environments may provide new avenues for workforce participation by neurodiverse individuals. In her paper, titled "Unveiling Technorelief: Enhancing Neurodiverse Collaboration with Digital Capabilities" Saigot [7] identifies that while nearly a fifth of the world's population is estimated to be neurodivergent, the implications of remote collaboration on the cognitive, sensory, and socio-affective experiences of autistic workers are poorly understood. Saigot's research demonstrates that digital media present capabilities that filter input from the environment, turning it into a virtual stage that lets workers "time out". The resulting "technorelief" enables autistic workers to tune into their perceptions and regain control of their collaborative experiences. These technology features may enable greater diversity in the future technology workforce.

4. Reference

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