

## AIRAANZ 2018: Proposal for Conference Stream

### *Advancing Theoretical and Empirical Understandings of the 'Gig' Phenomenon*

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The rise of the so called 'gig' or platform economy has been facilitated by advancements in online communication and mobile technology and fuelled by venture capital (Kenney & Zysman 2016). There has been a growing media and public interest in these forms of work organization due to the rapid and continued expansion in areas such as ride-sharing, food-delivery and cloud-based work. Views on the 'gig' phenomenon are mixed, with some hailing the technological advancements as the future of work (Cusumano, 2015), whereas others are voicing concerns about its precarious nature (Friedman, 2014), the displacement and fragmentation of existing jobs (Sundararajan 2016) and fears about management by machines (Rosenblat & Stark 2016).

In recent years there has been a growing body of scholarly work focussing on issues associated with these digitally enabled work arrangements and work regimes. The research highlights how these new forms of work fit within the rules that govern existing work (Prassl & Risak 2015); reflect on the "novelty" of the contracting out of risk to workers (Finkin 2015); the regulatory challenges associated with 'gig' work (De Stefano 2015); and, adequacy of existing regulatory frameworks (Cheery 2015). There are also studies exploring the flexibility and remuneration of 'gig' workers (Aloisi 2015).

Considerable gaps remain in our understanding of the 'gig' phenomenon. Most academic endeavours, thus far, have tended to adopt legalistic or descriptive approaches. There is a lack of more rigorous empirical research on workers experiences or management's strategies. Similarly, as 'gig' work is under theorised, ample opportunities exist to engage with the phenomenon within prevailing and new paradigms on work and employment and to consider where these emerging forms of work are heading.

In line with the theme of the AIRAANZ 2018 conference "Jobs and Change in Uncertain Times", this contemporary stream focuses on the digital disruptions of work in the platform based economy. Possible topics for conference papers include:

1. Theorizing the 'gig' phenomenon – where to from here?
2. 'Gig' work and the future of work – is the end of the Uberization in sight?
3. Worker experiences of, responses to, and motivations for, 'gig' work
4. The regulation of 'gig' work – are policy makers stepping up to the challenge
5. Work Health and Safety risks in the 'gig' economy
6. Ethical dilemmas of management by machines and algorithms
7. How is the organization of 'gig' work evolving
8. Collectivism versus Individualism in the 'gig' economy – Opportunities and challenges for new and old forms of worker organising

#### **Reference List**

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