

Work and Equalities Institute

Does Work Still Pay?

Unpaid Labour Regimes, Precarious Work and Strategies of Reputation in the Platform Economy

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Abstract

How unpaid labour accounts for precarious work within labour platforms? This paper answer this question by focusing on the platforms' market strategies of reputation and examine how they are deployed through digital technologies within platforms. By drawing on a comparison of on-location (food delivery) and online (freelancing) platforms in Belgium, the Netherlands and France, which relies on a multi-method research design consisting of work-focused narrative interviews and working diaries with workers and freelancers in labour platforms, the paper explains how precarious work unfolds from the 'open' and 'closed' regimes of unpaid, which re-commodify or de-commodify labour by affecting the autonomy of the employees in the conduct of their work. We illustrate this is due to these regimes relying on platforms' strategies of reputation, which shape employees' access to work, and which result from different forms of embeddedness of the digital technologies within the 'triadic' employees, customers and platforms relationships.

About the speaker

Valeria Pulignano is Professor of Sociology at the Center for Sociological Research (CESO) at KU Leuven. Her research lies in employment (industrial) relations and labour markets, their changing nature and implications for voice at work, precarious work and inequality as differences in wages, working conditions, job quality and wellbeing at a comparative level in Europe. She is currently coordinating an ERC AdG ResPecTMe research project on "Resolving Precariousness: Advancing the Theory and Measurement of Precariousness Across the Paid/Unpaid Continuum" see <https://soc.kuleuven.be/ceso/wo/erlm/respectme> and she is also Partner in the EU WorkYP "Working and Yet Poor". Her recent books include *Shifting Solidarities*. (2020, Palgrave-MacMillan) with I. Van Hoyweghen and G. Meyers and *Reconstructing Solidarity* (2018, Oxford University Press) with Doellgast V. and Lillie N.