RESHAPING WORK IN THE PLATFORM ECONOMY
25 & 26 OCTOBER 2018, AMSTERDAM

RESHAPING Work in the Platform Economy

CALL FOR PAPERS

INTRODUCTION   Over the last decade, platforms such as Uber, Helpling, and UpWork have rapidly transformed the way we work and employ others, generate income, and make use of our free time. These platforms facilitate exchanges between providers of services – 'platform workers' or 'gig workers' - and clients, including individual consumers and organizations. The marketplace in which these platforms operate is usually referred to as platform economy, on-demand economy, or popularly as sharing economy.

Platforms have emerged for tasks ranging from transportation services and food delivery, to cooking and babysitting. Interactions are primarily facilitated by digital technologies – e.g., apps, algorithms, blockchain – that lower transaction costs and allow the creation of more flexible job opportunities in these highly accessible labor markets. At the same time, platforms have been accused of operating in disregard of existing labor laws and local regulations. In addition, they are said to benefit platform owners more than platform workers, for whom flexibility may entail high uncertainty and absence of traditional employment benefits (e.g. pensions, insurance).

It is, however, clear that platforms are game changers and the new rules of the game are currently being shaped, both locally and globally. Drawn by the promises and challenges of platforms, we have witnessed the surge of new initiatives and experiments with new organizational forms. For instance, platform cooperatives currently stand as an alternative to 'platform capitalism' – the dominant form of organizing in the platform economy. Governments at different levels are experimenting with innovative regulation to harness potential and avoid detrimental consequences, and public perceptions of what is legitimate are changing. For this reason, it is crucial that these emerging platforms - both as operational infrastructures and institutional actors - are studied from a variety of disciplinary angles, in order to better understand the opportunities and challenges they present to the future of work.

Therefore, in this conference we invite the submission of high quality and timely research contributions from different backgrounds, grouped together as business and economics, sociology & humanities, and law.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS
Digital platforms allow the rise of new business models and change the nature of work by radically increasing efficiency, reducing transaction costs, and possibly allowing a more flexible type of work. Work on digital platforms might be characterized by 'micro-tasks' that are conducted by freelancers or private individuals, rather than employees. While these new business models have great potential, they also hold risks for workers, as well as for traditional enterprises. We invite contributions from the fields of business and economics that may discuss, among others, the following aspects:
• New business models, relationships to traditional enterprises, and market access requirements
• New ways of working, managing workforce, and the organization of work
• Asymmetric information and trust-building
• Effects of digital labour platforms on innovation and entrepreneurship
• The role of new technologies, such as blockchain, for the emergence of new forms of platform organizations
• Alternative solutions that allow workers to capture more of the value that is generated by platforms, such as portable reputations and platform cooperatives

SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES
Online platforms that facilitate labor and service exchange have profound impact on local and transnational labor forces. They also raise daunting challenges for national and local regulatory authorities.

CALL FOR PAPERS

A growing number of studies question the rhetoric of flexibility and autonomy and the bias and control built into the automated work process. Others lay bare deteriorating work conditions, astonishing degree of exploitations, and the normalization of precarious work for today's employment institution. We welcome contributions from academics, worker organizations, and policy-makers to address the social and cultural implications of digital platforms for work. Studies that are informed by historical and comparative perspectives are particularly welcome. Among others, we are interested in papers that address the following topics:

• The history of automation of work process (e.g. performance monitoring, hiring)
• Historical continuity and departure in the process of platformizing work
• Emerging workers' organization and resistance strategies
• Comparative studies on platform work (e.g. cross-platform comparison)
• Intersectional studies on platform work (race, gender, class, etc.)
• Studies focusing on developing countries
• Critical studies on algorithms and data analytics
• Explorations into viable inclusive development agendas for fair and sustainable platform work

LAW

We welcome academics, business leaders, national and European law- and policy-makers, representatives from the temporary staffing industry, platform companies, and platform workers to explore and discuss the evolving intersection between law and the platform economy on critical issues that are shaping the future of work. Accordingly, scholars and other professionals are invited to present papers across a range of legal research topics including, not limited to:

• Labor law and policy: emerging trends, options and challenges
• Dispute resolution: role of arbitration, courts, and regulation
• Discrimination across the platform economy: platforms, workers and consumers
• Liability and Risk: current practices, alternatives and implications for allocating liability and risk
• Taxation: the impact of tax design choices on the direction of the platform economy and on the role of workers in platform business models
• Consumer protection and/or Competition law: impact on establishing a level playing field

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Those wishing to participate in the conference by presenting a research paper are requested to submit an extended abstract (around 800 words) by June 15, 2018. Applicants should include their title and institutional affiliation and indicate the domain to which their work belongs (business & economics, sociology & humanities, or law). Abstracts should be sent to submissions@reshapingwork.net. You may also contact Hans Berends (j.j.berends@vu.nl) with any questions you may have about scholarly contributions to this conference. Notification of acceptance will be send in the first half of July.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The Reshaping Work conference will take place on the 25th & 26th October 2018, at the Student Hotel in Amsterdam. For practical information, please consult our website: https://reshapingwork.net/. To ensure you stay up-to-date, please sign up for our newsletter or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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