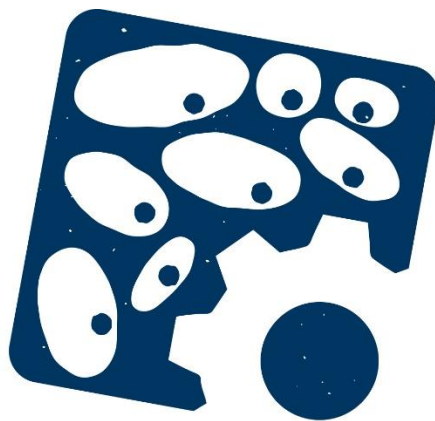


# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

42<sup>nd</sup> International Labour Process Conference 2024  
(ILPC 2024)

**“Coercion, Consent and Conflict in the  
Labour Process and Beyond”**



## **INTERNATIONAL LABOUR PROCESS CONFERENCE '24**

Institute of Sociology at University of Göttingen  
Sociological Research Institute Göttingen (SOFI)

3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024, Göttingen

## WELCOME TO GÖTTINGEN!

**A warm welcome to the University of Göttingen for the 42nd International Labour Process Conference. We are honored and delighted to welcome you all to Göttingen!**

We are living and working in times of change and multiple crises. Over the last years we could witness massive shocks to transnational value chains and subcontracting pyramids through the pandemic, geopolitical confrontations and intensified warfare; right-wing authoritarianism is globally on the rise and authoritarian assaults on workers' rights could be observed in several countries; the usage of digital technologies interferes with the established ways of work organisation and regulation of labour; policies of precarisation and the ecological crisis continue to endanger the material foundations for social reproduction. At the same time, we can also witness striking examples of labour revitalisation and practices of resistance. With the 2024 conference theme we address the re-articulation of coercion and consent in the course of these changes and shed light on the interrelations between workplace regimes and current developments in the sphere of economy, political regulation and the social division of labour.

In Göttingen there is a long tradition of research on developments, problems and prospects of the worlds of work that we are gladly taking up in our collaboration in the organising committee of the conference. The Institute of Sociology at the University of Göttingen has constantly strengthened its focus on labour studies and has currently established two chairs of sociology of work that are contributing to the conference. The Sociological Research Institute Göttingen (SOFI) has been among Germany's leading empirical research institutions on labour issues and sociology of work from the late 1960s onwards until today. These institutional conditions enable us to engage in research on various aspects relevant to this year's conference ranging from informal work and migration to new modes of control and marketisation, from firm's digitalisation strategies, platform work and technological affordances to industrial relations and mobilisation, from alienation to appropriation and class formation.

We are excited and proud to announce that this year, approximately 370 people from a total of 35 countries will participate in the ILPC. Although the majority of participants are from European countries, we are honoured to also welcome numerous participants who have travelled a long way to attend – such as Australia, India, South Africa, China and Brazil.

We also welcome the editors of *Work in the Global Economy (WGE)*, published by Bristol University Press. WGE is the official journal of the conference. The editors will be available throughout the conference - at the reception and at the journal's book table - to discuss opportunities for publishing your work post-conference.

We are looking forward to fruitful discussions with critical minds from around the world, to rich and intense exchange with colleagues and hope you all have a successful and enjoyable conference!

### **The Göttingen Organising Team**

Sarah Nies, Moritz Kuhles, Heiner Heiland, Annemarie Kern, Nicole Mayer-Ahuja, Linda Beck, Felix Bluhm (University of Göttingen)

Martin Kuhlmann, Antonia Altendorf, Peter Birke, Lukas Underwood (SOFI Göttingen)



*Partly funded by the "zukunft.niedersachsen" program.*

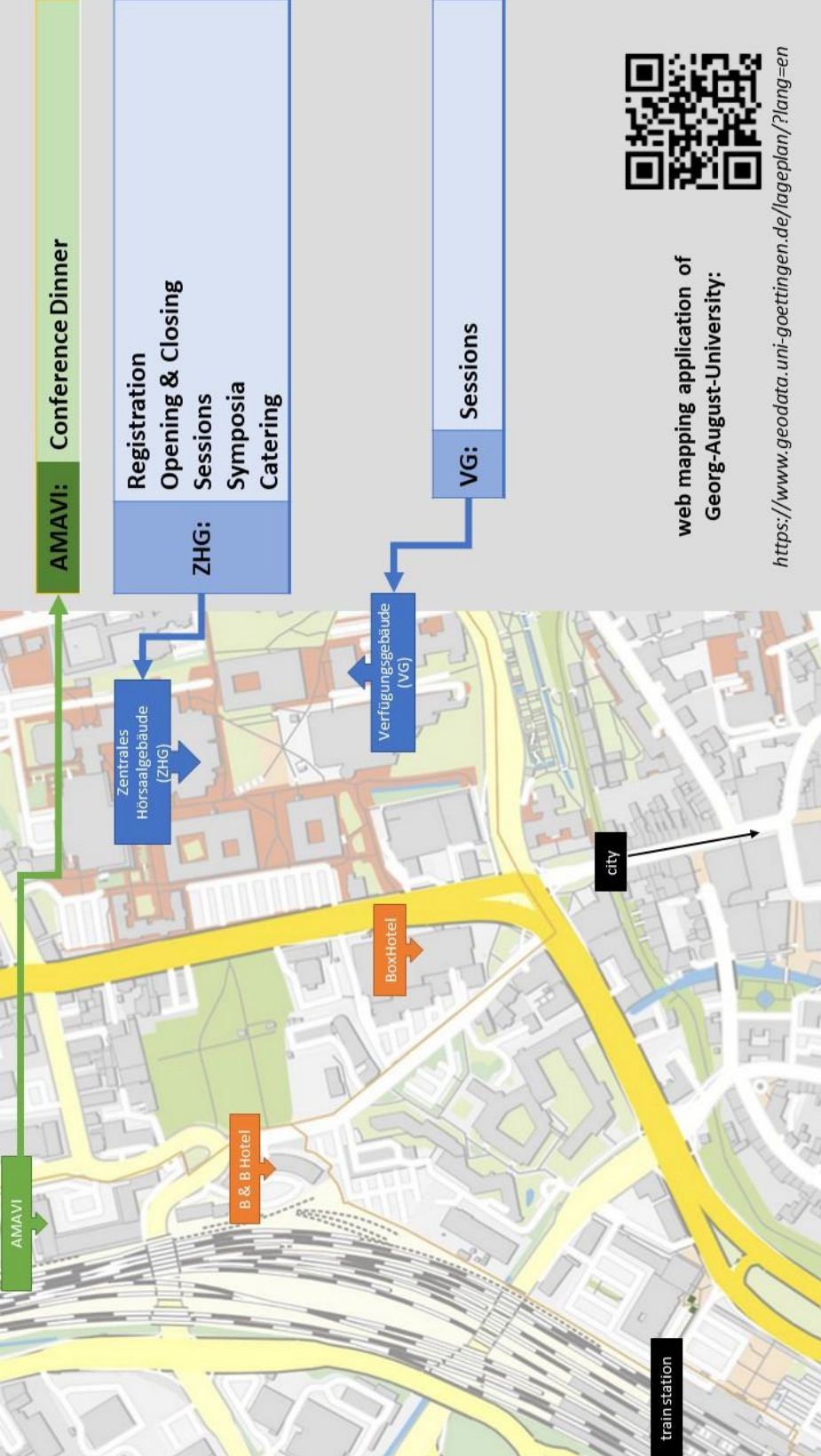
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## 1. SHORT PROGRAMM

<b>Wednesday, April 3rd</b>		
09:00 – 16:00	Registration	Foyer ZHG
09:30 – 12:00	PhD-Workshop	ZHG101
11:45 – 12:15	Coffee and Snacks	Foyer ZHG
12:30 – 14:15	Opening Event	ZHG009
14:45 – 16:15	Parallel Sessions 1	
16:15 – 16:45	Coffee Break	Foyer ZHG
16:45 – 18:15	Parallel Sessions 2	
18:30 – 19:30	Reception Work in the Global Economy with Snacks and Beverages	Foyer ZHG
<b>Thursday, April 4th</b>		
08:45 – 09:00	Coffee	Foyer ZHG
09:00 – 10:30	Parallel Sessions 3	
10:45 – 12:15	Parallel Sessions 4	
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch Break	Foyer ZHG
13:15 – 14:45	Symposia	
14:45 – 15:15	Coffee Break	Foyer ZHG
15:15 – 16:45	Parallel Sessions 5	
17:00 – 18:30	Parallel Sessions 6	
20:00 – open end	Conference Dinner	Amavi Restaurant
<b>Friday, April 5th</b>		
08:45 – 09:00	Coffee	Foyer ZHG
09:00 – 10:30	Symposia	
10:45 – 12:15	Parallel Sessions 7	
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch Break	Foyer ZHG
13:15 – 14:45	Parallel Session 8	
15:00 – 16:30	Cosing Panel	ZHG009

# 2. MAP

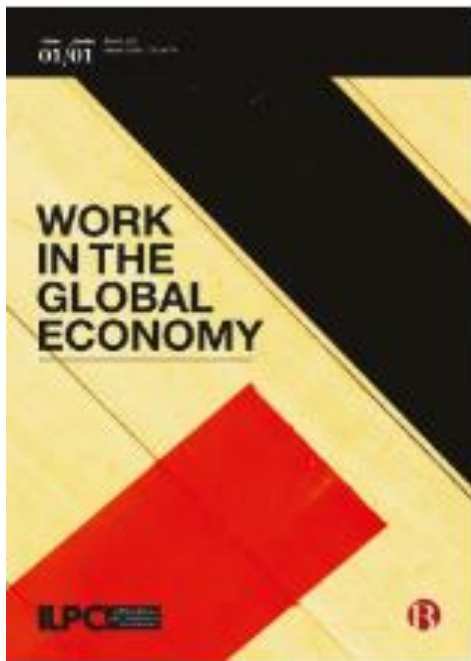


### 3. ILPC JOURNAL: WORK IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

In the aftermath of the conference, all ILPC attendees are **strongly encouraged to consider submitting papers** from the conference to Work in the Global Economy.

Work in the Global Economy is an **interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal** that promotes understanding of work, and connections to work, in all forms and dimensions and that builds upon a tradition of shared scholarship and a commitment to theory building and rigorous empirical enquiry that has been exemplified by the annual International Labour Process Conference (ILPC). A special session with the editors at the evening of April 3th will address all questions regarding the journal and the submissions of papers. Further information on the journal: [Work in the Global Economy](#).

**WGE welcomes your submissions for research articles.** If you are considering publishing your paper in the aftermath of the conference, please visit the journal's [website](#) for more information on the submission process, or speak with the editors at the reception and at the journal's book table during the conference.



## 4. PHD-WORKSHOP

This year's PhD Workshop focuses on

### **“Precarity in and beyond the Thesis: Prospects for Critical Labour Researchers”**

Lacking job security, benefits, and long-term career prospects, many PhD students and early career researchers find themselves in a vulnerable and uncertain employment situation. We would like to take an ongoing debate in and grassroots campaign from Germany as the starting point to discuss in an international comparison the chances and risks of science as a profession. In light of the conference's overarching theme of *'coercion, consent and conflict in the labour process and beyond'*, the workshop seeks to explore the coercive pressures experienced by emerging scholars due to the growing academic casualisation in different national contexts.

We are delighted to have the following speakers contributing to the workshop:

- **Amrei Bahr**, Junior Professor at University of Stuttgart, and one of the initiators of the german grassroots campaign #ichbinhanna
- **Kendra Briken**, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
- **Rohan Mathews**, PhD-Student from Mumbai, India

The chairs of the PhD Workshop are **Antonia Altendorf**, **Roland Budz**, **Pauline Schneider**, **Lukas Underwood**.



## 5. KEYNOTES

The opening keynotes of ILPC 2024 will be given by

- **Hans-Jürgen Urban**, Honorary Professor of Sociology, University of Jena, Germany, and Member of the Executive Board of the German Metal Workers' Union (IG Metall).  
**“Transformation of labour and trade union power resources – Labour policy strategies and sociological research needs in times of transformative capitalism”**
- **Paul Thompson**, Emeritus Professor of Management, Work and Organisation, University of Sterling, Scotland.  
**“From consent to coercion in the labour process tradition: departures, distinctions and directions”**
- **Sarah Nies**, Professor of Sociology with Focus on Digitalisation in the World of Work, University of Göttingen, Germany.  
**“Coercion, Consent and Conflict in the Labour Process and Beyond”**

The closing keynotes will be given by

- **Heide Gerstenberger**, Emeritus Professor of the Theory of Bourgeois Society and the State, University of Bremen, Germany  
**“Unbounded exploitation in capitalist labour processes”**
- **Klaus Dörre**, Professor of Sociology of Labour, Industry and the Economy, University of Jena, Germany  
**“Transformation and control: class and climate in the German industrial relations model”**
- **Nicole Mayer-Ahuja**, Professor of Labour Sociology, University of Göttingen, Germany.  
**“Labour Process and the Dynamics of Class Formation”**

## 6. SYMPOSIA

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### Transformation at the point of production. The case for eco-social production politics.

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In the strategic discourse on how to address the climate crisis, eco-social transformation is so far mostly approached from the demand side. The recent 6th IPCC Working Group III report proves a case in point, as it addresses sustainable production and consumption, concepts of wellbeing, investments by corporate and infrastructure actors and political regulation as elements of demand-side mitigation of climate change. Conversely, ecological issues have so far rarely come up in research informed by the labour process concept.

This symposium explores the idea that mitigation of climate change and adaptation to planetary boundaries and basic social needs calls – in the terminology of Michael Burawoy – for a new type of “eco-social production politics” with the aim of transforming the production apparatuses of capitalist societies. Within a framework of state regulation triggered by commitment to the Paris agreement, relations both of production and in production are contested between corporate actors, workers and their representations and larger eco-social movements along new lines of conflict. The symposium brings together research and strategic discussions at the intersection of the labour process, socio-ecological transformation and activism. Three contributions pursue this from different angles.

Contributions by:

- **Peter Bartelheimer**, Bremen (Organiser)
- **Silke Ötsch**, SOFI Göttingen (Organiser)
- **Tobi Rosswog**, Verkehrswendestadt Wolfsburg (mobility transition city Wolfsburg)
- **Bénédicte Zimmermann**, Ecole des hautes études en Sciences Sociales Paris / Berlin Wissenschaftskolleg (WZB)

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### Labour, migration and union politics in the Meat Industry – Germany and Denmark

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The symposium provides empirical and theoretical insights into ongoing research on the meat industry in Germany and Denmark. It aims to stress the necessity of critical research, while simultaneously fostering dialogue and an exchange of knowledge regarding the industry. Of particular significance is the focus on discussions regarding the effectiveness of the Occupational Safety and Health Control Act (in German “Arbeitsschutzkontrollgesetz”, ASKG), which has been in force for three years now. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has recently issued an initial evaluation of the law in February 2024 concerning the industry’s development. Against this background, the three contributions, with different emphases on the industry in Germany and Denmark, will primarily address current developments related to labour, trade unions, and wage policies in the meat industry.

In Germany, the emphasis is on industrial relations and wage policies, while the Danish case also delves into discussions about a just transition. Key questions include how companies adapt to the ASKG's new circumstances, its impact on sustainable changes in labour relations in the meat industry, and the stance of employee representatives and unions in Denmark regarding employers and stakeholders, particularly in green transition discussions.

Contributions by:

- **John Lütten** and **Marwaa Zazai**, University of Hamburg

“Relations of production in transition? Corporate strategies, labour and migration in the German meat industry”

- **Serife Erol** and **Thorsten Schulten**, Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI)  
“Co-determination structures and wage policy in the German meat industry. [Tarifpolitik und Mitbestimmungsstrukturen in der Fleischindustrie. Aktuelle Veränderungen.]”
- **Laura Horn** and **Marie Huntley Andersen**, Roskilde University  
“When green pigs fly - Just transition in the Danish pig-meat industry”

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## Working Class Resistance in South Africa

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The symposia will explore conflict in the labour process and beyond in the context of South African society, with a specific focus on the development of different kinds of working class resistance and organisation that arises as a result. Each presentation will speak to conflict in the labour process and broader society, and focus on different kinds of working class responses. The first two of the contributions focus on tensions that migrant workers face in society and in the workplace, and the development of collective and individual forms of resistance that arise. The next contribution reflects historically on the collective agency that workers developed in the workplace and in unions under apartheid, and uses this to situate and better understand contemporary developments in this regard. The final contribution looks at the division of labour along gender lines in the household and the community, the impacts of climate change on this, and how women navigate and organise in response to these challenges.

Contributions by:

- **Faisal Garba**, University of Cape Town  
“Migrant workers tensions and organising solidarity”
- **Lorato Setlhoke**, University of Cape Town  
“Migrant farmworker experiences of exploitation: collective and individual resistance”
- **Greg Dor**, University of Cape Town  
“The general meeting: worker alienation and the development of collective agency in the labour process”
- **Anele Songo Benya**, University of Cape Town  
“Land and Marine-Based Livelihoods: How Smallholder Women Farmers Navigate the Impacts of Climate Change”

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## The Academic Labor Process and Strikes

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Coinciding with newfound attention to the service sector and the burgeoning social movement unionism, American labor studies shifted their focus from the labor process to the labor movement. However, there has been little theoretical attempt to link the two. In this symposium we turn our attention to strikes by academic workers – in particular the street level educators called teaching assistants – that have swept across the United States and the UK. We show how locating the pedagogic labor process within the dynamics of the extractive university gives us a framework to understand labor mobilization – its causes, its evolution, and its consequences. We will present material from a “Workers’ Inquiry” that spanned two crises: the Covid Crisis beginning in 2020 and the unprecedented six-week strike across all 10 campuses of the University of California, beginning at the end of 2022, led by the UAW (United Auto/Academic Workers) representing 48,000 teaching assistants, research assistants and postdoctoral scholars. We plan to first make several short presentations, raising questions for collective discussion with attendees, focusing on the labor process of street-level educators at different universities, in different countries. The topics of the short papers will be: (a) the extractive university, (b) the labor processes of street-level educators within it, and (c) the

relationship of both to the causes and conduct of the strike and (d) to the outcome and lessons of the strike.

Contributions by:

- **Margaret Eby**, University of California
- **Elizabeth Emmott-Torres**, University of California
- **Thomas Gepts**, University of California
- **Justin Germain**, University of California
- **Sarah Mason** University of California
- **Natalie Pasquinelli**, University of California

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## Labour Agency and Industrial Conflict in Globalising Sectors: Historical Perspectives from Seafaring and Oil

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This symposium interrogates labour agency in two crucial industrial sectors: seafaring and oil. These sectors were each crucial to the making and functioning of an international economy marked by the more rapid movement of capital and goods. Since the mid-twentieth century, the oil industry has relied on integrating novel technologies into new production processes and transportation by tanker. Both sectors regimented workforces by race and nationality, overlapping with historical and contemporary imperial practices. Workers disputed the frontier of control, defying and renegotiating the expectations of employers and resisting the segmentations enforced through old and new divisions of labour.

Dave Featherstone contributes to debates around labour agency and the circulation of materials and commodities through examining three aspects of the British National Union of Seamen (NUS) and the politics of oil between the 1960s and the mid-1980s. the negotiation of the racialised labour geographies of oil tankers during the unions' major strike in 1966, the engagements between the NUS and multinational oil companies in relation to the North Sea oilfields in the 1970s and the involvement of the union in Maritime Unions Against Apartheid in the 1980s.

Mattin Biglari explores the relationship between Taylorism and racial capitalism in the Anglo–Iranian Oil Company (AIOC, now known as BP) during the 1930s and 1940s. His contributions show how, in contrast to prior assumptions about the global oil industry being less dependent on human labour vis-à-vis other extractive industries, the AIOC devoted much attention to shaping, disciplining and controlling the 'human factor' of operations. This was especially to combat resistance from the company's Iranian workforce across the period, ranging from large scale mobilisations to acts of everyday resistance.

Ewan Gibbs assesses the moulding of a new North Sea oil rig building workforce by Texan firm, Brown and Root, in the Scottish Highlands. American managers instigated a novel regime, eschewing craft traditions which characterised work in the related shipbuilding sector. Production was marked by conflict over occupational status, managerial authority, mobility and extra remunerative rewards. These were central factors in union agreements and industrial disputes. They led to a major restructuring of work practices and cost cutting which were accepted by workers and unions in return for the yard remaining open.

Contributions by:

- **Mattin Biglari**, University of Bristol
- **David Featherstone**, University of Glasgow
- **Ewan Gibbs**, University of Glasgow

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## Gendered Notions of Care Work: Consent, Conflict and Labour Law

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The social construction of care work is the result of a gendered division of labour. This Symposium reflects on the gendered notions of paid care work, which is expressed in the feminisation of care work and in its being perceived as “non-economic”, as not creating economic surplus value. Care work is socially constructed as being characterised by its emotional and relational qualities. At the same time, due to persistent gender stereotypes and inequalities, these qualities are still socially viewed as “female”. The Symposium looks at paid care work in all its forms, from nurses’ work in care institutions to domestic care work by migrant live-in workers; it traces how the gendered construction of care and stereotypical assumptions about care work are reflected by workers, in the economy, by social counselling projects and in the law. It discusses how, in care work, notions of work, conflict and labour law are shaped by gendered assumptions, and how these gendered notions of work reflect in care workers’ consciousness, in economic structures, in care workers’ support structures, and in labour law. It covers micro, meso and macro levels, with a specific interest in socio-legal perspectives.

Contributions by:

- **Ziga Podgornik Jakil**, European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), Germany  
“Understanding the Emotional-Relational Dimension of Nurses' Work Life”
- **Helma Lutz**, Goethe University Frankfurt/Main, Germany  
“The gendered commercialization of migrant care-work in current European senior care”
- **Lorena Poblete**, CONICET-UNSAM, Buenos Aires, Argentina  
“How to make the law available for migrant care workers? Legal counselling through social media in Germany”
- **Eva Kocher**, European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), Germany  
“Gendered Narratives about Conflict and Care in German and EU Labour Law”

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## Labour process and the logics of history

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The symposium gathers an interdisciplinary group of scholars, whose work focuses on the labour process and on issues of coercion, conflict, and consent in the world of labour from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. The contributors draw on their own work or on relevant empirical case studies to emphasize the importance of historicizing the labour process, and to explore ways and means to do so. They will attempt to articulate potential and provisional answers to the several questions. Why does history matter for understanding transformations in and beyond the labour process? Why should we stand against a presentist regime of historicity when analysing coercion, conflict, and consent in the labour process and beyond? And what do we actually mean by “history” when suggesting our theoretical insights and empirical inquiries should stand on solid historical ground?

Contributions by:

- **On Barak**, Tel Aviv University
- **Bridget Kenny**, University of Witwatersrand
- **Nicole Mayer-Ahuja**, University of Göttingen
- **Luisa Steur**, University of Amsterdam

Organised by **Alina-Sandra Cucu**, Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Berlin

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## New Prospects for Collective Bargaining? Comparative Perspectives on the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages

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The erosion of collective bargaining has been a general development for many years - both in terms of quantity (scope and reach) and quality (outcomes). The importance of collective agreements for the regulation of working conditions has declined. Several trade unions have reacted to this e. g. by attempts of new forms of organizing. At the same time, we are seeing an upswing in organized labour unrest, at least in some countries. Strikes and collective bargaining initiatives have become more frequent, especially in the service sector. However, it is not yet clear whether this will lead to an upturn in the relevance of collective bargaining. In 2022, the EU adopted the Directive (2022/2041) on adequate minimum wages without much public debate, which stipulates, among other things, that "Member States with a collective bargaining coverage of less than 80 % should take measures to improve such collective bargaining" (Directive 2022/2041, recital 25). The symposium "New Prospects for Collective Bargaining?" is intended as a discussion on the importance and impact of this directive. Has the directive improved the possibilities for collective bargaining or could it even lead to a trend reversal? The symposium will begin with two academic overview presentations: a comparative European presentation by Torsten Müller (ETUI, Brussels) and one by Martin Behrens (WSI Institute, Düsseldorf) on the German situation. Following the two presentations, we invited three practitioners to give their comments and share their experiences of the events in Ireland, Romania and Germany. These countries are in different economic situations and they belong to very different systems of labour relations and collective bargaining. At the same time, all three countries face the challenge of raising the scope of collective bargaining to a much higher level, and there has been at least some activity in this direction.

Contributions by

- **Martin Behrens**, WSI, Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, Düsseldorf
- **Torsten Müller**, ETUI, Brussels
- **Ger Gibbons**, ICTU, Ireland
- **Frederic Speidel**, IG Metall, Germany
- N.N., Romania

Organised by **Martin Kuhlmann**, Sociological Research Institute Göttingen

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## Current forms of resistance of migrant workers in Europa

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The resistance of migrant workers against undignified working conditions is a central and recurring motif of critical research, especially against the backdrop of the increasing racist discourse in almost all countries of the global North. Such resistance can appear in many forms, as it is demonstrated by migrant labor struggles following the Pandemic. Workers fought through blockades of construction sites or highway rest stops, wildcat strikes, collective bargaining labor disputes, and campaigns in alliance with NGOs and social movements for dignity and payment, sometimes with success. Often, (South-)East European workers initiated these unrests: A strike at the Femarnbelt construction site (Denmark), the struggles of the IP union at Amazon in Poland, the transnationally organized blockade of trucks of a forwarding agency at a service station in Gräfenhausen or the strikes in the German meat industry in the verge of a ban of subcontracting. There are also many examples of non-EU workers fighting for their rights in France, Germany, and other countries, despite their precarious residence status.

A special stream at the ILPC discusses labour and migration from an empirical and theoretical perspective, presenting research perspectives from many countries around the world. However, we are convinced a discussion of migrant workers' resistance must remain incomplete if it lacks activists' perspectives. Thus, we will bring participants of contemporary

labour struggles in different branches and from different national backgrounds together. By crossing the border between specific branches and residence conditions, a dialogue between trade unions, social movements, and scholars might be facilitated: What is the meaning of migrant resistance at work? What does the emergence of (new, re-newed or changing) forms of labour unrest tell us about traditional repertoires of action? How can the struggles of certain groups in specific sectors be turned into multinational and transnational actions? What role do supporters play, like consulting initiatives, NGOs, and local social movements? What is the relation between the different forms of migrant resistance and trade union organizing?

By posing and discussing these questions, the symposium contributes to the conference's focus on conflict and labour process. The questions and answers provided the podium invite to further discussions.

Contributions by:

- **Szabolsc Sepsi**, Faire Mobilität, Dortmund, Rheda-Wiedenbrück
- **Magda Malinowska**, IP, Poznan, Poland
- **Polina Manolova**, Stolipinovo in Europa e.V, Duisburg
- **Sükran Budak**, IG Metall, Frankfurt am Main
- **Alexandru Firus**, Peco-Institut, Nürnberg

Chairs are:

- **Laura Bremert**, Hamburg
- **Christian Sperneac-Wolfer**, Frankfurt a.M.
- **Georg Barthel**, Aalborg
- **Peter Birke**, Göttingen

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## Reworking the Climate Crisis - Work and Labour Process Theory on a Warming Planet

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Climate change is one of the most existential social problems of our time. The massive impact of dramatic ecological changes as well as measures of mitigation and adaptation on all social fields is widely recognized. While workplaces are the major site of CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions and work, more generally, is considered the central locus of the societal metabolism with nature, labour process theory, so far, has paid little attention to the ecological crisis. This symposium aims at exploring the various ways in which work is challenged by the climate crisis and how labour process theory (LPT) can respond.

LPT understands work not merely as a process of production, but also as a political arena of conflict. This approach is principally well suited to analyse the various ways, in which the climate crisis itself as well as its political regulation affects workers and workplaces. This can take the form of new conflicts over ecological risks (like heatwaves, extreme weather events etc.) at the workplace. Or it can take the form of institutional politics, for example when trade unions or employer associations become involved in negotiating climate mitigation and its often massive effects on employment. In recent years, the role of trade unions in environmental politics received increasing attention in research. The symposium seeks to expand these discussions. This raises questions like:

To what extent are there specific developments in different countries and regions of the world? Which developments and influencing factors can be identified from perspectives, which analyse labour processes in different spatial levels and in their relationships?

Furthermore, it addresses the less explored level of the labour process itself, asking questions like:

In what ways do conflicts over socio-ecological transformations manifest at the workplace level? Is the intensification of climate change associated with new lines of labour/ecology-

conflicts within workplaces? To what extent can LPT be 'ecologised' and what does an LPT perspective contribute to understanding labour conflicts in times of climate change?

Contributions by:

- **Stefanie Hürtgen**, University of Linz
- **Dennis Eversberg**, FSU Jena and **Vera Trappmann**, Leeds University
- **Simon Schaupp**, University of Basel

Organised by:

- **Thomas Barth**, Institute for Social Research, Frankfurt a.M.
- **Simon Schaupp**, University of Basel



## 7. AUTHOR MEETS CRITICS

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### **The Politics of Unpaid Labour. How the study of unpaid labour can help understand inequality in precarious work**

by Valeria Pulignano and Markieta Domecka  
Oxford University Press

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The author meets critics section around the book “The politics of unpaid labour” gathers a group of scholars within the realm of critical sociology, whose work focuses on the transformation of work, technology, climate change, precarious work and the labour process from different theoretical and methodological perspectives to discuss how unpaid labour for both waged (i.e. ‘wage theft’) and no-waged labour (i.e., ‘income theft’) in paid work can advance our understanding of inequality within the context of precarious work. Why does unpaid labour matter? How does unpaid labour contribute to understand unequal ‘class-based’ power structures which are produced and refracted through income, social reproductive labour, state policy as well as other institutional arrangements within industry and labour market contexts? How does unpaid labour relate to ongoing structural transformations? These questions are at the core of the book and will be discussed in the section.

Contributions by:

- **Valeria Pulignano**, Centre for Sociological Research, KU Leuven
- **Vera Trappmann**, Professor of Comparative Employment Relations - Leeds University
- **Martin Kuhlmann**, Director at Sociological Research Institute Göttingen

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### **Handbook of Research on the Global Political Economy of Work**

by Maurizio Atzeni, Dario Azzellini, Alessandra Mezzadri, Phoebe Moore and Ursula Apitzsch  
Edward Elgar Publishing

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In this symposium we propose to present and discuss the ‘Handbook of the Global Political Economy of Work’, co-edited by Maurizio Atzeni, Dario Azzellini, Alessandra Mezzadri, Phoebe Moore and Ursula Apitzsch. The handbook deals with various issues usually discussed at ILPC (migration, social, reproduction, digital labour, logistics, trade unionism, industrial relations, among others) but from a broader political economy perspective rooted in a Marxist analysis of work and capitalism. From this point of view we think the book discussion can help ILPC attendees to expand their knowledge of contemporary debates on labour issues and on labour as interdisciplinary field of study on its own.

Contributions by:

- **Stephen Bouquin**, University of Paris-Saclay
- **Beltrán Roca**, University of Cádiz

## 8. PRE-FIXED SESSIONS

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### 20 years of Global Labour University (GLU) – Learning and Acting Together

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This session presents the work of the Global Labour University (GLU) through contributions from established academics who are also representative of the network's diversity. At the same time it opens space to discuss the potentials of education and research for the labour movement in times of crisis. The contributors will sketch out current research agendas within and beyond the network of the GLU and discuss methodological approaches and innovations that are necessary to adequately describe contemporary developments in the world of work. In doing this, special emphasis is laid on the experiences of the last 20 years of close collaborations between academic scholars and activism. Drawing from these experiences, the following inquiries arise:

How can research and activism inform each other at the local and global level? How can we build an emancipatory education model that takes into account the complexity of today's capitalist developments on the one hand and on the other hand breaks it down to students and activists from diverse backgrounds on the other hand? How can developments within the labour movement (i.e. moving away from classical forms of organizing, social division of labour along intersectional axes, new and old forms of workforce segmentation) inform labour-centred education, both within trade unions and universities? These questions are tied together by the understanding of internationalism as an ongoing, real-world practice rather than just a declaration. Internationalism, as complex as it is, is constantly under threat which is why the ILPC is a good moment to take stock of two decades of experiences within the GLU.

Contributions by:

- **Melisa Serrano**, University of the Philippines
- **Martina Sproll**, Berlin School of Economics and Law (HWR)
- **Edlira Xhafa**, GLU Online Academy
- **Frank Hoffer**, GLU Association
- **David O'Connell**, GLU Alumni Representative for Europe

Organised by:

- **Lisa Carstensen**, University of Kassel
- **Aleksandra Draganic**, University of Kassel

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### Going beyond the place of production - Learning from care and migrantized labor to broaden our understanding of platforms, resistance, and subjective precarity

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Platform labor research has thus far focused on the (re-)organization of the labor process with particular attention paid to new forms of control and coercion. As this body of research has highlighted, it is not just new (digital) technologies but also the lack of political regulation that lead to precarity for platform workers. This lack of regulation is most widely discussed in terms of employment regulation but, as our panel will show, ought to be understood more broadly to include immigration regulation and gendered regimes of social reproduction. In foregrounding these other forms of regulations, we go beyond the platform to understand platform-mediated labor, away from case studies at the point of production to a broader scope beyond the workplace and to consider workers' larger life. In this session, we therefore explore factors beyond the workplace, and create a dialogue between three case studies. First, the aim of the

panel is to showcase empirical research illustrating how this approach reveals new insights for understanding the future of work. Secondly, by bringing the contributions into a dialogue, we aim to show the complexities within each of these under-researched fields (platform-mediated domestic work, elder care work, and grocery delivery work). What is more, we will discuss which available concepts of labor studies, gender studies and critical migration studies helped within each project to understand the empirically emerging complexities and interrelations of care, precarity and migration.

Contributions by:

- **Barbara Orth**, FU Berlin (Organiser)  
“Working Holiday Visas Fueling Berlin’s gig economy”
- **Franziska Baum**, University of Hamburg (Organiser)  
“Caring via Platforms: Challenging the platform and care narratives of labor research”
- **Valentin Niebler**, HU Berlin  
“Organizing fragmented labour: the case of migrant workers at Helping Berlin”

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## Contemporary Slave Labour in the Coffee and Meat Supply Chains in Brazil: Why should we discuss decent Work globally?

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The UN Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Agenda 2030, and the new Human Rights Due Diligence Laws being published in the European Union (EU) have stated that countries should implement mechanisms to prevent the entrance of products with slave labour in the supply chain, as well as multinational companies must be accountable for benefiting from it.

This session will host a debate that aims to map the supply chains of coffee and meat in two states in Brazil, ranking first and second in the use of contemporary slave labor: Minas Gerais and Mato Grosso. The two states were chosen because of their importance in the exportation scenario. Minas Gerais and Mato Grosso are the biggest producers and exporters of coffee and cattle respectively. Following the debate, the session anticipates the construction of a dialogue that compares and contrasts national and international struggles against slavery and uses the experiences of due diligence laws and mechanisms that can help advance its eradication.

Contributions by

- **Livia Miraglia**, Federal University of Minas Gerais
- **Lécia Nidia Ferreira Taques**, Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT), Brazil (Chair)
- **Fagundes Maurício Krepsky**, Decent Work Institute

## 9. SPECIAL STREAMS

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### Alienation and the labour process

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A central pillar of labour process theory is the antagonistic relationship between capital and labour and the resulting subordination of the labour process under the dictate of capitals' interests. Researchers then necessarily focus their analysis on the relations of exploitation and the wage-effort exchange. Yet the dominance of the capitalists' rationale of valorisation bears consequences also for the way work is experienced and the possibilities of work appropriation. Marx's theory of alienation combines a critique of capitalist exploitation with the critique of the impediment of a subjective appropriation of work that has profound consequences for the whole of capitalist society. Alienation is generic to capitalist society because of its inherent universal "extension of saleability" and commodification and the conversion of human beings and their relations into things (reification) (Meszaros 2005: 35). While alienation is structurally generated it leaves its mark on individuals' and collective psychology albeit in a contradictory form. Therefore, the concept also holds explanatory power for the ways that capitalist domination is experienced, enacted, perceived, legitimised and contested – inside and outside of the labour process.

The prime target of a widespread critique of alienation was the standardisation and fragmentation of industrial work. For the most parts the diagnosis of alienation has been attributed to coercive, often Taylorist, modes of control and associated with rigid working conditions rendering workers powerless and stripping all sense of meaning from labouring activities. In labour process analysis, the use of alienation as an analytic tool has tended to be a background role in theoretical debates and especially empirical studies. When referred to, it is often as an taken-for-granted understanding on the harmful experience of selling labour power.

The rise of different, seemingly less rigid management models and modes of control challenge a narrow understanding of alienation that focusses on rigid modes of control alone. Among other things this is due to increasing managerial efforts to mobilise the whole person including emotional, aesthetic-corporeal and intimate aspects of labour power. This has led to a growing interest in theorising the contradictory, subjective experience of labour power both in labour process theory (Brook 2013) as well as in the German debate where the wide-spread terms 'subjectification' and marked-oriented, 'indirect control' conceptualize increasing utilisation of worker's subjective capabilities and self-responsibilisation as a mode of rationalization. Whereas Boltanski and Chiapello attest that what they call "artistic critique" has been absorbed in new management styles and does not offer a powerful source of critique anymore, research in different sectors has shown the prevailing importance of the suffering of alienation. In that sense, the discussion on emotional labour gives an expression what alienation might look like beyond the limits of fragmented industrial work, and the conceptualisation of alienation as a fundamental contradiction between concrete labour oriented towards the production of use value and the forces of valorisation might explain the occurrence of alienation beyond the tayloristic workplace (Voswinkel 2019; Nies 2021).

However, formalized, fragmented, and routinized work, as traditionally addressed with alienation theory, is far from gone either. Research has comprehensively explored the labouring realities of workers subjected to digitally-enabled forms of comprehensive control –

such as algorithmic management (Ivanova et al. 2018;) or cybernetic regimes (Schaupp 2022, with in-depth reference to the concept of alienation: Kassem 2023).

In this stream we aim to explore classic and new ideas on alienation as a concept and discuss its continuing value to contemporary labour process debate. This includes interrelations between alienated work and alienation as a wider perspective on the (re-)production of the capitalist society as whole especially with regards to the related concepts of commodity fetishism and reification (cf. Lukács, Marcuse) as well as recent concepts of alienation as disturbed relationships within the social and natural world (Jaeggi 2014; Rosa 2019).

Stream organisers are:

- **Mirela Ivanova**, University of Basel
- **Wolfgang Menz**, University of Hamburg
- **Sarah Nies**, University of Göttingen
- **Sarah Tews**, University of Hamburg

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## Housing Workers: Reproduction and Production of Labour Power

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Production and reproduction of labour power are intimately related. Labour process research, especially in the ILPC, has tended to focus on the workplace as the site of production, where labour services are transformed through the labour process, into commodities or tradable services. The immediate labour process concerns the daily wage effort struggles between workers and employers, through the temporal constraints of the working day. Within market capitalism, wages go to workers and are used to buy the daily and long-term reproduction needs of the workers. Within welfare capitalism, the state is involved with longer-term reproduction, especially with the education and housing of the workforce. Under more neo-liberal forms, in Western countries state housing provision has declined in favour of market-mediated provision, putting more pressure on wages to make this adjustment, but with employment fragmenting, and regulation of wages becoming harder (Felstead et al 2020), this model is being challenged. As wages come under pressure and capitalism has moved away from traditional bureaucratic forms of employment, where wages are used for the daily and long-term reproduction of labour power, other agencies are becoming involved in the reproduction of labour.

Historically prior to the rise of the factory system, production, and reproduction in terms of where workers lived, were coupled. Workers took in raw products from merchants or middlemen and transformed these into tradeable commodities through a home-bounded labour process. This was common except for industries with factor contingencies, as in mining. With the growth of the factory system home and work separated, with different spaces for different activities. Whole family labour was engaged in early factories, and then progressively separated between home and factory. Gendered roles existed in both spaces. As factories grew from the late 18th century, some employers provided accommodation, leading to the emergence first of English mill villages, and then European, US and Indian company towns. In textile industries in the US, Japan, and China from the early 1900s, the provision of industrial dormitories was used to capture young female workers prior to marriage (Smith, 2003).

But such patterns are not simply historical, as transitions of former state socialist countries, such as China or the Czech Republic, re-valued the competitive place of dormitories on an extended scale (Ngai and Smith, 2007; Smith and Pun, 2006; Ngai, Andrijasevic and Sacchetto, 2020). The so-called 'dormitory labour regime' (DLR) that emerged first in 1980s China showed the advantages for capital in housing migrant workers close to the workplace. The DLR was gendered in different ways, but both male and female workers are accommodated. Having workers on call, churning labour without the build-up of industrial communities as in earlier company towns, and drawing labour from across the labour market,

together function to hold down wages and extend productivity. The recent internationalisation of the DLR beyond China has drawn attention to the consequences for the organisation of the labour process of spatially integrating reproduction and production of labour power (Goodburn and Mishra, 2022; Oya and Schaefer, 2023). The DLR also has implications for managing sexuality for male and female workers, and more generally for maintaining patriarchal control over social reproduction. Living at work can be crucial in order to maintain, manage, and control a stationary workforce, but the workplace can also contribute to developing forms of workers' transnational mobility power (Ceccagno and Sacchetto, 2020). Furthermore, living together in dormitories can facilitate forms of solidarity among workers, as living together translates into struggling together.

The Special Stream aims to examine the reproduction and production of labour power, with a focus on housing. We suggest there are 5 typologies for thinking about this integration:

- 1) Employer-led accommodation provision, as in the dormitory labour regime (DLR) or where there is collusion and interaction between private landlords and employers over renting to workers, and information gathered by landlords about workers is shared with employers.
- 2) State-led provision, as in aspects of the DLR, coerced labour or in the case of prisoners who perform waged labour voluntarily or due to legal compulsion.
- 3) 'Tied provision', whereby industry or occupational conditions force workers to 'live at work' – as in the case of seafarers or long-distance truck drivers. Or Domestic work, which is often neglected by labour process writers, but statistically accounts for a massive global share of employment, especially for female workers.
- 4) Worker-led collective provision of accommodation, as in certain 'plastic villages' tied to agricultural production, (Piro, 2021).
- 5) Home-work – Home working has always been highly gendered, with casualised forms of outsourcing typical of female work. A new form of working from home was massively expanded during the Covid Pandemic, in which household-bounded labour re-emerged as a site for the intersection of wage labour, social reproduction and consumption, leading to new tensions between the meanings attributed to home as a place of reproduction, of affection and relaxation, or as a place of work, of production, of time "coerced" (Felstead, 2022).

Stream organisers are:

- **Chris Smith**, Royal Holloway University of London,
- **Devi Sacchetto**, University of Padua, Italy
- **Pun Ngai**, Lingnan University Hong Kong
- **Charlotte Goodburn**, King's College London

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## Labour and Migration: Recomposition, Regulation and Conflicts at the Point of Production and Beyond

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In different sectors and geographical contexts, a connection can be observed between the use of migrant labour and precarious, informalised employment. This connection is based not least on a social recomposition of workforces: the state as well as the management of corporation, sometimes with the participation of trade unions, do continuously and often systematically promote a stratification ("Unterschichtung") of workforces. This happens based on differentiated border regimes (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), which in many countries and economic areas currently strongly focus on the usability of labour. But precarious employment relations are also brought about by the use of limited residence conditions and the connection

between those residence conditions and a so-called individual “employability” (Kalbermatter 2019, Neuhauser and Birke 2021).

As a result, in expanding sectors such as online mail order, parcel services or the food industry, transnational fluctuation and stratification – and thus a “migrantisation” of workforces – have become an explicitly declared management strategy (Birke 2022). At the same time, the economisation of the production of public goods and the associated labour shortage in many countries leads to an increased use of migrant labour (Kontos and Ruokonen-Engler 2022). In both cases, employment is embedded in labour regimes (e.g. Baglioni et al 2022), in which goods and workers circulate on a transnational or global scale, deliberately exploiting and creating regulatory gaps.

However, these developments do not remain uncontested: since the coronavirus pandemic, migrant labour has become the subject of public debate and social conflict in many countries, not at least on the backdrop of deteriorating working and living conditions and through mass infections (Cook et al. 2020, Askola et al. 2021, Neuhauser et al. 2021). At the same time, the importance of migrant labour for the maintenance of production and services becomes clear, and simulatenously is an expression of an improved labour market position of the workers, as (individual) bargaining power of workers continues to rise in the wake of labour shortages. In some constellations, improvements in working conditions can be achieved by protests and strikes, which are sometimes promoted by trade unions, but often not (Birke 2022, Benvengú et al. 2018, Morrisson et al. 2014).

In migration research, the segmentation and organization of the labour process is a subject that is rarely explored systematically. This special stream adds to this gap, by focusing how the constellation outlined, effects the organisation of work processes, management control, and workers’ struggles.

Stream organisers are:

- **Georg Barthel**, Aalborg Universitet
- **Linda Beck**, Universität Göttingen
- **Peter Birke**, Soziologisches Forschungsinstitut Göttingen
- **Felix Bluhm**, Universität Göttingen
- **Laura Bremert**, IMU Institut Stuttgart
- **Samia Dinkelaker**, Academia Sinica Taiwan
- **Anita Heindlmeier**, Universität Wien
- **Jacqueline Kalbermatter**, Universität Basel
- **Benjamin Herr**, Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt, Wien
- **Christian Sperneac-Wolfer**, Institut für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt a.M.
- **Johanna Neuhauser**, Universität Wien
- **Janina Puder**, Universität Duisburg Essen

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## **Workers’ transitions throughout the life course**

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This stream will focus on the different transitions that workers might make during their working lives. It will focus on changes in the status of workers, how changes in status occur, barriers and enablers of changes in status and the outcomes resulting from changes in status. It will also explore workers’ subjective experiences of transitions.

Work and employment transitions are of interest to researchers working in several academic disciplines and fields of study, including economics, education, psychology, sociology, youth studies and work and employment studies. The scope for inter-disciplinary research is therefore considerable, yet the potential remains largely untapped. An important aim of this Special Stream, which will be convened by researchers (including ECR researchers) from the

fields of employment relations, sociology and economics, will be to provide an environment in which inter-disciplinary learning can occur.

Research on work and employment transitions has tended to focus on a small number of transition types. The movement from education into the labour market is perhaps the most commonly studied transition (e.g. Irwin and Nilsen, 2018; Chesters, 2020; O'Reilly et al., 2019). The ability of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) to transition into work has also been a perennial concern (e.g. Crisp and Powell, 2017; McPherson, 2021) as have transitions between unemployment and employment. Transitions within the labour market have also attracted interest. For example, an enduring research question has been whether workers who initially enter low-quality part-time or fixed-term employment become 'trapped' in this type of employment or, conversely, whether it can provide a 'bridge' or 'stepping-stone' to better employment (Scherer, 2004; Gash, 2008; McGuinness and Wooden, 2009, Nunley et al., 2017; Muñoz-Comet and Steinmetz, 2020), particularly for 'poorly integrated' young workers (Scarpetta et al. 2010). Opportunities to develop skills are important in this regard and labour process and employment relations researchers have revealed much about how different skills are developed, rewarded and recognised (or not), connections between skill development and utilisation, work organisation, job quality and career pathways, and how these connections differ between sectors and countries (see, for example, Grugulis and Lloyd 2010, Lloyd and Payne 2016, Yates 2022).

In recent years, transitions from work to retirement have also attracted attention, partly reflecting the extension of working lives and the emergence of pathways out of employment that involve reductions in workers' attachment to the labour market as they approach retirement, rather than a sudden severing of their connection (Bennet and Möhring 2015). Researchers have also examined the role of government policy and national institutions in encouraging the development of 'capabilities' and supporting different types of transitions during the life course (particularly notable in this regard is Transitional Labour Market analysis, largely developed by Günther Schmid).

Stream organisers are:

- **Jason Heyes**, University of Sheffield
- **Maria Pantea**, Babeş-Bolyai University
- **Romania Antonio Parlavecchio**, University of Sheffield
- **Mark Tomlinson**, University of Sheffield
- **Bert Van Landeghem**, University of Sheffield
- **Stefanie Williamson**, University of Sheffield
- **Peter Wright**, University of Sheffield
- **Edward Yates**, University of Sheffield

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## Unruly objects and interferences – challenges and consequences for the labour process?

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Labour process theory and analysis are based on the antagonism between workers and management and the ways in which labour as a commodity is shaped in this relationship by control and coercion. While it is widely discussed that the labour process is not only negotiated between workers and managers but e.g. also customers in the service economy (Lopez 2010), little is known about further participants in this negotiation. We would like to think about the role of objects or non-human actors as well as other fuzzy interferences and their consequences for the labour process. We suggest that the labour process is not only shaped by workers' recalcitrance and subversion as well as management's control and coercion, but even more so by accidental disturbances such as unruly technology (unexpected updates, server crashes), viruses or extreme weather events. Rather than focusing on structural conditions of this antagonism, we would like to ask about unexpected, random and accidental



interferences in the negotiation of this antagonism; we are interested in the ways workers deal with ecological or technical disturbances and their consequences for control, consent and coercion on a micro-sociological level. These disturbances are both caused socially and naturally, such as extreme weather events or the Covid-19 pandemic.

Social theory has much addressed the issue of non-human actors in the past decades (cf. Latour 2007, Haraway 2016). These approaches extend and think beyond social interactions as being only of human capacity. To some extent, most social theories, from new materialism to practice theory, from ethnomethodology to actor network theory, agree that social interactions and doings depend on their environment in order to be successful. However, the degree of non-human agency varies. We would like to take up on the premise that all kinds of social doings do depend on other-than-human capacities while putting aside the differences in these capacities. Rather, we would like to ask about the consequences and challenges for the labour process as much as labour process theory with regard to other-than-human doings of any kind. The labour process is always contingent in the sense that its outcome is the product of the worker-capital antagonism, moderated through consent, coercion and control. What about other contributing factors to the labour process? We would like to extend these to objects, technologies and fuzzy interferences, taking up on Hornborg's (2017) idea, that things do not have agency but consequences. Unruly technology might enable workers to withdraw from control; extreme weather events might mess with control of the labour process; technology, animals, plants, viruses, hormones or disruptive weather events constantly interfere with social processes and in this capacity these must also influence the labour process with contingent consequences. This range of interferences influences the labour process to the extent that unruly technology or events challenge the control of the labour process. This may e.g. result in inability to manage commuting, destruction of the outputs of work, or not being able to perform work activities as usual. Such interferences may lead to disengagement and relieve of workers or, quite contrary, intensify managerial control of the labour process that is of disadvantage to workers.

Including unruly objects and fuzzy interferences as being consequential for the labour process also challenges the notion of control. Control is a key concept of labour process analysis, locating it at the core of worker-capital antagonism. However, the paradigm of control implies that control is possible and merely a question of human agency - whether it be managerial coercion or workers' subversion. What if though, the labour process is influenced by more than human control or rather, at least partly, outside of human control at all?

Technology often does not work as expected, breaks down, leads to delays, and has to be updated. Certain tasks need to be postponed or cannot be accomplished at all due to unruly technology. While on the one hand, this may lead to stress and strain for the workers, unruly technology may also allow for free time and autonomy. For example, a system crash while working from home or an interrupted digital workflow can lead to restful non-activity. Video conferencing software and social media make it possible to feign presence and activity. Generative AI as a supposed new counterpart, as an 'interaction partner' with whom one 'talks' and jointly develops ideas, may initially appear very smooth and not at all unruly, but depending on the quality and (bias of the) training, this 'interaction partner' can prove to be discriminating, misleading and misinforming.

Beyond unruly technology, we think of processes that disrupt the labour process and that are outside of the workers' as much as management's control: Bacteria and viruses make bodies unfit for work or, like the Coronavirus, lead to restructuring of entire work processes (e.g. physically distanced). Storms, hot spells, wildfires and other unexpected natural events like volcano eruptions can interfere with work processes, not only in agriculture but with regard to mobility, commutes and / or different workplaces from industrial plants to offices.

We would like to think beyond control as a human capacity and allow for different ways of recalcitrance and subversion that may be triggered by non-human actors such as mentioned

above. The idea of unruly objects and interference enables us to think about the following questions, consequences and challenges:

- Do workers blame technology in order to defy managerial control?
- Do they use unruly objects or interferences as a starting point for subversive actions?
- Do workers feel stressed or relieved when extreme weather events disrupt the work process, make it impossible to go to work?
- Do workers and/or management collaborate with objects in order to defy/enforce control?
- What are the fuzzy consequences for the labour process if it is shaped by unruly technology, other objects and interferences defying control?
- What other forms of non-human influence can be found in labour research and what are ways to include these in an LPT informed analysis?

Stream organisers are:

- **Tanja Carstensen**, University of Hamburg
- **Isabel Klein**, LMU Munich

## 10. PAPER PRESENTATIONS

Abstracts in alphabetical order as submitted by proposers.

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### Shaping Irregular Pathways: Intermediaries in Romanian Labor Migration from South Asia

Abbati Andrea

University of Urbino Carlo Bò

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In recent times, the Romanian context has emerged as particularly interesting, given the ever-increasing presence of intermediation agencies supporting the placement of a workforce from non-EU countries. Despite ongoing outmigration and fundamental labour supply imbalances, the Romanian economy is becoming both more complex and larger. Due to the significant growth in labour scarcity over the past few years, which has led to increased demand for companies to raise salaries, the labour force in Romania is becoming scarcer and more expensive to hire. In response, the government has attempted to alleviate the pressure on local companies by developing immigration policies for non-EU foreign workers, increasing the contingent year after year (from 7,000 in 2017 to 100,000 in 2023). This has resulted in a situation where firms are recruiting workers from other countries while national authorities are relaxing legislation and implementing selective and temporary migration policies that allow the employment of low-skilled citizens from third countries.

The research question driving this study is: how can regular intermediaries contribute to flows of (irregular) migrants? Is the production of irregularities functional for the maintenance of the migration industry? In this sense, within the framework of the migration industry, we will first delineate intermediaries as a set of actors who can act both as agents for migrants and as agents for the state. They can help the state put migration policies into practise for the entry of non-European workers, but they can also assist migrants in circumventing state migration policies, thereby creating irregular migration. Initially presenting themselves as regular intermediaries, there is a change in roles during the migration process from South Asia to Romania. This transformation leads us to consider these intermediaries as irregular figures within the migration industry.

We argue that the irregularity created by intermediaries within the migration industry serves to maintain and reinforce the migration industry in the Romanian context. On one side, intermediation agencies benefit from each intermediation process and from each worker they can place in a final company. However, what if this worker never arrives at their destination? Whether the mediation process occurs directly between an Asian agency and the final company or involves an additional agency in Romania, if the Asian worker does not reach their destination or arrives and leaves shortly after, the labour force recruitment process is destined to repeat itself. This results in greater demand from final businesses and an increase in state quotas for incoming migrants, which also leads to an increase in low-paying, precarious, and informal jobs.

This project is based on a qualitative study, utilising individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 42 interviews among intermediation agencies' managers and private recruiters, as well as 17 meetings with companies in the recruitment phase of the Asian labour force.

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## **The ‘Chhuta Bua’ Culture in Bangladesh: Exploring Women Empowerment in the Informal Employment Sector**

Ahsan Manzuma

East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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The ‘Chhuta Bua’ is the Bangla word for Temporary House Maids – who are an integral part of the informal employment sector in Bangladesh. Though the occupation of Temporary House Maids can involve both male and female, but the word ‘Bua’ (in ‘Chhuta Bua’) specially indicates the Female Temporary House Maids. Following this, the profession has a feminized nature in its essence. Moreover, the informal employment sector in Bangladesh is a great concern of discussion starting from government to the civil society. Those working in the informal economy include wage labourers, self-employed persons, unpaid family labour, piece-rate workers, and other hired labour. Therefore, these women who are engaged as Temporary House Maids (known as ‘Chhuta Bua’) are also of great concerns for their contributions to fight the many odds of the society, particularly poverty. Poverty is a gruesome reality for a country like Bangladesh among the other countries in global south. Despite the significant achievements in terms of growth in GDP, human development, and environmental responsiveness; Bangladesh still encounters a major challenge on the issue of poverty. This paper has made an effort in exploring the ‘Chhuta Bua’ culture in Bangladesh as a way of women empowerment among the poor women from the low-income settlements. By focusing the capital city of Dhaka, this paper has extracted the stories of these women in terms of their status, abilities, and coping strategies in the informal employment sector. While exploring the ‘Chhuta Bua’s, the incident of Pandemic situation due to a virus (known as covid-19) has been taken into consideration as it has put toll on the families of these women too. By employing a qualitative research design, the present study has found out that the poor women from the families of the low-income settlements of Dhaka city have been facing many adverse situation that starts from earning a low/insufficient income to problems of social crimes within the informal employment sector. All these have provided them a distinct way of life, a trait of potential abilities, and a significant coping strategies against the challenges of being socially and economically empowered. Some case studies, few focus group discussions, along with some multi-disciplinary theories have provided this study to reach to further validation of the real situation and has suggested that there should be policies and guidelines from all stakeholders to help these women, as ‘Chhuta Bua’s, to gain meaningful insights for their empowerment within the informal labour process in Bangladesh.

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## **Equal pay, unequal status? Contractual differentiation and ongoing uncertainty in a UK warehouse**

Alberti Gabriella, Dolezalova Marketa, Cutter Joanne

University of Leeds

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Warehousing work has been at the centre of attention in research looking at changing production processes due to the integrating global logistics and increased digitalisation focusing on work degradation, surveillance, control and worker organising (e.g. Alimahomed-Wilson & Reese 2021; Briken and Taylor 2018; Danyluk, 2019; Gautié, & Perez, 2020; Smith, Monea, & Santiago, 2022). Questions around the contractual and social makeup of the warehousing workforce and how they impact the labour process have been only partly explored: this paper further uncovers the changing composition of labour in warehousing vis-a-vis ‘post-diversity’ strategies of precarization (Zanoni & Miszczyński, 2023) and management search for flexibility and stabilization (Smith and Zheng 2022).

Warehousing as a sector has expanded in the UK, it has faced multiple challenges caused by the end of free movement and the impact on long-term labour shortages (UKWA 2020; Road Haulage Association 2021) as well as fluctuating demand and supply chain disruptions exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of a large ongoing research across four

low-paid 'migrant-rich' sectors in post-Brexit UK (Alberti et al 2021), this paper draws from a workplace-based case study of a medium-sized warehousing employer exploring how the firm has dealt with these intersecting multiple crises, the workforce's contractual composition and the implications for different groups of workers. The qualitative data from the in-depth workplace case are complemented by analysis of quantitative data drawn from an original survey of UK employers' responses across the four sectors, and stakeholders interviews. The employer in our case study is celebrated an outlier of 'good practice' because it offers all categories of worker equal rate of pay and regular opportunities for worker participation. The relatively higher pay (when compared to other local warehouses) and flat organisational structure has meant that the company has not experienced significant labour shortages as others have in the sector in recent years. However, other strategies of workforce stratification are used to manage the labour process: stark hierarchies persist based on contractual and occupational status, but also along the line of employment security, whereby most pickers and packers are on fixed-term contracts and are subject to strict productivity controls through opaque processes based on 'unachievable targets'. Having a section of the workforce on fixed term contract also allows the company to reduce the number of workers in times of lower demand.

Based on this 'outlier' case the paper develops an argument about the instability of warehousing businesses and labour forces at the crossroad of multiple regulatory and economic crises, and the ways in which even companies with relatively good management practices still present patterns of work intensification, contractual differentiation and status divisions in the workforce. From the workers point of view, even though the pay is relatively higher, fixed term contracts create precarity and limit opportunities for progression, with some responding by quitting and perpetuating the longstanding issue of turnover in the sector.

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## **Women of Color Workers in U.S. Male-Dominated Unions**

Alimahomed Sabrina, Wilson Jake  
California State University, Long Beach

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This paper examines women blue-collar workers, especially women of color, who were routinely subjected to gendered/racialized discrimination and sexual harassment and hostile working conditions from many of their fellow male union members in the Southern California waterfront in an effort to control their labor. Drawing on interviews and oral histories of women longshore workers, this paper extends our previous research by providing a new in-depth exploration into how men exert power over women union members through both informal, interpersonal interactions and the union's patriarchal structure. We argue that this gendered and racialized treatment impacts the work and labor process for women of color workers. This paper employs a feminist intersectional frame to explore how sexism and racism simultaneously contribute to Black women and Latinas' subordination within white, male-dominated unions, thus impacting the working conditions for women of color workers in blue-collar, male-dominated industries.

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## **Digitalization in Employment Agencies ("Job Centers"): Unruly Technology due to Different Logics of Work**

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Digitalization in public administration in Germany is falling short of expectations. The example of employment agencies shows that digitalization lacks usefulness and functionality in many respects. Street-level bureaucrats in German "job centers" (a special type of employment agency) complain about incomplete solutions, system errors, missing interfaces, lack of access and hardware, and a design of digital systems that is distant from the work process and thus impractical (Kuhlmann/Bogumil 2021).

With regard to the opportunities, challenges, potentials and necessities of digital technologies, however, we find quite different assessments and ways of dealing with them: between different job centers as well as between (groups of) employees. How can we explain these different perceptions and assessments of digitalization and the different ways of dealing with unruly technologies? Why are digital tools handled differently?

Our concept “logics of work” (“Arbeitslogiken”) has explanatory value. By logics of work, we mean understandings or guiding principles with regard to the subject matter, content, goal and purpose of work activities. Not only the concrete work activities (‘doings and sayings’), but also the organization, design and planning of work processes and the use of technology are oriented to these guiding principles. “Logics of work” are formed and shaped in many ways: by the concrete material task conditions, concepts of work/management strategies, institutional structures, or by professional orientations. At the same time, “logics of work” shape and mold structures and processes and influences ways of working. As STS research as well as the sociology of work has repeatedly emphasized (Carstensen 2017), “logics of work” are inscribed in digital applications and become effective (“enacted”) in the appropriation of and interaction with technology. Our empirical research shows that actors evaluate digital applications and opportunities against the background of (different) “logics of work” and that employees cope with unruly technologies in the triangle of managerial control, customer behavior and professional orientations.

Our study in employment agencies extend previous research on digitalization and work in different sectors and task areas (e.g. Baethge-Kinsky et al. 2018, Buss et al. 2021, Carstensen 2023, Hirsch-Kreinsen 2020, Kuhlmann 2023). With “logics of works”, our research focuses on what we consider as an important influencing factor: for consent or subversion of employees, for managerial control and for different dynamics, developments and work effects of digitalization.

This presentation will:

- point out the specific context in which digitalization processes take place in employment agencies and the role of actors at different levels,
- show how employees use and/or unused technical devices, how they perceive, experience and assess the realities of digitalized work, which obstacles and problems arise and how they deal with unruly technology from the perspective of logics of work,
- show that unruly technology also exists because digital technologies and prevailing “logics of work” do not fit together.

Our research is based on in-depth comparative case studies in several German job centers using a mixed-method approach.

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## **Temporal Conflicts. Labour and time in the digital platform economy (and beyond)**

Altenried Moritz

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The relationship between labour and time is a crucial vantage point for understanding the capitalist mode of production and its societies. As shown, for example, by Karl Marx and E.P. Thompson, the labour process, mode of production, and reproduction in capitalist economies are built on specific modes of the organization and discipline of time and temporality. Consequently, many conflicts in these contexts are explicitly or implicitly conflicts over time (we may think of the wage as a temporal unit or the five-day working week). The paper argues that one crucial way to understand the current transformations of the world of work driven by digital technologies is to analyse how these technologies are implicated in reconfiguring the relation of labour and time. The paper exemplifies this argument by the case of labour on digital

platforms. Based on empirical work in platform-based logistics, the paper shows how time and temporality play crucial roles in the organisation and contestation of the labour process in the platform economy. In analysing these conflicts over time, it becomes clear that time and temporality are reconfigured by the labour model of digital platforms and play out in ways often very different to what is commonly understood as the standard form of employment. The renaissance of piece wages (as opposed to time-based wages) in the platform economy or the temporalities of automated management are two examples helping to understand the crucial and shifting role of time in the platform's labour process and the ways it is contested by workers. The platform economy and its specific politics and conflicts of labour time is, as the paper will argue in closing, only one, if pertinent, example of how we need to understand the manifold transformation processes driven by digital technology, automation and artificial intelligence as deeply reconfiguring the relation of labour and time.

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## **Intersectional challenges to western unionism: insights from Italy**

Amorosi Lucia

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In last decades, we have witnessed an heterogenization of the western working class, mirroring the ongoing process of labour segmentation along the axes of race, gender, age, ethnicity, and so on (Doellgast et al., 2021). This may sometimes clash with unions' definition of workers' interests colliding with new identity-based claims (Meardi et al, 2021), showing how western trade unions are racialised and gendered organizations (Lee, Tapia, 2021). In this context, most marginalised workers -being usually migrant, women, and young people- may engage in new forms of organizing and labour conflict, within and outside established trade unions (Alberti, Però, 2018). Studying workers' new claims and the way how unions address them while adopting different unionization strategies appears relevant to highlight how western unions face ongoing challenges in workers organizing. Applying the intersectional and critical race theories may help in acknowledging the racial and gender biases reproduced also within unions both in their internal decision-making processes and in their external conflictual/concertation practices (Lee et al, 2022). Here, intersectionality refers not only to the analytical theory detecting marginalised workers' new needs, but also to a strategy building broader solidarity with other organizations beyond established unions, such as grassroots unions and racial and feminist social movements, while strengthening workers' collective action (Tapia, Alberti, 2019).

Aiming to detect the intersectional challenges faced by western trade unions when dealing with the current heterogenization of the working class, in this paper I will focus on the Italian case, particularly on the unionization strategies adopted by both established and grassroots unions when dealing with migrant workers. In doing this, I will rely on two case studies, namely the domestic work sector in the city of Milano, where intersectional organizing emerges as extremely necessary (Marchetti et al., 2021); and the textile sector in the city of Prato, where interesting ethnic dynamics occur between the Pakistani workers and Chinese employers. I will rely on in-depth interviews I performed with workers, unionists, and activists, using storytelling and life history as main method (Lee et al, 2021). The paper will summarize the first results of my postdoc research on unions' intersectional practices in Italy, for which comments and critiques will be essential in the further stages. As emerges from the first results, in fact, an intersectional and critical race theory approach to unions' internal structure, external practices and alliances building, while being particularly needed in reaching marginalised workers, seems still far from Italian union's everyday practices. Thus, Italian unions- despite willing to reach racialised and feminised workforce- are often still seen as distant by these marginalised workers, with negative consequences on unions' membership and strength, and on these workers' power to express their voice.

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## **Monopoly capital and the politics of labour regulation. Amazon and Mercado Libre in France, Italy and Argentina**

**Atzeni Maurizio, Sabato Massimo Francesco**

**Centre for Labour Relations, CEIL/CONICET, Argentina University Alberto Hurtado, Faculty of Business and Economics, Chile**

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In this paper we look at the strategies used by Amazon in France and Italy and by Mercado Libre, “the Latin-American Amazon”, in Argentina, to circumvent and evade existing institutional frameworks and regulations in their warehouses. The monopolistic power of these companies and their political influence, explicit anti-unions policies and the strategic use of inter-union competition, labour market segmentation, employment opportunities offered in contexts of unemployment and low salaries, high turnover level and systematic use of temporary workers, the possibility of temporarily shifting logistic flows to neighbouring countries (in the case of Amazon) and the image of a young, cool and meritocratic company, shape an industrial relation arena in which unions, when exist, are in most of the cases domesticated. These managerial policies are not the simple deployment of corporate plans, but the result of selective compliance on the part of management, and weakness of labour institutions and regulation.

This evidence seems to highlight the limits of institutional perspectives that focus on formal regulation and trade unions without questioning its actual functioning and representativeness. In the paper, we want to add more complexity to the equation that more regulations correspond to more protection and rather to investigate under what conditions effective workers power can be built and labour regulation enforced, thereby constraining monopoly capital in the workplace.

The paper is based on data collected by the authors, through interviews with managers, workers and unionists, media and documentary sources analysis, as part of two independent projects on the labour process and working conditions at Amazon in France and Italy and at Mercado Libre in Argentina, carried on in the last four years.

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## **Desperate Responsibility: the symptom of precarious existence. The case for domestic and care work in Spain**

**Aznar Erasun Jaime**  
**University of Kent**

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The notion of precarity has been in vogue among many scholars in recent years. It is a term that has been used broadly in debates around contemporary work and employment, class, the transformation of social conditions and the creation of new subjectivities in current societies. The unprecedented extension of precarity across classes and sectors has become one of the main organizing principles of post-industrial economies in the West while remaining an old yet vivid question in the global south. Simultaneously, it has been more than two decades since the neoliberal reorganization of markets have emerged as a politically salient issue. However, it seems that two decades later, ensuing a financial crash and social crisis in 2008, the square movements in Europe, the acceleration of climate change, the rise of right-wing autocracies, the not-so-new platform and supply chain economies, Covid-19 or the prevalence of large-scale war in Europe, precarious conditions of existence prevail. Experts from the whole of the ideological spectrum have confirmed on several occasions that we are experiencing an extended crisis of democracy, a public health-care crisis, the Covid-19 crisis and its aftermath, the refugee and migrant crises. But when the crisis extends for over twenty years, can the crisis, defined by its three outcomes – death, recovery, or transformation – continue to be called a crisis? In said conjuncture, and without the intention of tackling such broad and multifactorial issues, answering questions about what precarity is and how it permeates society



can help us navigate the mentioned political economy and its ensuing grievances. Addressing precarious existence in its variegated forms, as will be argued in this paper, can help us think about emancipatory projections into the future. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is twofold. In the first place, to scrutinize and provide a comprehensive definition of precarity which accounts for both the spheres of production and reproduction, thereby accounting for the racialized and gendered dimensions precarious experience can take. Secondly, this paper will present the notion of 'Desperate Responsibility' - theorized by Paul Apostolidis (2018) - as a key theoretical tool through which to visualize precarity in its variegation across class, sectors and livelihoods. 'Desperate Responsibility', I argue, helps understand precarity in its multiple expressions across capitalist society and attempts to understand the social consequences of precarity in its multiple expressions. Through empirical work carried out in the last two years, this paper will dive into how the concept of desperate responsibility is rendered visible and symptom of precarious existence in the domestic and care sector in Spain, which is characterized by high levels of informality racialization and feminization, expressing existing precarities in social-reproductive work.

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## **Occupy, Resist, Produce! Worker Recuperated Companies and Workers Control in Southern Europe**

Azzellini Dario

Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico

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Over the course of the contemporary crisis since 2008 closing companies all over the world were occupied by workers with the goal to produce under workers' control. Among these worker recuperated companies (WRC) there are metal industries, shoe factories, industrial printshops and even fast-food restaurants. Workers' takeovers of workplaces have happened throughout history in different contexts. But starting with the workers' takeovers in Argentina in the early 2000's we can see how the contemporary takeovers develop out of a defensive situation. From Latin America workplace takeovers for self-management under workers' control spread also to Europe, North America, North Africa and Asia, although with much less cases than in Latin America. The experience of struggle during the occupation and to restart production under workers' control is a crucial experience and leads the WRC often to have different characteristics than traditional cooperatives. In my presentation I will analyse how conflictive workers' takeovers successfully restart production as workers' cooperatives in times of economic crises. I will look at three companies in Southern Europe occupied by their workers 11 to 13 years ago: Scop Ti, a former tea packing plant in Gemenos, France; Vio.Me, a former construction material factory in Thessaloniki, Greece; and RiMaflow, a former car parts producer in Mila, Italy. The three factories studied face very different contexts, had different starting points and embraced diverging strategies in their struggle that led all three of them to successfully restart production as workers' cooperatives. The article analyses the strategies, struggle, performance, decision making and internal structures, of the three takeovers, and the associational and institutional power the workers build. I will point out common features and differences regarding workers' subjectivities; social relations among the workers; labor processes and solidarity, and which circumstances in different national contexts favor the success of WRC.

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## **Work in the socio-ecological transformation: A critique of "green jobs" and the alternative concept of sustainable work**

Azzellini Dario

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There is a scientific consensus on the need to keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Governmental discourses focus usually on a change in the prevailing patterns of consumption and production. This is supposed to be based on recycling and a technological fix with "future technologies." Work as such is rarely addressed explicitly in

concrete government measures, or only as quantitative element, as a coming new “Wirtschaftswunder,” rooted in an explosion of “green jobs” in a “green economy.” Both concepts are based on the idea of “green growth.” The quality of work does not play a role here, beyond statements of intent. As studies in various European countries show, “green jobs” are largely low-skilled, the majority are precarious and poorly paid. Grounded in empirical research in 10 European countries, Mexico, Colombia and the Philippines I will present a holistic critique of Green Jobs looking at terms, discourses, the concrete praxis and results in various countries. The critique will touch on different aspects, from the blurry definitions of green jobs, the ecological and social aspects, the scope and velocity of transformation to gender aspects of “green jobs”.

Changing production and consumption patterns alone will not lead to the necessary socio-ecological transformation. As alternative approach I propose to put work at the centre of our thinking. Employment and labour markets are already changing, and we need to ensure that work itself becomes sustainable in all its aspects. “Sustainable work” is part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the UN for 2030, adopted in 2016, which should be included in global, EU-wide and national policies. While the SDG, and also the ILO concept of decent work linked to it, are still linked to the idea of growth, I will present sustainable work as a holistic approach. This involves looking at economic, social, and environmental issues as an interrelated whole. Moreover, in order for the socio-ecological transition to be a just transition, different levels need to be taken into account. These include social security for those directly affected by job loss, as well as class, North-South relations, and gender.

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### **Shift work and worker’s health: The role of occupational psycho-risk factors and impacts on family and social networks**

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University of Greenwich

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There is strong evidence of an association between shift work and workers health, especially in the case of cardio-vascular disease, diabetes and metabolic disorder, and with weaker evidence of links with cancer, mental health especially depression, and reproductive disorders. While these are likely to be mediated by disruptions to circadian rhythm and by sleep disturbances, especially in relation to night work, sociological aspects including social misalignment and psycho-social risks in the work environment also have complex feedback mechanisms that mediate the association between shift work and health. Unlike biological mechanisms, sociological aspects are more amenable to alterations in the work environment to ameliorate the negative impacts of shift work on shift-worker’s health.

This research reports on a qualitative, interview-based study of shift worker’s narratives examining the inter-relationships between psycho-social risks in the work environment and shift-work, as well as the inter-relationships between shift work and worker’s social relationships with family and communities outside the formal boundaries of the work environment. It identifies key occupation-based psycho-social risks and how there may interact with shift work. This will form the basis for future quantitative research to assess the strength of these relationships and interactions, at the level of occupations

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### **(Re)Manufacturing Consent and Dissent: Insights from a Global Online Labor Platform**

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Existing research has shown that gamification, which uses video gaming techniques of digital currency, scoring, competition and so forth, improves employee productivity and satisfaction at work in traditional work and localized on-demand platforms such as Uber. However, it is unclear how gamified work practices might influence engagement with cloud-based platforms

for highly skilled knowledge workers in labor markets where workers are dispersed across geographic territories. These gamified work practices might generate consent to work and a sense of worker autonomy, but they might generate dissent, or possibly, an intertwined mix of consent and dissent. Despite the existing scholarly work on online labor markets, we still only know little about the role of unruly and gamified labor platform architecture and work practices introduced by organizations as a playing field in an entirely virtual workspace and the consequences it produces for knowledge workers in their everyday labor process.

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with workers, archival data and online observations as a registered user on the labor platform, I examine how workers understand and experience two aspects of their work environment. First, I consider gamified work practices designed and implemented by platform owners. Second, I consider whether and how workers also participate in worker-generated 'making out' games to work in ways unintended by the platform organizations. For knowledge workers simultaneously responding to gamification and crafting new workaround games, I explore what the consequences might be of this dual engagement, in both a means of consent to work and a pathway for dissent against constraining elements of the gamification. Individual workers in a dispersed labor market have little power and limited interactions, but interweaving subversive or redirecting games along with their response to gamification might give them more of a sense of autonomy than simply responding to gamification prompts. I explore whether it sometimes results in changes to the gamification paradigm or sometimes generates further explanations and instructions from the platform owners that leave workers with little to do but continue to comply or find a new game.

My findings thus far show how gamification of work practices by platform organization influences (re)manufacturing of consent, a concept taken from Burawoy's (1979) early formulation for factory imperatives and games. Consent in these new work conditions takes the form of assent and simultaneously generates dissent among workers. Such acquiescence to gamification represents a seductive yet subtle compliance with the rules of the gamified work practices on the online marketplace. Dissent generated among workers against gamified work practices is again re-engineered subtly toward engaging workers further in gamification. I theorize that gamification and 'make out' workarounds lead workers to intensify their engagement and commitment to the platform organization through self-investment in the platform, enmeshing workers in an 'investment maze.' My study thus extends the long-standing research on 'manufacturing consent' in 'workplaces' into a unique 'workspace' where work contracts are fragile and interactions are remote and virtual on a cloud-based platform. This study also contributes to the emerging scholarship on gamification and the broader on-demand economy.

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## **Technological disruption, job losses and unemployment: Analysing the scale and impacts of site closures and relocations in warehouse logistics**

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Job loss and unemployment have always accompanied the capitalist economy. However, major studies of the social impacts and consequences of job loss are concentrated in the manufacturing and, to a lesser extent, resource sectors. Studies of the socio-economic effects of job loss on workers, households and communities are comparatively rare for the services sector activities which dominate labour markets in middle to high-income countries. This imbalance is partly because of historical deindustrialisation and job contraction in manufacturing and comparatively high jobs growth in services, but also because of the presumption that high-quality jobs in the former have been replaced with inferior-quality jobs in the latter. In past studies of plant closures in manufacturing, it was common for workers to follow a pathway from relatively secure employment to precarious work, under-employment or joblessness. With the increasing normalisation of precarious work in services-oriented economies, this pathway of socioeconomic decline has been displaced with an underlying

assumption that contemporary job losses are unremarkable expressions of labour market churn because, unlike the victims of historical deindustrialisation, contemporary victims are already in precarious circumstances before job loss.

But labour market disruption and job loss are becoming increasingly important questions for understanding wholesale and retail operations in supply chains, justifying renewed attention to this issue. This paper focuses on warehousing operations, where the displacement (and creation) of jobs is being driven by changes in market competition, global networks, firm strategies, work organisation, and labour-disrupting technologies. These changes are influencing company plans to close and relocate numerous warehouses across multiple markets. The paper approaches this issue by compiling and analysing data from company and media reports on warehouse closures and relocations in Australia, Britain, India and the United States over the past 5 years. As well as Amazon, which dominates eCommerce in Britain and the US and remains an emergent force in India and Australia, the paper focuses on the warehouse operations of leading retail grocery brands in each country. Against the assumption that such closures represent unremarkable cases of job loss among already-precarious workers, the paper argues that these cases raise issues of 'just transition' for workers in closure-affected cities and regions, issues which have rarely been considered previously in this sector and which also raise critical questions about the subjective value workers attach to their jobs and careers in warehouse environments.

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## **Against the Odds: Legal Struggles of Migrant Domestic Workers**

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Domestic workers, formerly domestic servants, were always and everywhere a de facto part of the workforce as people have worked in other people's households for centuries. At the same time, they were not part of the workforce, as they have worked - and continue to work - without formal contracts in arrangements far from standard employment relations. The ILO estimates that at least 81% of the 75.6 Mio. domestic workers are employed irregularly (ILO 2021). In many areas migrant women form a permanent, yet mostly invisible (and hardly organized) mobile workforce in global "care chains" (Hochschild 2000) filling the care gaps under precarious conditions. Labour laws should protect these vulnerable workers and unions should be central agents to shape those protection regimes. But do they really and if there are laws in place, can migrant domestic workers (MDW) mobilize those rights?

My dissertation zooms into the rare occasions in which migrant domestic workers get involved into legal struggles to improve their working conditions and to secure their residence. Different overlaps within the working field and the positioning of MDW render a mobilization of rights highly unlikely: MDW are in precarious situations that hinder them from going the costly, time consuming and complicated juridical route of conflict resolution (Maaroufi/Seidel 2022). Their legal status is often insecure which feeds the fear of being reported for illegalized residence status to the foreigners' authority, which can lead to an employment ban, the termination of residence titles and ultimately deportation (ibid. 2). Other reasons lie in the self-understanding of MDW as narratives about kinship and help keep MDWs from viewing themselves as workers with rights (Hutchison 2021).

A puzzle emerges when marginalized groups mobilize the law and take part in reshaping it in these asymmetric power relations. A comparative case study between Germany and the US should clarify why, when, and how MDW mobilize the law and how these legal struggles (Pichl 2021) relate to political mobilization. By studying the legal struggles of marginalized groups the access to law and the role of social and political actors in translating social struggles into legal struggles (Buckel/Vestena/Pichl 2023) and in lowering the thresholds to mobilize existing law can be investigated. Legal struggles are understood here as one form of conflict through which we can understand labour relations (Cartensen 2022). A focus on conflict allows us to

understand the a/normalisation of certain labour relations into and through the law in the contexts of gendered, racialized and classist labour relations.

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## **The dialectic of physical and moral force. On the moral grammar of two wildcat strikes of migrant workers**

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For decades neoliberal policies and employers' strategies have weakened union power and decreased labour standards in the Western World. In recent years, however, there have been strong signs of a revitalization of the labour movement in the US and Europe. While price pressures due to high inflation have strengthened a feeling of enough is enough, the high demand for labour power has promoted a new self-confidence among workers. This is not the least true for migrant workers, who are especially affected by precarious working conditions. A strong analytical tool for researching workers' struggles as well as for the worker organisations themselves has been the power resources approach. By making strategic use of their diverse sources of power, workers can improve their situations. Emphasis has been put especially on structural and organisational power of workers. Institutional and societal power, however, cannot only make the difference, but they can act for or against the workers' cause. This is especially true for the moral power, workers can or cannot mobilize.

This will be demonstrated on base of a comparative case study contrasting two of the biggest wildcat strikes of migrant workers in Europe in the last years. The empirical data has been generated through field visits as well as qualitative interviews with workers, supporters, and union officials. The first case is a strike of more than 300 mostly Polish construction workers employed in the building of the Fehmarn Belt tunnel in Denmark in 2022. The second case consists of two strikes of in total more than 150 truck drivers from Georgia, Uzbekistan, and other non-EU-countries in Gräfenhausen in Germany in 2023. While in both cases the workers could command considerable structural power, the institutional and moral power differed strongly. This proved to be decisive for the respective outcomes. While the construction workers in Denmark won some of their demands, the truck drivers in Germany got their demands completely fulfilled and brought the working conditions of migrant truck drivers in general to the attention of the European public. To make this understandable the power resources of the workers in each case will be analysed following the Jena Power Resources Approach. A special focus will be directed towards the moral grammar of the cases, which was generative for the striking contrast in societal power in the respective cases. It proved to be decisive for the strong societal and institutional power the truck drivers in Germany could rely on. In contrast, the construction workers in Denmark had to rely exclusively on their structural power.

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## **The Sequence Effect and its Impact on Cooperation, Conflicts, and Conflict Management in IT Freelancer-Client Relationships**

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Since conflict is a ubiquitous phenomenon in inter- and intra-organizational work, conflict management behavior (CMB) is a preconditioning factor for successful cooperation. Prior research shows that CMB can be individualistic or collectivistic in orientation and highlights the episodic nature of CMB. However, by focusing on analyzing specific conflicts and conflict dynamics in cooperation, research has paid less attention to how conflict and CMB are influenced by structural patterns, especially by the basic sequentiality of interaction. We address this gap by developing a sequential contingency perspective on cooperation in work contexts, distinguishing between three sequences of interaction: the actual cooperation, its

precedent initiation, and its subsequent evaluation. We elaborate on this by asking the following research question:

How do interaction sequences affect the nature and extent of conflict and CMB in work collaborations?

We answer this question by investigating the hitherto little considered inter-organizational cooperation between IT-freelancers and their client organizations. Those working relationships are common in knowledge-intensive industries, such as IT, and provide us with the possibility to draw clear lines between the sequences outlined above as there are: a) a pre-contract sequence, in which recruitment processes and negotiations take place, b) a contract sequence, in which the actual cooperation is carried out, and c) a post-contract sequence, in which evaluation processes occur, and networks are maintained (or not). Based on 18 semi-structured problem-centered and expert interviews with IT-freelancers, representatives of client organizations and agencies, we show that the nature of conflict and the CMB orientation depends on the highly institutionalized sequential stages of the cooperation.

We find that the initiation of a freelancer-client relationship in the pre-contract sequence is based on both sides' perception of a good fit in terms of the technical and social requirements and preferences, the contractual terms, and the individual/personal expectations. Here, both sides show little willingness to deviate from their demands and thus, exhibit an individualistic CMB. However, when both perceive a good fit, the interaction proceeds to the contract sequence. While we find evidence here for the simultaneous existence and interrelationship of tasks, relationships, processes and status conflicts, freelancers and their clients in this sequence emphasize the need to act empathetically, to understand the other party's needs, and to show a great willingness to compromise, even by escalating a conflict if necessary. Thus, the CMB switches to a collectivistic one, what we call the "sequence effect". Finally, the post-contract sequence is largely functional in informing further pre-contract sequences. Cognitive and institutional evaluation processes as well as networks may increase the likelihood of a better fit in the future.

In sum, the paper makes three main contributions: 1) empirically, it enriches the literature on conflict and cooperation by investigating freelancer-client relationships, 2) based on empirical observations, it links the nature and extent of conflict as well as the respective CMB back to the sequence of the work cooperation; 3) by introducing a sequential contingency perspective on conflict it points to the role of structural patterns in and for CMB.

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## **Caring via Platforms: Challenging the platform and care narratives of labor research**

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The digitalization and platformization of care work is often framed as a commodification that is dehumanizing care (Strüver, 2021). Often, however, findings from platform labor research are transferred to care platform work without further adjustment or recapitulation. Platform labor is critiqued for its overexploitation of migrants, algorithmic management, its misclassification of workers as freelancers, and its outsourcing and individualization of risks (MacDonald, 2021). The case of care platforms remains different: Findings on care platforms show that algorithmic control is low. However, recruitment is much more controlled (McDonald et al 2021). By showing who is actually (and who is not) available on care platforms based on a data set of 2100 crawled care worker profiles and interviews with self-employed care workers, the contribution aims to show the high qualification and status incongruence of care workers. Their turn to platforms is a deliberate choice based on the platforms ecosystem: the conditions of paid care work. Workers position themselves as part of the care workforce not as platform workers, however, within their status as self-employed care workers they often do not share the struggles of the industry. Rather, their strategy in dealing with the industry's conditions is individual care taking. As such self-employed care workers present as well connected to other

care workers with the same training. The contribution hence paints a more nuanced picture of the workforce of platform care workers, their motives and their in/dependence of platforms and their algorithms.

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## **“Don’t forget to submit your timesheet”: the case of a management device degrading work and reorganizing the production process**

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"Management devices" play a central role in the world of work. The sociology of management views them as "cognitive traps designed by management to produce a singular representation of the organization and thus order the actions to be taken" (Metzger, Mauger, 2014). Among contemporary devices, timesheets hold a prominent position in an increasing number of companies. These are "electronic time accounting sheets" (Linhart, 2015) that fit into a broader system of controlling and streamlining working time by the employer.

Timesheets serve as a device for objectifying productivity by juxtaposing the time worked, tasks completed, and other elements such as billable hours. They allow for the quantification of work while overlooking the quality of what is accomplished. Used in fields like consulting, research, and advertising, they represent the transposition of financialization logic into the production aspect of traditionally "white-collar" professions.

We argue that this type of tool contributes to the degradation of white collar working conditions and, consequently, they contribute to the disappearance of the "white-collar" / "blue-collar" distinction.

This paper draws upon approximately forty semi-structured interviews with white collar from the consulting, communication, and advertising sectors. These ongoing interviews were carried out between November 2022 and October 2023, and have been conducted with professionals in various roles and positions, primarily in France.

This empirical contribution will align with theoretical discussions on the restructuring of classes and the class positioning (Vatan, Miliband, Poulantzas) of the French category named "cadres" (a specific category slightly different from executives or managers) in light of their professional practices.

Furthermore, these timesheets have an impact on professionals, their identities, and their practices. For instance, we will see that for some consultants, these timesheets contribute to a sense of exploitation as they reveal the gap between expected autonomy and the actual amount of work performed. We will analyze how the consequences of these timesheets constrain professions in research or creative fields by excluding certain professional practices from objectified time and work, leading to a reduction in practices and a standardization of creative work. This, once again, affects how interviewees perceive their work. From this perspective, the timesheets make visible the alienation of "increasing portions of the working population" (Braverman, 1976), but also for some interviewees, the realization of this situation.

More broadly, these timesheets also embody a paradox as they fit into debates regarding the status of managerial roles. The very use of these timesheets in organizations challenges the status of managers, especially in terms of the desire for autonomy. In this context, timesheets introduce changes in the work process by influencing professional practices and the distinction between billable and non-billable working hours.

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## Fragmentation and Solidarity among Workers in the German Construction Industry

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In the last 10 years, employment in the German construction sector, which until recently has been said to be booming, has grown considerably. A closer look at the labor market statistics reveals that the increase in the sector's workforce is largely based on workers immigrating from Eastern European and West Balkan countries to work in various building trades on German construction sites (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2023, own calculations). Different studies highlight the precarious working and living conditions as well as the informalization of work and employment relations these workers often face (Sperneac-Wolfer 2023; Caro et al. 2015).

Management strategies aiming at the use of migrant labor not only go together with the deterioration of working conditions but also create a growing fragmentation of the sector's workforce and divisions between workers. Indeed, a certain fragmentation is not new to the sector, which is traditionally characterized by a high share of small firms. However, since migrant labor is often accessed by management through subcontractors or temporary work agencies, organizational fragmentation has further expanded in the sector (see also Bosch & Hüttenhoff 2022). Thus, the workforce on construction sites is made up of changing and heterogeneous groups of workers who differ in terms of nationality, employment relationships and employers as well as working conditions. It is to be expected that these fragmentations will pose major challenges to the potential for collective action by workers in everyday working life.

The contribution presents conceptual considerations and preliminary findings of an ongoing research project that investigates forms of everyday collective resistance and solidarity among construction workers against the backdrop of deepened fragmentations. The research project draws on qualitative interviews with experts (unionists, representatives from counseling centers for migrant workers, management representatives) and both migrant and non-migrant construction workers employed in the German construction sector.

The presentation will first discuss different dimensions of fragmentation among workers (e.g., organizational boundaries, differentiations along national identities and fragmentations of working conditions) and the ways these dimensions are interconnected in different branches of the construction industry. In a second step, the presentation will look at the role of fragmentation in structuring the scope of workers' collective action aimed at defending their common interests against management. To what extent do workers' solidarities tend to reproduce certain lines of fragmentation? Under which conditions and in which instances do they overcome such divisions?

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## Control and autonomy of part-time crowdworkers: Why using gamification to encourage workers' activity often fails

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Gamification describes the implementation of game elements in non-game contexts to modify the framework of the activity. Common examples are rankings, ratings or badges. In crowdwork, defined as 'paid and flexible short-term jobs that are distributed, performed and managed entirely via the internet through online platforms' (Gerber/Krzywdzinski 2019: 122), these technologies are implemented by the platform to encourage the workers' activity on the platform and their motivation to work on tasks. This is particularly important in the Global North, where crowdwork is mostly done as a side job and the amount of time spent on crowdwork is usually low, and most workers are not dependent on the (often low) remuneration. This also changes the framing of crowdwork, with platforms even advertising the opportunity to earn money in one's spare time.

Previous research has drawn on the labor process theory to analyze the platforms' control of gig workers and crowdworkers with technologies such as rankings and reputation systems (Gandini 2019; Schörpf et al. 2017). This paper extends these perspectives by focusing on workers for whom crowdwork is not their main source of income, but rather a free time activity that they do for fun, out of interest or for vocational training. In this context, the paper examines the role of gamification technologies in the work practices of crowdworkers and how the workers relate to them. The empirical analysis therefore focuses on the relevance of gamification technologies in their work practices, motivational effects, emancipatory potentials, moments of re-use or non-use of the technologies.

The paper draws on online ethnographic observations of platform technologies and semi-structured interviews with crowdworkers on two German crowdtesting platforms, which were conducted as part of an ongoing research project on crowdwork in Germany (<https://www.hsu-hh.de/bbp/en/research/crowdwork/>).

In this paper, different types of work practices are presented in which crowdworkers engage with gamification technologies in different ways. It outlines the subjective interpretations of gamification technologies. It shows why gamification technologies are only relevant for a few crowdworkers and points to the use of potentials for resistant behaviors and practices. The findings highlight the important role of the workers' autonomy as their work practice is often characterized by a claim for autonomy in the selection of tasks. From a theoretical point of view, it shows the importance of including the workers' practice and their motivational orientation in the analysis of labor process control and its effects.

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## Unions and works councils in Germany: from allies to strangers?

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In Germany, industrial relations is structured around the so-called “dual system” of employee interest representation comprised of two key institutions: works councils and unions (Markovits & Allen, 1984; Müller-Jentsch, 2003; Thelen, 1991; Turner, 1991). While works councils provide a mechanism for codetermination at the establishment level, unions and employers' associations negotiate collective agreements predominantly at sectoral level (Keller & Kirsch, 2021). Legally, there is a strict separation between the responsibilities and rights of works councils and unions, although historically they have tended to cooperate ‘symbiotically’ (Müller-Jentsch, 2003). Traditionally, unions have provided training and support to works councils, while these in turn have recruited the lion’s share of members for unions (Müller-Jentsch, 1997, p. 276; Behrens, 2009).

However, since the early 1990s, Germany’s dual system of IR has been ‘eroding’ through ongoing decline in union density, collective bargaining coverage, and works council representation (Schulten 2019). These developments raise important questions about the state and future of worker representation and the dual system in Germany: Do works councils still recruit members for unions? If so, what organizing techniques do they use? If not, then why not? How do ‘union-active’ works councils differ from those that are ‘union-inactive’?

We begin to shed light on these questions by drawing on a large, unpublished survey of German works and staff councils (n=3713) conducted in 2023. We use regression analysis to examine the factors that shape whether and how works councils are ‘union-active’. Our results indicate that a range of institutional (e.g. collective bargaining arrangements) and firm-level (e.g. digitalization, conflict with management) factors help explain variation in union organizing by works councils. Our findings suggest that there is considerable scope for unions to strengthen their bonds with works councils and enlist their support in recruiting new union members.

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## **Wages and wage regulations in sheltered workshops for people with disabilities in Germany**

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Sheltered workshops for people with disabilities have been anchored in the German rehabilitation system since the 1970s. They offer vocational qualification and participation for adults who, due to a disability, cannot, not yet or not yet again work in the labour market and therefore have a legal right to employment in these workshops. In the so-called "Arbeitsbereich" (work area), the workshops should offer a diverse range of activities and as real work as possible. In order to realise the requirement of diversity and authenticity, they cooperate with private and public clients.

The wages that employees in sheltered workshops receive for their work include, in addition to the basic amount that is standardised nationwide, an individual component. According to the law, the individual component is calculated according to the individual work performance of the disabled person, in particular taking into account the amount and quality of work. The more than 700 sheltered workshops throughout Germany must have wage regulations for the individual component, in which the relevant criteria and procedures are laid down.

The presentation outlined here explores the question of how the individual wage components are operationalised in sheltered workshops and how this operationalisation is interpreted and applied in practice. Using the example of two contrasting case studies, it is shown that wages and their distribution and calculation practices in sheltered workshops can be described as instruments for solving the "transformation problem of work" (Minssen 2012): The labour processes of the employees are controlled, not least on the basis of the wage regulations, by means of instruction, evaluation and disciplining. This labour process control often takes place on a personal level (in contrast to technical and bureaucratic forms of control) (Edwards 1980): The group leaders sometimes arbitrarily evaluate the work performance of the employees and thus also decide on the amount of the respective wages.

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## **Emotional regimes as soft coercion? The Governance of casework in German human service organisations**

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Having become a strong pillar in the economy of contemporary Western societies, human service agencies can be viewed as being emblematic of tension fields inherent to post-industrial work organisations. While these agencies are distinctive in being subject to comprehensive public regulation, they reflect cross-sectoral developments in labour processes related to service work under managerialist pressures. Various studies have explored how these organisations and their staff cope with such pressures, epitomised by phenomena like just-in-time production; payment-by-result; process rationalisation; or market orientation.

Going beyond (but building on) the literature on emotional work, our paper probes into the role of 'organised and processed' emotions in this coping process, i.e. the mechanisms by which feelings play out in both the steering of human service agencies and the self-management of employees.

Our contribution is based on recent case studies in Germany, dealing with elderly care services and publicly funded further education. Run between 2020 and 2022, this largely interview-based research has combined field investigation at industry level with in-depth investigation in four nonprofit human service organisations. The research was aimed at unpacking the mechanisms by which emotions structure the above coping process, as well as the wider implications of that process. One objective consisted of uncovering the 'handling' of 'organised' power in the labour process and the human service industry more largely, with one question being as to how far these regimes can work as 'soft coercion' in the sense of enforcing some kind of discipline and instilling emotion-driven 'agility' into the labour process while involving latent discomfort among workers. We also looked at mechanisms that may undermine such dynamics, even if in latent ways and only in the long run.

In terms of findings, our paper uncovers organisational mechanisms which combine with the repercussions of 'managerialist' public regulation (as an institutional factor) to constitute what we refer to as 'emotional regimes' within the aforementioned agencies. More generally, our analysis establishes linkages between labor process concepts, the sociology of emotions, and the theory of power. Drawing on Nye and taking the perspective of stakeholders with a management function, we shed light on hierarchies' 'ability to get the outcomes you want without having to force people to change their behaviour', with this including reflections on the covert and latent face of power relations (Bachrach/Baratz; Lukes) and the co-production of these relations by subordinate actors (Giddens). We contribute to the theme of the ILPC 2024 in disentangling dynamics of coercion, consensus building, and conflict, with emotions being important catalysts. This includes a perspective on associations between the labour process and developments in politics and the wider society – given that political regulation is of utmost importance when analysing the labour process in contemporary human service industries.

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## **Social reproduction of AI: Lived experiences and working conditions of women on data annotation platforms**

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This paper is part of a broader ethnographic study examining women workers' conditions of work and social relations in transnational data annotation platforms, focusing on gendered and racialized dynamics in this platform work. The proliferation of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) industry and machine learning companies fundamentally rely upon human labour of data annotation. The potential of platform technologies occupies the heart of debates on digitally mediated work and the disruption of traditional norms about workplaces and employment. The paper focuses on the experiences of women who form a substantial part of the data annotation workforce. The labour force for this low-wage, piece work is primarily home-based workers in Global South countries, and India has emerged as a significant location for this work. As a feminist scholar, I center my attention on women's lives and experiences, revealing the gendered and racialized dimensions of platform work and challenging typical notions of freedom, inclusion, and an available workforce.

The paper draws on a Marxist feminist framework and ethnographic methods. Specifically, I interrogate two key institutions: the family and the State, for the role each of these play in reproducing patriarchal relations and weakening women's political and economic positions across paid and unpaid workspaces. Presenting a range of data collected from semi-structured interviews and home visits of women workers in different parts of India working as home-based workers and document analysis of Indian policies and laws on platform labour, I argue that the family and the State play a key role in reproducing feminized platform work and normalizing

intensive working conditions for women. These social relations with the family and the State, in turn, shape women's ideas of themselves as workers, their political subjectivity on the platforms, and their imaginaries of resistance against families and paid work. In doing so, I argue that expanding our notions of "social reproduction" is necessary to see how platforms, family and the State are interconnected and how these impact women workers' lives.

Finally, I also draw upon interviews with union organizers to conceptualize and critique the existing state and concerns around platform organizing from a feminist perspective. In doing so, I highlight dimensions of informal organizing that women data annotators in India do and the possibilities of expanding the organizing agenda for platform work towards a more collective working-class struggle against capitalist political economy.

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## **Migrant workers' perceptions of labour and society. Results from a study in a logistics warehouse**

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Migrant workers underlie distinct conditions to sell their labour power on a segmented labour market (Neuhauser 2019), often under particularly precarious conditions (Birke 2022), and are confronted with specific forms of disciplining, which include the linking of residency and employment (Kalbermatter 2020). This connection between migrant labour and precarious employment is discussed in reference to a social recomposition of the workforce, where migrant labour is situated at the bottom end. How are these conditions perceived by the workers themselves? The influence of the labour process on the self-perception of workers and how they perceive their position within the wider society are questions that a diverse field of research within the German sociology of work has been focusing on since the influential study on the "Gesellschaftsbild des Arbeiters" by Popitz, Bahrdt et al. in 1957. After the field branched out methodologically and theoretically during the 20th century and lost some of its political relevance towards the end, a slight "revitalisation" can be noted again since the 2010s (Menz 2022). However, the perspective of migrant workers has so far only been treated marginally.

In my contribution, I want to present some of the results of my research, which is addressing this gap within this field of studies. The research is based in warehouse logistics, a sector generally characterised by precarious working conditions and the high use of migrant labour. At the studied warehouse more than 50% of the workers do not have German citizenship. The research asked, how the specific conditions of employment and labour are subjectively experienced and processed by the migrant workers. Based on qualitative interviews I reconstructed the perception, evaluation, and legitimation of the individual employment and labour situation on the one hand and of German society on the other hand and tried to find connections between the interpretations of the two spheres.

The data shows the interpretation of their own employment at the warehouse as either a stopover towards other goals of (further) education or as the result of a relative lack of alternatives. The social relationships within the labour process are perceived as a dichotomous structure with a clear differentiation between workers and management, mainly in the form of team leaders and area managers. The mostly critical stances towards the conditions of employment and labour do not correspond with a critical evaluation of German society, which is rather affirmatively evaluated and perceived as a comparatively fair society, which grants social security and equal opportunities. The comparison to the country of origin is a strong reference point in the evaluation and legitimation of this perception. When it comes to locating oneself in German society, perceptions diverge between those who locate themselves in the middle of society and those who see themselves at the bottom end.

The study has an explorative character and only a limited possibility of generalisation, wherefore the results are to be understood as indicators for further research into the specific conditions and forms of migrant workers' consciousness.

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## Organising Migrant and BAME Platform Workers in London. The Intersection Between Agency, Collective Resistance, and Self-exploitation in Food Delivery

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This paper aims at analysing the intersection between agency, collective resistance, and trends toward self-exploitation of migrant and BAME platform workers involved in specific protests supported by the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain – IWGB. Drawing from an ethnographic study conducted in 2022, the paper discusses the construction of collective forms of resistance as the result of processes of continuous negotiation with migrant and BAME workers. In doing so, the focus is on the perspective of both workers and unionists supporting the protests and show how the observed forms of resistance are affected by both workers' trajectories, including trends toward self-exploitation, and their collective (and political) claims denouncing the racialised exploitation perpetuated by platforms.

At the theoretical level, the paper aims at contributing to the debate on migrant workers' mobilisation and organisation, autonomously or supported by independent (Cioce et al., 2022; Però and Downey, 2022; Smith, 2022) and well-established unions (Tapia and Turner, 2013; Heyes, 2009). In particular, I am interested, on the one hand, in formal and informal mechanisms of union voice (see Alberti, 2016), on the other, in how community organising, and the intertwining of class and ethnicity, can facilitate forms of collective resistance (Alberti and Però, 2018; Jiang and Korczynski, 2022). In analysing this debate, particular attention will be paid to the research conducted so far on migrant platform labour. Several authors have indeed shown that platform work, while offering working opportunities to migrant workers, it also contributes to perpetuate structural inequalities (Van Doorn et al., 2022) as the platform economy takes advantage of historically rooted racialisation processes.

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## **Putting a dangerous class to work - coercion and resistance in a military-inspired professional integration center**

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Sociological research at the intersection of labor studies and youth studies has revealed an extension of the transitional period from childhood to adulthood. This extension is evident through the growing number of labor opportunities that rely on voluntary work or wages below traditional standards.

In the case of working-class French youth, the public policies aimed at integrating them into the labor market often employ coercive methods, which contradicts the emancipatory mission they claim to champion.

This paper analyzes the strategies of resistance adopted by working-class youth against coercive work-centered reintegration programs. Our analysis is based on an ethnographic study of a military-managed boarding center located in the working-class outskirts of Paris, known as EPIDE. This center accommodates between 140 and 180 volunteers who learn the fundamentals of military discipline and are expected to develop a professional plan through workshops and internships. Our argument posits that the military discipline expected in the center and that which is anticipated for an unskilled young worker to follow are two sides of the same coin. They both aim to prepare what is considered as a « dangerous youth » for the unskilled labor market.

First, we will look at how enrolling into this voluntary program can show an attempt to extract oneself from a home environment perceived as dangerous or violent. As they strive to escape the illegalities of the "hood", male and intra-family violence or particularly exploitative forms of employment, the center appears to be both an escape route and a means of access to an "adult" life defined by stable employment. Military discipline can then meet the "desire for order" brewed by a youth with no stable horizon.

Joining the center then appears to be a survival strategy that offers both a transitional period and an opportunity to project oneself towards a stable future. Behind the strict military rules, the volunteers lead informal lives, organized around minor illegal activities. Paradoxically, consenting to military discipline and the arbitrary authority of officers becomes a way to experience youth. Volunteers consume cannabis, engage in intense and conflict-ridden relationships involving love, sex, and friendship, and invent new ways to circumvent the disciplinary schedule.

The tensions between "living one's youth" and "adulting," resisting or reverting to discipline, mirror those in their professional integration. In a "trial and error" mode, volunteers attempt to construct a professional project that suits them. However, this project is often limited to the jobs available in the so-called "shortage" sectors. Depending on their individual backgrounds and trajectories, many of them leverage their local connections to secure a job and break free from the center. Others choose to pursue "insertion," subjecting themselves to both military discipline and the de-skilled job market. Finally, those who are excluded or absentees return to their neighborhoods, families, engage in illegal activities, unreported work, and ultimately experience their youth in a state of "social vagrancy."

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## **Assessing the impact of liberalized industrial relations upon the labour process. The case of the french automotive industry**

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In this paper we want to present research assessing the impact of new types of industrial relations upon the labour process. Resulting from the “Macron” ordinances of 22 September 2017, the Collective Performance Agreement (CPA) is a specific collective agreement that makes it possible to negotiate measures related to the organisation of working time, the organisation of wages scales and the determination of professional and geographical mobility within the company. Collective performance agreements are negotiated primarily to meet the needs of the company's operations and preserve or develop employment. While financial difficulties may be a sign of a downturn, they do not in any way constitute an obligation to resort to a CPA. Since 2018, more than 800 agreements have been signed. The majority concern SMEs (with fewer than 250 employees), but some large companies in the automotive and aerospace industries are also involved.

This type of agreement represents a new attempt to develop in France the competitiveness-productivity agreements, where the unions and management negotiate temporal and organisational flexibility in exchange for employment guarantees, with the difference that the CPAs no way imply any real job security. It demonstrates how industrial relations at company level contributes, sometimes with the active participation of trade unions, to intensifying work and lowering labour costs. In this respect, it embodies a variant of neo-corporatism or ‘business unionism’, which developed in the US automotive sector in the early 1990s. Applied to France, it reveals the extent to which industrial relations are no longer a ‘social shield’ for employment or a lever for improving working conditions, but a tool in the transformation of the labour process and accelerating the degradation of work.

In the first section, we will briefly present the French panorama of employment relations and the context in which Collective Performance Agreements came into being. In the second section, we present the initial results of our fieldwork in the automotive industry, looking at the reasons why management uses collective bargaining to transform the labour process, to make employment more flexible and to reduce production costs and the wage bill. In the third section, we develop some more general reflections on the changing relationship between management and trade unions and the extent to which this is fostering the transformation of the latter into partners responsible for productivity gains and competitiveness of the firm. Somehow, this is an evolution that can be observed in other countries too and could be interpreted as a tendency of workers being alienated from trade unions.

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## **Shaping the Tunisian Working Class: Neoliberal Policies and Gender Dynamics**

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Tunisia's 1987 transition to neoliberalism involved a significant change to the technical composition of the working class. In an effort to entice and attract foreign capital, the Tunisian state endeavoured to lower the cost of labour. One main way this was accomplished was through the incorporation of women into the labour force. The state needed to adopt specific programmes to achieve this result, including the promotion of girls' primary and secondary education and technical education for women. The state also recognised the role that women played in the social reproduction of the household, and ran public service campaigns encouraging men to participate in household chores. The state simultaneously reduced its role in social reproduction, reducing family allowances, maternity leave benefits, and health care spending. This had the desired effect of increasing women's labour force participation rate, thus lowering the overall wage rate for Tunisian workers in general.

This paper adopts an autonomist Marxist theoretical orientation, which sees working class action as the driver of capitalist innovation. By applying this conceptualisation of class struggle to the state, this paper finds that earlier struggles by previous iterations of the working class have forced the decomposition of the class. The state has then altered the technical composition of the class by encouraging more women to enter the labour force by encouraging



firms to hire women workers and changing the state's role in social reproduction. This change in the technical composition of the class would have been unlikely without the change in state policies. This paper uses a mixed methods approach, and draws on previously unpublished data from Tunisia's 7th, 8th and 9th development plans, other reports from the Tunisian state, and an interview with a group of activists.

This paper contributes to the broader discourse on the impact of neoliberal policies on labour and the changing landscape of the workforce, particularly in the context of gender dynamics. It seeks to make a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussions surrounding labour processes, state policies, and the dynamics of class in Tunisia, in line with the conference's theme of 'coercion, consent, and conflict in the labour process and beyond.

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## **Between Process Optimization and Performance Control. Rethinking Algorithmic Management**

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Various studies on algorithmic management illustrate negative impacts on employees' autonomy, compensation, and work experience (Gandini, 2019; Kellogg et al., 2020; Veen, Barratt & Goods, 2019). Often, deterministic effects of algorithmic control are assumed, leading to adverse effects on work organization and conditions for employees. However, as argued by Meijerink & Bondarouk (2021), the relationship between algorithmic control and work situations is more complex. Several studies indicate that the use of algorithms is not necessarily associated with direct control of work performance and a restriction of work autonomy (cf. Krzywdzinski et al. 2021, Klur & Nies 2023). In some cases, it can even (intended or unintended) expand decision-making spaces and enhance experiential knowledge. This perspective is based on a recursive, cyclical understanding of algorithmic control (Meijerink & Bondarouk 2021; Orlikowski 1992). According to this view, systems of algorithmic control are perceived as both deterministic and determinative. Against this background, we want to tackle the following questions: (1) by which factors and actors on the side of the organization is this recursive relationship of algorithmic control shaped?, and (2) what are the implications of algorithmic control on work practices, working conditions, and work experience of employees.

In our contribution, we address these questions based on two contrasting in-depth case studies conducted within the European project consortium "Incoding – Democracy at Work through Transparent and Inclusive Algorithmic Management" (funded by the European Commission). These studies provide insights into two different application areas of algorithmic control in the context of simple service work (delivery service) and skilled industrial work (mechanical engineering). The cases are analyzed with regard to the question of how algorithmic process control affects work practices and what variables exist in the design of sociotechnical systems. Special attention is given to the challenges of designing algorithmic systems as objects of industrial relations: the case studies demonstrate that specific requirements for transparency, dialogue, and knowledge building must be met to consider employees' interests in technology implementation processes.

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## **Labour shortages and the labour process**

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Labour shortages have become a dominant issue across economic sectors in many advanced economies. Contrary to public perception, this not only accounts for highly-skilled and skilled workers, but even for low-skilled segments of the workforce. The extent to which these changing circumstances affect labour processes and strategies of managerial control has barely been reflected in labour sociology, which either does not spell out the linkages between labour market supply and the labour process or – explicitly or implicitly – is shaped by the legacy of labour surplus in the context of rising unemployment in the past decades. As the phenomenon of labour shortages is set to stay due to demographical changes, it is important to reflect upon its implications for employment systems and power relations at the workplace. This contribution provides theoretical reflections about the relationship between labour shortages, production regimes and the labour process and discusses how this affects our concepts of precarization and digitalization.

First, the relationship between labour markets and the labour process is explored theoretically by combining insights from regulation theory, the power resources approach and labour process theory. Second, an outline and interpretation of labour shortages in the context of the German economy is provided. It is emphasized that the current mismatch on labour markets is – contrary to popular beliefs about the labour market effects of automation – not only a question of supply (demographic change, changes in subjective aspirations), but also of rising demand in an increasingly complex and volatile economy. Third, I discuss the impact of labour shortages on managerial strategies drawing on case studies in industry and logistics. Contradictions in employment systems that have developed under the circumstances of labour surplus and stable supply of skilled labour are highlighted. Particular emphasis is placed on contradictions between strategies of precarization and labour retainment. Lastly, the contribution calls for rethinking concepts of digitalization at the workplace, which are often shaped by the motivation to tackle labour shortages. In this context, conflicts at the workplace are increasingly shaped by the question of whether and how digitalization contributes to relief the workload (which it often fails to deliver)

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## **Alienation and Remote Work: new questions and perspectives**

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Remote work presents a nuanced distinction that has sparked a significant debate surrounding the concepts of alienation and the labor process. This discourse centers on ideas of autonomy and the blurred boundaries between personal and professional life, encapsulating what can be termed as digital alienation. Researchers have explored various sociological dimensions, bringing this debate into the Italian context through the contributions of scholars and experts.

In this paper, we aim to examine the management and control dynamics within the framework of smart working and discuss the contemporary manifestations of alienation within this widespread phenomenon. Today, various interpretations and theories of alienation have given rise to specific implications: depending on the adopted notion of alienation, it becomes possible to emphasize certain critical aspects of remote work. We must consider the role of new technologies in this context. Drawing from theories of alienation such as those proposed by Jaeggi (2005), Fraser (2018), and Rosa (2016), we seek to offer a new interpretation of the forms that alienation can assume in digital transitions. Furthermore, taking into account the international debate, this paper aims to make a contribution to understanding how and in what ways alienation could become a sociological concern, particularly in applications like remote work.

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## **A solution in search of a problem. The diffusion and circulation of Industry 4.0 concepts in the French auto industry**

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The automotive sector is one of the main industrial sectors of France both in terms of economic activity and employment, and the main investor in digital manufacturing technologies. It is also a sector that has endured a constant decline since 2005 due in particular to a massive process of relocation of production from France to low wages countries in central and eastern Europe and in northern Africa and Turkey. For these reasons, focusing on the automotive sector in France provides a good opportunity to look at the effects of digital technologies, like Industry 4.0 (I4.0) in the workplace, and their promise to create new value added activities in manufacturing, to bring back production from low-cost countries.

The goal of this paper is to complete the studies on the labour process with an analysis of the introduction of I4.0 concepts in research and development, in order to better understand the socio-economic determinants that lead industrial firms to choose a particular technology and to adopt I4.0 as a general framework. In order to do this, we conducted interviews with high-level management of the « digital platform » of Renault, the entity responsible for the digitalisation of manufacturing, as well as with some director of assembly plants which have led the introduction and experimentation of these technologies.

The results of our research are still preliminary, but they show that, far from becoming the norm, I4.0 technologies are struggling to spread within the firm and to find legitimacy, as well as a clear and shared use. They are more like « solutions in search of problems » that can be explained by the pressure by external players, like large consulting firms and financial analysts, to conform to the « digital factory model ». On the one hand, this has resulted in the creation of new entities responsible for « digitalisation », but these have limited staff, no hierarchical authority, and must prove their usefulness, not only internally, but also externally, since they are supposed to sell their « solutions » to customers other than the firm's own engineering departments. On the other hand, assembly sites have also been tasked by the digital platform with deploying these technologies via a series of experiments, but these have rarely come to fruition and only in the form of local tinkering. However, in terms of display, they are omnipresent and form an important part of the firm's communication.

We analyse this paradoxical diffusion of I4.0 using the theory of managerial fashions and their spread (Abrahamson, 1996). We then analyse this deployment as a quest for legitimacy in the context of a power struggle between different groups within the firm, in a context of crisis/contestation of the control design in place (Fligstein 1990, 2001), where digital technologies and their players claim to provide solutions to the problems faced by the automotive industry.

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## **Designing inclusive remote and hybrid working to support disabled workers**

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The COVID-19 pandemic instigated widespread change to working practices, both within the UK and across the world: three years on, remote and hybrid working is still available to many desk-based workers and job-seekers, despite a well-publicised employer pushback to “get people back to the office.” One-fifth of working-age people in the UK are currently categorised as disabled, yet their working preferences, and their experiences of remote or hybrid working both during the pandemic and across the post-pandemic landscape, remain largely unexplored. This project seeks to rectify this by exploring disabled workers’ experiences of remote and hybrid working, alongside a complementary focus on employer and policymaker perspectives within this field, and to identify how best to make these new and increasingly popular models of work more inclusive for disabled workers across the UK.

The disability employment gap in the UK currently stands at 29.8 percentage points and is largely driven by organisational inflexibility and non-inclusive workplace policies and practice. Remote working offers flexibility to schedule work around fatigue or pain, and to reallocate energy used for commuting, yet prior to the pandemic employers were often reluctant to allow disabled staff to work remotely, even as a reasonable adjustment.

Our previous research found that remote working was positive for disabled workers’ physical and mental health, productivity and employment (Taylor et al, 2022). It was particularly valued by disabled women, younger disabled people, people with multiple impairments and disabled carers. Our larger-scale mixed-methods study funded by the Nuffield Foundation builds on this, exploring how remote and hybrid working can be designed to be inclusive of disabled workers’ needs and preferences to promote their job retention, recruitment and progression. Underpinned by the Job Demands-Resources model and an intersectional framework, we explore, through a national survey and in-depth interviews, disabled workers’ perspectives on the benefits and challenges of remote and hybrid working in relation to their employment, health/wellbeing, productivity and work-life balance, and factors they perceive as enabling inclusive remote/hybrid working. Through organisational case studies, we will also identify whether and how employers are implementing inclusive remote/hybrid working.

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## **The construction of a racialized migrant workforce: Insights from the study of discourses on labour recruitment and seasonal migration**

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This contribution addresses methodological and theoretical challenges when it comes to understanding intersectional violence and inequalities in the construction of a migrant workforce. In labour studies, ‘race’ is often treated as a static and ahistoric category rather than a social phenomenon that needs explanation. But historical analyses have taught us, that racism is rather actively produced through discourses, practices, and institutions, including wage labour (Miles 2006; Hall 1989). Therefore, I operate from the premises that ‘race’ and racism cannot be treated as ontological categories, but that research instead should turn to empirical expressions of racism and the conditions of its existence, e.g. in migration regime. While labour studies struggle, to conceptualize racism in an adequate way, research on racism is often silent on labour and class relations – although these being of immense difference for explaining social and political inequalities and injustices. This might be due to the fear of functionalistic simplifications such as the reduction of racism to its function in the generation of cheap labour – a prominent leftist and trade union narrative.

If one wants to overcome this, a more complex understanding of the reproduction of racism within the world of work is required. The production of a cheap and docile labour force may be an effect of racism but is at the same time always situated within local and global dynamics of power. And although racialized labour market structures might be explained in parts by an analysis of the structural development, this does not suffice to explain its diversification and persistence. Instead, I proposed elsewhere, to analyse racism and labour at three interrelated levels: The historico-structural, the discursive-symbolic and the level of everyday practices (Carstensen 2019).

In this contribution I focus on the discursive-symbolic dimension and scrutinize the debate on migration as a means to mitigate the shortage of qualified labour (“Fachkräftemangel”) and seasonal migrant work in Germany. The research is guided by the question, how the idea of specific “migrant” skills, qualifications and labour market dispositions are reproduced within the debate and how these ideas are mirrored (and in consequence, reproduced) by labour market policies and employment practices. The analysis also reveals blind spots and omissions of the discourse that contribute to essentialising and projecting social inequality structures onto migrant subjects. Zooming in on this aspect of the reproduction of racial capitalism might help to better understand, how migrantization and racialization of certain labour market segments perpetuate precarious and even unfree labour. It also helps to understand conflict and interest representation around work.

The contribution is based on a discourse analysis that takes as its empirical basis current policy papers, media reports and policy-oriented research documents. Critical discourse analysis allows to reconstruct how consent and legitimation are constructed and to better understand the field and background of conflicts within and about labour. In empirical terms, the paper focusses the regulation of seasonal migrant work in the agricultural sector and the recruitment of qualified workers in the health care sector.

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## **Connecting labour process and business model in a context of sociotechnical transformation: the case of Walmart**

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This research focuses on the socio-technical transformations at work, a central theme in the subsequent waves of the Labour Process Analysis (LPA) (Thompson, 2010). With the acceleration of e-commerce development during the pandemic, retail has experienced processes of digitalisation and organisational restructuring that have degraded the quality of employment (Carré and Tilly, 2022). The big discounters in retail have traditionally relied on this low-road business strategy, but how sustainable is this over time? What happens when a sector is undergoing an accelerated transformation? Articulating LPA (Smith, 2019) and Critical Business Model Analysis (CBMA) (Froud et al., 2017), this research asks about the dynamics of value creation and value capture in the food retail sector in a context of digital transformations, considering the strategic relationships that a multinational retailer holds with its main stakeholders, such as shareholders, consumers, workers and state regulatory bodies. Special attention is paid to the transformations experienced in the labour process and how they can affect the viability of the business model.

This study focuses on Walmart's subsidiary in Chile and uses qualitative data collection tools, including semi-structured interviews with managers from different areas (Finance, Operations, HR and Tech), union leaders from supermarkets and distribution centres, and state regulators (Labour Directorate and Labour Inspectorate, Ministry of Labour) to contrast Walmart's narratives and practices towards its different stakeholders. Participant observation (visits to workplaces and participation in union meetings) and review of company, press, union and Labour Directorate documents were also carried out.

Through a content analysis guided by the LPA and CBMA debates, this study argues that, in the context of current socio-technical transformations, Walmart's business model is based on

value creation narratives and value capture strategies that are differentiated according to the strategic importance assigned to the stakeholder. In the case of customers and investors, the stakeholders most valued by the company, there is a high coherence between value creation narratives and value capture strategies (i.e. between the company's official story-telling and its practices to generate profits). Conversely, for suppliers, state regulators and workers, there are inconsistencies between what the company publicly declares as a value creation strategy and what it actually does to capture value. By addressing the dynamics of control, conflict and resistance in the labour process, it is argued that in the context of sociotechnical transformations the problem of labour regulation may jeopardise the credibility and viability of Walmart's business model in Chile - as has been the case in other Walmart subsidiaries around the world (see Martin et al., 2019; Bank Muñoz et al., 2018). This research contributes to bridging debates about labour process and business model, particularly in contexts of socio-technical transformations. It is a first level of analysis that, before delving into discussions of Global Value Chains and Global Production Networks, enables the connection between the labour process and the broader dynamics of the political economy (Thompson and Laaser, 2021).

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## **Localization of the fulfillment warehouse and its workplace regime in Korea**

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Coupang, the biggest e-commerce company in Korea, introduced fulfillment services for the first time in Korea. Coupang, which was listed on NYSE (the New York Stock Exchange) in 2021, is now not only a leading company in fulfillment service, but also a market dominating company in e-commerce and retailing field in Korea. In Korea, it is said that Coupang is "Amazon of Korea" in the regard that Coupang's business strategy is deeply based on Amazon's business model.

Likewise in Amazon warehouses, working conditions and intensity of labor are extremely demanding in Coupang. More than a half of the warehouse workers are daily-employed who are paid just minimum wage, and the warehouses are not equipped with air-conditioning and heating systems so that it is not unusual for Coupang workers to see other workers collapsed from heatstroke in summer or gotten frostbite in winter. Furthermore, there are also a despotic labor control policies such as forbidding to bring in cellphones and public rebuking on low-speed workers through in-house broadcast. Although the work process of the warehouses has become automated and digitalized, the ways of labor control in workplace are not just based on digitalized tools, but also dependent on despotic techniques.

Based on ethnographic research on labor process of Coupang warehouses, this study investigates what mechanisms Coupang has deployed to control the labor of its warehouses. Especially, this study focuses on the localized workplace regime that is refracted from the Amazon warehouse model and its labor control mechanism when it is articulated into the context of Korea. This refraction created localized workplace regime in Coupang warehouses which are correspondent with labor norms, institutions, and labor market of Korea. In order to achieve seamless flow of commodities in the warehouse, with its limited automation and digitalization, Coupang warehouses are inevitably dependent on relatively more labor forces and extreme flexibility of labor, which necessarily require effective labor control mechanism making workers work hard and compliant.

Many of the previous studies on the labor process of Amazon warehouses focused on the algorithms and technologies-based labor control and surveillance which are produced by digitalized workplace and tools. This study, however, puts an emphasis not just on technology-based labor control, but also on the other diverse labor control mechanism embedded in the organizational and social contexts of the warehouse. The interaction of the limited digitalization and the extreme labor flexibility produces the unique localized workplace regime in Coupang

warehouse. Examining localized workplace regime in Coupang warehouses could contribute to understanding the changes in workplace regime based on precarious work spreading with globalization of fulfillment warehouses.

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## **Class-conscious Workers Indifferent to Unionisation: The Case of E-hailing Drivers in Zhengzhou City, China**

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In recent years, with the booming of the platform economy in China, there has been an important state initiative to proliferate the establishment of unions for “new forms of employment” under the All-China Federation Trade Union (ACFTU), emphasising providing “care” and promoting a sense of “belonging” to attract platform workers. The author finds that the platform workers are class-conscious, manifested in their highly political discourses, including describing themselves as “the working class”, “the masses”, and “subalterns” (diceng renmin) exploited by “capitalists” (i.e. the platforms). As a result, many e-hailing drivers express a desire for “socialist contracts” and institutionalised intervention from the government. However, they are indifferent to state-led unionisation. Focusing on the e-hailing drivers in Zhengzhou, China, employing qualitative methods including ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, and deep hanging out following a collaborative approach, this paper addresses why e-hailing drivers are unwilling to be unionised despite being class-conscious. Due to its geopolitical position in the most populated region in central East China, Zhengzhou is a major hub for the national transportation network. Since the beginning of the development of the platform economy, the provincial government has followed the “tolerant and prudent” policy, categorising e-hailing rides as urban transportation infrastructure and a “technological fix” for economic development and job creation. The study finds that the union predominantly act as a means to depoliticise and legitimise the existing class antagonism between platform workers and platforms by defining it as a need for care and welfare to maintain social stability facing a slow economic recovery in the post-pandemic era. It is incompatible with the demands and grievances of the class-conscious workers who demand higher wages and social security. Combined with the lack of independent workers’ organisations in China, the workers experience a sense of helplessness manifested in the perpetration of neoliberal discourses that feature the essentialisation of greed and the inevitability of market competition and clientelism between platforms and governments. As a result, they hesitate to join the union or initiate collective organising independently. By situating in the workers’ perspective, the study demonstrates workers’ contradictory consciousness concerning the platformised labour process in relation to the increasingly nationalist and neoliberal state governance. Ultimately, the study calls for a context-based, localised, processual and dialectical analysis of control and resistance in the platform economy.

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## **Navigating Liminal Spaces: A Journey of Transition as an Intergovernmental Organization Project Manager in India**

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Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) work with governments around the world to tackle urgent development issues. Major IGOs in India such as UNDP, UNICEF and World Bank work with central and state governments to implement multi-stakeholder programs for poverty reduction, health care, education and women's empowerment. IGOs provide expertise, capacity building and funding. The implementation of projects supported by IGOs requires dedicated staff performing specialised tasks such as project management, analytical work, consulting and coordination. This often necessitates working closely with several agencies and stakeholders, navigating complex bureaucracy and local systems as an outsider.

This paper is based on the first author's career transition experience of moving from a corporate role in Dubai to managing an IGO supported rural community and capacity development initiative. As an appointed IGO project manager posted at an Indian district government office, key roles included community needs assessment, training of volunteers and early coordination to achieve stated objectives. However, it also required building working relationships with various stakeholders such as state, local community and political parties, as well as employees at local and regional government offices, local volunteers and party leaders and of course IGO heads. To fit into this new geography of roles and responsibilities, there were intense personal challenges of adaptation and identity re- negotiation.

There were, however, different liminal spaces emerging in relation to different actors and their organizational structures. Experiences with the local office staff showed the stark contrast between an efficient corporate culture and the bureaucratic culture of the local government, where protocols dictate “this is how things are done here.” Interactions with the local and regional governmental agencies also showed a liminal space in relation to idealism versus enforced pragmatism. Experiences with volunteers showed the tension between ideals and reality. The enthusiasm of mentoring that would eventually dissipate as time went on showcased the resistances faced, and declining volunteer involvement and performance added to a sense of frustration. Liminal space also showed up in negotiations as a non-governmental employee amid complicated governmental systems, showing the tension between perceived and real power and influence. Efforts of efficiency often clashed with the struggles of bureaucracy. These liminal spaces illuminated disorientation, powerlessness, and the struggle to give up self-conception while facing the responsibilities of a new role.

Narrative analysis foregrounds subjectivity to highlight nuanced insights of major career transitions and lived liminality experiences. More specifically, the concept of liminal space reveals the complexity of navigating destabilizing transitions with empathy, integrity, and growth—highlighting the inner work needed to transcend boundaries and reinvent oneself. An analysis of liminal spaces provides specific insights into multi-dimensional conversations, identity work, emotive work and meaning-making, to reorient the self across multiple cultures and roles.

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## **Precariousization of labour: reconsidering work and employment in Thailand**

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The enormous changes in the world economy in the late 1970s has seen many debates on trends of industrialization such as the change of technology and restructuring of the world market as well as the shift of large scale production. The term ‘precariat’ was coined to indicate the new trends of the effects of socio-economic change on labour employment and class concept. The precariat is importantly defined to a social class with many problems from precarity which is lack of security. This has brought about psychological depress as being a member of a proletariat class of industrial workers and other different types of worker under the new phase of economic development. The workers are suffering of the lack of their own means of production and have to sell their labour to live both skill and unskilled labour.

This paper investigates precarious work in Thailand contemporary labour employment. Precarious employment in Thailand is increasing widely spread in several economic sectors. Education business, for example, employ various categories of precarious university jobs. Many small enterprises in service sector is increasing using many forms of precarious work. These circumstances create frustration and anxiety for the workers. Working in precarious work is difficult situation and has less bargaining power. They are unable to organize trade unions. The paper is based on my survey research on precarious work and the changes of labour employment in Thailand. Using statistic data analysis of labour employment both in macro and micro levels and documentary investigation, the paper shows that work situation in



Thailand contemporary labour employment in Thailand has been changed to precarity and uncertainty situation. This has much effect on labour organizations, changing of definition of work and working class. Increasing precarious employment has brought about the problems of people quality of life and the work security .

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## **Mobility regimes and intermediaries in the Taiwanese Semiconductor industry**

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As there is more demand for IC chips, the demand for skilled workers in the semiconductor industry will increase, according to the Semiconductor Industry Association reported in 2023. As the previous study showed, a specific labor regime for migrant workers in the packaging and testing sector in the semiconductor industry has shed light on the role of the state in the regulation of migrant labour regime, firms' collaboration and the labour market intermediaries in the coupling of Global Production Network (GPN) dynamics and local labor market (Chen and Schiller, 2022). In 2021, a huge joint-venture investment in Japan from TSMC, which is the world's largest semiconductor firm brought more Taiwanese investment to Kumamoto, which has changed the local labor market drastically (Inagaki, 2023.Sep.26). In other words, Kumamoto become a node of GPN with high level of integration, such as foreign capital, upgrading in the value chain and labor migration of the semiconductor industry in East and Southeast Asia. However, it is still not clear whether the GPN dynamics facilitate migration in different sectors and national contexts. Therefore, it is necessary to better understand labor mobility within the Asian context and among countries at different levels of development and with integration in GPN at a different level.

This study examines the mobility regime through the interaction among industrial norms between lead firms and local suppliers, governmental regulations, and corporation governance in Kaohsiung, Taiwan and Kumamoto, Japan. To this end, I conducted semi-structured interviews with firms, employment agents, and governmental authorities and used secondary data. As a result, by comparing the Taiwanese mobility regime for low- and medium- skilled Filipino workers with the regimes for more mutual exchange of high-skilled workers between Taiwan and Japan, the study addresses a kind of mobility regime in GPN in the East and Southeast Asia context. Furthermore, two types of circular migration demonstrate the logic of mobility capital accumulation in the Global Production Networks underpinned by a new form of global im- and mobility.

Moreover, the study makes a theoretical contribution by revealing the framework to analyse a specific multi-scalar mobility regime for skilled workers in GPNs, especially suppliers' collaborations, in responding to fluctuations in labour demand and shaping the local labour market. These findings, therefore, provide insights into the policies of migrants and regional development that the mobility regimes should be seen through the workers' mobility bargaining power in the labour-receiving countries.

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## **Alienation and Fatigue from Marx' Large-Scale Industry to the Contemporary Gig Economy**

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Labour process theory has been heavily inspired by Karl Marx' critique of capitalist large-scale industry in, among others, the Grundrisse and Capital Volume I. Especially the "Fragment on Machines" from the Grundrisse contains a theory of alienation very compatible with Braverman's diagnosis of deskilling and the separation of conception and execution. Whereas the young Marx articulates alienation in terms of the perversion of human species-being and

the hindering of workers' full potential of self-expression in labour, the Grundrisse breaks with any assumptions about human nature and self-expression. It articulates a new and yet underexplored theory of alienation, which claims that industrial machines dispossess workers from the autonomy to organize their labour and make their own choices. The 'general intellect' – or 'machinofacture' for Braverman – enacts a cognitive dispossession of the workforce, in which machines absorb and centralise workers' artisanal skills and thereby make workers dependent on continued subsumption under industrial capital. Once workers lose the skills to organise their own labour autonomously, they are forced to insert themselves into the self-propelling machinic labour processes of capital.

In my paper, I will explain the relevance of Marx' new theory of alienation for studying the gig economy, for which I will primarily look at labour conditions among Uber drivers. Marx warns that the centralisation of knowledge in the general intellect reduces human workers to passive cogs in machine-driven processes that can only execute orders coming from machines. These machines subsequently risk ignoring the bodily and mental limits of human labour-power. When machinic orders become too demanding and workers are put under too much stress, their bodies and minds quickly falter. In Marx' time, this contradiction between the hyperactivity of industry and the finitude of human bodies led to increases in workplace injuries, fatigue among the workforce, and even a general decline in workers' life expectancy. Similar problems are currently emerging in the gig economy, where algorithmic management techniques centralise the coordination of the labour process. Uber drivers, for example, suffer from mental stress, chronic sleep deprivation, and illnesses due to sitting in the car for excessively long timespans. Since the algorithms governing Uber's allocation systems do not take the biological limits of drivers' bodies into account, they tend to overexert these bodies until they break. By abstracting from the human body, algorithmic management risks depleting the supply of labour-power that fuels the growth of platform companies like Uber.

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## **Energy transition on whose shoulders? The battery supply chain and labour in lithium mining in Chile**

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In the context of the escalating global imperative to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the transition towards sustainable energy sources has become an unavoidable priority. In this process, lithium mining emerges as a crucial cornerstone, as this mineral is indispensable for the production of batteries, key components in the electric mobility revolution and energy storage.

The lithium supply chain spans multiple countries in the global south, with China standing out as the primary buyer and battery manufacturer. Furthermore, major automobile manufacturers worldwide rely on this intricate network to secure the necessary supply for electric vehicle production. This global interconnection places lithium mining at the epicenter of the energy transition.

The research delves into the second-largest lithium-producing nation globally: Chile. To achieve this, it adopts an analytical perspective framed within the concept of "Putting Labour in Its Place" as presented by Newsome, Taylor, Bair & Rainnie. This approach allows for an understanding of the work process in lithium mining within a broader context of Global Value Chains (GVC) and Global Production Networks (GPN).

Additionally, the contemporary concept of "labour regime," revitalized by Baglioni, Campling, Coe & Smith, is incorporated to explore the institutional and political factors shaping the specific labor regime in the lithium industry in Chile.

The research poses the fundamental question of what type of labor regime prevails in lithium mining, considering its global context. The predominantly qualitative methods employed include interviews, documentary review, and secondary data analysis.

The conclusions reveal a demand for lithium that significantly outstrips supply, incentivizing intensive and unrestricted production. This dynamic is institutionally linked to a labor relations system that weakens union power, hindering the formation of robust organizations capable of improving labor conditions, especially wages, despite the considerable profits of the industry.

Ultimately, the emergence of a distinctive labor regime in Chile's lithium mining industry is identified. Although it unfolds in a classic sector like mining, this regime appears to seek to avoid traditional union conflict, as observed in copper mining, to meet demand and maximize profits. This phenomenon raises significant questions about the social sustainability of the energy transition in the era of lithium mining.

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## Who is Disrupting What? Challengers and Challenged in the Logistics Mobilizations in Italy

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Over the last decade, the resurgence of labour mobilizations across Europe in the wider logistics sector, comprising ride-hailing, food delivery and warehousing, has raised new and old questions as to whether and how novel forms of actions, grievances, and actors are emerging. The burgeoning bulk of studies, exploring these mobilizations, has mainly focused on their action repertoires, their forms of organizing and claims. Very few studies have analysed the impact that these workers have achieved in terms of companies' concessions or political and legislative outcomes. No research has so far explored the reactions that these mobilizations have triggered from the various actors which have been the target of their contention, especially companies, political and state authorities. Our study sets out to do so by making sense of the different reactions that two cases of mobilization, i.e., food delivery couriers and warehouse porters, have spurred at the local level in the logistics sector of the Bologna area in Italy. As for food delivery, there has been a generally positive orientation towards these mobilizations by various actors, such as policymakers and media, instantiated in the adoption of the 'Bill of Rights of Digital Workers in Urban Contexts' by the Bologna City Council in 2018. By contrast, as for warehousing, the local context reaction has been considerably more hostile, with negative media coverage, confrontational attitudes by the companies and political disinterest from institutions, all leading to police repression combined with the penal incrimination of some workers and activists. Such a difference seems puzzling, as both mobilizations showcased similar action repertoires, such as blockades and street pickets, and bottom-up forms of organizing. Why was this the case? We argue that this difference is to be attributed to the diverse configuration of actors and interests, challengers and challenged, involved in them. While in food delivery the actors challenging the local market and the related constellation of interests were some new transnational platforms with their cutting labour costs-oriented business model, in warehousing this disruption was carried out by the porters themselves, alongside their labour organizations, contributing—with their mobilizations—to threatening a consolidated system of medium and large enterprises well embedded in the local context. In the paper, we show how such a diverse configuration of interests and actors played a key role in the different contextual reaction between the two cases. To probe our argument, we conducted research fieldwork in the Bologna area between August 2021 and March 2023, by triangulating various qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews with all the relevant actors (i.e., workers, political activists, union representatives, policymakers), media and document analysis. Our study contributes to the Industrial Relations literature considering the specificity of the (local) context, with its configuration of interests, power relations, and actors, as key in accounting for the impact of worker mobilizations.

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## **Work, education and social reproduction of the immigrant working class in Santa Catarina, Brazil**

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This text addresses the relationship between work and education based upon a master's thesis research defended by the first and advised by the second authors at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil, (PALHOZA, 2019). The research addressed the work, education and social reproduction of the life of families descended from Italian immigrants and residents in small wine estates in the interior of Santa Catarina. From the methodological point of view, we developed a field survey through semi-structured interviews with six elderly people who grew up and worked on small rural properties in the municipality of Videira. We also carried out an analysis of the historical archive on migration and wine production of the Mário De Pellegrin wine museum, with its photographic and bibliographic collection. Finally, we performed a review and analysis of academic literature previously developed on the constitution of small rural properties, work, education and social reproduction of immigrants. Theoretically, the research was based on Marx (2017), Engels (1984), Perrot (2017), Arruza, Bhattacharya and Fraser (2019), Federici (2017), Meszáros (2002). Among the results found, we highlight the family as an essential institution for the reproduction of private property, a central characteristic of the organization of labor in the capitalist mode of production. The family is an essential space for the reproduction of the future workforce to the extent that it educates and socializes children from the hegemonic culture teaching values such as love of work and respect for order and current social hierarchies. Learning about respect for order and parental authority from the family is fundamental for working-class children to learn to obey social rules and hierarchies. The results of the research show that in the family division of labor, women are majorly responsible for reproductive work, since they are responsible for the care of children and household tasks essential to maintaining the life of the family nucleus. Still, this does not mean that they are exempt from toil in the field, as they work in rural production together with other family members. The division of labor between genders impacts on the work done by children: older girls are assigned to care for younger siblings and housework as soon as they become physically able. Boys are exempt from these activities, although they work in others. Both boys and girls have their own roles on small farms: they are responsible for lighter work, which intensifies and becomes more complex as they grow up. The work activity is taught and supervised by adults, so that children and adolescents learn to have discipline and to venerate work. Leisure time, rest and play are enjoyed only on Sunday, when the working week is over and adult and child responsibilities are finished. Thus, we realized that education for work exploited in the midst of the agricultural and migrant family in southern Brazil has a reproductive and coercive character, contributing to the construction of consensus around the culture necessary for the social reproduction of the capitalist system

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## **Close-up on the wage relation and the labour process in a Romanian car factory**

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The paper analyses the process through which a systematic relationship between wages, skills, and work tasks got created and then dismantled in an automotive factory located in the Southern part of Romania. The factory opened in the city of Craiova in 1981 as a joint venture between the French automotive company Citroën and the Romanian socialist state. The French partner was replaced in the 1990s by the South-Korean conglomerate Daewoo. In 2007, Ford became the factory's main stakeholder, which led to a rapid expansion of production capacities, to the establishment of a large network of suppliers, and to the implementation of new managerial ideologies and practices. For decades now, the factory has

been the most important employer and the biggest taxpayer in the otherwise deindustrializing region of Oltenia, being now placed in a position of “too big to fail” and central in local networks of political clientelism.

The paper builds on long-term ethnographic engagement with the factory community, archival research, life histories, and expert interviews to show that what on the surface looks like just another story of decline in labour’s negotiation power can be better understood by analysing the disintegration of the wage relation. I argue that the particular way in which the making and breaking of the wage relation took place has two major consequences on shopfloor politics today. On the one hand, an increasing standardization of tasks did not involve a corresponding standardization of wages but rather their individualization and fragmentation. On the other hand, generation replaced class as a solidarity principle on the shopfloor. While this process can be read in classical Braverman vein – as part and parcel of “work degradation” in the car manufacturing branch – a closer look at the transformations of the factory reveals the intricate connections between the expansion of global commodity chains in Eastern and Central Europe, a new regulatory framework at national level, and the local politics of production that made or broke the relationship between wage and the labour process, both in late socialism and in late capitalism.

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## **Resistance to voice suppression at Belarusian enterprises**

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The paper investigates the forms of worker resistance at Belarusian enterprises. It addresses a severely under-researched problem of individual and collective response to the hierarchical abuse of power (e.g., Vredenburg and Brenen, 1998). In doing so, it applies the concepts of conflict, control and consent as defined by earlier labour theory (e.g., Ramsay 1977, Burawoy, 1979, etc.) to the analysis of employment relations at Belarusian enterprises. The paper employs a Ramsay cycles of control theory as well as Hodson (1997, 2001) work on voice and resistance to identify the forms of resistance at each stage of the cycle. We differentiate between unionised and non-unionised forms of workplace resistance in order to see the dynamics of worker mobilisation over the last three decades as well as determine whether workplace confrontations in Belarus is limited to employment relations as has developed as a form of response to managerial voluntarism or has its roots within a wider socio-political conflict.

Since researching labour in Belarus presents significant challenges especially since the country has effectively been subject to international isolation since the rigged 2020 elections, the research was conducted using a number of qualitative methods available. It is based on a number of online semi-structured interviews with workers and trade union leaders and activists (many of whom are currently imprisoned or were forced to emigrate) conducted over the last four years. In addition it uses textual and content analysis of social media, including workers’ forums and discussions at independent media outlets. It uses the data from previous research conducted by the authors in Belarus and limited statistics available on the subject.

Preliminary findings indicate that:

Resistance to voice suppression at Belarusian enterprises has not been consistent. Rather, a three cycles of resistance are identified.

Forms of resistance were not consistent over time; instead, each cycle is characterised by its own forms of workplace resistance, ranging from formally organised unionised protests to individual forms of protest, not associated with any union activity.

Resistance to voice suppression has transcended internal enterprise conflicts and became a part of a wider societal protest which has also become more politicised since 2020 elections.

Although most forms of workplace resistance developed in Belarus are not unique to the country, some, such as widespread individual strikes, have not been documented in the post-Soviet region before and present an interesting research case.

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## **Labour Process in the Unorganized Sector and Universal Basic Income in India: Insights from a Survey on Casual Laborers**

Das Aurolipsa  
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Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a payment made to the citizens of the country at regular intervals of time to cover their basic needs. The proposal of UBI in India, was however associated with the replacement of existing poverty alleviation schemes which are majorly in-kind by nature (ex, food transfers). Contrary to this, the casual labourers (mostly involved in construction, stone cutting and crushing, roadway and railway work) in the unorganized sector, owing to the below minimum wage-rate, are highly dependent on the social protection programs (SPPs) for meeting their basic needs which would otherwise cost them much more if availed at market price. Moreover, the prevailing wage-rate was also observed to differ across regions, depending on the proximity to the urban centres. The differential wage-rates within cities in India, with the prescribed rates of Government of India (INR 504 - 628, depending on the categorization of cities) or International Labour Organizations (INR 371- 432) is a case of concern as well. This maybe attributable to the number of working days in a month which ranges from 15-20 days, and their expenditure patterns which incorporates both food and non-food expenditure.

UBI is not necessarily a substitute of existing schemes, but an income supplement. UBI would enable the casual labourers to be in a position to bargain in case of unfavourable working conditions or insufficient pay, remaining unperturbed about the loss of their source of income. Furthermore, it enables them to exercise their mobility power in choosing their employer and counter repressive employment relations and labour process.

This study assesses how SPPs have been acting as a safety net for casual labourers in one of the poorer states of India, Odisha, where the SPPs are implemented and are performing well. For this purpose, casual labourers availing benefits from three well-performing SPPs were interviewed with 71 from an urban region and 153 from a rural region, were interviewed about their preferences for the form of transfer (cash or in-kind) and implementation of UBI.

A difference in the employment patterns between rural and urban area was observed, where in the former both male and female participated in labour force as opposed to the latter which maybe due to the below minimum wage-rates being disbursed in the rural region. Consequentially, a distinction in the asset ownership (like that of mobile phones, smartphones and two-wheelers) was also observed which later helped in explaining the stronger influence of transaction costs, in the rural region, for the continuation of SPPs instead of scrapping them off and replacing them with cash transfers. Transaction costs which include the cost associated with time and distance travelled, were also noted to be leading concerns for substitutable cash transfers. Unfamiliarity with the cashless transaction systems, inconvenience, inflationary pressures and inadequate cash transfers were few more concerns. Additionally, as the wages offered to the casual labourers are below the minimum wage-rates, the idea of income supplements in the form of UBI was received positively, but not at the cost of the existing schemes.

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## Forms of Casual Labour and Lease Contracts: Agrarian Change in West Bengal

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Labour and lease markets are integral component of agrarian dynamics. The objective of the paper is to analyse the emerging trends of casual labour contracts and rise of fixed tenancy in the context of agrarian change in West Bengal. The study argues that the fixed rent on land is a medium of labour exploitation and the agrarian question of land and labour intertwined. The paper is based on the quantitative and qualitative field survey of 213 agricultural households by concurrent mixed method research design in three villages from different agro-ecological regions in the state. The finding of the survey reveals that the unevenness of agriculture development across regions leads to heterogeneity of lease and labour contracts and rooted in the caste-class dynamics of the region. The paper reveals that with increase in commercialization, there is an increase in fixed rent tenancy, casualization of labour force, and interlinkage in lease-labour markets. In lease-labour interlinkage, the coercion is more of economic than extra-economic, where the uncertainty of not getting land under seasonal lease on fixed rent compels the producer to work as agricultural labourers on landowner's field.

The semi-feudal thesis underscores the lack of development of capitalist relations in pure form and unfreedom of labour as an obstacle to agrarian transition. We argue here that there are various ways how capital extracts labour from the region. The classes are differentiated by ownership of means of production, and the use of labour. The rich capitalist farmers are in M-C-M' circuit, where they hire labour and appropriate surplus, whereas the bottom strata of the peasantry are selling their labour for subsistence. The persistence of attached labour in capital advanced village indicates that capitalist development agriculture uses pre-capitalist relation for surplus accumulation. The lease market has large presence of land poor lessee households who pay the pre-capitalist form of rent containing surplus labour of marginal peasant classes. However, there is emergence of capitalist tenant class in agriculturally advanced region, who lease-in land to expand production. The fixed rent form of tenancy is the most frequent terms of tenancy where the production risk is borne by the petty producers. In the period of market glut, the fixed rent tenancy contract does not get changed or relaxed. The prevalence of fixed rent tenancy on seasonal duration is the highest for the most volatile crop potato, cultivated in the region. Due to lack of land ownership, the fixed rent tenancy is also perceived as pre-capitalist ground rent. Seasonal fixed rent tenancy subsumes the formal labour of tenant households. The study argues that increasing share of fixed tenancy indicates the surplus extraction of labour through lessee market. Whereas in agriculturally backward village, share-cropping remained the distinct form of tenurial relation, however, the nature of relation has been changed due to commodification of input. Hence the agrarian change in the state is not a unidirectional transformation rather pre-capitalist relations are subsumed under development of capitalism.

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## Worker Voice in the Platform Economy

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The interface of traditional employment relationships comprising three key entities, the worker, the workplace, and the work, has evolved to accommodate new forms of working arrangements. The role of technology in advancing this transition has been pivotal (Cross & Swart, 2022) and has led to the proliferation of Online Labour Platforms (OLPs) and novel ways in which work and workers are organised through digital intermediaries. In platform work, customers are connected to service-providing, self-employed freelancers in an on-demand manner for short-term tasks (Duggan et al., 2020). Despite its purported entrepreneurial

offerings, it has ignited several new and some existing academic debates, one of which has been the focus on worker voice (Barry & Wilkinson, 2022; Budd et al., 2023; Dibben et al., 2023) and its revolutionary potential and role in the changing industrial landscape (Keegan & Meijerink, 2022; Kougiannou & Mendonça, 2021; Walker, 2021).

Accordingly, scholars have examined worker voice in relation to (a) platform worker's limited access to traditional industrial relations voice structures on account of their employment status, (b) their success in devising alternate voice mechanisms to counter organisational silencing tactics engineered by OLPs and, (c) the emergence of collective voice in the context of worker resistance and mobilisation efforts observed in the platform economy (Cini, 2022; Gegenhuber et al., 2021; Heiner, 2020; Kougiannou & Mendonça, 2021; Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020; Walker, 2021; Wood & Lehdonvirta, 2021). Considering this burgeoning evidence of workers adopting non-traditional avenues and hybrid approaches to voice use, we undertake a systematic examination and analysis of how platform workers have used voice to influence their working conditions?

Drawing on the labour process (LP) and industrial relations (IR) perspectives on worker voice, we identify three distinct patterns of voice use by platform workers, which enable us to provide a nuanced understanding of how these workers have consolidated what we term as – a 'grassroots voice mechanism'. In our analysis, we consider the multiple variants of platform work, different levels of worker participation and dependency, owing to which workers may see differentiated use and potential of voice and which may consequently alter their approaches. Additionally, differences in voice use could also be influenced by factors such as the organisation of the labour process, the socio-political environment, and the institutional context within which the work is embedded.

Our key contribution is through elaborating and theoretically developing the LP and IR perspective on voice in non-standard employment contexts where technology has been central. We also map this growing research domain by way of comprehensively profiling the key themes, theories, methodologies employed and publication patterns. We use the insights garnered from this to develop a future research agenda that can guide ongoing research efforts in a dynamic domain, that also has policy and practice-level relevance. For instance, these insights can sensitise and provide key implications for policymakers who are charged with developing regulations for this new world of work, and how to best enable appropriate access to institutional voice structures for individuals without a formal employment relationship.

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## **Contributory Social Security and Employment-Based Social Protection for Unorganised Workers: Moderating Role of Regulatory Framework**

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**Background:** The vulnerability of informal workers stands as a huge challenge on the way to accomplishing health and well-being, decent work, and equality for all across the Global South (Sustainable Development Goals no. 3, 8, and 10). The universal social protection agenda has not only been the prudence of international organizations like the International Labour Organizations and the World Bank but also a workable policy direction in developing countries.

**Purpose:** The developing countries have started contributory schemes in addition to assistance measures to expand the horizontal and vertical coverage of protection for the entire working class. The purpose of this study is to comprehend the effects of employment relations and contributory social security on employment-based social protection. Furthermore, the moderating effect of the regulatory framework on employment-based social security for unorganized workers' is studied.

**Design/methodology:** The study follows an exploratory design. This research is grounded mainly on two theoretical bedrocks: the rational choice theory and the public interest theory. By borrowing the theoretical underpinning, the contribution of informal workers and the



efficiency of the regulatory framework are analyzed to see the impact on workers' social protection. Cross-sectional data were collected through a schedule questionnaire from 406 unorganized workers employed in the construction sector. Further normality of the data, followed by hypotheses, was tested using PLS-SEM.

Findings- Contributory social security mediates the relationship between employment-based social protection and dimensions of employment relations. Moreover, the regulatory framework moderates the relationship between employment relations and employment-based social protection for unorganized workers. The result shows that the regulatory framework in the labour market has a significant moderating role, while contributions by workers directly mediate the association between employment relations and social protection.

Theoretical implications: The study contributes to the theoretical evolution of willingness to contribute to social security from the perspective of low-income cohorts. It also supplements the literature on the informal economy, employment relations, and regulatory framework to extend social security for all.

Practical implications: The study proposes the emergence of contributory social security for unorganized workers. It also offers pathways for policymakers and government officials by establishing the role of a robust regulatory framework to extend social security to excluded labour in the informal economy.

Scope and limitations: An attempt has been made to present the role of social insurance and the regulatory system in the social protection mechanism. It is focused on the unorganized workers in the construction sector. The study results from the specific sector and region could question the generalizability and suitability of the proposed model.

Originality: The study has made a new attempt to empirically assess the mediating and moderating effects of contributory social security and the regulatory framework, respectively.

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## **Open and covert labor struggles: "Guest workers" in current Taiwan and post-WWII Germany**

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This conference contribution approaches temporary labor migration programs in Europe and East Asia through a comparative perspective 'from below.' It traces connections between the contemporary labor migration of Southeast Asian blue-collar workers to Taiwan and the historical migration of "guest workers" from Southern Europe and Turkey to post-WWII West Germany. European "guest worker" programs, and especially the West German version, 'modelled' for current Taiwanese regime of hiring flexible and temporary workers from abroad. My contribution draws on two years of fieldwork among Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan and a broad body of literature on historical labor migration to West Germany. It looks at the various forms in which migrant workers in both contexts counter racism, exploitation, and precarization. Thereby, I focus on migrant labor in manufacturing, a sector that plays a major role for the recruitment of migrant labor in both countries. In Taiwan and in post-WWII West Germany, migrant factory workers have contested their conditions both inside and outside the workplace. Both contexts feature parallels regarding migrant factory workers' every day and covert forms of struggle. Migrant workers have used their labor mobility, and they engage in small work slowdowns or stoppages. Also, in both contexts, migrant workers have developed social and cultural forms in which they organize themselves in everyday life, for instance, in hometown associations, self-help groups, or in music scenes. One striking difference is that in the current Taiwanese context, open struggles remain rare. This contrasts the series of mass strikes of the late 1960s and 1970s in West Germany, in which migrant workers played a major role. Against this background, the conference contribution tries to trace the conditions under which the specific forms of struggles in the respective contexts take place. I suggest that a number of interrelated factors need to be taken into account in order to gain a better

understanding of the circumstances under which migrant workers develop power from below: the respective industrial structures, demographic conditions, the state of the economy, migration policies, labor processes, the organization of migrant workers' social reproduction, the state of local labor and social movements, and migrant workers' previous experience of labor struggles in their countries of origin.

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## **Immigration policy and the regulation of the labour market and migrant workers in post-Brexit UK**

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The UK government has generated and implemented an increasingly hostile migration environment through its policies since 2012 (Immigration Acts 2014; 2016), with the aim of deterring certain migrants from coming to the UK or making (mainly, but not only, undocumented) migrants more likely to leave through policies that make it difficult for them to access key services. The 'hostile environment' policy was accompanied by austerity measures, a decrease in funding for public services, and strong anti-immigration rhetoric by some politicians and media. These factors and policies contributed to the UK leaving the EU and a subsequent re-haul of the immigration system in 2020, with the key change being that the current immigration system is more restrictive to EU citizens wanting to come and work. The new system is aimed at attracting 'skilled workers' and as such there are no routes of entry for people wanting to come to work in the so-called 'low-skilled' (but perhaps better described as low paid) sectors.

Following Brexit, the UK has seen a reduction in the number of EU citizens coming entering the country for work and an increase in people leaving, but the overall migration numbers have increased. In the context of a lack of adequate domestic workforce, there are ongoing reports of large numbers of vacancies that employers are finding difficult to fill. The rhetoric that led to Brexit focused on regaining the control over migration and who enters the country on the one hand, and on increasing the opportunities for developing the UK workforce on the other hand. However, in practice it seems that the new system has resulted in the tightening of the labour market, increase in labour shortages across sectors and work intensification in the sectors mostly hit. In response to labour shortages and business pressure, the government has tweaked immigration routes aimed at Skilled Workers as part of the Points Based System, and introduced some temporary visa categories to address urgent shortages, as well as established a fund aimed at supporting care providers with recruitment from abroad.

In this paper we look at the political regulation of migration and how the UK government's reactive approach to immigration contributes to reproducing precarity within the UK labour market. Drawing on our research of labour mobility after Brexit, we make two arguments in relation to UK's immigration policy and migrant labour regulation. First, we argue that there is an inherent tension in its approach to immigration policy, between the government's rhetoric of being 'tough on immigration' and its policies that allow or even actively encourage some forms of labour mobility through introduction of new visa or skilled worker categories to target specific occupations or sectors. Second, we argue that this 'targeted visa approach' and the new immigration system place a greater burden of ensuring regulatory compliance on employers who recruit from abroad, and employers in turn want to exert higher control over the workers recruited from abroad to recover the cost of recruitment, resulting in fewer rights and more precarity for workers.

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## **Ethical business, the possible, the necessary and the irresistible: moral economy in the age of sustainability**

Dupont Vincent, Pietrzak Diana

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The economy is traditionally seen as a distinct sphere of society, in which the calculating logic of profit making structures behavior. This is of course an ideal typical situation. In reality many different and contradictory values pervade economic practices, as transactions in a market are structured by considerations far beyond the narrow rational calculation of individual commercial interests. In more and more value chains the idea of a moral economy -under banners as diverse as 'fairtrade', 'CSR', 'decent wage', 'living income', or just plain good manners- is on the rise. It increasingly determines how organizations choose commercial partners, manage commercial relationships and market their products. It also shapes how entrepreneurs see themselves and the businesses they run. Even though the extent to which these 'sustainable' business practices tend to positively impact their purported beneficiaries - classically the environment, or workers in the 'global south'- is debatable, there is no doubt that they heavily influence businesses' policies and practices, and in some cases fundamentally reshape business landscapes and even whole sectors.

But what do these ideas of the 'moral economy' consist of? Where do they come from? And how do they interact with commercial realities? We argue that below their apparent heterogeneity lie certain historically and culturally determined ideational structures that make possible the thinking of the economy as moral or immoral. It enables entrepreneurs and their employees to think of morality within the current economic system, but also necessarily limits them in their thinking as to the alternatives that might exist. Over the course of three years we have conducted interviews with employees, managers and business owners in 17 companies, most of them smaller businesses, considered to be 'best in class' examples of sustainability in what are termed 'high risk' sectors. Through these interviews emerges a dual picture. On the one hand, many interlocutors see themselves as frontrunners resisting hegemonic unsustainable practices and pioneering in a growing movement that aims to fight them. On the other hand they feel chained to the workings of the market within which they function, and wonder about their own insignificance within a global economic system they see both as the most important carrier of progress and its primary obstacle. Looking at governments, large corporations or the consumer to bring about the long awaited large scale change, they muddle through with the patchy sustainability policies they manage to set up and keep afloat.

In this paper we aim to better understand the worldviews driving managers and employees in smaller companies to strive for a more ethical economy. Through the use of a critical cultural sociological lens, the discourses produced in the 17 companies are analyzed and framed within broader cultural and historical tendencies present in contemporary capitalist societies. By providing a critical evaluation of the meaning structures underlying these views of a moral economy, we examine the conditions for their existence, as well as their possibilities for transformation.

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## **Chasing promises of progress: control, consent and the proliferation of counting and accounting in a sustainable cocoa supply chain**

Dupont Vincent, Pietrzak Diana

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In the countries at the center of global capitalism, attention for the sustainability of globally sourced goods is rising both on the agendas of lawmakers and consumers. These worries over the environmental and human cost of commodities go hand in hand with the concern to quantify, measure and certify sustainability. As due diligence and transparency regulations proliferate throughout the 'global north', operating 'sustainably' is no longer optional in many sectors. Increasingly, products need to be infused with stories of sustainability, stories that

require to be backed by data empowering their truth claims. This, however, does not take place spontaneously, but requires extensive governance efforts. Mechanisms of control driven and coordinated by lead firm management reverberate throughout global value chains (GVC), in a bid to both create the sustainable goods, and the data, markets and governments require. Through the combination of labor process theory and a discursive lens, this paper aims to further our understanding of what this means for workers in sustainable supply chains.

The present paper is based on a case study extending over three years and including different organizations implicated in the supply chain of a European chocolate company, widely known as a 'sustainability champion' in its sector. Through interviews, participant observation and document analysis, we elaborate a multi-sited ethnography of quantification in sustainable supply chains. We follow the idea of sustainability and traceability as a crucial vehicle for control and consent along a GVC, from the European chocolate manufacturer and its importing supplier, through a West-African cocoa cooperative, to the very farmers harvesting the cocoa beans. By doing so we explore how ideas of sustainability -permeated with a quantifying logic-travel from the concerned minds of European consumers and the proposals of European lawmakers, up the supply chain, to impact labor processes of some of the most precarious workers on the globe.

We argue that sustainable supply chain governance efforts centering on the quantification of sustainability require the creation and maintenance of new forms of workers' consent. Along the value chain studied, organizations participate in vast data collection efforts, driving their employees to outdo each other in the exactitude and abundance of the data they generate. Besides through -rather modest- monetary incentives, consent in organizations in capitalism's producing periphery is being generated and reinforced through narratives of neoliberal sustainability and development, promising better futures through certification schemes and social initiatives. Considering this, we argue that sustainability programs risk reproducing and even exacerbating existing power disparities. However, the intensification of the exchange of information within a supply chain also transforms inter-organizational relations, generating new opportunities for solidarity and emancipation. Our paper thus explores how in GVCs, lead firm management's intensification of sustainability governance through numbers facilitates novel forms of exploitation, while at the same time generating new possibilities of resistance. By addressing this question we respond to an urgent need for deeper reflection on what the proliferation of sustainability regulations will mean for workers, and how they will feed into broader global inequalities.

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## **Service Quality Conflicts in Organised Childcare and their Implications in Terms of Professionalisation**

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Throughout the Western world, early childhood education and care (ECEC) has developed into an increasingly professionalised segment of Western labour markets. Concomitantly, this sector is subject to multiple and divergent expectations concerning what it shall deliver – by society at large and public politics; among parents; and within the relevant range of occupations and professions. In the context of rapid expansion under conditions of both staff shortages and public budget constraints, but also due to incompatible external demands, the sector is rife with tensions affecting the labour process in ECEC organisations in various ways. Among other things, these tensions reflect what we label 'service quality conflicts', prone to influence the ongoing movement of professionalisation throughout the sector.

In our paper, dealing with the case of Germany, we first analyse the inherent tensions in greater detail. Thus, we illustrate how public policy has discovered childcare organisations as a lever for social investment strategies aimed at ensuring both equal opportunities for children (including from disadvantaged backgrounds) and the improvement of 'human capital' for post-industrial labour markets. In this context, formalised quality standards have increasingly been

viewed as being critical to achieving educational objectives, for instance, through the systematic monitoring of children's development including by individual record-keeping. This approach borrows from the mantra of 'New Public Management', but also seems to be engrained in popular concepts of modern professional practice, transforming the latter into organisational professionalism (in the terms of Evetts). These concepts also comprise the establishment of what is called 'educational partnerships', established between childcare staff and parents. While German ECEC organisations are involved in social inclusion agendas targeting disabled people and lower-class populations, many families higher up the social ladder consider childhood as an 'educational project' that should be organised in a school-like manner, with children entering curricular-based training as soon as possible. A major background for this is 'educational panic' in the sense of Katz. This bunch of discrepant expectations also pervades the professional, yet fragmented community in this traditionally feminised field, hosting various occupational groups and a professional elite pursuing an academic orientation. Overall, our overview analysis suggests that the labour process in childcare organisations is fraught with huge challenges.

Secondly, we illuminate the 'organisational processing' of this imbroglio, looking closer at how service quality conflicts are perceived and understood throughout the sector. This part of the analysis is drawing on results from expert interviews conducted for a research project which will be based on in-depth case studies geared towards gaining insights into how the above set of expectations shapes role conflicts in ECEC organizations and how this translates into the mind-sets of (various groups of) childcare workers in current Germany. Based on the above findings, we show, that some quality commitments in the ECEC sector are self-proclaimed while others are externally imposed, with ambivalent effects. To some degree, they are conducive to enhanced professionalism, yet they come with intra- and interindividual service quality conflicts which may undermine the process of professionalisation and the motivational basis of staff.

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## **Powered by the supply chain: How the German Supply Chain Act opens up a new legal terrain for labour conflicts**

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In our contribution, we examine how the new German Act on Corporate Due Diligence is capable of changing the terrain of legal struggles for workers. Those changes do not only affect the negotiation and articulation of labour conflicts in the Global South but also the European context. We depart from a case study of two truckers' strikes carried out in Gräfenhausen, Germany, in March/April and July/August/September 2023, led by workers from different Asian countries. Our contribution aims to offer an analytical framework to make sense of the interplay between labour conflicts and legal strategies in the context of enforcing the new German Due Diligence regulation. We argue that labour struggles can be carried over to the legal arena in different ways and with different implications for the actors in the labour struggle.

The precarious working conditions and legal status of Asian and East European truck drivers in Europe impacted their access to legal instruments and their strategic assessment to consider these particular tactics. We examine how, during the strikes in Gräfenhausen, actors with specific legal resources, such as legal expertise, network in the legal field, or financial resources, represented those truck drivers were addressing the legal arena. This meant enhancing their bargaining power and juridification of the political conflict. The case shows, on the one hand, how the reference to the law can have productive results for labour struggles to the extent that it legitimizes collective workers's demands based on the institutionalized grammar of the law. The reference to the German Act on Corporate Due Diligence moreover allowed the rights holders to direct their claims apart from the Polish client as well as on end customers in the supply chains. On the other hand, there can be tensions between workers, labour and legal actors about organisational and legal priorities. To develop our analytical

framework, we bring together contributions from the field of sociology of law and industrial relations (Löw 2023; Birke 2022; Vestena 2022; Taipen/Fabian 2022; Buckel et al. 2021; Cowen 2014; Levy 2008) and combine their theoretical reflections with our empirical study.

Our study is based on a qualitative-empirical research design, including semi-structured expert interviews with workers, trade union officials, NGO members, legal experts, and officials from involved ministries and authorities, in loco observations, and group discussions.

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## **Narratives of migration and hierarchization: the media portrayal of migrant farmworker in Germany**

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Agricultural work has become a major concern in Germany as elsewhere in Europe, for farmers and their federations, policymaker and political parties, and the wider publics, as well as for trade unions and the, often mobile, workers themselves, albeit for very different reasons for each group. However, little attention has been paid to agricultural work in migration research in and on Germany, just as in the broader public discourse, although this had changed with the pandemic that brought the issue into the spotlight albeit for a short moment only.

Looking at public, media and political discourses in migration studies is usually undertaken with an interest in the attitudes towards immigration, answering the questions how immigration and immigrants or particular migrant groups are perceived, by whom and on which grounds, and thus whether they are rejected or well received. This view has recently also guided the interest in the official and media discourses on refugee reception. However, the press and other media outlets are also one of the key spaces where migration, migrants, and their hierarchization are produced. Thus, rather than merely a reflection of the different societal stances on migration, media needs to be recognized as part of its production, and of its stratification. With its focus on labour market issues, and on farmwork more specifically, this paper adds some nuance to media analysis and shows how media also accompanies (migrant) hierarchies on the labour market, shaping the processes of segmentation that turn out not only as employer driven, but also as part of media discourses.

Using local newspaper articles in the LexisNexis-database, this paper analyses narratives of migration specifically looking into how Romanian agricultural worker harvesting in Germany figure in the German media. The analysis covers 106 identified local media articles from 12 local newspapers in the region of North-Rhine Westphalia and covers a time frame from 2014 to 2022. Thus, our period starts with the moment when Romanian citizens could freely access the German labour market until the two years throughout the pandemic. It is the period when Poland was substituted by Romania as the major source country for seasonal labour in Germany. The data analysis employs a mix of open coding according to Grounded Theory and the use of codes and narrative strategies other researchers already established. Applying this procedure, the analysis is interested in the main themes and perspectives, together with the actors and their voices in local media discourse. Not least we ask whether and which hierarchizations emerge in the discourse.

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## **Negotiating Standards and Standardization in the Era of Digitalization**

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Digitalization is increasingly finding its way into the world of work and new requirements are emerging as technology is now being integrated into work processes (Pfeiffer & Suphan 2020). In order to translate processes for digital technologies (e.g., AI-based technologies), standards come in handy to structure procedures and offer clear and set regulations. However, non-formalized standards, like working routines/processes, need to be translated for digital solutions to be applicable and useable. Likewise, standards can be equally used when

handling work processes within a more networked infrastructure and securing operational data. In this case standard means regulatories to secure legacy systems in work surroundings regarding information security.

In the field of labour, many explicit standardized processes can be found to ensure that work procedures are always fulfilled in the same manner, which primarily serves the consistency, quality and security (Gerig 2020; Lucas et al. 2019; Strauss & Schmitz 2016). For example, in the domain of cybersecurity regulations like NIST, ISO-Norm (ISO 27001) specify risk management and information security requirements for the organization's establishment. Moreover, in hospitals, as part of the critical infrastructure, standards like B3S focus on secure IT structures to prohibit cyber-attacks that could endanger patient care or sensible information. Nevertheless, in the field of Engineering, DIN or ISO Norms are crucial to ensure consistent work processes (Chen & Vernadat 2004; Pritchard 2009).

Who sets and develops those standards varies from area to area, and how mandatory they are differs. Nonetheless, standards intervene in existing work processes and structure them according to the requirements demanded (Lampland & Star 2009). The adequate translation of regulations can be quite compliance-driven instead of actually improving work consistency or ensuring security. Focusing on compliance can also create more work, as structuring the work processes, documentation or bureaucratic processes related to standards takes time. Accordingly, employees might have to cope with the translation of abstract regulatories, juggling between compliance and the requirements of the set work environment. However, too much formalization can prevent employees from being innovative, as their scope of action is restricted by standards. In addition, implementing regulatories can miss the point of securing the environment when it becomes a compliance-driven task. Therefore, integrating and translating standards into the work processes and making sense of them (Skotnes 2021) must be viewed from different angles.

In order to elaborate on how standards are handled in daily working practice, a first insight is given utilizing empirical material on the functioning of standards in cybersecurity, healthcare and engineering to explore implications for a translation of standards in the shadow of digitalization. Furthermore, our research shows the implications of standards in the working sphere to coordinate 1) a transformative process in the field of engineering and 2) securing legacy systems in healthcare. Despite the differences, the unifying elements of standards in the work environment of the analyzed work areas are also considered.

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## **Technological Change and Migrant Labour: A Comparative View into European Agricultural Sectors**

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My research presents a close comparative view of the agricultural sectors of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Specifically, I explore the relationship between technologies and precarious migrant labour in the sectors, as shaped by different actors, by looking at the institutional dimensions of labour regulations in the sector, immigration policies, and national training systems. Today, much hope is vested in technological advancements and the corresponding product and process innovations to provide an alternative to replacing domestic labour with migration, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic crisis. But the adoption of technology remains an uneven trend across countries. Several works studying how technological change impacts jobs, both in quantity and quality, have underlined important dimensions of inequality that are produced and re-produced. However, by solely focusing on the impacts of technological change, the drivers and determinants of states following different trajectories regarding automation are overlooked. This limits the potential to contribute to policy debate around better strategies to deal with the ongoing "digital revolution". Stressing the important role of institutions, actors (migrants, employers, and unions), and their interests and power in shaping how and whether technological change is adopted in practice within a sector

historically reliant on migrant labour, my research addresses the question: How do unions, migrants, and farmers shape changes in the use of technological change and migrant work in the agricultural sector? The study is loosely embedded in the recent Comparative Employment Relations literature (CER) and injects the migration literature into CER. It draws from qualitative methods of interviews with farmers, unions, and migrants in both countries and fieldwork in both field sites to form comparisons between the dynamics and interests that emerge in two different political, social, economic, and geographical contexts.

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## **Manufacturing Automation: Engineers on Robots, AI, and the limits of Automation in the Austrian Automotive Supplier Industry**

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Industrial employment in Austria has increased over the past 15 years, despite increasing robot-use. This is particularly true for the Austrian automotive industry, where more than anything, labour-shortages have been the main concern of manufacturers. This paper asks why this is the case, what the increasing numbers of robots are used for, who they are replacing (if anyone) and most importantly how the automation and labour-use strategies in the Austrian automotive industry have shaped this outcome. In order to explain this, the paper focuses on the socio-economic group of those performing the 'work of automation' (company engineers, system-integrators, and technology suppliers) as privileged point of access, in order to understand limits and logics of the ongoing automation and the persistence of manufacturing employment.

Recent contributions on the use of AI and robotics have identified different uses (substituting, complementing or augmenting human labour). There is limited research, however, on when, which of these strategy is pursued and why. The conceptions of engineers, how they envision the desired changes to the labour-process and human-machine interaction are central to this. By investigating those performing the work of automation, it will be possible to ground more aggregate developments, problematize them, extend or confirm them. While contemporary Labour-Process Theory, has been famously concerned with questions of control and the skill level of work, it also has a foundation in such analysis of engineering rationales and how they shape the labour-process (see originally Braverman's work on Taylor). Many contributions within LPT and the critical sociology of work have so far focused on the contextual conditions shaping the implementation of automation, for example through international comparisons (Lloyd and Payne, 2019, 2021; Krzywindzski, 2017 and 2020) or the position of firms in commodity chains and the difference between small and large firms (Da Roit and Ianuzzi, 2022, Krzywdinski, 2017), or the role that different managerial strategies have in technology implementation (Mokudai et al, 2021, Moro and Rinaldini, 2020). Less attention has been paid to the role of engineers in the automation of production as well as to comparisons of different actors within the same sector. The goal of this paper is to address both aspects.

To this end 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted with company engineers, external systems integrators and technology suppliers. This number also includes auxiliary interviews with worker council representatives, management without engineering positions and representations of interest. The sample of firms includes a variation between types of products, type of ownership and employment numbers. Using Burawoy's extended case method (2009), these interviews, together with descriptive statics and observations from nine factory site visits, are drawn upon to arrive at more general conclusions about automation and continuing employment in the automotive industry in Austria.



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## **Beyond independent contractors – risks and harms of subcontracted labour in the platform economy**

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Work in the platform economy (as in the food/grocery delivery, ride-hail or domestic sector) is mainly characterised by notoriously precarious and sometimes even dangerous working conditions. The reasons for this are numerous, but one of the critical aspects that has been widely discussed in recent years is the misclassification of workers as independent contractors. Workers are stripped of various benefits and social rights (depending on the respective countries' legal contexts) connected to an employment relationship.

However, numerous court rulings in many countries (most prominently in Spain, the Netherlands, the UK and Belgium, to mention a few) clearly state that working for digital labour platforms, in many cases, fulfils the criteria of an employment relationship. Accordingly, fighting for the re-classification of platform workers as employees has become a significant claim of activists, unions and governments trying to improve working conditions in the platform economy (see, for example, the ongoing debate about the EU directive on platform labour).

This paper argues that more than a sole focus on re-classification is needed to mitigate the platform economy's risks and harms, and the case of genuinely self-employed needs to be included in discussions of the social protection of platform workers. Focusing too much on re-classification as the ultimate panacea of all issues in the platform economy means that either platforms seek new gaps in the law to circumvent emerging laws and regulations, or they come up with new business and operational models to ensure that the laws do not apply to them. One operating model growing in popularity in Europe at the moment is the subcontracting or the 3PL model, as it is sometimes referred to. In this model, workers are formally hired and (often) employed by subcontractors who have direct relations with a platform but are not directly hired by the platforms themselves. While legally speaking, this means that platform workers are employed (and not independent contractors), we argue in this paper that this employment relationship does not necessarily guarantee better working conditions for platform workers. In other words, the nature and quality of the employment relationship are at least as important in platform work as its mere existence.

Drawing on empirical evidence from the Fairwork Project, a global action-research network which evaluates and aims to improve working conditions in the platform economy, the paper will discuss different business and operational models platforms use to include subcontractors in their business practices and highlight the effects on working conditions. The paper uses evidence from qualitative research done in multiple countries of the Fairwork network to analyse the effects of subcontracted labour. Especially drawing on the recent developments about platform regulation, the paper intends to provide policy suggestions that address the root of the problems workers face in the platform economy: lack of social protection. However, this problem can only be addressed if the discussion moves beyond the simplistic employment classification debates.

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## **"Strawberries are safe" - working and living conditions of migrant farmworkers in Germany during and after the Covid-19 pandemic**

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The temporary closure of the borders in March 2020 caused panic among farmers and fruit growers who were expecting the arrival of seasonal workers, mainly from Romania and Poland in the case of Germany. In this paper, I take a closer look at the working and living realities of seasonal workers before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. I consider how the tied provision

of accommodation goes hand in hand with an increased control regime. Importantly, the increased control regime was legitimised not only by the needs of employers and the 'just in time' mode of production but also by the state of pandemic and the adoption of a fast track solutions, such as labour quarantine, which allowed migrant workers to be quarantined on the farm and carry out farm-work at the same time. Applying the lens of agricultural exceptionalism, which allows the sector to be insulated from much of the labour regulation, I argue that it is precisely because of the exceptional position agriculture enjoys as an industry, the fast-track solutions were adopted by many EU member states during the pandemic with regards to temporary work of migrant farmworkers. Finally, I ask whether the inclusion of migrant farmworkers in the category of key workers has led to a positive change in their working and living conditions.

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## **“Work hard, have fun, make history” from Latin America. Coercion, surveillance, and consent in MercadoLibre**

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With the rising role of e-commerce, logistics gained more importance in contemporary capitalism. Big Tech companies such as Amazon and Alibaba orchestrate and control entire market ecosystems comprising providers, producers, suppliers, and consumers who have a large concentration of workers in e-commerce's logistical infrastructure. The quality of these jobs is frequently far from satisfactory, it involves work under pressure and sometimes inhuman working conditions. Management must ensure workers' commitment and it combines bureaucratic techniques (real-time control and performance evaluation) with a particular type of corporate culture that depends upon gamification and meritocratic discourse. Jobs in Amazon warehouses have been widely explored in the global north, nevertheless, this kind of jobs and the practices of these companies in the global south (especially in Latin America) is still very much unknown. This presentation explores how MercadoLibre (MELI), the largest e-commerce provider in Latin America integrates a distinct combination of coercion, surveillance, and consent in the workplace.

MercadoLibre is widely considered the “Amazon of Latin America.” The Argentinian-born company is mainly a third-party marketplace, which means that sellers are selling their products through the marketplace and the company just operates the infrastructure (both online and offline) and takes a cut. This rate includes shipping fees through the company's logistics operations (Mercado Envíos), financial operations (Mercado Pago), and advertising operations (Mercado Ads). MELI operates fulfillment centers in multiple locations in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and Colombia. Storage, separation, packaging, and shipping to the customer are fully managed by the company.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to get data from the unique warehouse in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Data collection and analysis aimed to identify and explore the factors associated with the phenomenon of the study according to the employee's perception.

The main results show that despite its location MercadoLibre has similar patterns to Amazon in its fulfillment centers. The hierarchical conflict between labor and capital is displaced into an individual and lateral conflict between workers over the resources needed to make out. This practice is reinforced by the existence of an internal labor market.

On the shop floor, surplus value is produced through coercive methods of speed up, firing, and close supervision. Nevertheless, the management rely also on consent-manufacturing games to meet the production quota which shows that, the profound contradiction is that capitalism has to exclude and involve workers for the functioning of the process. This coordination of interests between the management and the worker in such a way as to ensure extra effort relies on the ideology of self-gratification.

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## Activist work and field research: exploring multi-sited dynamics through outreach counseling and information work with Romanian construction workers in Germany

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Field research in social sciences underwent significant changes in the last decades. Immersive and flexible multi-sited participatory approaches became an active part of the literary discourse (Beer & König, 2020), being showcased as adequate alternatives to older subaltern and rigid views on field research (Marcus 1995). These constructivist approaches drive researchers to shift personal positions in relation to encountered actors and discourses, but also at the same time inherently allow them to actively construct the lifeworld of various subjects as well as of the system itself, therefore becoming „circumstantial activists“. Thus a sense of „doing more than just ethnography“ comes to the fore (Marcus 1995, p. 114). „Strategies of following connections, associations, and putative relationships“ lie here at the heart of the employed methodology (id., p. 97).

However, particular circumstances demand a more advanced case sensitive approach. Research on the lifeworld and working conditions of East European mobile construction workers in Germany stands out in the scientific discourse as highly incomplete. The high degree of fragmentation present in the German construction sector (Bosch & Hüttenhof 2019) as well as the very pronounced precarity, exploitation, informality, dependancy on employers and inaccessibility of mobile workers (Sperneac-Wolfer 2002, 2023) act obstructively in establishing the elementary connections required to proceed with participant multi-sited observation and therefore render the entire field of study as very limited.

Practical work conducted by the author as an activist researcher of the PECO-Institut e.V., a labour union-affiliated educational and research institute, has shown, however, that by further extending the reach and depth of field research, access to such a restrictive environment can be effectively created. The approach employed here did not only rely on pre-determined strategies to map and investigate the terrain but involved the application of clearly defined and proven mapping tactics used by union organisers (Ersoy 2020, TUC 2018). Such instructions were adjusted to the particular circumstances around Romanian mobile construction workers in Frankfurt am Main and Nürnberg and combined with counseling work.

Mapping terrain and specific dynamics is from this point of view a primary tactic in approaching and exploring the lifeworld of construction workers and not just a circumstantial exercise. The approach is defined here not by immediately following connections, associations and relationships but first of all by finding and accessing them. This was achieved not only by means of circumstantial encounters and interactions but also and foremost by practicing outreach problem-centered counseling, information work and language assistance. The author could thus explore and determine first-hand the dynamics present in the lifeworld of mobile construction workers, create mutual trust and shared experiences as well as to access and establish networks, having handled over 400 labour law and social law-related cases in the span of 3 years. In doing so, a very large amount of research data has been collected. The data served as basis for numerous scientific projects and press articles. It is here to be noted that the effort required high flexibility and motivation since actions on-call and during weekends were very common.

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## Conflict, Consent and Emergency Communities. 30 Years of Workplace Codetermination in Eastern Germany

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High expectations of the East German population for democratic participation accompanied the German process of reunification. Not only in society, but also in the workplace, people wanted to have a voice. Consequently, when the West German dual system of industrial relations was transferred to the new states of Germany in 1990, the first elected works councils often laid claim to economic democratic co-determination. Early hopes were quickly dashed in the face of a fatal economic situation. Therefore, works councils were usually forced to collaborate with management in the socially acceptable liquidation of broad sections of the workforce. Instead of economic-democratic co-management, so-called "Notgemeinschaften" (emergency communities) emerged in many places. In East Germany, conflict was hardly a realistic option.

Thirty years later, there is neither economic nor cultural unity in Germany. Economic conditions and collective bargaining structures continue to differ between the eastern and western parts of the country – always to the disadvantage of the East. However, something seems to be changing both in terms of collective bargaining strategies and within companies – especially in the East. Recent research has claimed a revitalization of trade unions, a certain boom in the establishment of works councils and a new generation of East Germans who are more conflict-oriented and self-confident in the workplace. It seems that 30 years later, conflict is slowly becoming an option.

In our talk, we will address the question of how co-determination in Eastern German industrial enterprises has changed over the past 30 years. The aim is to reconstruct typical forms of change in co-determination and to examine which company, union, and societal factors promote – or do not promote – interest-based co-determination that is open to conflict.

We first use a concept by Streeck and Thelen (2005) to capture typical patterns of change in co-determination. Second, we show by some case studies that the theses of recent research suggesting a shift toward conflict-oriented co-determination can be confirmed, but this trend is by no means omnipresent. The case studies indicate thirdly that the factors of co-determinational change are deeply intertwined with the specific development of the companies. We illustrate this ambivalence based on collective bargaining strategies of IG Metall in Eastern Germany: While under certain conditions these strategies stimulate the willingness to engage in conflict, in other companies new "Notgemeinschaften" are promoted.

The talk is based on data collected as part of a research project on "East German Codetermination in Historical Change" funded by the Hans Böckler Foundation (2022/23). The empirical basis is 40 interviews with company and trade union actors in ten East German metalworking companies. Since the project is conceived as a follow-up design, we also draw for all case studies on interview material collected in 1993/94 in an earlier research project on the "Political Culture of Exchange Relations between Management and Works Councils in East German Industry" (Artus et al. 2001). The basis of the analyses is thus a genuine qualitative panel.

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## Assessing sustainability research through the lens of the Labour Process Theory

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The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of the present. Climate research has been discussing different transformation paths, ranging from Green Economy to Post-Growth concepts. While the former concepts rely on technological innovation and market incentives while continuing the path of economic growth, the latter call for new forms of economic activity. Whatever transformation paths into the future will look like, they will change labour processes, the demand for and types of jobs. Ongoing change has been witnessed by Environmental Labour Studies (Räthzel/Stevis/Uzzell 2021). It remains an open question to what extent this fast-growing field of research takes on board the achievements of Labour Process Theory (LPT) over the last decades.

The aim of this paper is to look at recent research on socio-ecological transformation from an LPT perspective. In doing so, we use an analytical grid mainly reflecting the core propositions of LPT (Thompson 1989, Thomson/Vincent 2010). This means, first, to consider the constraints stemming from capital accumulation. A second dimension relates to the structured antagonism of capital and labour influencing employment relations and the dynamics of the labour process. How powerful is the ideology of “sitting in the same boat” obfuscating the antagonism when it comes to defending investments, business opportunities and jobs against changes? The aim of a climate-friendly reduction of working hours and the related struggles also fall under this dimension. A third dimension refers to the control imperative and the control-and-resistance paradigm and covers, for example, both workers’ adherence to companies’ sustainability rules and workers’ resistance against unsustainable working practices. Also of interest is another indeterminacy of labour that Smith (2006) called ‘mobility power’: Do workers leave, threaten to leave or not join a company for ecological reasons? Another dimension covers participatory management and workplace democracy which includes the extent to which workers have a say in ecologically relevant decisions on products and production methods.

This paper is based on the results of an Assessment Report in the tradition of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reports, focusing on the country of Austria (APCC Special Report “Structures for Climate-Friendly Living” (<https://klimafreundlichesleben.apcc-sr.ccca.ac.at/>) from 2023 and on additional literature reviews. The report assesses scientific literature drawing on research from a wide range of disciplines (political, economic, social and natural sciences). Overall, the analysis shows that parts of the research on climate change and socio-ecological transformation has clear overlaps with LPT (e.g., research on just transition) while other parts show blind spots in this respect.

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## How workers' employment trajectories are affected by insecure employment at the early career stage

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This contribution forms one of the empirical chapters of the author's PhD thesis, currently in her third part-time academic year, combining this with her full-time role as Principal Analyst at the Work Foundation at Lancaster University where she leads the Insecure Work Programme.

The paper explores how engagement with insecure work during the early career affects UK workers' longer-term employment trajectories and outcomes. Much of the prior literature around insecure and precarious work is divided between public health literature, which explores the effect of subjective insecurity (the perception of being insecure) on mental and physical health and wellbeing (Kim & Knesebeck, 2015); and literature on objective insecurity (ways in which people may experience insecurity without necessarily feeling themselves to be insecure), focussing on the impact of employment precarity on future earning potential and risk of unemployment. This latter strand has often focussed on a single aspect of insecurity, such as temporary work, or part-time work (Booth et al, 2002; McVicar et al, 2019). However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that several forms of insecurity can coincide, creating a greater intensity of insecurity (Florisson, 2022). Therefore, this paper explores the extent to which 'cumulative insecurity' during the early career impacts on worker's longer-term employment trajectories and their quality and experience of work.

This paper uses a holistic measure of labour market insecurity across three dimensions derived from the literature (as outlined in Florisson 2022, this uses among others Olsthoorn, 2014, Kalleberg, 2018, Richardson, 2022):

- contractual insecurity, where people are not guaranteed future hours or future work
- financial insecurity, where people experience low pay or unpredictable pay
- and (lack of) access to rights and protections within the UK context, for example by virtue of employment status or due to failure to qualify for certain benefits.

As a new contribution, these three dimensions of insecurity are represented by eight indicators for insecurity selected from an ESRC-funded longitudinal data source: the British Household Panel Survey and Understanding Society (1991 to present). The paper exploits this data source by classifying employment across different levels of intensity and duration of insecurity at every point of observation, and tracking individual outcomes over time using descriptive analyses, regressions and sequence analysis.

The analysis demonstrates that cumulative levels of insecurity in the UK have been relatively stable over the past 30 years. Further, it finds that although three quarters of young workers who enter into insecure work obtain secure positions within three years, a sizeable minority of workers remain in insecure work for protracted periods of time, suggesting clear employment penalties for young workers who engage in insecure work that persist for some time. Previous research may have underestimated the consequences of insecurity by focusing only on a single aspect of insecurity at a time, rather than the longer cumulative impact. This paper shows that experiencing insecure work in the early career has implications for long term individual outcomes as well as wider implications for the UK labour market.

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## Regulating Labour Standards at Sea: Implications of the Labour Process for the Regularisation of Commercial Fishing Workers' Employment in Indonesia

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Commercial fishing is widely considered to be incompatible with 'standard' notions of work. Internationally, employment relations in the fishing industry are governed by the Convention on Work in Fishing, which outlines minimum labour standards for the industry, with a particular focus on occupational safety and health. The Convention aims to cover all fishers – migrant and domestic – working on boats that meet minimum requirements in terms of size, distance travelled from the coastline and time at sea. But, as Vandergeest and Marschke (2020: 291) point out, even the Convention on Work in Fishing identifies fisheries work as being exceptional, permitting working conditions 'that would be considered unacceptable on land'.

The nature of commercial fishing work is indeed distinctive. While some commercial fishers work on a daily or weekly basis, others may be at sea for months at a time. The latter may have little work to do on the (often) long journey to the fishing ground. When they get there, the rhythm of work is determined by the availability of fish. At times where fish are plentiful, they are required to work with minimal breaks for periods that extend long beyond the maximum times mandated for work on land. In addition, the majority of commercial fishing workers are not in waged employment. Those who receive wages are generally paid at rates that fall below the minimum levels that (theoretically) apply to land-based employment.

There is no doubt that commercial fishing work is hard for governments to regulate. In Indonesia's case, the Ministry of Manpower does not have full jurisdiction at sea. Although it remains responsible for disputes settlement, it does not have oversight of sea-based employment contracts (*perjanjian kerja laut*), and its capacity to carry out labour inspections – sometimes even to enter a port – is limited. The situation is further complicated by the fact that unions are discouraged from engaging in the sector by high levels of labour mobility, the isolated nature of workplaces and the relatively small number of workers employed even on larger vessels.

Using a labour studies framework, this paper analyses the labour process on local commercial fishing vessels in Indonesia, the challenges that the labour process poses for regulators and activists, and the ways in which it has shaped the regulation of work in the industry. The analysis presented draws on (a) a close examination of national-level policies, laws and regulations and qualitative research involving (b) field observations in five Indonesian ports, (c) semi-structured interviews with government, industry, NGO and union representatives at the national and local levels, and (d) group interviews with 81 fishing workers. Based on this analysis, we demonstrate the link between assessments of the labour process and the regulatory uncertainty within the industry, which in has left commercial fishers without adequate protection or even a collective voice.

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## Beyond Overt Repression: Exploring Authoritarian Innovations in Labour Governance

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How do states, democratic or otherwise, manage dissent and worker voice through changes to labour governance? This paper explores the utility of the concept of "authoritarian innovations" – drawn from the political science literature and defined by Curato and Fossati (2020) as "novel governance practices designed to shrink spaces for meaningful public participation in politics" – as a way of unpacking the intent and practical implications of labour "reforms" across a range of regime types.

A defining feature of authoritarian innovations is that they “draw from democratic discourse” to try to build legitimacy and neutralise opposition to changes that ultimately serve to limit democratic participation. In the context of the global crisis of democracy and the emergence of new forms of despotism, applying the lens of authoritarian innovations provides a way to understand institutional changes and governance practices that claim to be reformist but which by design actually restrict democratic participation and voice in established democracies and hybrid regimes, as well as in openly authoritarian contexts. In this way, it shifts our attention from the predictable strategies, such as overt repression, used by authoritarian regimes – and sometimes democratic ones – to undermine citizen participation and voice, to less obvious practices of control.

In a labour studies context, this concept provides a pathway for examining anti-worker and anti-union “reforms” across a range of regime types, as governments seek to limit the power of organised labour while maintaining a level of internal and/or international legitimacy. In democratic regimes, governments may choose to adopt authoritarian innovations in order to incrementally erode collective labour rights or power, such as, for instance, the use of the language of democratic values and individual rights to justify measures to regulate and restrict access to collective industrial action. In authoritarian regimes, they offer a means of assuaging the concerns of international stakeholders, including intergovernmental organisations or global supply chain actors, but also a mechanism for the pacification and demobilisation of workers and independent trade unions.

In this paper we compare and contrast authoritarian innovations in labour governance in a range of democratic, hybrid and authoritarian states. In doing so, we demonstrate the utility of the concept as an analytical lens insofar that it moves us away from political regime type per se to consider the varied and dynamic ways in which states work to control workers and unions. We argue that, in directing our attention away from states’ overarching political complexion to their meso-level techniques of control and institutional pacification, its application makes it possible to tease out and classify the intent and impact of a broader range of techniques of labour governance on workers and unions.

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## **Worker-Driven Social Responsibility in Global Garment Chains: Resisting Gender-Based Violence as a Form of Labour Control**

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The use of gendered power dynamics as a form of labour control by garment factories located in Asia that supply major brands in the Global North has been widely documented (Nathan et al. 2022; Business & Human Rights Resource Centre et al., 2022; Asia Floor Wage Alliance 2021). Gender segmentation is reinforced through routine and entrenched practices of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) that function as a mode of supervision within workplaces, dormitories, villages, and company-provided transportation. Fuelled by gendered ideologies and patriarchal norms, GBVH has become an integral feature of a fashion business model that prioritises short-term profit. Brands squeeze suppliers on price during negotiations, routinely demand discounts and unrealistically short lead times, make last minute changes to orders, and impose unfair penalties. These purchasing practices drive labour abuses as suppliers manage these demands by passing risk and cost down to women workers through low wages, accelerated work processes, and extended working hours.

Worker-driven social responsibility (WSR) initiatives are an innovative method of addressing labour exploitation in in garment supply chains, including GBVH (Angelini and Curphey 2022). WSR involves worker organisations, suppliers, and brands entering into enforceable and legally binding agreements in which transnational companies commit to using their supply chain relationships and leverage to support raising labour standards at specific worksites. In 2022 the Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Workers Union entered into an Agreement on Prevention, Remedy and Elimination of Gender Based Violence and Harassment with



Eastman Exports Global Clothing Ltd. and three prominent brands entered into enforceable agreements labour stakeholders. Known as the “Dindigul Agreement”, the two interlocking agreements cover 5000 workers at Natchi Apparel and Eastman Spinning Mills. According to the labour stakeholders, the Dindigul Agreement implements an organizing, as opposed to law enforcement, model. The idea is for brands to use their leverage to create space for labour organizing through binding commitments regarding purchasing practices and protections for freedom of association and a union-led program for addressing GBVH. Through key informant interviews with those who have pioneered and implemented the agreement and documentary analysis, the paper explores the establishment of the Dindigul Agreement, how it tackles GBVH, and its outcomes. Thus, it contributes to the literature on how to address gendered forms of labour control in global garment chains.

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## **The impact of remote work and hybrid work model on work spatiality. What is the future for workplaces?**

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Work time and space are acquiring new dimensions and meanings due to the globalization of the economy and the digital transition. This is even more evident with the widespread implementation of remote working due to COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, remote work is becoming the standard modality of work in many organizations and economic sectors globally, leading to significant transformations in the organization of work.

During the pandemic period, several studies analyzed the impact of remote work on workspaces. While some research argues that remote working has favored and will continue to encourage mechanisms of work decontextualization, other studies highlight work recontextualization processes following the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, working from home (WFH) has encouraged the need for greater flexibility by workers, fostering new geographical mobility and spatial work patterns. However, there is no consensus on the longer-term impact of remote work on workplaces. Moreover, we still know little about what happened in the post-pandemic period and whether or not the hybrid work model, currently widespread in many sectors and business environments, has reinforced these new spatial patterns of work.

In light of this, our contribution aims to investigate the impact of remote work on the spatial dimension of work in the post-pandemic phase, focusing on the Italian context and particularly the city of Milan. In this regard, the strategies adopted by large companies and the role played by co-working spaces in these processes will be explored. The empirical material is the result of several in-depth qualitative interviews conducted between June 2023 and October 2023,

involving HR managers of large companies in the quaternary sectors, policy makers and managers of coworking spaces.

The research results show how large companies are implementing the hybrid work model in response to workers' demands for spatial and temporal flexibility. In this regard, some companies are reducing workplaces or entire company headquarters. Although hybrid work is destined to endure, face-to-face work remains essential to foster relationships between colleagues and to ensure employee motivation and corporate culture. Therefore, the research shows that many companies are even implementing various solutions to ensure periodic in-office presence. In this regard, some companies are increasingly investing in decentralized headquarters. In fact, ensuring geographical and spatial flexibility is becoming an essential aspect for retaining and attracting new workforce. Furthermore, the need for greater spatial flexibility is also leading to new models of shared workspaces and offices. While in the past coworking spaces were mainly inhabited by freelancers and start-ups, today they are also increasingly attracting companies that rely on coworking, renting workstations or entire offices for exclusive use. Indeed, coworking seems to respond to current work organizational trends and workers needs, in terms of logistical requirements, relational dimension and work-life balance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the needs of workers, forcing many companies to rethink their long-term organizational and logistical strategies. Future research should continue to explore these ongoing transformations, especially questioning the future of workplaces and the impact of new spatial work patterns on labor processes, work relations, and workers' well-being.

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## **Digitalisation in our hands - Transnational perspectives on the shaping of digital change in the apparel industry by trade unions**

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The digital transformation in the apparel industry is changing all stages of the value chain from production to logistics to retail. At the company level, this is reflected by a simultaneity of catch-up digitalisation and the introduction of new digital control technologies through to autonomous software systems and delegation techniques that control workflows and processes autonomously. At the same time, this includes the control of supplier relationships between companies, in extreme cases up to the logic of 'a new supply chain for every order'. This fundamentally changes power relations between companies, between capital and labour, and changes existing dimensions of inequality, such as gender or race.

This poses several challenges for trade unions: on the one hand, digital technologies are changing existing areas of conflict in companies, such as disputes over working hours, occupational health and safety or precarisation. On the other hand, the question arises as to how technologies that control work processes across companies and sometimes across borders can be negotiated and influenced by workers and their representatives with foresight in the interests of workers.

The digitalisation collective agreement concluded in autumn 2022 between the trade union ver.di and the Swedish clothing retailer Hennis & Mauritz is of great importance for this question. This collective agreement guarantees workers and works councils extensive co-determination rights in the design of digital technologies and work systems. The aim is to design digital technologies and the entire work system at H&M in a human-centric way.

The extended co-determination rights go beyond the content of other collective bargaining and company regulations on digitalisation, as technology design is already co-determined in the development and planning phase. This is institutionalised through various newly created co-determination bodies and workers in the stores can formulate requirements for the design of

the digital transformation. In this context, technologies are also negotiated that have effects beyond the individual store.

The collective agreement was preceded by an intensive phase of organising, in which H&M workers, together with works councils and ver.di representatives, developed their own understanding of digitalisation at company meetings, developed design criteria and in this way created support for the demand for a collective agreement.

The collective agreement is in the implementation phase. This paper will discuss initial experiences with the digitalisation collective agreement. To what extent do workers and works councils succeed in developing their own criteria for shaping technologies? What contradictions do workers, works councils and trade unionists face and how do they deal with them? What conclusions can be drawn from this for the design of technologies and digital change from a trade union perspective? To what extent are there approaches to using the co-determination rights created in the collective agreement for the design of digitalisation processes along the supply chain?

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## **Exiting the Factory: Strikes and Class Formation beyond the Industrial Sector**

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I would like present my forthcoming book at the conference, which will be published in two volumes by Bristol University Press in early 2024. It is called *Exiting the Factory: Strikes and Class Formation beyond the Industrial Sector*.

In the book, I address the question of how de-industrialisation and the increasing relative economic weight of service- and public-sector work affects processes of class formation from a global labour studies angle. I critically assess a claim made by Manuel Castells in his major tome *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996/2010), according to which deindustrialization results in individualization. This suggests that non-industrial sectors are characterized by the absence of class formation. In a first step, I engage with major contributions to the global labour studies literature and argue that there is a normative-critical subtext visible, according to which global labour studies is committed to criticising class domination. Consequently, I engage, in a second step, with materialist class theory. I develop a dynamic conceptualization of class with reference to the work of Nicos Poulantzas, Beverly Silver and Erik Olin Wright and proceed from the assumption that collective actors in the form of class forces emerge if the agency of workers is expanding in the course of labor struggles. Against this backdrop, I then conduct an incorporated comparison examining the collective agency of workers around the globe visible in non-industrial strikes. My empirical material stems from a mapping of strikes from 56 countries (n=386) that I have produced by systematically examining the strike coverage of seven newspapers that represent five continents and three language plus two online platform dedicated to charting strikes around the world. I complement this mapping with detailed case studies on three strike waves from Western Europe, a macro-region characterized by strong processes of deindustrialization: the railway strikes in Germany, the strikes of junior doctors in Britain and the general strikes against austerity as well as the feminist general strikes in Spain. Both the global picture and the more detailed case exhibit signs clear signs of solidarity across the boundaries of different economic branches. It follows – contra Castells – that class formation is indeed taking place.

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## **There are no jobs on a dead planet: exploring the counter-hegemonic discourses of trade unions in the just transition**

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There is a growing consensus that tackling the climate crisis requires a fast and far-reaching transformation of hegemonic global capitalism. While trade unions clearly have a crucial role to play, their transformative potential is often limited to eco-modernist and ‘business-as-usual’ strategies due to their vested interest in protecting jobs and growth in polluting industries. This line of thinking raises a thought-provoking set of questions for researchers interested in the discursive power of trade unions: what counter-hegemonic discourses are being deployed to support the transition to a just low-carbon economy? And, more specifically, how are these discourses being circulated through the media and across arenas of union strategizing, climate policy-making, and public debate? To answer these questions, this article offers the first ever interdisciplinary review of contemporary literature on the topic and draws on industrial relations, environmental sociology, and the emerging field of environmental labour studies. The analysis synthesizes and refines existing typologies of trade union strategies by engaging with John Dryzek’s categorization of environmental discourses, Nancy Fraser’s conceptualization of (anti)capitalism, and Stefania Barca’s eco-feminist perspective on counter-hegemony that centres the agency of reproductive labour. Ultimately, I argue that embracing the most recent work of these three theorists will help develop new frontiers of research on the role of the trade union movement in a truly counter-hegemonic project of eco-societal transformation.

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## **Structuration of transnational markets for reproductive work: Struggles for recognition against constructed categories of migrant women care workers**

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The implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive as a response to the Russian military aggression against Ukraine constructed a category of migrants who are granted a relatively more ‘privileged’ legal status in terms of social security, healthcare and unrestricted access to labour market. However, current Ukrainian women refugees are confronted with an already existing plurality of exploitative hierarchic social orders that organise transnational markets for reproductive work. Transnationalized reproductive work markets, including cleaning, domestic and care work, are a site of social stratification along gendered and racialised hierarchies, which exploit different forms of cross-border mobility. Over the last couple of decades, during which geopolitical borders between East and West have shifted (the dissolution of the former Eastern Bloc, 2004 to 2013 enlargements of the EU), we can see the formation of the European care border regime as a geopolitical imprint of social reproductive contradictions of capitalism, and gendered structures of division of labour on an East–West divide and racialised hierarchies of the European whiteness. Moreover, the needs and motivations of current Ukrainian women refugees remain different from the assumptions that transnational labour structures originally build on, such as transnational wage differentials, circular migration, transnational organisation of family life, or other forms of temporary work. This makes them a particularly vulnerable category and explains a profound discrepancy between legal and social protection granted to Ukrainian refugees, and the reproduced vulnerability and exploitative working conditions they face.

In this paper, we build on our research among Ukrainian women under temporary protection in Czechia, which we compare with earlier research among Czech cross-border care workers working in Germany and Austria and among Ukrainian migrant women who came to Czechia before February 2022. In particular, we analyse patterns of structuration of transnationalized

markets for reproductive work resulting from interactions between social reproductive contradictions of the capitalist system and double misrecognition of reproductive labour, political and legal construction of different categories of mobile/migrant workers and mobile/migrant women's struggles for social recognition. We highlight mobile/migrant women's lived critique emerging from their encounters and confrontations of these structures, and how they differ among the different groups we talked to. We argue that these everyday struggles are part of transnational labour struggles, even though they are not recognized as such. While often the exploitation of reproductive and care workers is analysed through their precarious legal migration status, our comparative outlook sheds a clear light on the role of political economy of social reproduction and underlying gendered and racialised organisation of the labour process, which political redefinitions of mobility regimes do not change.

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## **How do Tech Workers position themselves towards digital capitalism? Class and producer-orientations of tech workers in the digital economy**

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In recent years, organized tech workers questioned the course of technological change in the centers of digital capitalisms. Walk-Outs at Google or Amazon, the establishment of Tech Worker Coalitions and the foundation of Alphabet Workers Union were driven by IT-professionals claiming to have a say over their own products and questioning the social impacts of digital technology. These developments are challenging insights of Labor-Process- and Class-Theory characterizing high qualified technical employees as aligned with managerial class interests. Rather, they are raising the question whether an unseen group of high qualified technical workers is rising in the centers of digital capitalism with a new self-understanding of their class position as producers of technology in social orders of injustice.

Against this backdrop, the contribution investigates the orientations of tech workers in Big-Tech and platform-companies towards technology. It applies Neo-Marxist class theories and power approaches of a sociology of professions to reconstruct their producer orientations on three levels. First, on the production level of class relations their perception to technology at work for corporate control regimes in Internet-based platform companies are examined. As tech workers in digital capitalism are no longer concerned with the control of production, but with the rationalization of markers, their perception of technology has fundamentally changed. Second, on the market level of class relations the professional orientation they develop throughout their biography as they navigate labor markets are reconstructed. As tech workers are less profiting from professional mechanisms of social closure, their expert orientations are eroding and they are losing the ability to professionally shape the technologies they produce. Third, on the level of class-consciousness it is investigated how changed class positions influence tech workers' images of society and their self-positioning as producers of technology in social orders.

The contribution shows that tech workers are widely open for a critique of digital capitalism as they understand themselves more affected by technological change as in charge of it. They perceive the trajectory of digital technology as alienated from their own influence and see themselves proletarianized as producers of technology. With that, they develop an understanding of digital change as a social order of injustice.

The research is based on 24 biographical interviews with tech workers in the USA and Germany and 18 expert interviews with representatives of organized tech worker movements and professional labor market institutions.

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## **Special Economic Zones, Gender and the “Dormitory Labour Regime”: local evolutions of the Chinese “model” in India and Nigeria**

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This paper extends analysis of China’s ‘dormitory labour regime’ (Smith and Pun, 2006) by examining examples of female internal migrant worker housing from special economic zones (SEZs) in China, India and Nigeria. Drawing on original fieldwork in all three countries, it argues that accommodation of internal migrant women in hostels and dormitories is an overlooked but nonetheless critical part of China’s highly successful 1980s-2000s SEZ ‘model’ that has since been emulated across the Global South. Though much research has focused on the impacts of these SEZs for their host countries, including through the development of large-scale manufacturing, none has examined worker accommodation and its essential role in an increasingly global internal migrant labour regime. This paper addresses this significant gap by examining how in two emulating countries – India and Nigeria – the dormitory labour regime has been adapted to fit local contexts, leading to varied forms of worker housing which may appear distant from China’s ‘model’, but which similarly aim at control of young, female migrant labour for the purposes of maximum value extraction.

China’s large, city-style zones attracted waves of migrant labour from less developed areas from the 1980s on. Multinational corporations set up export-oriented manufacturing bases, employing rural workers recruited first intra-provincially and then nationwide, and accommodating them onsite (Andors, 1988). Factory dormitories and young women’s factory labour have existed in many places globally; yet China’s gendered regime of precarious employment and dormitory accommodation gained the status of a ‘model’, allowing firms to take unprecedented advantage of internal migrant labour, giving employers extensive control over workers’ productive and reproductive lives, and enabling exceptional productivity.

The economic success of China’s SEZs attracted many imitators in lower-income countries, and China itself has increasingly sought to export its SEZ approach (Brautigam and Tang, 2011). This approach includes the key role of employer-led accommodation for female migrant workers. Yet the nature of policy mobilities (Peck & Theodore, 2012; Bok & Coe, 2017) means that the model is not replicated in its entirety, but is adapted by policymakers, developers and firms into the local historical, economic, political and social contexts of the receiving country. By comparing two (anonymised) Indian and Nigerian zones, both explicitly modelled on existing Chinese SEZs, with the original Shenzhen model, this paper explores how gendered workplace-residence systems used in China are emulated in both Indian and Nigerian SEZs; yet it also shows how, in conjunction with differing economic development trajectories, labour regulations and socio-cultural settings, neither the impacts for labour management nor for the women themselves are straightforwardly reproduced. Moving beyond a focus on the specific Chinese ‘dormitory labour regime’ facilitates a broader understanding of the role workplace-residence systems play in enhancing control of migrant labour in and beyond SEZs.

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## **“There’s nothing I can’t manage”. Games of survival and mutual responsibility in negotiating consent in precarious work in hospitality work**

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This presentation examines the negotiations of consent in precarious work in the hospitality sector based on 40 in-depth interviews with hospitality workers with long experience of working in restaurants, clubs, cafes and hotels in Finland. Research on the new economy usually focuses on the production of consent either within the boundaries of one organization or in work without a specific organizational context, such as in platform-mediated gig work. Drawing

from labour process theory and theorization of consent, this paper instead examines the production of consent among precarious wage workers who circulate from job to job within one sector. The hospitality sector represents “post-Fordist work organization” (Sallaz 2015), with insecure jobs, weak career opportunities and low pay. Work is physically and emotionally demanding. First, in the fast-paced and unpredictable and autonomous work, workers need to be hardworking and flexible in order to “survive” the workday. “Surviving” in turn creates strong symbolic rewards, such as feelings of satisfaction, which generate consent to work. The unpredictability related to always having new workers means that all workers must rely on their co-workers to be as flexible and hardworking as they are. This creates an industry-wide cultural expectation of availability, flexibility and trustworthiness, and serves to construct working too much as an integral part of the restaurant work and as a central quality of a good worker. This is the source of informal control, which also transgresses the boundaries of a single organizations. In the absence of a (relatively) stable work community and the structure it provides the expectation of hard work and flexibility becomes generalized. The article concludes that contingent work arrangements create specific forms of consent, in which responsibility towards co-workers play a key part. We need to examine the labour process and the production of consent within the networks of precarious workers.

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## **Artificial Intelligence for Steelmaking: Optimising processes, augmenting workers, blurring accountability**

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This paper derives from a project that aims to build an artificial intelligence (AI) platform, employing Federated Learning, to tackle energy consumption, waste and emissions in Electric Arc Furnace (EAF) steel-production and automotive-parts production, and to build replicability and scalability of the AI solution across the European metallurgy industry. The design of the solution employs Human-Centred Design (HCD), which continuously considers user and stakeholder (i.e., workers and management) requirements during development, implementation and use. A further consideration is that the AI solution demonstrates compliance with the European Union’s (EU) (HLEG on AI, 2019) Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI, i.e., ALTAI (Assessment List for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence) (see Anderson and Fort, 2021). With such matters under consideration, the context for the discussion begins to move us beyond notions of Industry 4.0, and the digitalisation of manufacturing contexts, to centre the innovation within Industry 5.0 conceptualisations. Here, a more human-centred focus, and what Leng (2022: 279) discusses as ‘combining human subjectivity and intelligence with the efficiency, artificial intelligence, and precision of machines in industrial production, reflecting the value of humanistic care, thus realizing the evolution toward the symbiotic ecosystem’ is considered. Framed by such understandings and the specific parameters of this AI innovation, we draw on data from interviews and surveys with workers and management at three EAF steel plants in France, Poland and Spain and one EAF automotive-parts plant in Italy to discuss the impact of AI on work practices in heavy manufacturing industries.

We situate our discussion within sociological readings of AI. The latter have been scattered over the last 50 years, but recent advancements in the field have led to a resurgence in sociological research on AI. A recurring concern is the extent to which AI can approximate human intelligence, and thus complete a wider range of non-routine tasks, following the distinction between narrow and general AI (Liu 2021). The Federated Learning application addressed in this contribution is an example of “narrow” AI, i.e., an algorithm that can only perform specific functions. Nevertheless, it provides a case study to posit questions around the impact of AI on work practices within industrial contexts, as well as more general questions around the scope of AI compared to human intelligence and the complementarity between the two envisioned by Industry 5.0. For instance, Wolfe (1991) underscored that human intelligence is rooted in social interaction and the emergence of a social mind and a self (Mead

1934), resulting in the capacity to assume someone else's point of view and thus act according to this and to assumed consequences. This comprehension of the wider context, located in symbolic meaning, does not apply to AI which mimics human-like thinking by manipulating numbers, rather than social constructs and meaning (Pettersen 2019). Such considerations are relevant when assessing ALTAI principles, as the extent to which oversight, transparency and accountability are secured (and thus a human-centred AI application is realised) depends also on the users'/stakeholders' understandings of this very distinction and how this reflects on workplace practices and decision-making.

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## **Digitalisation is in Fashion: An investigation into how technology is enacted and experienced in the fashion industry**

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Some have conducted in depth ethnographic studies of the fashion industry, shedding light on specific field dynamics (Entwistle, 2009, Mears, 2011). More recently, others have researched how models experience their aesthetic labour (Holla, 2019), and looked at how 'the dream' of fashion sustains exploitation across the industry (Mensitierie, 2020). Yet, like many markets, the fashion industry has undergone significant transformation over the last decade due to socio-technological advancements. Surprisingly, the influence of these advancements on the labour process in the fashion sector remains underexplored in existing academic literature. This PhD research asks, how is technology enacted and experienced in the fashion modelling industry?

This research firstly contributes to understanding of how work is experienced within the fashion and cultural industries, as well as offering valuable insights into how socio-technological progress shapes labour processes on a broader scale. The fashion industry emerges as a fascinating case study to explore the evolution and potential limitations of marketization in late capitalism.

This qualitative multi-method case study employs content analysis of online content such as Instagram posts, websites and documentaries, along with semi-structured interviews with male and female fashion models. Key informants from various sectors of the industry are also interviewed to aid understanding of models' experiences and provide alternative perspectives. Additionally, ethnographic fieldnotes are drawn upon to offer valuable contextual insights. The research findings are structured into three different sections: micro, meso and macro level analyses.

The micro-level analysis delves into what technology models use in their work and how they experience this at the individual level. In the meso-level analysis, the focus shifts to examine how digital platforms such as Instagram have fundamentally reshaped the labour process in fashion modelling, and how artificial intelligence is just starting to reshape the industry. The ways in which digital platforms are emerging with the aim to replace or work alongside traditional model agents are also discussed, and it is highlighted how these companies are navigating the industry to varying degrees of success. Here, the study explores how technology has been integrated into the industry, influencing the production of value and altering the management of models. Simultaneously, it is noted how technology has opened up new avenues for models to resist their working conditions, through collective action online.

The macro-level analysis considers discursive structural factors, in relation to gender, race, citizenship and field position, which impact models' experiences. Here, how the changes that are evident in the fashion industry relate to broader societal patterns in relation to capitalism and the labour process are scrutinised. Greer and Umney's (2022) theory of marketization proves invaluable in comprehending these shifts and underscores why the fashion industry serves as a compelling lens for understanding overarching societal transformations in late capitalism.



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## From “dirty” oil and gas to green energy: Workers’ views on skills transition

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As the environmental agenda progresses worldwide, it is clear that the move to sustainable forms of energy is both crucial and inevitable. For UK workers currently employed in the traditional energy sector including oil and gas, this transition presents challenges particularly around the transferability of their skills, recognition of their skills, long-term career prospects and access to upskilling. What’s clear is that the transition to renewable energies will require amongst other investments, a clear route to developing the required skills within the workforce (de Leeuw & Kim, 2021).

Britain has a wealth of skilled workers in the areas of coal, oil and gas. Previous reports have found that many of the oil and gas workers have medium to high skills transferability into other energy sectors (de Leeuw & Kim, 2021) and are therefore in a good position to transition into the renewable energies sector (Green Jobs Taskforce, 2021). However, what’s largely missing from the current debate is the worker’s perspective on transitioning into cleaner energy jobs and the opportunities and barriers that they perceive. Therefore, the factors that impact on workers deciding to engage in upskilling, which would allow for such a transfer to employment in renewable energy, are not yet clearly understood.

To address this gap, the purpose of our research is twofold. First, this research explores workers’ perspectives of skills and training required for the transition from traditional carbon-based industries (e.g. coal, oil and gas) to renewable energy. Second, the research also aims to identify key barriers and enablers to upskilling for the UK’s energy transition. In order to capture worker’s views we conducted a survey amongst employees of a major UK energy company.

Initial findings show, that in line with previous research, respondents perceived their skills as generally transferrable across the energy sector, though the degree to which these are seen as transferrable differs for different types of skills and competences. Perceived transferability of skills seems further related to perceived job security as well as workers’ continuous skill building. With regard to potential enablers and barriers to upskilling, the data suggests that these span across workers individual circumstances, e.g. motivation to engage in learning, as well as organisational factors such as for example the training opportunities offered to workers in their workplace.

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## The ‘Silent Performances’ of Digitally Networked Work: A New Look at Subjectification and Digital Networking

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Digital networking has become a feature of what are now very many forms of work. The new type of work emerging in this wake – digitally networked work – is characterized by the fact that digital tools connect different actors in the work process in a dynamic way and thus bring about structural changes in work itself. For employees, this gives rise to several new requirements that can be described in terms of time, space, material, and social aspects and consistently refer to incompatibilities in the work process. What is meant by this is that digital and non-digital elements of the networking process in the work of employees must be actively related to one another and made practically compatible. As empirical examples show, processes of subjectification play an essential role in this. Not only is subjectivizing work action necessary to perform digitally networked work well. Rather, subjectivizing work takes on a new meaning in that it is no longer primarily directed at dealing with imponderables and uncertainties, but rather involves the subjective production of digitally networked work itself.

Subjectification thus refers to dealing with the incompatibilities of digital and non-digital elements in the process of digital networking of work, which is constitutive for digitally networked work.

The conceptually oriented talk draws on research results from projects at ISF Munich that have dealt with the digital transformation of work and the stressful consequences of digitally networked work. Based on previous reflections on the structure and requirements of digitally networked work, we will develop a new view of digital networking that emphasizes the 'silent performances' of employees that make digital networking possible in the first place. The focus is not primarily on disruptions and breaks in work that have to be overcome by employees. Rather, the silent achievements become apparent precisely where work is inconspicuous and (seemingly) unproblematic. Only a look at the practical processing of the structural conditions of digitally networked work reveals the requirements that are hidden there – for example, the practical synchronization of digital and non-digital time horizons, each of which follows its own, basically irreconcilable logic, or relating non-material digital and non-digital material properties of work objects and resources to one another in the work process. This opens up a view of work that enables a comparison of very different forms of digitally networked work – for example, agile work and office work – and allows a new understanding of the digitalization of work.

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## **Struggling under adverse conditions: The labour movement in Myanmar's garment industry**

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In the last three decades, Myanmar experienced a series of economic changes that brought the country from a formerly „closed“ planned economy to an „open“ market-based system. A major role in this transition had the country's garment industry which grew significantly in this timeframe and is nowadays the main channel through which the country is integrated into the global economy. Following Beverly Silver's idea of 'conflict follows capital' my paper traces the development of the labour movement in the Myanmar's garment industry. Drawing on an extended power resources approach and expert interviews, an analysis of garment workers' power in relation to their employers' influence as well as general political, economic and judicial conditions is provided.

The analysis shows that a labour movement has emerged in Myanmar that was able to anchor social rights institutionally between 2011 and 2015. The case of Myanmar's garment industry seems to prove the hypothesis that 'conflict follows capital' by Silver (2003). This means that moving production to locations with abundant cheap labor leads to labor unrest in these new locations due to poor working conditions in the factories. Workers always used their power to organise collectively (associational power) and to interrupt at points of production (structural power) to protest their dire working conditions and flaws in existing labour laws. In contrast, institutional channels were always only weakly developed and did not offer labour movement actors effective means to push their interests vis-à-vis the state and garment employers. Furthermore, garment workers were not involved in struggles for broader political or social issues. The power of garment capitalists developed equally along the changing conditions in the country. While they could always use their structural power in their factories, i.e. their ability to influence who works for them, to change production targets and required working hours or else (associational and instrumental power) only developed when the Myanmar government made the export-oriented garment industry a focus area of their industrialisation plans after the transition in 2011/2012. State behaviour towards workers mobilisation and trade unions began at an overall high level of violence and suppression, was channeled into a legalistic repressive system after 2011, only to become increasingly authoritarian in the mid 2010s until the coup in 2021.

In sum, workers' struggles, particularly through wildcat strikes and other forms of collective action, proved crucial to advancing social rights in Myanmar.

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## **Moving up, moving down or going nowhere: labour market transitions and segmentation in the UK**

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Studies of work and employment transitions have predominantly focused on movements from education into work and from unemployment (or inactivity) to employment. Certain in-work transitions have also been studied, in particular transitions between non-standard and standard employment. An enduring research question in this regard has been whether workers who initially enter part-time or fixed-term employment become 'trapped' in this type of employment or, conversely, whether it can provide a 'bridge' or 'steppingstone' to better employment (e.g. Gash, 2008; Nunley et al., 2017; Muñoz-Comet and Steinmetz, 2020), particularly for 'poorly integrated' young workers (Scarpetta et al. 2010).

Focusing on the UK labour market, this paper sheds further light on transitions between non-standard forms of employment and standard employment. It focuses on transitions of two types. The first is between temporary/casual employment and permanent employment. While previous studies have examined transitions involving these two employment situations, they have typically focused on transitions from the former to the latter. Our paper, by contrast, also examines transitions from permanent to temporary/casual employment. The second transition involves underemployment. Here we focus on underemployment situations in which workers are unable to work as many hours as they would like. The issue of underemployment has received a significant amount of attention in recent years (Bell and Blanchflower, 2019; Kamerāde and Richardson, 2018; Heyes and Tomlinson 2020) but to date little attention has been paid to transitions into and out of underemployment.

To examine the two types of transition, the paper draws on data from the UK British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS/Understanding Society). The paper's findings show how short and long-term transition probabilities differ between workers with different individual characteristics, including in relation to age, gender and country of origin. In explaining these differences, the paper draws on the 'new labour market segmentation' analytical approach proposed by Grimshaw et al. (2017), which combines insights from the institutional and radical variants of segmented labour market theory that emerged from the 1970s with insights from other bodies of theory that relate to the study of work and employment, such as feminist theory and comparative institutionalist theory. Our examination of workers' transitions also draws on the transitional labour market (TLM) framework (Schmid 2011, 2017), which focuses on transitions that workers might make throughout the life course and how they are influenced by socio-economic institutions and policies relating to, for example, education and training, care, social protection and employment rights.

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## **A big wave or a ripple? – The potential impact of the Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on Collective Bargaining in Ireland**

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The purpose of this paper is to seek to understand the potential impact the Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on Adequate Minimum Wages in the European Union may have on collective bargaining (CB) practices and outcomes in Irish industrial relations. The directive seeks to

increase the number of employees who are covered by collective agreements in the EU. For Ireland's 'voluntarist' system the Directive's implementation may impose a new legalised form of CB in the IR system especially as it aims that; "each Member State with a collective bargaining coverage rate below 80 % should adopt measures with a view to enhancing such collective bargaining. Each Member State with a collective bargaining coverage below a threshold of 80 % should provide a framework of enabling conditions for collective bargaining and establish an action plan to promote collective bargaining to progressively increase the collective bargaining coverage rate." Therefore, how the new Directive is implemented in Ireland is of great significance. Currently, Irish trade union density is approximately 35%, with higher levels in the public sector and much lower in the private sector. A form of national social dialogue between the Government, employers and unions was established in Ireland in 2016, called the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF). In LEEF, discussions have begun on implementing the new Directive and special report commissioned. However, no agreed implementation plans or processes have been agreed at the current time. However, this paper suggests that the expansion of sectoral bargaining would be vital to obtaining a 80% CB coverage in Ireland and this may be the vehicle for delivery of the Directive aims. This paper has three main aims. Firstly, it examines the current state of Irish IR systems, the potential impact of the EU Directive on the IR actors and their practices. The second aim of the paper is to question the existence of the Irish voluntarist IR system and consider its future. The final part of the paper examines and speculates on the likely changing patterns in Irish IR in future years.

2. Methodology The research for this paper was primarily a qualitative one involving interviews with key industrial relations actors, employment lawyers in Ireland and some documentary analysis of EU legislation, peer review articles, parliamentary debates, and relevant public commentary.

3. Key findings There is a high amount of Juridification in Irish industrial relations and continued employer resistance to attempts to provide a legal framework for sectoral bargaining. This paper argues that there are clear examples of growth of neo-liberal values in Irish employment regulation. What passes for voluntarism in Ireland is not one that equates to traditional notions of such an approach. The EU Directive could be a "game changer" in this development as it could strengthen trade unions and therefore equate the balance of power between the industrial relations actors. Irish national employment legislation has attempted to re-shape laws around collective bargaining, but they do not provide an equal balance of powers for workers and trade unions.

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## **Collaborative Multiskilling: Occupational Skill Change within Software Development**

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The occupation of software developer has existed for over 50 years yet there has been surprisingly little attention paid to the changing nature of skill within this occupation. Kraft (1979) applied Braverman's deskilling thesis to the occupation in the late 1970s and established that since the occupation's emergence, management attempted to fragment the occupation via structured programming. This led to increased managerial control and occupational deskilling through fragmentation and the extensive documentation of code. Since then, other scholars such as Biernie et al. (1990; 1998) suggested that the implementation of newer job 'enrichment' programs with increased participation and input within the occupation had led to work intensification under the guise of managerial control. Yet what has happened since?

Based upon semi structured interviews with approximately 20 software developers, this paper argues that the role of the developer has significantly changed since the work of Kraft or latterly Biernie et al. Now, developers are typically expected to perform a range of tasks including but not limited to, coding, testing, reviewing, designing and more. This has resulted in increased learning on the job and increased 'multiskilling'. This need for multiskilled developers can be in part explained by the organisational imperative for collaboration and in part by advances in

technology. The paper builds upon the work of Adler (2006; 2007) to argue that interdependence has increased within organisations at the expense of autonomy. Software developers are increasingly required to perform multiple roles to fulfil the needs of the organisation within an 'Agile' team. Their autonomy has been eroded but not in the manner that Kraft envisioned which included occupational fragmentation and documentation. Instead, developers are multiskilled, and tasked, within collaborative environments. Even when they problem solve errors, this is still for the purpose of the collaborative team and organisation. Therefore, the paper introduces the concept of collaborative multiskilling which helps to explain occupational skill change within software development.

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## **Feminism as labor conflict? The rise of feminist frames in the labor unionizing of female migrant cleaning workers in Spain**

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In Spain, female migrant workers have increasingly articulated their labor organizing as a feminist struggle (Alcalde, Gálvez, und Valenzuela 2022; Bocco und Tatić 2023; Díaz 2022). Since the transnational feminist strike movement feminist and trade unionist alliances and convergences have grown through a shared politicization of the crisis of social reproduction (Gago und Cavallero 2022). Yet, these nascent feminist frames in trade unionism have been overlooked by the literature on the burgeoning grass-roots mobilizations of migrant workers (Alberti und Però 2018; Però 2020). This paper takes local organizing efforts of female migrant workers in Barcelona as example to trace the emergence of the feminist frames of their labor organizing. Based on the feminist critique of conventional trade unions as gendered organizations (Acker 1990), this paper interrogates, what knowledges and practices does feminist unionizing contribute to existing labor organizing strategies? What role do the coalitions between feminists and female migrant workers play in the rise of feminist frames in labor unionizing? What was the impact of the global pandemic and the transnational feminist strike movement on the development of these feminist frames? Do feminist frames in labor organizing represent a growing consensus or new strategy for revitalizing trade unions? These questions will be answered by comparing the hotel cleaners' union Las Kellys Unión and the domestic workers' union Sindihogar. The unions' feminist organizing strategy mimopolítica – politics of pampering – aims at the socio-emotional emancipation of the workers by strategically linking their situated understandings, life experiences and respective emotions into practices of collective care and affective empowerment (Fulladosa-Leal 2015:65). With variations in their workplace – inside and outside of private households – both unions are directing their labor mobilization towards different, but interconnected, social conflicts, which target the patriarchal-capitalist infrastructures of maintenance and exposes its inherent contradictions (Federici 2016; Lim 2016). This paper seeks to contribute to emerging research on feminist labor unionism (Bartolomé 2021; Filigrana 2021; Gago und Cavallero 2022) by positing that feminism – by adopting the organizing strategy of emotional empowerment – emerges as a form of labor activism.

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## **Employer accommodation provision, power and control in the UK agricultural sector**

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In the United Kingdom agricultural sector, caravan accommodation is used to house seasonal workers. Owing to the low paid, seasonal, and difficult conditions of this work, the United Kingdom has been reliant on international migrant workers to fill these roles. In a pre-Brexit context this was mainly workers from central and eastern Europe. Following Brexit and the introduction of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers visa, these workers have increasingly come from nations east of the EU, such as Macedonia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

Perceptions of farm owners and managers of these migrant workers is broadly positive, particularly as compared to workers from the UK. This reflects a pattern seen in many previous studies of a variety of sectors in the UK. Workers from the UK are reported by managers as being unreliable, less likely to work overtime, and having a poorer 'work ethic' (e.g. Dawson et al., 2018). These issues can be categorised as temporal (UK workers having outside life commitments and interests which mean that they do not, for example, like inconsistent work schedules) and familial (UK workers having caring commitments, both for children and older family members).

This study examines how the provision of caravan accommodation, in what can be considered to be a dormitory labour regime, extends control over the workforce, particularly where this consists of a high proportion of migrant workers. Firstly, temporal control is extended by having accommodation and further provision (entertainment, laundry, leisure etc.) on site so as to keep workers closer to their workplace and therefore able to tolerate long and inconsistent hours. Secondly, familial control is extended as farm employers ban workers from having children in the accommodation, frequently meaning that these are cared for by other family members in the home country. Finally, a third type of financial control is created by the low price of the caravan accommodation as compared to bricks-and-mortar accommodation. If workers are not flexible to employer demands related to, for example, inconsistent work schedules then they will not only lose their jobs, but also lose their affordable accommodation.

Data from this study is drawn from three case study farms located in Southern England. Data was collected in the harvest season of 2022, with visits of 2-5 days at each location. This allowed for in-depth data collection literally 'in the field' to take place, with visits to both workplaces and accommodation, together with holding 53 semi-structured interviews.

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## **Emotional economy of management labour migration in long-term care at the European (semi)periphery**

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Neoliberal processes of cuts in public spending on long-term care have markedly worsened working conditions in the residential care services for older people in global North, which is reflected in the high turnover and lack of care workers. The role of labour migration is increasing in its variety of trajectories and pathways, which mix transit, onward, and back-and-forth moves, return visits, tourist visas, cross-border shuttling, longer-term migrations. Like most Eastern European countries, Slovenia is in a triple position in this transnational political economy of care: local care workers are leaving as daily commuters for work in neighbouring Austria and Italy; migrant care workers are being recruited from European "third countries" of the Western Balkans, for whom Slovenia is often only a transit destination and a starting point for migration further to Western Europe. Although Slovenia has bilateral agreements on labour migration with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, the recruitment of migrant workers mostly bypasses official channels, following two strategies: migrant social networks and family reunification. In this paper, I discuss these two recruiting strategies as a systematic mobilisation of the emotional economy in the management of labour migration, which is functional for keeping labour costs low because it shifts migrant workers' costs of transition, integration and social reproduction onto migrant social networks and families. With this starting point, I reflect on traditional theories of labour migration that have been dominated by a focus on economic motivations, and argue that far from being a secondary or unimportant dimension of labour mobility, affect and emotion are one of its central aspects. I demonstrate the importance of less obviously economic forms of valuation in migrant connections to family, friends and particular places, and reflect political emotional management of labour migration.

As care migration studies have already highlighted, labour cost-cutting in long-term care by recruitment of migrant care workers is related also too deskilling, which is a result of administrative barriers to labour migration from 'third countries' affecting precarious work and

residence statuses. Our interviews have confirmed these processes too. However, they have pointed also to the emotional economy of recruitment that sometimes serves as excuse for deskilling.

In the conclusion I reflect the national borders (in Europe in particular the borders between the EU and the associated members with liberalised visa regimes) as functional in reducing the costs of the caring proletariat. They represent formalised channels for a subtle combination of inclusion - through access to labour markets within the EU - on the one hand, and exclusion (from the protection of labour and social rights, consideration of integration costs, meeting social reproductive needs) on the other.

The empirical evidence is based on the preliminary findings of the research project Transnationalisation of eldercare – diversities, recruitments, inequalities (ARIS, J5-3104). In 2022/3 we conducted three series of interviews: with 11 national stakeholders; with 17 migrant care workers; with 8 stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country from which most migrant women caregivers come to Slovenia.

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## **The inscription and negotiation of control, legitimation and conflict in development processes of work systems**

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**Focus of research:** The paper shows how conflicts and relations between labour and capital are already being negotiated in the development processes of new work systems and inscribed in future workplace regimes. Legitimization and expectations in the form of technological promises, rationalization ideas and understandings of labour play just as much a role as conflict and design awareness as well as the latent but fierce resistance of work itself.

**Methodology:** The article is based, among other things, on the extensive findings (interviews and observations) from an empirical research project in which the attempt of a company and development team to automate the wiring of control cabinets with robotic solutions was accompanied over several years at great expense. The history of previous failed attempts is also described in the interviews. And the current approach of at least partially automating the cabling with a collaborative robot system also reveals new obstacles and problems.

**Theoretical orientation:** Central topics and concepts of work and industrial sociology and critical management studies are brought together with approaches from organizational sociology and the sociology of technology or science and technology studies. Concepts typically related to the work process such as direct and indirect control of work, resistance and complexity are combined with expectations, legitimation, ideas of rationality and rationalization/automation concepts as well as awareness and work orientations with regard to the development of work systems.

**Findings:** Four types of human-technology relationships are identified that stand for failed and current attempts to technically master the resistant topic of wiring control cabinets: the automaton, the humanoid robot, the production line and augmentation. Behind the four types are different (conflicting) ideas of rationalization and legitimation as well as different latent forms of organization, coordination, and control of future work. A process of awareness and cognition is also emerging on the part of the development team. Limited and biased ideas of automation (substituting not complementary/empowering) and manifestations of capitalistic organized labour processes result in path dependencies which manifest in concrete (and failed) workplace designs (e.g. in time, space, and information regimes). Thus different ideas of labor - working system relations in design processes have different effects on alienation or empowerment in future work places.

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## 'HR heal thyself': The digital evolution of work, automation and the role of HR: A theoretical review

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There has been much recent debate on how digital technology, especially automation, will affect the future of work and the labour process. Frey and Osborne's (2013) claim that 47 per cent of U.S. jobs are at risk of automation has been subject to much critique on the basis of flawed assumptions about the nature of jobs. Even more nuanced task-based approaches (e.g. Autor, 2015) lack a full appreciation of power and context in firms' automation decisions. A more nuanced approach that is theoretically embedded and builds on recent developments in technology, is needed.

Most accounts of technology and the future of work do not sufficiently interrogate the relationship between digital technology and worker agency, nor do they adequately theorise how organisational context and wider political economy structures affect technology-work outcomes. We overcome this lacuna by synthesising the literature on socio-materiality (e.g. Scott and Orlikowski, 2013), socio-technical systems (e.g. Leonardi, 2013), and organisations' HR architecture (Lepak and Snell 1999) to develop a novel general framework of digital technology and work. This is done through a realist synthesis.

We foreground the role of technology affordances, as a way of overcoming the issues of technological determinism vs. voluntarism, to consider the interplay between structure, agency and materiality. Affordances are described as, 'action possibilities and opportunities that emerge from actors engaging with a focal technology' (Faraj and Azad, 2012: 238); akin to discretion and agency in the labour process. The ultimate shape of socio-technical relations at work, and subsequent technologically enabled occupational change, depend upon workers' power to resist or adapt technology and their position within the political economy. Utilising Lepak and Snell's (1999) HR architecture framework, this power depends upon the scarcity of workers' skills, and their strategic value to the firm (although workers of all kinds have the potential to unionise and build collective power). This leads to a 2 x 2 typology, within which differing socio-technical relations and forms of worker agency emerge. Within each quadrant these relational and agential tendencies allow us to map the current and likely future effects of technology upon work in a way that overcomes extant theoretical weaknesses.

We foreground the HR profession as a key actor, with trends within the profession highlighting tendencies in occupations, more widely. For example, senior HR professionals arguably have much agency to act as 'integrating experts' affecting others' labour processes through technology; and HR process automation may 'free' up HR professionals, in general, to work on strategic tasks. Such automation may also, however, pose a risk to some peripheral HR roles; whilst efforts to digitise and automate labour processes more generally may expose HR to ethical dilemmas, and /or reduce their power and agency vis a vis other actors. The experience of the HR profession might then be used to inform wider management and policy approaches towards digitisation, automation and changes in the labour process.

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## To organise or not to organise: lessons from female street vendors operating in the informal economy in Lagos, Nigeria

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Globally, around 90 percent of businesses operate as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and are responsible for around half of total employment as well as 40 percent of total world output (World Bank, 2020). In the Global South, around 75 percent of SMEs operate in the informal economy, which, in turn, is dominated by street vending (see Igudia, 2020; Onoduga et al., 2016; Basinski, 2009). Whilst there are several sub-informal economic activities, street



vending seems to be the activity mostly undertaken by women. In Lagos, Nigeria informal economy, for example, findings from our years of studying two dominant economic activities – street vending and okada riding – show that women are more into street vending, whilst men are more into okada riding (motorcycle taxi). What our research also shows is that street vending contributes to income generation, jobs creation, and entrepreneurial development. This provides participants (predominantly women) the platform to develop/horn their entrepreneurial skills. Yet, in some contexts, street vendors have been given all sort of negative labels: ‘criminals that pretend to hawk, but who often turn into criminal activities’, ‘economic nuisance who often litter the streets and cause traffic congestions’, ‘saboteurs who create artificial potholes to enable them sell their wares on a slow-moving traffic or steal from unsuspecting members of the public’ etc. Consequently, these women operate in a policy hostile environment, which arguably could be ameliorated with a strong and vibrant union. However, such organised union for street vendors are hard to find in reality. It is the case that whilst street vendors are regularly harassed, arrested and prosecuted for daring to carry out legitimate economic activities, that is, sell legitimate goods and services on the street to earn a living, they are often not able to form a formidable union to represent their interest. This thus represents a huge gap in the literature. Our goal in this research is to investigate whether it is possible to organise street hawkers and what factors potentially facilitate or hinder such move. We employ the information obtained from 600 street vendors who participated in the state-wide-survey we carried out in Lagos Nigeria in April 2022. We complement data from the survey with the information obtained through stakeholders’ engagement workshop, which held in August 2022 and April 2023 in Lagos Nigeria. Preliminary findings from our data show that relative to their male counterparts, female street hawkers are more pessimistic about forming a union for street vendors. Moreover, we find that lack of trust in the organising process (and potential leaders) and high level of inherent corruption are key reasons given for their attitude towards forming a street hawkers union. We conclude by noting the importance of forming a reputable organised union for street vendors and how biases and factors hindering such move can be mitigated.

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## **The Rise of Workers’ Solidarity and Trade Union Organizing Strategies In The Wave of Militant Labor Mobilization At Bekasi (2011-2013)**

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Even in the post-authoritarian era, Indonesian labor mobilization has suffered from low-density and long-time fragmentation among trade unions. However, between 2011 and 2013, there were unusually militant labor mobilizations in Bekasi Regency -- the most concentrated areas for the manufacturing industry in Indonesia. Existing literature has acknowledged the leading role played by the Indonesian Metal Workers Federation -- a labor union which in previous years had been moderate and more focused on negotiation rather than militant mobilization. However, empirical research has revealed another important factor in the mobilization: the emergence of militant workers’ grass-roots solidarity in demanding increases to the minimum wage and especially in resisting changes to the labor process associated with greater labor flexibility.

The paper aims to contribute to the literature of labor mobilization. In addition, it advances a critical explanation as to how working-class organizations respond dynamically to changes in the labor process. The paper focuses on showing the critical interplay between the eruption of surprising solidarity of militant self-activism of rank-and-file workers – both of those with temporary and permanent employment status -- and the strategies of trade union officials as a significant factor determining the course of the labor mobilizations in Bekasi. The empirical research involved fieldwork interviews with important participants in the mobilization, including trade union activists, factory managers, and government and police officials.

The theoretical framework draws on the concept of “politics of production” (Burawoy 1985) to conceptualize the rise of militant labor mobilization as a form of dynamic class struggle which has its source in power struggles over institutions that shape struggles over the labor process. However, to explain the dynamic response of a trade union federation to the workers’ mobilizations, there is also a need for the framework to connect with two important concepts from labor mobilization literature: workers’ solidarity and trade union organizing strategies. Accordingly, both factors will be understood from the labor process perspective by drawing on references from the literature that discussed worker solidarity based on labor process – especially by focusing on the importance of rank-and-file workers’ struggle (Cohen 2013; Darlington 2012, Atzeni 2016).

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## **Alienation in the World of Search Engine Optimisation: Bridging Structures and Experiences**

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Alienation is one of those long-standing concepts that, though hard to pinpoint, continues to entertain the sociological imagination. Recent studies attest to its continuing explanatory relevance in the world of work (Glavin et al., 2021; Haddad and Senter, 2017; Hardering, 2019; Kassem, 2023; Sawyer and Gampa, 2020; Soffia et al., 2021).

This article continues the debate by focusing theoretically and empirically on the alienation from the labouring activity. It upholds that the concept allows for, firstly, bridging structural conditions with subjective experiences and, secondly, the integration of alienation theory and Labour Process Theory (LPT). Until now, studies have tended to either deduce experiences from conditions or conditions from experience. The paper proposes an innovative analytical approach in which objective and subjective alienation are handled as separate phenomena in their own right. The former builds on the indeterminacy of labour found in LPT but expands the idea as it grasps processes beyond effort regulation by. It thus problematises more generally how management secures the profitability of the labouring activity. The latter designates suffering experiences concerning a sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness, detachment and isolation, among others. Technologies can serve as conduits for both objective alienation by organisational structures and subsequent alienation experiences.

By connecting objective structures to subjective experiences, researchers can trace sufferings back to modes of capital-driven management of labour. Different workplace contexts might yield specific manifestations of alienation, though this relationship is not deterministic. For an alienation experience to arise, employees’ identity, understandings, expectations, demands, self-worth, normative grounds or labouring capacity must be challenged.

The article studies these interconnections by focusing on the work of Search Engine Optimisation specialists (SEOs). Despite marketing and sales advancing to one of the central wheels of capitalism over the last few decades (Baran and Sweezy, 1968; Pfeiffer, 2022), research on marketers’ labour process and experiences has been scarce - aside from indications that they may perceive their work as socially useless (Graeber, 2019; Soffia et al., 2021; Walo, 2023). The study addresses this gap by exploring processes and states of estrangement found in a fairly new occupation born out of the dynamics of digital capitalism.

The findings suggest that management secures the profitability of SEOs’ labour by controlling performance and output while leaving a sufficient degree of operational autonomy- ensuring the integration of online marketers’ knowledge and skills needed for navigating an algorithmically uncertain environment. Metrified performance indicators from SEO tools enable this control mode. This market-cantered workplace regime is supplemented by a resource-allocation system, which has a double function: a carrot-stick mechanism controlling employees’ labour and an assessment mechanism of the cost-effectiveness of business activities. This form of objective alienation is associated with two main experiences of alienation. The first one is powerlessness and insecurity in the labour process due to being

responsibilised for success on an algorithmic website market. The second one is status alienation- a perceived lack of recognition towards one's labouring activity and profession and thus also an existential insecurity regarding one's future.

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## **“Gendered” Care work: Navigating the Self and the Social in Platform Work**

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The increasing presence of women in the labour markets is said to have resulted in care work becoming outsourced to the market (Claassen, 2011). Care work, which includes all activities for the maintenance and well being of self or another human was primarily done within the confines of the household and largely undertaken by women earlier. The growth of platforms is prominent in female-dominated sectors such as domestic work or care known for their informal nature (Hunt & Samman, 2023). Platform companies that provide domestic and care services promote the discourse on improving worker's livelihoods while at the same time addressing labour market inefficiencies that plague the domestic labour market (Tandon & Rathi, 2021). They function by connecting caregivers and care-recipients in such technologically-enabled markets. Studies have, however, shown that these platforms too continue to reproduce structural inequalities and the prevailing gender bias (MacLeavy, 2020; Ash, Kitchin & Leszczynski, 2018; Elwood & Leszczynski, 2018). This study analyses the lived experiences of workers operating in two categories of care work as seen in the private sphere – cleaning services and home care services. The research uses the “Foucauldian” concept of “disciplinary-power” seen through the prism of gender. Although the platforms promise flexible work conditions and autonomy, it often ends up in controlling and managing the bodies of the workers, indeed the “labour” and not the “labour-power”, through surveillance methods like monitoring time, service-quality, frequent trainings and regular contact. These coercive forms of control govern labour as per the norms of the platform. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches but focuses by drawing on field-data using in-depth interviews and observations to code and contextualize their experiences of working on these digital platforms. The study finds that men are engaging in cleaning or homecare related services in substantive numbers on digital platforms for care work. The lower class and caste dynamics is explicit for these workers, who have migrated to cities from rural/ semi-urban peripheries. Interestingly, work enabled through digital technologies seems to bring a form of social capital for the workers after being trained. However, men are able to reap higher benefits than women. Though both men and women are enabled by technology, men capitalize on this by consolidating their social capital through their social networks by navigating through better employment prospects with/within the platforms or independently. In comparison, majority women do not explore their networks and believe that the platforms give them a ‘safety net’ or guaranteed work which they are unsure of otherwise on account of being migrants. This study, therefore, explores the different ways in which men and women manoeuvre these platforms to seek a social identity using their social capital, while simultaneously battling for their autonomy and navigating better employment opportunities.

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## **Companies and intermediaries’ strategies and (im)mobility labour regimes**

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Labour migration scholars stress how immigration and labour policies are crucial in the regulations of mobility. Accordingly, the state remains a key actor for understanding migrants working conditions and their vulnerability to labour exploitation (Anderson 2010). The situation of vulnerability that migrant workers experience could be considerably lessened, critical scholars have suggested, if migrants could gain legal status and the freedom to move across

borders (Squire, 2011). By enjoying formal rights and gaining free access to the labour market, migrant workers would be also more likely to mobilise collectively against mistreatment. However, some scholars stress that even in the case of internal EU workers different actors, from supra-national to the member state and to the local administration, shape mobility (Arnholtz, Leschke 2023; Windzio et al 2023). Therefore, they contend that immigration regulations affect mobility and hierarchies (Könönen 2019) in employment relations for both local and EU migrant workers.

While we agree that the state is an important actor in the construction of the EU labour mobility regime, we suggest that employers are assuming a greater role in shaping the segmentation of labour and in managing transnational labour (im)mobility. On the one hand, we stress that employers produce a multi-layered stratification through organizational elements (labour process), social elements, (nationality and skin colour) and legal elements (citizenship). On the other hand, the extensive processes of controlling migration and the need for just-in-time and to the point labour allocation (Xiang 2012), are opening up new spaces for labour intermediaries and employers in managing workforce inside and outside workplace (Shire 2020).

Based on the shipbuilding industry in Italy and Germany, our case studies highlight the role of companies in workforce management of (im)mobility and hierarchization of employment relations. Our fieldwork consists of about 25 interviews in Italy and 23 interviews in Germany with workers, unionists and managers conducted from 2020 to 2023. In both case studies, we found different kinds of labour employed with different contracts and legal status. This workforce shows different patterns of mobility and immobility managed by firms that are not restricted to the yards' simple use of subcontracting firms, thus it is not restricted to a rather passive role of 'regime shopping', whereby they act as a consumer of different 'solutions' already available. Instead, it also involves strategies that creatively combine different forms of atypical work; and most importantly it involves the lead firms' (yard) support in setting up subcontracted firms and in creatively developing specific staffing practices and contractual relations linking these firms to the lead firm. Further, companies' strategies are also counteracted by workers through turnover among firms and sectors, a slow unionization and mobility among countries. In this paper, through an analysis that brings together labour process and the (im)mobility regime, we suggest that this combination of different layers is a critical aspect of labour regimes as it allows companies to assemble a mobile workforce that can meet the needs of a fluctuating sector such as the shipyard.

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## **'If a Horse Befriends Grass, What Will It Eat?': Exploring Women's Resilience and Challenges in India's Reproductive Labour Market**

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This paper examines the intricate dynamics of coercion and consent within the labour processes of egg donation and surrogacy in India. This sector has undergone a major shift in the past year with the passage of the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act, 2021 (ARTA) and the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 (SRA). After more than a decade of a liberal regulatory framework in relation to ARTs and surrogacy, the Acts prohibit commercial surrogacy and egg donation backed up by severe criminal penalties. A year since the passage of these laws, we share results from an empirical study spanning nine Indian states conducted between February 2023 and September 2023 where we conducted in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders, including fertility experts, ART banks, donors, surrogates and intermediaries.

Although the two Acts require the informed consent of egg donors and surrogates for various medical procedures, we show that achieving informed consent remains an epistemic challenge (Allen & McNamara, 2011; Mongoven et al., 2012), and obtaining consent relies more on trust than comprehensive knowledge. We found that the procedure of obtaining informed consent

outlined in the laws falls short in ensuring women's understanding of potential health risks and emotional challenges. The liberal legal requirement for consent in surrogacy and egg donation as reproductive labour processes is heavily mediated, undermined by pre-existing economic, social, and legal inequalities. Not only that, but the continued willingness to perform egg donation and surrogacy despite the prohibition on payment underscores the structurally coercive socio-economic realities of the women's lives. The economic vulnerabilities of surrogates and egg donors can further complicate the consent process, where financial incentives and familial expectations take precedence in decision-making.

The central contention of this paper is that the prohibitionist altruistic framework advanced by the Acts diminishes women's reproductive autonomy while simultaneously compelling them to partake in reproductive labour without financial compensation, with little in the way of safeguards to protect their rights. The laws do little to address the ambiguities in the procedures for counseling surrogates and donors, giving rise to significant concerns about the framework for obtaining consent. While the stated aim of the laws is to prevent exploitation and coercion experienced by female reproductive labourers, in the absence of any attempts to provide meaningful livelihood options to egg donors, surrogates and their families, prohibitionist laws in fact end up producing the outcomes they seek to outlaw. While these Acts confine women's reproductive labor within an altruistic framework, built upon the expectation of unpaid reproductive contributions from women, our findings underscore the resilience of women involved in egg donation and surrogacy, who resist these unjust laws and assert their rights within this complex landscape. Our research further reveals the potential emergence of an underground economy as a result of these restrictive laws, where reproductive services are provided under exploitative conditions for women, demanding an urgent revision of the law. Through life histories of women, we also assess the strategies women employ to navigate the structural transformations within the ART and surrogacy sector in India.

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## **Not so junior any more: NHS doctors' alterations in professional identity upon completion of training**

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This paper seeks to explore the normative professional identities of mid-career doctors, who were junior at the time of the 2016 NHS strikes and detrimental contract imposition. It builds upon existing research that found a marked change in normative occupational values resulting from failed industrial action (Jephson, Cook and Charlwood, 2023). The UK's National Health Service (NHS) is facing an ongoing staffing crisis (Andah et al, 2021), characterised by low retention as a result of junior doctors feeling undervalued, lacking decision-making authority, and having poor work-life balance (Jephson, et al., 2023). Junior doctors are not regarded as core stakeholders in the development of solutions to this crisis (Lock and Carrieri, 2022). Furthermore, senior hospital doctors (consultants) joined new strike action in October 2023, resulting in a cumulative total of over one million inpatient and outpatient appointments needing to be rescheduled (NHS, 2023).

This paper adds to Labour Process debates on the meaning, value, quality and (lived) experience of work by reporting findings from an ongoing qualitative, longitudinal project exploring the working lives of NHS physicians who have navigated the 'junior doctor' labour process, punctuated by strike action in 2015-16 and 2023, and who have now obtained their Certificate of Completion of Training, marking an end to their junior doctor status. Framed in the literature of identity work and 'preferred selves' (Brown and Coupland, 2015; Mumford et al, 2023), we seek to illuminate how our 'no-longer-junior' research subjects navigate the transition to positions of senior managerial responsibility and the possession of 'ownership power' (Krachler and Kressler, 2023) over junior doctors and other groups of healthcare practitioners.

Theoretically, this paper addresses the need to expand understanding of mid-career doctors' identities as they enter the senior, and often the first managerial, stage of their professional career. We ask how they navigate the complexities of balancing newly-sanctioned managerial authority and discretion alongside complex patient care-loads and family commitments. We also consider and build upon the 'focus on the future' identified as an alleviation strategy to previously considered identity threats in junior doctors (Jephson et al., 2023) in asking the questions: now that the future is here; how do they construct their normative professional identities? What are they seeking from their current, senior position? And do they see themselves as in a stronger bargaining position relative to their previous junior grade?

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## **Access to protection, enforcement and redress? Effects of visas for agriculture and care on migrant workers' vulnerabilities in the UK**

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In the post-Brexit reform of the UK's migration system, the government has introduced unique schemes for migrant workers to work in the agricultural and care sectors. In the agricultural sector, the government introduced the Seasonal Work Visa (SWV) to allow workers from overseas to come to the UK to work in the UK for periods less than six months. For the 2023 and 2024 growing seasons, up to 55,000 visas are available. Under the SWV, workers can change employers only if the 'scheme operator', which acts as their sponsor, accedes to their request. Relevant visa changes for the care work sector came later. When the post-Brexit immigration system came into force on 1 January 2021, the government introduced a Skilled—Health & Care Worker visa (H&CWV). In 2022, care workers were added to the Shortage Occupation List, which means that employers can now sponsor workers earning £20,960 per annum. In contrast to the SWV, the H&CWV can be extended, allows entrants to bring their family and contains a potential route to permanent settlement. However, as a sponsored visa it is still associated with limited labour market mobility.

Our project's key aim is to analyse the effects of these migration regimes on workers' vulnerability to exploitation and modern slavery. The term 'modern slavery' encompasses slavery, servitude, trafficking, and forced labour. The project began from an understanding that labour exploitation is not solely the result of malevolent actors but can also be caused by structural and institutional factors, such as visa rules and the legal regulation of work. Our research explores how these factors interact with unique risk factors in each sector – such as the seasonality and remoteness of the work for agriculture, or the demand of extremely flexible hours and the devaluing of care as feminised work in the case of the care sector – combine to predispose workers engaged in these sectors to labour exploitation.

The project was an equitable collaboration – meaning a collaboration in which parties have an equal role - between five academic researchers and four NGOs: Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX), Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Southeast and East Asian Centre and Kanlungan, with support from UNISON. The methodology drew on FLEX's 'participatory migrant community approach' in closely collaborating with migrant and community organisations with the objective of producing research that is inclusive and sensitive to migrant workers' lived realities. The partner NGOs facilitated and carried out the interviews: FLEX and SEEAC undertook interviews with 20 seasonal agricultural workers, while JCWI and Kanlungan interviewed 15 care workers. Our findings has highlighted the challenges faced by both group of workers including low pay, long working hours, poor ccomodation, discrepencies between job contracts and working realities, discrimination, surveillance, difficulty of changing employers. isolation, discrimination and lack of union support and other support networks. Our finding also reveals migrant care workers who are undocumented or under the Overseas Domestic Workers are more likely to fall victim to modern slavery.

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## **“Monetize on TikTok:” How TikTok Incentivizes Its Users to Produce Content on the Platform**

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TikTok’s business model crucially depends on its users’ production of content on the platform. Drawing on hybrid ethnographic field research on the political economy of TikTok dances, this paper discusses how TikTok incentivizes its users to create content on the platform by (1) designing the platform in such a way that it is easy for users to create content on the platform and (2) allowing them to monetize their content in different ways. I argue that by designing the platform in a way that not only makes it easy for users to create content but also to monetize it, TikTok contributes to the more general trend of incentivizing users to regard and use content creation as a (potential) source of income. At the same time, TikTok, like other content creation platforms whose business model relies on user-generated content, neither formally employs its users nor describes their content creation activities as a form of labor. Rather, it frames them as independent “creators” and enables them to form economic relations with other entities active on the platform, like brands with whom they can “collaborate,” or other users whom they can encourage to tip them and send them so-called “TikTok Gifts.” In creating different ways of monetizing content, TikTok also creates different (though not necessarily mutually exclusive) “classes of workers” and practices of labor on the platform: those who produce content with the aim of receiving gifts and tips and those who produce content in collaboration with brands. I will illustrate these arguments based on the analysis of selected examples of how dance content creators produce and (aim to) monetize content on TikTok.

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## **Why do migration control and social reproduction matter for labour process theory**

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In various sectors such as logistics, hospitality, construction, agriculture, meat industry and care, the use of migrant workers is a key element in work organisation. Although different labour processes are involved, it can be argued that migrant workers are confronted with specific forms of labour control. Nevertheless, the questions of how these forms of control are produced, how they are characterised and how they are shaped by migration control and the social reproduction of the workforce have so far remained conceptually underexposed not only in sociology of work but also in migration studies.

The contribution proposes a conceptual framework that theoretically captures the interplay between labour control and the possibilities of social reproduction of migrant workers. Migration policy is central to this interplay: Following Social Reproduction Theory, it can be argued that migration policy constrains the possibilities of social reproduction for migrants according to their residence status by limiting access to social security, social insurance, education and language acquisition, health insurance, etc. Migration policy can therefore also be considered as a specific form of reproductive control (cf. Baglioni and Mezzadri 2020; Ferguson 2020). It is precisely these particular conditions of social reproduction that influence the way in which labour control is established, with disciplining being a central element of control. Vice versa, certain forms of labour control also shapes the possibilities of social reproduction of migrant workers. Thus, labour control not only has a crucial influence on how bearable or unbearable their living conditions are, but also on their right to stay.

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## **Safe Rates for Owner-Drivers: The Making of New Labor Standards at the Intersection of Marginality and Illegality**

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Resistance is not futile (Bailey, 2015); however, it is also not fertile in times of insecurity and austerity. For several decades, workers in developed economies could attain greater security with their employers; this experience has been increasingly eroded by neoliberal globalization. Labor standards have been undermined by the prevailing 'race to the bottom' across industries. Today, workers are fundamentally challenged with restoring labor standards and industrial order prior to negotiating wage increases. New challenges necessitate and create distinct sorts of resistance. Following up on the 'variable geometry of resistance' (Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick, 2017), this study asks: Under what conditions can workers unfold greater resistance? In other words, what are the forms and strategies that enable workers to overcome barriers and restore dismantled labor standards?

Empirical data is presented from an extensive examination of owner-drivers and their association, the Cargo Truckers' Solidarity Divisions (TruckSol) in Korea. Based on in-depth interviews with TruckSol members and relevant actors, including the Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union (KPTU) and the Transport Worker Union of Australia (TWU), this research investigates how owner-drivers could introduce 'Safe Rates', which plays the same role as minimum wage standards in other industries, and restore fair labor standards in the road transportation industry. In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, Korea's road transport sector underwent comprehensive deregulation, leading to the emergence of a large number of owner-drivers who were recruited by previous employers as independent contractors. This has resulted in goods-owners transferring their interests to private individuals and spreading risks and responsibilities by hiding behind the guise of an equal, independent contract. Moreover, owner-drivers not only have marginal labor market status but also lack legal rights to collectively organize and bargain under Korean Labour Law. Consequently, the resistance of owner-drivers has begun at the intersection of marginality and illegality.

The precarious position has imposed constraints but also created opportunities. The marginality of individual owner-drivers and the illegality of their associations—TruckSol—have served as a facilitator for novel methods of resistance. Their resistance draws attention in that they strategically manage tension between (1) trade unions and new forms of representation, (2) labor actors and other social movements, and (3) on a local and global level. First, owner-drivers and their associations, TruckSol, have created a quasi-independent model to maintain daily independence. It allows TruckSol to form a more democratic, worker-centric organization while simultaneously reaping the benefits of mature and resourceful trade unions. Secondly, TruckSol has effectively implemented framing tactics in the face of a series of national safety accidents in Korea and extended the support base for Safe Rates even to ordinary citizens who have no interest in or sense of solidarity with truck drivers. Lastly, TruckSol could mobilize discursive and institutional resources from a steadfast and long-standing transnational partnership with TWU that stretched over a decade—not on a one-off basis. This study calls for a shift in focus from tensions between different forms of action and representation toward how to manage the tension and strategically transform it into greater resistance.

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## **'Freedom' in the Fens: A case study of the labour process across the food chain in a 'logistical hinterland'**

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This paper introduces some preliminary findings from my ongoing doctoral fieldwork in a region of Eastern England known as 'the Fens'. This historic marshland on the 'edge of England' is an agricultural region where work has long been organised through kinship networks and a



'gang labour system'. In recent years, scholarly and media interest have centred on the region's high levels of migration from Eastern Europe, and overwhelming support for 'Brexit', most notably in the town of Boston. Less well known is the phenomenal growth of logistics work in the region. My paper will historicise the transformation of this former marshland into a 'logistical hinterland' (Arboleda, 2019), and set out two emergent findings from my fieldwork at one of four major logistics firms in the region.

An emergent body of literature – broadly conceived of as Critical Logistics Studies – has drawn attention to the rise of logistics and related developments in global capitalism that shift the logics of accumulation towards 'just-in-time' supply chains and the accelerating speed of circulation. I explore the relationship between the labour process in logistics work and transformations in political economy in a political geography largely overlooked by this literature – a rural space at the centre of the UK's value-added food processing. This little-studied area is an 'inbound logistical packhouse facility' where 60% of the UK's food comes to be processed, packed, stored, and distributed to supermarkets. The area, one interviewee told me "is in the middle of nowhere. But it's in the middle of everywhere." I situate this development in the changing political economy and consolidation of farms and fruit importers.

I examine how the logistics sector has been situated at the heart of a renewal strategy meant to counter decades of economic stagnation. I describe a crisis of social reproduction in the region, exacerbated by a perceived 'skills shortage' after Brexit, in which logistics firms scramble to ensure a reliable labour force. A recent 'Town Deal' funding package stated their objective of becoming "a global centre for food logistics," launching a 'Logistics Academy' at a local further education college to "accelerate the support for skills and employment" in the sector. Biographical interviews with logistics workers, many of whom previously worked in the town's food factories, reveals a tension between the motivating ideal of 'freedom' associated with local haulage work, and the reality of the labour process for a modern surveilled logistics workforce.

I also articulate a shift from a "Just in Time" to a "Just in Case" production model, reflecting greater supply chain fragility. In an area where land is cheap and available, opportunistic logistics firms have sought to capitalise on supply chain instability by making flexible storage and product recovery key aspects of their offering. I examine the implications of increased friction and unpredictability for a labour process centred on 'distressed' goods. Thus, my research reflects on the conference's focus on 'shocks to transnational value chains and subcontracting pyramids.'

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## **The logistical labour of circulation: Race, class and the labour process of warehouse workers in e-commerce in South Africa**

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Based on interviews with industry expert, warehouse and logistics workers and unions, the paper examines the labour process and conditions of work in a major e-commerce company in South Africa. It offers an examination of key dynamics of control, coercion and workers' responses to new forms of digital technology within the growing sector of e-commerce, expanding with COVID19 and its wake (and including most recently the imminent direct entry of the Amazon distribution platform to South Africa in 2024). The paper outlines the conjunctural specificity of these relations in order to engage debates on the sector from the global South. In this way, it offers a reconsideration of Labour Process Theory, spatialising it and grounding examinations of changes to accumulation through 'circulation' through critical logistics studies (Cowen 2014; Danyluk 2018) and in located articulations of social relations producing uneven effects. Digital platforms have become key infrastructures shaping markets and economies as online platforms connect sellers to producers and consumers under conditions of the spatial reorganisation of these markets in South Africa. The paper suggests that the sector is constitutive of a reorganisation of capital investment in logistics in South

Africa, with important implications for an already highly precarianised labour market. It examines the local application of algorithmic management in logistics, including the adaptations of software to South African conditions, specific histories of high unemployment, a racialised labour market and discourses around skill, the prevalent use of contract labour, and the difficulties of unions to organise workers in an increasingly hostile context. The paper interrogates how the articulations of global and local relations converge to explain the importance of e-commerce and logistics as a new terrain for capital accumulation and working class struggles.

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## **Sociological Types of Precarity Among Gig-Workers: A Case of Food Delivery Platforms in Riga**

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In this article, we analyze how the entry of platforms into labor relations helps to solve (or not) the precariousness of life the neoliberal condition generates. We specifically examine the lived experience of precariousness at gig-work, a growing sector of the modern labor market, through the case of Latvia, a former Soviet Republic that has experienced radical neoliberalization. While in Western Europe, neoliberalism developed in the context of a strong middle class and the welfare state (Mau, 2015), in post-Soviet Latvia, it formed in high poverty, aggravating precariousness. Many critical studies demonstrate gig-work as a precarious form of labor due to its short-term engagements, the lack of legal protection and social benefits, and uncertainties due to algorithmic management. To understand precarity at platform work, we look at precarity as a labor condition (Bourdieu, 1998; Standing, 2011) and ontological experience (Butler, 2004, 2016), aiming to illuminate the relationship between both (Millar, 2017). Based on 56 in-depth interviews with food delivery gig-workers in Riga, we analyze differences in our respondents' motivations for choosing this work, their position, and historical mobility in the social structure. Based on this analysis, we can position our respondents along three axes: 1) their view of gig-work as a temporary vs. a long-term engagement, 2) the width of opportunities available to them, and 3) their emotional satisfaction with this job. As a result of this positioning, we develop a typology of food delivery workers and the various forms of precariousness they represent.

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## **The Work and Employment Grey Zone: the Regulatory Tool of Digital Platforms as a Holistic Process**

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This paper presents an overview and the theoretical underpinnings of an upcoming book that conceptualizes coercion, consent, conflict and other labor processes within the "work and employment grey zone", a space that objectivizes transformations of labor market norms in terms of the continually renewing dynamics of disembeddedness and recompositions (Cingolani, Kesselman, Schirrer 2024). The dimensions and temporalities of grey zones are gauged through close observation of the work, mobility and personal life conciliation experiences of "emerging grey zone figures" (Azaïs, 2019).

Objectivizing the grey zone as a heuristic space provides formulations for the new phases of neoliberalism and grey zones, whose proteiform complexities largely exceed initial perceptions of weakening institutions and the juridical overlap between subordination and independence (Supiot, 2000; Carelli, Cingolani, Kesselman 2022).

The overarching grey zone dynamics include “Institutional Instability”, a new phase of neo-liberalism (Grillo, 2022) and the displacements of “Orders and spaces of regulation” (Dirringer, 2022): these processes destabilize the tripartite capital/labor compromise and its traditional institutionalization through public regulation. The spatial approach reveals the crucial role of the state as a “co-creator of grey zones” (Kesselman 2022, Bisom-Rapp, Coiquaud, 2017). The resulting voids give rise to new theaters of interaction that we have called the “Grey Zone of Public Space Regulation animated by New Stakeholders” (Azaïs, Dieuaide, Kesselman), whose doubtful representativeness is in itself a generating source of grey zone.

After presenting the grey zone through the prism of the book’s contributions, we provide a deeper-going analysis of how digital platform use the “work and employment grey zone” is instrumentalized as a regulation tool to create a new work figure within each national context (Carelli, Cingolani, Kesselman, 2022). If left in abstract terms, the notion of “disruption” functions as an obstacle to grasping digital economy-provoked labor market and labor process transformations, tending to conceive them as dislocated phenomena (Aloisi, Stefano, 2022). The cases of France and Brazil sheds light on uberization trends in these countries that are comparable and distinct in various ways. The methodology illustrates the grey zone as an epistemological space that is capable of illustrating new dimensions of north-south comparisons as a holistic work process.

The data used comes from our ground research in a French ANR France-Brazil comparison grant between Uber drivers and food deliverers in Paris and São Paulo regions. Through our participation in the “Fairwork Annual Report”, we have also started to test our hypotheses more broadly.

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## **A just transition for auto workers? Decarbonization and restructuring in transatlantic comparison**

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The decarbonization of economic activities is a key component of strategic efforts in industrialized countries to achieve the goals set out in the Paris Climate Accords of 2015. In consequence, companies have to shift their operations towards carbon-neutrality (“greening the economy”). However, the labour effects of this transition are ambiguous and conducive to distributional conflicts.

In principle, governments, employers and unions agree that the transition should be “just”. According to the tripartite International Labor Organization, this means “greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind”. In practice, decent work, corporate profits and climate protection are conflicting goals. Governments, employers and unions negotiate solutions to emerging distributional conflicts and shape the transition.

Changes to economic activities in the transport sector are particularly valuable to reduce carbon emissions considering its 20% share of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2021, the second-largest after the energy sector. Many governments pursue decarbonization efforts by mandating or incentivizing the replacement of internal combustion engine vehicles (ICEVs) with electric vehicles (EVs). Corresponding regulations have initiated a profound industrial transformation with particular consequences for car producing countries. Germany and the USA are the two most prominent cases of Western industrialized economies where the EV transition potentially affects large workforces of around 800,000 and 1,000,000 auto workers, respectively. Many of these jobs are contested as EV production requires less labour compared to ICEVs.

Our comparative cases of the EV transition in Germany and the USA illustrate the struggles for a “just transition” in the institutional settings of coordinated and liberal market economies. We use comparative institutional analysis based on the varieties of capitalism approach and

the theory of actor-centered institutionalism to examine the interactions of governments, employers and unions in transatlantic comparison. We ask: How do restructuring activities affect labour in the German and US auto industries and how do collective actors influence the quest for a “just transition” to EVs?

We use a qualitative research design centered around semi-structured interviews with representatives of unions, works councils and auto industry management in Germany and the US, as well as collected documents on the EV transition. Our inquiry expects different labour effects in the German and US EV transitions based on institutional differences between the two market economies.

Indeed, our findings show notable differences in the process to negotiate solutions to distributional conflicts. Specifically, the transition process in Germany is marked by ongoing consultation among collective actors, while their actions are rather separated and conflicted in the US. This raises questions about how institutions might enable or constrain a “just transition” process. However, our findings also reveal unexpectedly similar initial outcomes of restructuring activities in the German and US EV transitions. Specifically, in both countries they are marked by legal and spatial separation of EV and ICEV production and decoupling of EV production from collective agreement coverage and co-determination. This raises questions about the extent to which institutions affect transition outcomes.

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## Industrial Policy for Future

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Green industrial policy can be a powerful strategy to decarbonize the economy. The recently revived interest in industrial policy has centered around the state as the main actor, and industrial policy has mainly come in the form of derisking. This paper proposes a Carbon Content of Jobs (CCoJ) metric and a corresponding theory of change proposed to facilitate industrial policy ‘from below’. The CCoJ is a metric that, like the ecological footprint for consumption, yields an ecological footprint for the individual workplace. While the ecological footprint has been placed in the discourse by fossil fuel companies to individualize emissions and assign all the agency to the consumer, the CCoJ metric implies very different potentials for agency to fight the climate crisis.

This CCoJ metric is closely linked to a theory of change that centers around strike action in the firms. There have been calls for a blue-green alliance -- the green movement joining forces with the workers' organizations to tackle the climate crisis -- but these efforts have not been widely successful so far. A different conception of industrial policy ‘from below’ rooted in ideas from economic democracy could make good use of this new CCoJ metric based on a production view of emissions, as opposed to a consumption view of emissions.

Demonstrations, even if publicly called ‘climate strikes’, differ from strikes in core aspects. A metric like the Carbon Content of Jobs could, through targeted union organizing, lead to the emergence of strikes for the ‘decarbonization of the workplace’, that is, strikes that oppose the loss of jobs. Thus, the huge potential of strike action could be leveraged to achieve a decarbonization of the economy through industrial policy ‘from below’.

How could a political movement building on this particular theory of change become hegemonic? It will be hard enough to convince trade unions and workers in fossil industries to strike for the decarbonization of their workplace, and potentially risk being involved in a ‘political’ strike. But if it succeeds, the climate movement is likely to be supportive. But who else could be part of the coalition? I argue that, surprisingly, fiscally conservative political actors should also be supportive of this strategy because, as an additional advantage, the fiscal cost of this transformation strategy would be considerably lower than in most other scenarios. The costs of reskilling necessary for shifting the workers from using the fossil to using the green technology, or shifting to another job within the same firm (e.g. from coal mining to grid

extension), will be borne by the firm. Thus, the proposed theory of change will also be fiscally frugal.

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## **Dialectic of Transparency. Alienation and its politicisation in the crisis-ridden workplace**

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The concept of alienation has enjoyed great popularity for many years: The failure of individual lifestyles, the loss of resonance with the world, the overwhelming demands of modern societies – alienation aims to describe the experience that individual decisions and social relations are determined by alien powers. In accordance with this, it is crucial for Marx's conception of alienation that people's own creations confront them as alien powers. Where Marx's conception differs from other diagnoses of alienation is that, for him, alienation is inseparable from domination, because it is based on the fact that the means of production are not in the power or at the disposal of the workers, both legally and factually. Marx's concept of alienation thus has an objective dimension in the social organisation of the means of production.

Our contribution will deal with the questions of whether and how workers subjectively experience this objective dimension of alienation and whether alienation is politicised by workers or not. Coming from our empirical research, we argue that the experience of a lack of transparency in corporate decision-making – particularly with respect to the rationalisation of labour – is a central expression of alienation: Workers' criticism of non-transparency expresses the lack of power over their own working and living conditions. However, the demand for transparency is not necessarily accompanied by a fundamental criticism of capital's power of disposal over working and living conditions, but rather by calls for the rational use of this power. On the other hand, transparency is not only a demand of workers but also a principle of labour rationalisation: The modern workplace – whether on the industrial shopfloor or in the office – is deeply structured by processes, methods, and digital tools, all with the goal of raising efficiency by transparency. Our empirical research suggests a link between the rationalization of the labour process and the need for transparency in modern organisations. Transparency thus seems to be both, a demand by workers and an element of capital strategies for the rationalisation of labour.

We will explore these questions and based on several empirical cases in the German automotive industry as well as social-theoretical reflections on the concept of alienation.

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## **Local labour control, migration and spatial dynamics in the East-German logistics industry**

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This paper makes the argument that a specific labour migration regime within the EU enabled the Eastern German logistics industry to thrive with ensuring labour supply. It contributes to the conceptual debate on the interplay between (local) labour control regimes and migration regimes in labour geography. In addition, this contribution provides new insights into the social and spatial conditions that facilitate the growth of the current 'low-road' logistics industry. Although the logistics industry is considered to be forerunner in digitalisation and automation, it still builds on labour intensive operations, low-pay jobs and vulnerable migrant labour.

In labour geography and sociology, we saw several workplace-focused papers on surveillance and control in warehousing, the role of temp agencies and subcontractors in facilitating precarisation (Gutelius 2015; Haidinger/Flecker 2015), and forms of resistance to it. What is missing are analyses of wider spatial dynamics of capital accumulation and labour exploitation in the logistics sector, beyond the workplace.

In this contribution, we deliver a thick description of the spatial and migration dynamics that underpin the local labour-control regime in the Eastern German logistics industry. Local labour control regimes can be understood as the institutional frame for capital accumulation that emerge from labour market dynamics, the regulatory environment, firm strategies and labour agency (Jonas 1996, Peck 1992).

The logistics industry in eastern Germany has undergone dynamic development over the past 20 years and has established itself as an important hub in the network of business-to-business but also business-to-customer supply chains. Especially at the intermodal freight handling points around Berlin and Dresden, the Express Hub in Leipzig and the Rostock seaport, agglomerations of logistical service providers have emerged. The growth of the industry in the 2000s meant the proliferation of a labour-intensive production model creating mainly low wage jobs.

Our research shows that the establishment of the East-German logistics clusters is favoured by a local border migration regime which mirrors the center-periphery relations of the EU as an integrated economic area and labour market. The border area with the 'new' Eastern European member states enables companies in the logistics industry in East Germany to employ sizeable numbers of Polish workers. Those are often paid wages that fall short of the domestic (German) wage level of reproduction of labour power, thereby enabling logistics companies to save labour costs. The wage differential between Poland and Germany and the mobility of Polish workers are fundamental conditions for the maintenance of the profitable operations of East German logistics by covering its labour demand (Koepp 2022), but also impede unionization efforts at the workplace.

The argument will be developed on the empirical backdrop of case study on the logistical cluster around Berlin. The case study consists of 15 interviews. We will also draw on a descriptive analysis of official statistics on employment and migration in the East German states to illustrate the dimensions of Polish employment in the regional logistics industry.

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## **Automation in Shared Service Centres: Implications for Skills and Power Dynamics in a Global Organisation**

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The Central and Eastern European business services sector has experienced a remarkable surge, driven by globalisation, outsourcing trends, and the demand for tech-related expertise. This expansion has given rise to shared service centres (SSCs), designed to enhance service efficiency and reduce costs. However, dynamically developing technologies like Robot Process Automation (RPA) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) threaten routine-intensive tasks within SSCs. This shift in the nature of work profoundly impacts the skills and competencies demanded of SSC employees. As automation progresses, the workforce is compelled to adapt, with employees actively seeking to automate mundane tasks and redirect their efforts towards higher-value activities. Consequently, the evolving skill demands within SSCs directly respond to the automation threat as employees strive to remain relevant and valuable in the face of an ever-evolving technological landscape. Moreover, the intersection of automation, changing skill demands, and workforce dynamics within SSCs presents a multifaceted challenge and opportunity for the sector's continued growth and competitiveness.

This study explores the impact of automation on the skills of SSC employees. We pay particular attention to shifts occurring in skill and competency prerequisites and their potential for dynamics of power relations within companies. Additionally, we look at skills rising and declining in value and the influence of automation on the scope of worker's independence and decision-making. In our investigation, we draw upon the Labour Process Theory (LPT), a theoretical framework that posits automation as a force driving deskilling. According to LPT, automation compels workers into specialised, repetitive roles, eroding their overall proficiency

and autonomy, ultimately leading to deskilling, job dissatisfaction and disengagement. Such processes have also been observed within SSCs, where informatisation, standardisation, and softwarisation have enabled the transformation of professional roles into predefined, often simple, procedures eliminating the requirement for specialised skills or insights. Our study seeks to discern whether the current wave of automation reinforces or reverses this prevailing trend.

Employing a qualitative research approach, we conducted 30 in-depth interviews across SSCs in Kraków and Warszawa. Our findings challenge the conventional deskilling narrative. We reveal that automation is a negotiated process shaped by interactions between headquarters, local offices, and employees. In stark contrast to the deskilling hypothesis, automation paradoxically triggers upskilling as employees actively engage in automating routine and mundane tasks, freeing themselves to engage in more intellectually stimulating and value-added work. This newfound empowerment stems from the capacity to optimise processes and significantly enhances job satisfaction. This upskilling phenomenon, however, hinges on the current labour market context. Facing labour shortages, SSCs must retain their workforce by offering software-enhanced career paths. In this dynamic, automation bolsters job quality. The organisational power struggle between headquarters and local branches plays a pivotal role in shaping automation processes, highlighting the discretionary authority of managers. The impact of automation on skills and power dynamics in Polish SSCs emerges as a negotiated process influenced by macroeconomic conditions and organisational dynamics.

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## **Bargaining and conflicts about Artificial Intelligence in the workplace**

Krzywdzinski Martin  
WZB

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The use of artificial intelligence (AI) and its effects on the world of work are controversial topics. While job cuts, discrimination and surveillance are potential dangers, AI also offers opportunities to develop new products, increase the efficiency of work processes and relieve human workers of the need to perform repetitive and stressful tasks. For employee representatives, the issue of how to regulate and ensure 'ethical' AI use is a central but difficult topic.

The proposed paper examines the bargaining processes about the introduction of AI in Germany. The German system of industrial relations is characterised by strong co-determination at workplace level, with the introduction of new technologies an important issue for negotiation and compromise-building between management and works councils. Although works councils have legal rights in the introduction of new technologies, however, it cannot be assumed that they can always translate these into actual influence on the introduction and use of new technologies. A lack of expertise and resources or even resistance from management can lead to management concepts unilaterally prevailing over the demands of works councils.

The contribution will present the findings of a survey of 300 companies, in each of which management and works council representatives are interviewed. The survey will take place in winter 2023. At the time of abstract submission, the questionnaire had been finalized, and the survey was scheduled to start in November 2023. While case studies on the practice of trade unions and works councils in regulating digital technologies are available, a systematic comparison of management and works council perspectives is lacking. Here, the presented survey offers a new perspective for the analysis of bargaining processes in the workplace. The contribution will focus on the following questions:

(1) In what areas and with what goals are AI-based solutions used in the companies? The aim is to develop a precise understanding of the solutions being applied and to move beyond general and unclear conceptions of "the" AI.

(2) How are AI applications introduced and to what extent are works councils and employees involved? The study investigates different forms of involvement, combined with questions about the acceptance of the technologies.

(3) How do the views of management and works councils differ with regard to the consequences of the AI applications? The course of the workplace bargaining processes depends on the extent to which the expectations of management and works councils diverge with regard to the effects on work contents, skills, employment and other dimensions.

(4) On which issues with regard to the introduction of AI solutions are there conflicts between management and works councils? While the focus of many analyses is on automation and/or performance control, there can be many more conflict topics, e.g., procedural questions of involving labor, but also questions of skill development. The goal is to provide a systematic overview of conflict issues.

(5) On which issues can works councils successfully exert influence?

The discussion of findings will be used to develop an assessment of regulation needs regarding AI in the workplace.

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## **How hard is work becoming? Technological change, work intensity and institutional frameworks of effort bargain**

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Work intensification is a central topic of current labor research. A number of influential contributions see the last 20-30 years as a time of increasing work intensity (Chesley, 2014; Eurofound, 2012; Green & McIntosh, 2001). This has a number of causes, among which digitalization stands out above all (Adăscăliței et al., 2022; Green et al., 2022; McCallum, 2020). In particular, Green et al. (2022) sharpen this finding to the thesis of “effort-biased technological change”, i.e. a general trend of technological innovations (and digitalization in particular) to increase work intensity.

Although the thesis of work intensification dominates the research discussion, we believe that the empirical evidence is at least ambivalent. The analyses based on surveys such as the European Working Conditions Survey (Eurofound, 2021) show that developments vary between countries and that even within countries there are often alternating phases of increasing and decreasing work intensity. Moreover, the measured changes are often so small that the question arises as to what extent they are meaningful at all. The findings in qualitative case studies are also inconsistent, especially as no long-term developments can be depicted with the help of the available qualitative analyses.

The diversity of developments observed between countries suggests that institutional and regulatory differences may play an important role in the development of work intensification. In our analysis, we use the comparison between Germany and the United Kingdom, two variants of capitalism that differ fundamentally in terms of the regulation of workplace labor relations, to test the thesis of work intensification. The UK represents a voluntarist system in which management-labor relations are hardly regulated by the state and which is confronted with a long-term trend of weakening labor. Germany, on the other hand, is characterized by very strong regulation of management-labor relations, with co-determination giving works councils, as representatives of employees, considerable influence on performance management.

We use the data from the Skills and Employment Survey (UK) and the BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Germany) and focus on the developments between 2001 and 2017 (UK) and 2006 and 2018 (Germany). With regard to the UK, we reconstruct and reassess the data used by Green et al. (2022). We replicate their approach for the case of Germany and compare the developments in both countries. Our central questions are:



(RQ1) Can an overarching trend of work intensification be identified?

(RQ2) How do developments in work intensity in Germany and the UK differ?

(RQ3) What role does technological change play in the development of work intensity in both countries?

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## **Not really here – analyzing legal geographies of seasonal harvest workers**

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In this paper, I discuss the legal geographies of seasonal harvest workers through analyzing timely court cases of wage theft and labour struggles in this field for the context of Germany and point out their socio-spatial consequences. The analysis combines a critical analysis of the spatio-legal field (e.g. Blomley at a. 2014) of seasonal labour in Germany with the theoretical lens of the multiplication of labor (Mezzadra and Nielson 2013). Through this, the seasonal workers' socio-spatial situation of vague presence will be highlighted.

In average 275.000 workers are employed as seasonal harvest workers in Germany every year, following the promise of quick and easy employment and relatively good income. Their role is essential: harvest labor is key to maintain competitive prices on the market for perishable agricultural products. Rising wages or a shortage of workers can lead to crop failure, simply because harvesting becomes un-profitable. Conversely, seasonal harvest work as such is systematically precarious: the low-wage and short-term contracts usually lack any social security benefits, or social integrative mechanisms and representation. Moreover, their work sites are often situated in rural and therefore remote areas, rendering their presence almost invisible both physically and in public discourse. Legally, socially, politically, they are not really here. Rarely occurring strikes or labour struggles disrupt these politics of production (Burawoy 1985). The labour struggles of seasonal harvest workers create situations of sudden socio-spatial presence in the German political system. But, as the mostly poor outcomes of the few legal battles for higher wages or better accommodation show, this presence remains vague.

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## **Did Deformalised/Informalised Labour process alienate workers? A Study of Tata Steel Ltd, Jamshedpur**

Kumar Vinay

Tata Steel Ltd, Jamshedpur

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Although alienation was appeared as detrimental to capital mode of production, numerous efforts have been initiated to mitigate/minimize it. Especially after the Second World War in the European countries and independence of India, full time, permanent jobs equipped with several social security (pension, gratuity, medical, housing, education etc.) loomed large in the Industrial Landscape. Paternalism or company town has also been one of the strategy, which reduced antagonistic relationship and built trust and loyalty between capital and labour. It worked in two ways as the employer looked out for the best interests of his workers, and the workers, in return, strive to do their best for him. Tata Steel Ltd. Jamshedpur was also emerged as a company town in India, and paternalism developed highly committed and loyal workers.

But scenario changed in the 1980s while India liberalized economy. Deformalised/Informalised labour process was injected at the workplaces and dominated after 2000s. The unstable labour arrangements, lack of identity/social security and erosion of rights have become common characteristics. The employers have been competed to race to the bottom regarding wages and perks of the workers. Capital intensive technology and 24\*7 hours surveillance and monitoring work seem to be eroded trust and attachments. This phenomena more or less also occurred in Tata Steel Jamshedpur after 1990, which is commonly known for workers' welfare and social philanthropy.

This paper hinges on three questions, firstly, the degree of deformalisation/indormalisation workforce and usage of capital intensive technology and surveillances, secondly its effects on workers' trust and attachments, if alienated then degree of alienation compared with regular/old workers and thirdly, the employer's strategies to reduce alienation and other reasons which compel workers to do even their bests. It is based on the Marx's alienation theory which accounts different forms of alienation in the capital mode of production.

The study is located in Tata Steel Ltd Jamshedpur, India, is being operated more than 100 years. Methodologically, the case study approach including participant observant has been utilized. Author himself has been employed in Tata Steel more than 30 years and witnessed, experienced, perceived all these developments. More than 100 workers have been interviewed (retired, Formal and Informal) with open ended questions to know the ground realities.

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## **Work ethic for self-worth in demeaning work contexts. Challenges for mobilization of resistance**

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Based on an empirical finding in my study on the work appropriation of low-wage workers in the service sector (specifically, supermarket clerks in the U.S. and Germany), I would like to introduce a new dimension of alienation and address consequential issues of resistance and worker mobilization.

Between 2011 and 2019, I interviewed 55 supermarket clerks in the USA and Germany about their work experiences. I wanted to find out how they see their work and their social position, what significance their work has in their life context, where and how they experience satisfaction and suffering in employment. I was interested in whether the presence of two or three years of vocational training, which is common in Germany but absent in the U.S., where employees are usually only briefly trained on the job, makes a big difference in their attitudes toward work. One finding was that a high work ethic was generally prevalent among employees, both in the U.S. and in Germany. A specific finding was that a group of employees cited a high work ethic as a mean of securing their self-esteem in contexts of severe disparagement. These were workers in the U.S. who perceived the social status of their jobs as very low and who were also often treated disparagingly by their supervisors. They earned minimum or low wages in precarious employment. However, their working conditions and experiences did not lead them to perform their jobs carelessly or to view other areas of life as more important than work. Instead, they also expressed a high work ethic, i.e., high demands on their own work performance, and justified this as a way to maintain their self-esteem. In order to be able to perceive themselves as valuable human beings in contexts that were characterized by strong devaluation, they used their labour power for optimal work. Could this kind of work appropriation be categorized as alienation? The paper discusses this question with reference to Marx, Jaeggi and Voswinkel. Ambivalences come to light. It is clear, however, that this form of work appropriation is accompanied by a high degree of exploitation. The active participation of workers in it shows a specific dimension of the difficulty to mobilize and resist against exploitative working conditions.

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## **Quantified and alienated: Psychotherapists in the 'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' program in the UK**

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In response to staggering mental health problems in the UK, such as anxiety, stress and depression, the NHS program 'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' (IAPT) was launched in the UK in 2008. IAPT, relabeled in 2023 to 'Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression' (TTAD ), became the largest publicly funded evidence-based psychological

therapy program in the world. By corollary, the Editorial of the Science Journal Nature heightened the service as a 'massive, enlightened initiative in psychotherapeutic capacity-building (...) a world-beating standard' (2012:474) and the noble price winner Kahneman promoted IAPT as an 'unprecedented success story' (2014:xii). Against this backdrop, IAPT became a role model for the restructuring of mental health programs in other countries. Certainly, official data published by the NHS suggests that central parameters for a robust mental health scheme are achieved with TTAD, such as rising referrals to therapists, shorter waiting times and higher recovery rates. And while systematic research on the labour process of IAPT/TTAD practitioners is scant, selective critical commentaries assert that the mental health scheme resembles an efficiency oriented, target driven managerialist system that applies Scientific Management techniques to psychotherapy (Chapman, 2012 ; Cotton, 2024; Dalal, 2019; Rizq, 2013).

Informed by mixed-method research data from therapists, line and unit managers that spans ten years of research, the presentation investigates through the lens of Labour Process Analysis the mechanisms that result in the standardization of therapy under IAPT-TTAD and, essentially, therapists lived experience of deskilling and deprofessionalization. In particular, the article illuminates the interplay between political mechanisms, economic interests and the system of IAPT-TTAD that rests on the undermining of therapists professional autonomy and the dominance of a so-called 'stepped-care model' of therapy that is evidence based. The empirical data unravels that at the heart of the stepped-care model is top-down managerial control mechanism that operationalizes and measures therapeutic processes, techniques and well-being. Against this backdrop, narratives assert that therapists tend to become alienated from the work they are asked to perform, while the client is objectified. In that way the presentation provides an ample warning of the marketization of mental health care that is pervaded by managerial ideologies and efficiency driven interests, putting vulnerable clients who do not fit the 'ideal client' model at risk and alienating therapists.

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## **Labour Process and Child Labour in Handloom Household: Evidence from West Bengal**

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According to Handloom Census 2019-20, the textiles industry has around 4.5 crore employed workers including 35.22 lakh handloom workers across the country. Handloom sector is the largest cottage industry in the country with 27.01 lakh looms (Handloom Census 2019-20) i.e. carried out with labour contributed by the entire family including children. Handloom sector is a part of Textile Industry where the concept lies in the production process by hand, classified into pre & post loom activities as allied activities like dyeing, spinning on charkha and weaving on a wooden structure which is called the loom. West Bengal is the largest state with the number of handloom weavers' households and has a fall of more than 4,00,000 students in 2022-23 (WBBSE Statistics,2023). Based on the recommendations of Gurupadaswamy Committee, the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act enacted in 1986 prohibits employment of children in certain specified hazardous occupations and processes and regulates the working conditions in Handloom industry. Since the work is carried out by the household, they are untapped and undocumented. Along with it replenishes human life, their contributions are either unaccounted for or are underestimated. If their labour process and value chain are studied then the contribution of a child would get noticed and can be bound by laws and policies at the household level rather than just factory. This would curb child labour in a society.

An attempt has been made in the present paper to study these labour processes and value chain in handloom industry involving children for which micro-level primary data were collected from the state of West Bengal across 5 districts. This paper is of descriptive and exploratory design. It is based on the primary as well as secondary data. The primary data were collected

from the field with the help of interviews on a semi-structured schedule of questions developed by the author were conducted as a pilot followed by a survey. The secondary data were collected from the government records, Weavers' cooperative society records, research papers and reports. The most knowledgeable member of the household and a child between the ages of 5-14 years of age from the same handloom household were separately interviewed.

The children working in the weavers' household were consciously chosen in an attempt to identify them as child labourers and not just child workers. Besides, qualitative data were also collected from the observation and focus group discussion constituted for adults and children separately for the purpose of cross examining the findings for the quantitative analysis. Findings reveals the features of labour process like the occurrence of inter-generational child labour, the preference of the household for children employment across kinds of handloom activities like majorly being employed across pre and post loom handloom activities and marginal for weaving i.e. on human skill and knowledge and division of labour, dependence on the nature of institutional arrangement.

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## **Digitalisation and co-determination in industrial apprenticeships**

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Digitalisation is turning the world of labour upside down. As an aspect of a greater transformation of labour, the economy and society, its socially responsible, ecological and democratic organisation is currently at the heart of the political agenda of the trade unions—above all IG Metall as the largest single German and European trade union. Back in spring 2019, IG Metall published its “Transformationsatlas”, in which works councils from 1,964 companies were surveyed on the developments, potential opportunities and risks of industrial transformation, providing an empirical overview of the actual state of development of digitalisation in companies and the resulting implications for employees and co-determination.

The digitalisation of labour and companies does not stop at company-based apprenticeships, and although the industrial transformation also affects young employees in apprenticeships in particular and poses major challenges for their youth and apprentice representatives “Jugend- und Auszubildendenvertretung” (JAV), the changes specific to apprenticeships are not depicted in IG Metall’s “Transformationatlas”. We seek to fill this gap with a “Transformationatlas” for company-based apprenticeships in cooperation with IG Metall Bezirk Mitte. We surveyed a total of 67 JAV committees from various companies in the IG Metall district “Mitte” from 2020 to 2021. Together, they represent 5,378 trainees and thus 29 percent of all 18,281 apprentices recorded by IG Metall and 33 percent of all 16,483 apprentices recorded in the 423 companies with a JAV within the district “Mitte”. We used an online questionnaire to ask them about the stage of digitalisation in company-based apprenticeships, the associated opportunities and risks for apprentices, co-determination, employment structure and development, as well as (further) vocational training. Furthermore, we conducted problem-centered expert interviews with eight JAV committee members from companies in different sectors and of different sizes, in order to increase the validity of the quantitative findings and to deepen the empirical insight. We took this approach because JAVs (with the exception of exempted JAV members) are affected twice by the effects of the transformation in their position—on the one hand as representatives of the interests of apprentices and as apprentices themselves on the other.

This study focuses on the current state of digitalisation in apprenticeship of industrial companies, the anticipated opportunities and risks for apprentices and, from the perspective of micro-political theoretical approaches, the possibilities and limits of co-determination in companies. Our empirical insight into industrial apprenticeships shows that the actual level of digitalisation is far from what is often proclaimed under the slogan Industry 4.0. Nevertheless, digitalisation and the introduction of new technology are gradually progressing here too. Laptops, WiFi, online platforms and learning software determine everyday “digital”

apprenticeships in most of the companies we surveyed; advanced and cross-linked digital technologies can only be found with isolated examples. In this context, the JAVs surveyed are rather pessimistic about the future: they expect increasing and intensifying burdens in the daily work of apprentices as digitalisation progresses and new technologies are introduced, partly because their own opportunities for co-determination are severely limited due to a lack of digital expertise.

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## **Against all odds? Why do persons work in person-oriented, essential public services?**

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This contribution examines workers' readiness to engage in person-oriented, essential public services. Against the backdrop of discussions on a "big quit" or "great resignation", many wonder how it will be possible to maintain a sufficient number of workers in domains like health, education, social work—given the adverse working conditions. However, based on empirical work of the joint research project GenDis and other sources (mostly on the case of Germany), it will be argued here that these jobs are not generally marked by poor working conditions, compared to other segments of the labor market.

Regarding pay, we found that in European countries, monetary remuneration gained by workers in person-oriented, essential public services—seen as one single group—is at least at the average, compared to workers in general. There is considerable income heterogeneity between different occupations within this group, however, strongly connected to the differing qualification levels. Doctors and teachers, at the upper end of the spectrum, earn high incomes, while on the lower end, there are different kinds of assistant care workers who are poorly paid, especially in Germany.

Occupational stresses and strains are rather intense: the branches education and teaching, health care and social services feature the highest stress levels of all sectors of economic activity, according to the DGB-Index Gute Arbeit. This is due to the fact that physical and emotional stresses are present at the same time; physical, for example, when lifting a patient, while emotional demands result, for example, from disrespectful treatment and conflicts at work.

On the plus side, person-oriented work in essential services provides workers with ample opportunities to feel helpful and useful by their work, which motivates them and runs counter to feelings of alienation. Working with clients who are in some way dependent also allows workers to carry responsibility, regardless of the occupations' qualification level.

Another positive aspect is the high job- and employment security of person-oriented service workers, caused either by the very favorable labor market, or even, according to occupation, by the status as a civil servant.

These factors result, all in all, in a relatively low occupational mobility. In contrast to what the talk about a "big quit" suggests, quantitative analysis show workers' high fidelity to personal service occupations. There are exceptions, like paramedics in Germany, but all in all, most of the occupations studied by us attract more employees from other occupations than they lose to other occupations by career changes.

And still, in the years to come, there may be labor shortages, partly in spite of the attractiveness of jobs: A constant or even slightly rising offer of workers may not suffice to match the ever-rising demand for person-oriented services. The presentation ends on some ideas how service provision can be secured in the future.

GenDis was funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research, jointly carried out by SOFI, GWS and BIBB, and coordinated by the author of this proposed contribution to the ILPC. The project ends with a book publication planned for early 2024.

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## **Divergent Working Time Cultures: De-bureaucratization and Re-personalization of Control in Public Administration**

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In the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, hybrid forms of work gained unprecedented significance (e.g., Bonin et al. 2020). The well-documented ambivalence of remote work, balancing between the challenges of extra workload and social isolation on one hand, and the advantages of increased autonomy and flexibility on the other, became increasingly evident (e.g., Babapour et al. 2021). This shift to varying workplaces notably questioned routines of collaboration, communication, and the control of the work process (Pianese et al. 2022). However, less attention was paid to the actual process of how new routines, norms and practices are being shaped by (informal) negotiations and power relations.

This contribution bridges this gap by examining negotiations regarding working time cultures and forms of control that emerge within a public administration. Employing control theory, the analysis is based on qualitative interviews with employees, supervisors, and members of the work council. It focuses on changes in practices and norms of working time, workplace attendance, and online availability.

It is argued that the expansion of mobile work has given rise to both formal and informal normalization gaps, leading to a remarkable high variance of working time cultures within the organization. On the one hand, these normalization gaps can be traced back to formal regulations, especially the work agreements and digital infrastructure, which offer considerable room for interpretation and negotiation (Strauss 1978; Bijker et al. 1987; Orlikowski 1992). In addition, unintended consequences of technological implementation as well as developments outside the organization (covid-19 pandemic) are discussed as unruly objects, requiring organizational processes and practices to be adjusted. On the other hand, normalization gaps are a consequence of hybrid forms of work itself, which partially obstruct communication and interaction among employees and thus the formation of informally shared expectations and routines (Berger/Luckmann 1966). These gaps are filled by unit-level practices and norms, which are notably shaped by the preferences of superiors that advance to “subentrepreneurs” (Edwards 1979: 32), “able to act in [an ...] arbitrary, idiosyncratic, unencumbered way.” (ibid: 31). On the backdrop of organizational structures and technology, the power position of superiors is strengthened: the control of the work process, working time, workplace attendance and online availability is situated on a continuum between direct control and responsible autonomy (Friedman 1977)

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## **Contesting the migrant labour regime in Thailand’s electronics industry**

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This study of an electronics factory in Thailand draws on recent interviews with Burmese migrant workers and labour representatives to demonstrate the necessity of using a multi-scalar labour regime approach for understanding migrant workforce construction (Baglioni et al. 2022). It illuminates the inter-dependency of the labour process, the labour regime and national strategic positioning in global value chains (GVCs). It also reveals the diverse ways that workers contest the migrant regime at multiple scales, demonstrating the importance of labour struggles in reshaping global production, even for the most controlled workers in GVCs (Silver 2003, Schmalz et al. 2018).

The electronics industry is an emblematic GVC. Its early international fragmentation, in which labour-intensive stages were offshored to East and Southeast Asia, was enabled by its disaggregated labour process (Henderson 1989). Thailand’s integration into electronics GVCs as a labour-intensive assembly platform powered its economic ‘miracle’ in the late 1980s. Its

new 'Thailand 4.0' economic model aims to upgrade Thailand's position in GVCs as an intensive high-quality manufacturer. Underpinning Thailand's integration in electronics GVCs is the perceived discipline and loyalty of its workforce. These attributes are highly-valued in flexibilized 24/7 electronics production. The study reveals how such attributes are manufactured in Thailand's segmented labour regime, which increasingly relies on Burmese migrant workers.

The study focusses on a large contract manufacturer that assembles consumer products for major electronics brands. It employs migrant workers on fixed contracts under the Thailand-Myanmar Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Despite the harsh conditions and mechanisms of control within Thailand's 'border regime', the migrant workers have asserted several power resources at multiple scales, including: undermining disciplinary mechanisms in the labour process; rejecting hierarchies of control within the factory; staging solidarity strikes to improve quarantine conditions during a Covid-19 outbreak; establishing an association through community organising; participating in national coalitions and winning transnational campaigns with NGO partners. The migrant workers have also used creative tactics to contest their racialisation (Arnold and Pickles 2011, Campbell 2018).

The study shows how segmented labour regimes are constructed to support particular labour processes and modes of GVC integration/upgrading, using several strategies such as the 'production of difference' (Roediger & Esch 2012). It also highlights how such labour regimes are reshaped dialectically through indeterminate struggles between labour control and labour agency at multiple scales.

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## **Labour Control in Global Value Chains: The Case of a Foreign Trade Garment Production Network in XiangShan, ZheJiang Province**

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In the last two decades, the fast fashion business model has been refined and intertwined with the growing efficiency and effectiveness of the major fashion sellers' supply chains. Within this framework, brands and retailers have the power to control the activities of companies in the supply chain that they do not own. In addition to low cost, quality and reliability, leading firms increasingly demand lead times, production flexibility, and compliance with labour and environmental standards, amongst other things.

This article focuses on the interlinkages between the labour process and global value chains. It draws on the changes of China's small-size garment factories within the fast fashion production chain and tries to find how the requirements of production chains impact on labour process at the factory level in China. It is found that under the structure of the fast fashion value chain, flexibility (informalise) is necessary even though it is announced that China's labour law and lead firm's CSR standards are both compliant.

Empirical research was in 50 small-size garment factories that produce for a world well know British fast fashion company. Approximately 400 supplies, nearly 600 factories with more than 80 thousand workers in China work for this company in terms of orders. The products include clothing, shoes and home appliances and so on, mainly are clothing. 50 garment factories in 9 provinces were selected. Mixed methodologies were used, including semi-structured interviews of one hour or more with 95 managers from 50 factories and 16 related supplies, 2 managers from the lead company (China office) in 2022. Due to the lockdown policy, both online and offline interviews were done simultaneously. In 2023, 12 factories were visited and 36 (nearly 100 workers ) face-to-face focus group discussions with workers and semi-structured interviews with 15 factory managers were conducted.

It is found that increasing fragments of production chains has resulted in more difficulty in the protection of workers' rights. In order to ensure stable production with low prices, the factories produce in terms of orders from various suppliers. It is most important to ensure the lead time

and the product quality. Piece work and overtime are very common. Modern management methods are carried out, partly required by the lead company. However, most workers, even low-level managers have no idea of management methods. In their eyes, only the strict piecework and quality control.

The majority of garment workers are mid-age, low-education females from rural area. There is no typical HRM at the factory. Workers are recruited using the old-timer-bringer approach. Although the contract is required to be signed, only one-year contracts are signed by workers. Temporary workers are recruited in busy times, while contract workers leave any time in the low season.

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## **The utopia of permanently appeased workplaces? Absenteeism and resistance strategies against work intensification in carmaker factories**

Li Vigni Clelia

Scuola Normale Superiore

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In *Labor and Monopoly Capital. The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Harry Braverman contended that workers' absenteeism from the workplace was to be interpreted «as an indication of a new resistance to certain forms of work» (1974:22). Additionally, he argued, the car industry represented a prime location for dissatisfaction with work, thus leading workers to exhibit especially high levels of absenteeism. After almost 60 years from the publication of Braverman's foundational book, absenteeism remains an important issue when it comes to manufacturing work within the automotive sector. The introduction of lean manufacturing in the 1980s was paired with the progressive intensification of work rhythms, leading to the deterioration of working conditions on the shopfloor (Skorstad, 1994). At the same time, management has consistently sought to implement strategies with a view to minimise conflict and avoid interruptions to production, chiefly through the fostering of lower levels of strike activity that result from the strategy of 'permanent restructuring' (Siemiatycki, 2012). In Italy and in the United States, former FCA factories (now Stellantis) plants have been characterised by a decade-long phase of permanent restructuring which has displayed precisely these trends. Whereas it has been argued that workers in factories implementing lean manufacturing methods resort less to absenteeism (Oliver et al., 1994; Vieria et al., 2012), this paper presents preliminary evidence suggesting that, faced with the exacerbation of work intensity and adopting it as an alternative strategy to conflict, workers have increasingly turned back to absenteeism as a resistance strategy. In turn, this raises questions about how management is able to cope with the costs of absence, especially while implementing a work organisation model (World Class Manufacturing/Stellantis Production Way) that employs just-in-time methods of production, particularly vulnerable to production stoppages. The paper thus represents an opportunity to investigate, through a qualitative research that relies on interviews with workers and trade union representatives, how a traditional form of workers' resistance, i.e. absenteeism, is employed within the current stage of social relations of production in car factories of two advanced capitalist countries where working conditions in the automotive industry have progressively deteriorated over the past decades.

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## **Making the Migrant Worker. Practices of Subjectivation, Discipline and Organization. Reactivating the Poststructuralist Stream of Labour Process Theory**

Lluís Conrad

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When studying how migrants are transformed into subaltern workforce, research tends to either favour macro-arguments about the coupling between migration and labour regimes – differential inclusion – or to focus on how racializing management strategies discipline workers.



My presentation aims at reframing these lines of reasoning with a poststructuralist analysis that revolves around the interlinkage between organization and subjectification. The thesis is: the making of the migrant worker is a demanding process. It needs a dense network of mechanisms of punishment, surveillance and reward to function effectively. Accordingly, the circuits of power that are enforced within organizations and their internalization by workers need to be spelled out.

The first step presents my anchor point in Michel Foucault's works *Discipline and Punish* and *La Société punitive*. In the latter, Foucault develops the notion of confiscation (*séquestration*) to trace how human life is transformed into labour power and hence intrinsically bound to certain organizations. Secondly, I advocate for actualizing the Foucauldian insights by falling back to the organizational theory of Stewart Clegg. Clegg's conception of multidimensional circuits of power can, I plead, be used for a nuanced understanding of organizations. They are power containers. In organizations, political decisions and legal norms intermingle with the capitalist imperative of labour exploitation. Out of their condensation and sedimentation, certain rules emerge. These rules structure labour practices, they enable and restrain labour processes. It is to the analysis of these rules that I turn in my third step. In the vein of Wittgenstein and Burawoy, I hold that these rules should be understood in their materialization in certain asymmetric power relations between management and employees, in constraining spaces (e.g. shop floor designed to impede social relations between workers) and artifacts (e.g. algorithmic control devices) as well as in their internalization as both overt values and tacit knowledge by workers themselves. Where rules are implemented successfully, material and internal levels achieve such congruence that the identity and the interests of workers are interweaved with those of the organization. Fourthly, I plead that such "matching" is virulent in those sectors where migrant workers figure prominently. The example of nursing homes shows that the interplay of certain rules (e.g. staff regulations), legal prerogatives (through different residence permits), identity formation processes (e.g. as caring female worker) and the needs of the objects of work (care receivers) solidify into a hegemonic order. Control over the labour process is achieved through the mobilization of consent.

Finally, I evaluate how recent changes in European and notably German migration regimes could even sharpen my framework. The social integration of migrants is increasingly equalized to labour market integration. Even those people demanding asylum for humanitarian reasons should, so goes political planning, be compelled into paid, and unpaid, work. Labour regimes are thus for migrants becoming similar to what, as Foucault observed, factories were for plebeians in the 19th century: institutions where not just a portion of life is spent for waged work, but where human existence as a whole is confiscated and squeezed out.

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## **Labour and Capital in the Moroccan automotive GVC: social downgrading, labour fragmentation and the ambiguity of workers' power**

Lodi Lorenzo

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Since Renault's investments in Tangier in 2012 and PSA-Stellantis' implantation in Kenitra in 2019, Morocco has emerged as a significant hub within the EU automotive periphery. However, contrary to the expectations of those who link "economic" and "social upgrading" wages have remained stagnant. Furthermore, despite the famous adage "where capital goes, the conflict goes", a relative labour discipline prevails.

I address these issues by employing a perspective that combines elements of a Marxist-inspired global value chains (gvc) analysis, insights from the labour regime approach, and a critical interpretation of the power resource theory. From this vantage point, gvc represent the transnational fragmentation of the collective worker by exploiting the uneven development between the global north and south, while perpetuating it through a combination of geographically dispersed and differentiated labour processes.

However, despite mainly consisting of labour-intensive tasks, the automotive gvc in developing countries comprises medium\high-technology productions as well. A closer examination of local dynamics of labour fragmentation reveals thus necessary. This examination should also encompass issues related to social reproduction, gender, and state repression. Despite low levels of labour-market bargaining power and associational power explaining much of the "social downgrading" within gvc in developing countries, the strategic power of workers located at specific nodes within the automotive sector should not be overlooked. In these nodes, the exercise of workers' power demands special attention due to its "double edge sword" nature, and its connections with dynamics of labour fragmentation and stratification within and across workplaces in the same value chain.

By adopting a similar perspective, this paper delves into labour relations within the Moroccan automotive gvc. It examines how "social downgrading" and demobilization are achieved through fragmenting workers along various workplace regimes. These regimes are shaped by the characteristics of the labour process in different nodes of the value chain, which intersect with various dimensions of workers' power.

At Renault, where a relatively capital-intensive labour process prevails, a workplace regime in which consent is of greater importance than coercion is observed. This contrasts with less strategically positioned and lower-technology factories such as PSA-Stellantis in Kenitra, closer to regions with huge agrarian labour surpluses and where workers possess less labour-market bargaining power. In the relatively fragmented wire-harness suppliers, characterized by just-in-time compulsions and manual labour processes, a coercive labour regime is common. This is secured through patriarchal norms, precarious working conditions, and state-supported anti-union behaviour.

The paper also critically examines the dual nature of workers' power, demonstrating that a union strategy focused on gaining institutional power, favouring permanent employees in crucial car-making firms, is essential for perpetuating the fragmentation of the collective worker. In fact, this strategy hinders the exercise of car-making workers' strategic power to the advantage of whole Moroccan automotive workforce.

The paper is based on a multi-sited fieldwork conducted in Kenitra, Casablanca, and Tangier between January and July 2023 as part of my Ph.D. thesis. During this period, I conducted 31 in-depth interviews with unionists, workers, HR and managers.

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## **Workers' consciousness today. Social images of wage earners in industry, warehouse logistics, education and courier services in Germany**

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Is there anything like a specific "workers' consciousness" in German society today? While the extensive discussion on worker and class consciousness as well as their empirical study are part of the canon of West German labour and industrial sociology and especially of the Marxist debate, not much is known about the consciousness of workers and wage earners in the lower positions of the labour market today. Especially since the 1980s and the political triumph of neoliberalism, the dominant narrative has been that an overall deproletarianisation and dissolution of traditional class consciousness have taken place. Both the question of the social status of workers and that of their consciousness or subjective position in society have since been marginal issues.

In the aftermath of the precarisation of the German labour market, the question of orientation patterns of precarious wage earners and, in part, their view of society and social hierarchies is increasingly coming up again. However, the focus is often rather on specific aspects and topics, such as right-wing populism, solidarity or the subjective processing of precariousness – the references to classical research remain rather loose and it is often more about specific aspects of consciousness than about consciousness as a whole. So, are elements of the

classical workers' consciousness, which used to be primarily understood as that of the industrial workforce, possibly also to be found among historically younger and new groups of wage earners?

The contribution presents the results of an empirical study in the course of a doctoral project. The dissertation examined 25 interviews with workers in, among others, industry, warehouse logistics of the online mail order business, education service and courier services in the platform economy. These employees were asked in individual interviews conducted between 2017 and 2019 about their views on their own labour, exploitation, social hierarchies and their own position in them, society and its development, politics and the future of society. It shows that both different variants and conditions of emergence of (workers') consciousness can be found, while such consciousness also seems to be blocked in some cases. At the same time, there are some common moments in the view of German society and its development that can be found in all groups.

Beginning with a brief conceptual and historical discussion of workers' consciousness and classical West German research, the results of the research will be presented and discussed. The overall aim is to contribute to the renewal of workers' consciousness research as part of social science class analysis and give some hints on elements of consciousness to focus on.

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## **Digital Transparency as a Contested Power Resource in the Labour Process**

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A significant part of digitalisation in the working world consists of the development of digital technologies that collect a multitude of data on the labour process. This newly available data, which can be made visible in real time, evaluated retrospectively, or used for predictions, has the potential to increase knowledge over the labour process. One aspect that has so far received relatively little attention is whether digital information can also be a power resource for employees. Rather than assuming that more data only increases the power of management and leads to an intensification of workplace control, it is necessary to interrogate who uses what data to what end. Do employees experience and use the increasing transparency of the labour process as a power resource? In our presentation we draw on qualitative interview material collected in Germany for the research project "DigiCLASS". We conducted 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews with employees from across the class spectrum, differentiated by work logic and qualification requirements according to Oesch (2006). Our sample allows us to systematically compare how employees from different positions in the labour process experience and actively use digitally processed data. Our presentation will highlight two main findings. First, the subjective experience of digital transparency is structured (i.e. conditioned, but not determined) by the employees' position in relation to the digitally generated knowledge. When the digital data gives only employees themselves increased knowledge over the work process, they tend to experience increased transparency as an increase in agency, while employees who are surveilled but do not have access to this knowledge are likely to experience similar technologies as restrictive. However, the majority of our interviewees are both the subjects of knowledge production outside their control and the beneficiaries of access to data that includes their own performance, putting them in both positions simultaneously. This leads to our second finding: for those simultaneously positioned employees increased transparency of the labour process has opposing effects on their relative power and agency. It is therefore mainly experienced as an ambivalent power resource. Whether these workers can use digital data to their own advantage depends partly on the availability of additional power resources, such as structural, institutional, and associational power (Wright 2000; Schmalz & Dörre 2014), and partly on workers' abilities and willingness to deploy these power resources, which can be a risky and conflict provoking endeavour. We highlight that digitally generated knowledge constitutes a contested power resource within labour process conflicts, a resource that is

always conditioned and modified by other resources of power. Our paper therefore fits within the general stream of the conference by contributing to understandings of the re-articulation of consent, control and conflict: our case study shows how pre-existing power relations in the workplace are reproduced and challenged in the context of new digital technologies.

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## **Home, Ownership and Precarity: A study of property relations and political economy of sex workers in Sonagachi, Kolkata**

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Over the past two decades, India has witnessed a systematic annihilation of its red-light areas, driven by both state and private entities. These evictions and displacements are initiated by abolitionist organizations that frequently equate all sex work with violence against women and human trafficking. They are ostensibly carried out as part of urban infrastructure projects, real estate development, city beautification, and disaster management initiatives, all under the pretext of "cleansing cities." Consequently, red-light areas are often demolished without providing adequate resettlement options. Despite these significant challenges, the sex workers in Asia's largest sex workers' district, Sonagachi, and adjacent red-light areas in Kolkata have demonstrated remarkable resilience. Sonagachi is home to over ten thousand sex workers at any given point in time and amidst the ever-expanding city, stands as a testament to its historical grandeur while also confronting the distinct challenges posed by the modern world. These challenges encompass issues such as housing, income, and living conditions. Housing is a fundamental human rights that enhances financial security, access to government programs, and overall quality of life. A stable housing for sex workers means having a home base, needing to take fewer risks to keep oneself safe and off the streets, more privacy, better facilities for personal hygiene, having a place to rest, minimize eviction, scope for better negotiation with the clients, and being able to keep all of the social and economic equity that comes with being housed. However, sex workers often struggle to access adequate and affordable housing and are frequently discriminated in relation to housing for rental or for acquisition or in accessing public or social housing. They are also at risk of being subjected to forced 'rescue and rehabilitation' without any protective regulations for their rights. This study employs a mixed research method to untangle the intricate web of property relations in Sonagachi. Involving more than three thousand sex workers in the area, the study aims to understand the importance of housing and residency status in the selling of sexual services and uncovers unique property arrangements, including rent-control measures and indigenous tenancy agreements based on 'selami' payments, rental contracts, and commission-based arrangements. The study further explores the correlation of housing and labour processes within sex work- hierarchies, autonomy and mobility of sex workers. The goal is to shift focus from the limited scope of repealing the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) and combating human trafficking to addressing the broader social and economic well-being of sex workers and initiating much-needed conversations about recognizing sex work as legitimate labor, their access to basic entitlements, including properties, and decriminalizing sex work.

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## **The 'blues' of technologies in manufacturing industries: Deskilling and dehumanizing female workers**

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Recent work in STS has outlined ways technology leverages power in workspaces (Hester, 2016; Gupta, 2019; Crawford, 2021; Delfanti, 2021). Analysis on use of worker data and increased automation on the industrial floor typically caters to the discussion of surveillance, discipline, coercion, and control. But these discussions often leave out the differential dynamics of gender- workplace- technology relations that grip the workspace. The literature on manufacturing (and warehousing) technologies assumes that the impacts of workplace

automation would be the same for all the workers (Munn, 2022). But it is imperative to link the forced algorithmic pace, presence of automated managers, “algocracy” and skewed power (and class) relations between workers and employees with worker’s gendered power relations. This includes biased division of labor (what kind of work is allocated and associated with the given position), ability to apply and get certain jobs (hiring processes and the opportunity of “success”), pay bargaining (value of work). Technology is set to intensify these biases for women (and people of color) more than others because intersections of gender and race weaken and marginalize these groups of workers as they face overlapping forms of discrimination, i.e., the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 1993). This is not a direct product of automation techniques in the workplace. Instead, it is the very gendered nature and construction of work and “skill” which is disproportionately attributed to different gender. The ankle monitors, CCTV’s, record “man’s” watches are mere technological tools implemented to dominate and dictate workers. The paper traces this labor relation back to the manufacturing industries of German chocolate manufacturers which comprised 75% female workforce in 1920’s; the Indigenous circuit “designers” in Navajo; typesetting and metal framing Taylorist worker assembly lines; Burmese migrant garment manufacturing work; printing and clothing industry in China; today’s manufacturers in India and China; perma- temp Latino workers at Amazon’s center with “robocages.” and AI manager. All these workplaces — regardless of differences in particularities of contexts — were controlled and managed by “technologies” which affected them negatively. These workplaces followed a common pattern of ‘genderization’ — once a type of work is seen as ‘feminine,’ it is seen as worthless and low-skilled, thus disciplined and disposed of by automation.

(Re)Viewing these modes of control and (not so) changing workplace regimes showcase the intersection of worker disposability and femininity in industrial automation. The paper would make a contribution to the field of labor and surveillance studies by effectively synthesizing existing studies by placing gender at the heart of dynamics between new technologies and labor processes in the manufacturing industry. Moreover, these cases will show that the future of automated workplaces, particularly the warehouses, will be recycled at best — with female workers being treated worse than the “cogs in the machine.” — dehumanization, deskilling and discrimination would continue. The social and power relations which oppress the gendered workers will continue to subjugate, perhaps with the help of automation. The technological futures associated with the workplace, will recycle (and further deteriorate) conditions of workers.

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## **Managing the undesirables: conditions of life, labour and death in German urban zones of exception**

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This paper offers insights into the socio-spatial dynamics of local labour market restructuring and the organization of migrant labour in post-industrial Western metropolises whose economies have been drastically reconfigured around the needs of flexible capitalism. It focuses on the proliferation of spaces for the exceptional management of undesirable populations and the re-territorialisation of contemporary apparatuses of control that increasingly penetrate ‘ordinary’ urban tissues and structures. These urban zones of exception represent concentrations of bordering practices at the intersection of welfare, bureaucracy, law-and-order policing and various infrastructures of arrival and involve a plethora of spatio-temporal-material technologies of governance, including legal exclusion, waiting, policing, containment and displacement. I take Duisburg-Marxloh, a former industrial stronghold and a current space riven with inequalities and racialized rampage as a privileged vantage point for exploring the productive potentialities of such technologies, especially in relation to the ways in which strategic loci of migration control such as the Job Center, law enforcement and informal support infrastructures contribute to the disciplining and supply of docile and disposable labour. The the organization of industrial cleaning, where conflicts between labour

and capital have recently come to bear upon the district, serves to demonstrate the ways in which the rationality of spatial segregation and racialized containment have given rise to a profuse subcontracting model that is largely built on informality, hyper-flexibility and racialized segmentation of the local workforce. The analysis draws on over a year of ethnographic observation into the work-life situations of East European migrant workers in Marxloh and the surrounding districts, as well as a series of activist interventions following the death of an industrial cleaner in local steel production facilities. In conclusion, I argue that exploring the spatial and socio-legal dimensions of migrant precarity and the specific modalities of urban ordering that underpin it can better visibilize the intersection between technologies of population governance and the transformation of local labour regimes.

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## **The Dark Side of Platform Labour Process. Digital affordances and Workers' Skills**

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Because of algorithm management, platform labor process is often associated with de-skilling effects, which is fragmented and routinized tasks that can be easily accomplished by workers. This view – often synthesized by the idea of platform work as something just requiring “a bike and a smartphone” – is often shared by both platforms’ management and workers. But is this really the case? Or do workers know “more than they can tell”?

On a first view, algorithmic management allows more flexibility, with digital technologies facilitating the employment of more vulnerable categories like migrant workers. However, on a more careful look, more than automatizing and simplifying labor process, algorithmic management seems to move in the opposite direction. A powerful lens in understanding this – only apparent – contradiction may come from the STS (Science and Technology Studies) literature and especially from the concept of affordance. In a nutshell, this indicates the qualities of an object that suggest individuals the appropriate behaviour to interact with it, which means at the same time enabling and limiting a range of possible informal interactions. In this perspective, platform APIs hold affordances indirectly affecting workers’ behaviour. In other words, by exploring platform affordances we want to demonstrate how digital platforms determine a set of informal behaviors that challenge the de-skilling view.

The first goal of this presentation will be that of classifying platform affordances, tracking the common logic algorithm management present in three of the main sectors where they operate: food delivery, short-term rentals and domestic work. These will be: visibility (which is the possibility to increase/decrease workers visibility within the platform); task assistance (the fragmentation of the service provision in single tasks); flexibility (the possibility to organize working shift and to accept/refuse task assignment); feedback (the possibility to deliver/receive them); communication (the possibility to communicate with customer).

The second goal will be that of investigating their implications for platform labor process. Challenging Braverman’s common understanding of de-skilling, it will be demonstrated how platform workers - indifferently from the sector in which they operate – require a wide range of informal skills in order to interact with platform affordances that are often unrecognized (and unpaid) by platforms.

Empirical evidence will come from the fieldwork conducted in the context of EU H2020 PLUS project (Platform Labour in Urban Spaces) and more specifically from platform workers operating in the city of Bologna for three of the most popular platforms: Airbnb, Helping and Deliveroo; for a total of 35 semi-structured interviews. The conclusion will finally stress not only how the narrative of a flexible and routinized work does not correspond to empirical evidence, but also how this is functional in extending ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ exploitation. On a more theoretical level it will be argued the potential of mixing labour process and STS theories in understanding the implication of digitalization on individual level. On a more practical level it will

be highlighted the potential that skills recognition - still largely neglected by collective bargaining - may have in empowering workers.

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## **Worker's Consciousness, Labour Process and Statutory Regulation: In Search of a Construction Labour Market in India**

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When construction workers' organisations began a national level campaign for comprehensive legislation in India in the 1980s and 1990s, their primary demand— of a tripartite labour board to regulate wages and working conditions for construction workers— was hinged on the unique conditions in the construction industry. They identified a specific labouring subject— the building and construction worker— who needed specific regulations to cater to the uniqueness of the labour process. They listed some key features that captured the working lives of construction workers: temporary work sites, lack of employer-employee relationship, high levels of informality with contracting and subcontracting practices, low wages, no adequate safety or occupational health. All of these emerged, according to them, from the inadequacy of existing labour legislation that appeared to imagine industrial relations through the lens of 'formal' industrial workers. They felt the conditions of dock workers and the subsequent decasualisation measures served as a useful and replicable template. The primary remedy, like in the case of dock workers, was to create a labour board that acts as an agent that controls the pool of available labour, resolving the employer-employee relationship as well as informality of work. However, the building and construction worker, here, appears to be a generalised character occurring at different situations. Construction activities have always been a part of the economic landscape and labour has been deployed across a range of sites of differing quality and quantity. However, when the campaign articulated the construction worker as a working subject, it somehow dehistoricised the category. The worker was synonymous with working conditions that appeared to be difficult to regulate, leading to the false imagination that regulation was absent. This was primarily because the post-colonial labour legislation framework had a strong root in industrial relations catering to the 'formal' industrial working class. However, this paper shows that construction workers, while spread across different occupations and locations, also produce certain specific labour market conditions that generate modes of regulation. These conditions can emerge best when there is a surge in construction activity, which needs a larger scale of deployment of labour and hence also control and regulation to ensure effective productivity. The paper examines the railways, public works and famine-public works in the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, to make the case that a surge in construction meant a lot more of the circulating labour was working in similar labour processes, which produced a set of regulations that guided construction work. It also meant a circulating labourforce that operated in similar labour processes and rarely exited this type of work, suggesting that a possible construction labour market existed. The paper, using historical material and contemporary field observations, attempts to historicise study of labour law and labour process, by juxtaposing regulation of the colonial construction labour market and the proposed comprehensive legislation. This methodology allows us to generate an organic link between labour process and labour legislation, especially in the case of the construction workers.

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## **Creative hierarchy or mutual assistance? An interactionist approach to the relationship between managers and creators in the Japanese animation industry**

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Nagano University

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Recent research on creative work has characterised it as "care-ful", stressing that workers in the creative industry experience mutual assistance and share hopeful perspectives of their

future rather than it being individualised or precarious work (Alacovska & Bissonnette, 2021). In line with this theoretical framework, this paper examines how workers and their managers address their ambiguous relationship in the peculiar context of the creative industry. More specifically, it has been found that while creators in the Japanese animation industry tend to help each other, conflict can arise in their relationship with front-line supervisors because of a "creative hierarchy" that puts them in a dominant position over their managers (Morisawa, 2015). Drawing on an interactionist approach to data acquired from participant observation and interviews in production studios in Tokyo, this paper elucidates how creators and managers address such conflicts and the situations in which they achieve mutual assistance.

The findings of this paper are threefold. First, while research on creative hierarchy has stressed the conflicts that emerge in face-to-face interactions between animators and managers, other disagreements arise because they tend to work in temporally and spatially dispersed situations. In particular, front-line managers show frustration with inefficient workflows and frequent production delays because creators are given significant discretion in their working patterns and place. Second, while managers are often frustrated with creators, fellowship among the managers is evident; they help with each other's work, even if that crosses the boundaries of their assigned roles. In this kind of co-operation, managers engage in conversation, providing them with the opportunity to gain information about animators' skills and personalities, which in turn helps them in their interactions with the animators. Third, when creators and managers work in the same place, they form informal friendships based on mundane chats about, for example, hobbies and mealtimes. In these cases, they demonstrate solidarity between the different roles. For example, an animator affirmatively understood the difficulties a front-line manager was facing and offered advice and support.

Based on interaction analysis of both face-to-face and remote contexts, this paper illustrates the fluctuating character of creative workers between individualised and "care-ful". In addition, this paper reveals that friendships between colleagues (Pettinger, 2005), stemming from co-presence in the workplace, shape mutual assistance and care. This finding contributes to recent discussions on the affirmative dimension of creative work in that it adds theoretical insights into spatiality and worker interaction.

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## **Reconstructing power and power relations in volunteer work**

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The wider aim of the paper is to (re-)connect Labour Process Theory with the empirical and theoretical analysis of volunteering as a form of unpaid labour and to show how power relations does take place in volunteer work as an integral part of it.

The paper argues at three points on three different levels:

First, and on a conceptual level, it conceptualizes (aligning with Taylor, 2004, 2005, 2016) volunteering as a form of unpaid work, outside the sphere of the private household and being an important part of work regarding the social and societal reproduction (Glucksmann, 2005) Here, I question the voluntariness of volunteer work and argue, that power relations are an inherent part of volunteering, even if volunteers were not (formally) forced to do their volunteer work.

Second, and on a empirical level, the paper reconstructs on the empirical basis of one in-depth-group discussions with volunteers from the LGBTIQ-community, that power relations between volunteers and payed social workers can be a starting point for volunteers autonomous action and selfdetermination in their working environment. I argue, that volunteers gain power through the unpayedness of their volunteer work so that the slogan of ‚power to the people‘ here becomes reality and volunteers come up against the socially secured limits of the social organization of work with their volunteering, for example, when they stand up for better working conditions. Here I show that power and relations of power in volunteer work can



tilt in the volunteer's favor; they can take advantage of them if they are aware of the social importance of their much-needed unpaid work.

In the third and last part, the paper addresses the (open) question of aspects of social inequality in volunteer work. With the question of 'who can actually afford to volunteer' the paper connects the conceptualisation of volunteering as unpaid work with the concept of 'hope labour', where unpaid work is seen as a necessary part of the way to a paid job.

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## **Theorising unfreedom, spatializing anti-slavery: Changing geographies of unfreedom, exploitation and anti-slavery politics**

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This paper reviews the growing literature on “modern slavery”, “human trafficking,” forced labour and related phenomena within geography. We argue that geographers have largely failed to take up Strauss’ 2012 call to “understand the role of space and place in shaping the continuum of exploitation and unfreedom” and, perhaps more surprisingly, have generally failed to critically interrogate the effects of ‘anti-slavery’ practices. To keep pace with the ever-transforming exploitative practices within labour relations and ‘anti-slavery’ practices (which are now gaining traction from discourses related to climate change and artificial intelligence discourses to assure its sustainability) more theoretical and conceptual work needs to be done. In this paper, we identify a number of themes across the literature to characterize it into categories such as carceral feminism (Bernstein 2010) and “anti-slavery reformism”. We highlight promising interventions from geographers that can be drawn upon to advance a spatialised conceptualization of labour-related unfreedoms as well as a critical theorization of anti-slavery interventions. Within labour geography, we highlight work on “constrained agency,” recent cross-disciplinary work to develop a renewed labour regimes framework, as well as Cassidy et al.’s call to develop a “punitive labour geographies agenda.” We further point to work within Global Labour History on coerced labour to expand and historicise our understanding. Finally, we argue that a range of approaches circulating within geography such as carcerality, necropolitics / necroeconomics, racial capitalism, and decolonization can be productively brought to bear on questions of unfreedom as well as the politics of anti-slavery.

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## **Invisible Labour: Unveiling the Global South Workforce Vulnerabilities in Global North Gig Economy Companies**

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Using a qualitative research approach, this study delves into the experiences of undocumented migrant workers within the food delivery sector in Scotland. In response to the growing prominence of gig economy platforms, this research aims to shed light on the often-unseen labour force that contributes significantly to the industry. The study addresses the intersectionality of vulnerabilities faced by undocumented migrant workers, typically originated from the global South, by exploring how factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic and visa status intersect with immigration status, influencing the experiences of workers in the food delivery sector. It also intersects the above mentioned individual characteristics with the technological apparatus that is developed and deployed by global North companies. Analysing how the technological infrastructure of gig economy platforms, largely designed and controlled by global North companies, perpetuates or challenges existing global power imbalances. This includes examining the influence of Northern-centric technologies on shaping the nature of work for the Southern workforce. The study recognises the inherent power dynamics, shaped by factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and immigration status, as pivotal in understanding the multifaceted experiences of labour within this intricate global landscape.

Employing a qualitative approach, the research utilises in-depth interviews, surveys, and participant observations to capture the nuanced and multifaceted aspects of the lived experiences of undocumented migrant workers in the Scottish food delivery sector. Investigating the impact of immigration status on the vulnerability and precarity experienced by global South workers, this study aims to understanding how (i) global North organisational/technological structures; and (ii) legal frameworks, border policies, and the threat of deportation contribute to power imbalances and exploitation within the gig economy.

By investigating the role of global North-developed and deployed technological platforms in the gig economy, the study contributes to knowledge on the power dynamics embedded in these systems. It explores how technological hegemony influences work relationships, access to opportunities, and the distribution of benefits, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the global imbalances inherent in digital labour. Additionally, through an examination of algorithmic decision-making, the study aims to uncover and highlight potential biases in gig economy platforms. This identification of systemic biases contributes to discussions on the ethical implications of digital labour, emphasising the need for transparency, accountability, and fairness in the design and deployment of technology within the global gig economy. Finally, the research addresses a gap in the literature by elucidating the ways in which the technological infrastructure of gig economy platforms exacerbates the precarity for global South workers, increasing the global inequality. This contribution adds depth to discussions on the socio-economic implications of digital labour, offering insights into the role of technology in shaping vulnerabilities within the gig economy. This research not only expands our theoretical understanding of the intersections between undocumented migration and the gig economy but also emphasises the urgent need for socially responsible practices within the food delivery sector.

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## From alienation to politisation

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Alongside the "social critique" of inequality and exploitation, the critique of alienated labour is a second important strand of the critique of capitalism. However, following Boltanski and Chiapello, the critique of alienation runs the risk of mutating from a principle of critique to one of legitimation. But how does critique of alienation arise in the first place, in the sense of a practical critique of and in labour, formulated by the workers themselves? The article deals with the question of whether and under what conditions alienation is politicized and whether political mobilization processes emerge from it.

In the classical theory of alienation, there is little to be found on this connection between alienation and politicization. Marx's early writings offer hardly any references to this. The theoretical tradition, which links the concept of alienation to that of reification, focusses on those mechanisms that prevent power structures and interests from becoming conscious to workers. But it also names the contradictions at which such ideologies become fragile (Lukács, the late Marx). Critical theory sees alienation in advanced capitalism as already so all-encompassing that neither the phenomenon nor its causes are consciously perceived. The alienated subjects remain hermetically enclosed. Politicised action directed against alienation hardly seems possible.

In my contribution, I will reflect the connection between alienation and politicisation with recourse to three approaches: alienation theory, mobilization studies (Kelly), and the sociology of legitimation (Boltanski/Chiapello, Menz). A necessary precondition for politicisation is first of all - to a certain extent - a subjective suffering from alienated labour. However, this does not have to express itself in resistance and protest, but can also lead to a retreat into the private sphere. In this case, claims to meaningful and fulfilling work are withdrawn. But even where claims to meaningful and useful work remain persistent, their function is ambivalent. On the one hand, identification with work can lead to quelling conflicts. On the other hand, it can lead

to employees demanding the realization of claims to meaning in work against the company. But when, however, does the critique of alienation in turn become a legitimizing principle of capitalism, i.e., when, in other words, does the progressive potential turns into voluntary submission?

In my paper, these connections are illustrated by two empirical examples a) an industrial conflict of highly skilled IT workers, b) the question of mobilization in care work.

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## **Of Soldiers & Sentiments: Emotional demands in military labour**

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While most of emotional labour research is produced in interactive service work and highly feminized occupations, the study presented has been undertaken in the military, currently an unexplored area in this dimension. By interviewing former and present soldiers of the German Bundeswehr, the study casts light on the broad range of emotional demands and practices in the midst of the highly masculine military world. Whether acting out hierarchies, building up 'camaraderie' or processing fear and anger while confronting major threats – managing emotions is an integral part of soldiers' jobs. At the same time, the relationship to the non-military world of family, friends and broader society demands careful management and translation work. Yet these diverse emotional demands are rarely referred to explicitly. In the military world, topics like physical and mental strength, sense of duty or the necessity of team spirit dominate the discourse in training and operative management. As my study illustrates, soldiers develop strategies to meet and cope with the challenges nevertheless.

In the research for my PhD-Project I conducted 10 narrative, occupational biography interviews with German soldiers, both men and women, from different branches of service, ranks and ages. Referring to the interviews and the current state of the international research debate, the presentation will primarily introduce the different types of emotional demands in military labour and the way the Bundeswehr as an organization is communicating, training and monitoring them. The second focus lies on the analysis of the different ways soldiers individually respond to the emotional challenges as part of their military labour. Analysing the narratives the interviewees use to tell their personal professional careers allows the reconstruction of subjective patterns. I call these patterns, which are biographically shaped (and shaping) 'emotional styles'. As I argue, the 'fit' of these emotional styles to the cast of the organizational surrounding is not only proving more or less successful, but can also be related to the decision of staying in or leaving the military job. Furthermore, I intend to present examples of how some emotional styles can serve as sources for acts of resistance, from quiet withdrawals to openly disobedient acts. Therefore, the project contributes to the long-lasting debate whether emotional labour has to be understood in terms of intensified exploitation or as a resource for resistance in the labour process.

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## **Intersectionality of migrants' experience on the example of Ukrainian pre- and post-war migration to Poland**

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Based on extensive desk research and qualitative study conducted in summer 2023[1] the presentation will analyse the situation of Ukrainian migrants in the Polish labour market.

Quantitative studies carried on in Poland and Ukraine show positive pictures of Ukrainian presence in Poland. Data stress a successful assimilation of migrants from Ukraine and promising assistance to refugees after Feb. 2022. However, qualitative studies as the one that forms the basis of the following presentation only partially confirm idyllic pictures. The labour market in Poland, as navigated by Ukrainian workers, unfolds as a complex and multifaceted system, one that is far from an equitable or transparent playing field.

Finding a job is only the first step in the challenging tasks of adapting to the labour market. This complexity is not a mere sum of individual challenges but represents a deeply interwoven tapestry of systemic issues, cultural nuances, and geopolitical uncertainties.

First, the entrance into the labour market is tricky since Poland became a migration country only recently and has not developed effective institutional mechanisms to welcome newcomers. Since the effectiveness of an official institution is low the migrants are looking for another path to the labour market based on their personal relations and commercial employment agencies. The evidence from Poland shows the significance of informal relations within the diaspora in the process of adaptation to the labour market and particular work positions.

Language difficulties, unfamiliarity with Polish legal systems, and the transience of employment contracts became an important barriers to finding a decent job. The problem is not merely one of insufficient information but of unequal access to power and resources, which manifests in precarious employment conditions and limited legal recourse. Ukrainian workers in Poland are lacking sufficient knowledge. Moreover, they perceive their work conditions as worse than that of their Polish counterparts. As a result, Ukrainian workers see their position as vulnerable to discrimination. Furthermore, they lack proper representation within unions since Ukrainian unions are absent in Poland and the Polish are not always prepared for the challenge of an important influx of foreign workers. Migrants, especially women with young children have to face an insufficient network of care services.

In sum, the situation of Ukrainian migrants in the Polish labour market, particularly after the Russian aggression from Feb. 2022, reveals a complex intersection of different valuables like; gender, access to different segments of the labour market, ability to get promoted, ability to find a job consistent with education level, discrimination during the work process, presence and efficiency of informal social networks. All of those factors influence the position of migrant workers, their general work satisfaction and their chances to climb up the occupational ladder. From the perspective of labour process theory, they indicate that the work process is placed within a broader social environment and the position of the worker usually results from the intersection of complex factors.

[1] Data provided by the Zatoka Foundation based on a study conducted by Zatoka Foundation and Solidarity Centre.

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## **AI in the workplace: inquiry into algorithmic management in platforms**

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As AI systems are deployed in numerous fields, public debate on AI is dominated by a neoliberal techno-determinist approach that reduces any problems of contemporary life to technical solutions that will gradually emerge. At the same time, a pessimistic-alarmist narrative arises indicating AI applications as harbingers of devastation, abundant with undertones reminiscent of science fiction and dystopian novels. A nuanced analysis of the impact of AI on labour and worker's rights is either sidelined or substituted with cliched warnings about job replacement. However, as critical AI studies have shown, the deployment of AI systems is not a speculative threat but an ongoing reality confronting workers worldwide that are already being subjected to algorithmic management, particularly workers involved in platform labour (Armano et al. 2022). Within this context, AI "does not simply replace workers but displaces and restructures them into a new social order" (Pasquinelli, 2023: 246), serving as a new, automated form of the "eye of the master".

This paper argues that labour process theory can greatly benefit from research into AI deployment in the workplace. More specifically, drawing from interviews with platform workers in Greece and Ireland, an inquiry will be made into the way labour process is transformed within platforms which function as a "laboratory for capital", suitable for experimentation with

“new uses for artificial intelligence and automation” (Woodcock, 2022: 5). Secondly, this paper argues that AI regulation proposals need to be recontextualized and informed by research in AI-managed labour process. In this vein, the argument is made that deployment of AI within workplaces should be contingent upon binding collective bargaining and agreements, involving trade unions and workers themselves.

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## How much is Dignity Worth? An Analysis of Punitive Damages in Case of Modern Slavery

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Since 2013, Minas Gerais has led the ranking of the state that most rescues workers in conditions similar to slavery in Brazil. In 2022, 1,070 of the 2,575 workers rescued in the country, were found in cities of Minas Gerais. In total, there were 462 slave labor inspections in Brazil, 117 of which were in Minas Gerais. The number is more than the double of the total of the second ranked state, Goiás (49), where 271 workers were rescued. Minas Gerais also appears as the main state of residence for rescued workers in 2022 (656)[1].

The fact that Minas Gerais leads the list of states where the most workers were rescued from slave labour justifies a detailed analysis of how slavery has been treated by the Minas Gerais authorities. The research was based, fundamentally, on labour inspection reports in the period from 2017 to 2022, results of the 422 operations and 334 infraction notices of which, in 173, they found slavery like conditions. The 105 adjustment conduct terms (TACs) were also analyzed, as well as the 21 public civil actions (ACPs) that resulted from these reports.

Some data are important to be highlight. There were 3,020 people rescued R\$14,328,789.13 as severance paid and 2,064 workers that received unemployment insurance. Regarding the value of compensation for moral damages, a significant increase was noticed. Between 2017 and 2022 the total amount paid by the employers was R\$8,658,355.72.

It is hypothesized that the increase in the compensation amount results from the change in the attitude of the members of the Public Labour Ministry, responsible for preparing the adjustment conduct terms and filing public civil actions. It should be noted that the existence of individual moral damages was unusual, and in 2018, another CTETP survey found that, in 66.4% of the 432 ACPs analyzed, there was no such request of individual moral damage compensation[2]. In the present research, of the 21 ACPs filed before the JT, in 10 the request for individual moral damages was granted. As for the adjustment conduct terms, of the 105 signed, 87 recognized the existence of contemporary slave labor, among which 77 predicted moral damage.

The purpose of this research is, based on the data collected, analyze the measurement of compensation and the value arbitrated in cases in which there was a violation of human dignity of the worker subjected to slavery like conditions, including seeking to establish a comparative panorama with the compensation granted in other violations of personality rights, in less serious circumstances than the hypotheses typified in art. 149 of the Penal Code.

The aim is to promote reflection on the naturalization and relativization of modern slavery in Brazil, which, not by chance, has the majority of its victims being black people, with low education and from regions with a low level of human development, in a repetition of a vicious cycle.

[1] SIT Radar. Available at: <https://sit.trabalho.gov.br/radar/>. Accessed on February 8, 2023.

[2] Federal Government - Participa + Brasil - Publications ([www.gov.br](http://www.gov.br)).

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## **From Circuit Boards to Paying Guests: Housing the Migrant Workforce in India's Electronics Revolution**

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This paper examines labour housing emerging as a result of growing dependence on internal migrants in India. While existing literature has examined the work conditions of low-skilled migrant labour, much less attention has been paid to their housing arrangements, and even less so for higher-skilled migrant workers in India. This is especially crucial as several China-associated electronics firms have recently shifted their supply-chains to India, raising questions as to the potential replication of the Chinese dormitory labour regime (DLR) (Smith and Pun, 2006; Pun et al. 2020; Goodburn and Mishra, 2022). This paper will address this gap by examining the case of the electronics sector in India's Noida-Greater Noida region, arguing that labour contractors play a significant role in the emerging workplace-residence regime as they work together with employers (whether local or Chinese) and private landlords to manage the worker/tenant.

Migrant workers stay in neighbouring urban villages where local landlords rent rooms to low-skilled male migrants or families, or set up "paying guest" (PG) facilities for higher-skilled migrants of both sexes. Based on interviews with PG owners, locals, private landlords, migrant workers and labour contractors, the paper compares the housing arrangements and related forms of labour management that emerge in low- and higher-skilled sectors. While both sectors predominantly employ migrants, the higher-skilled sector also hires local women while excluding men. This breeds conflict between locals and migrants, and sometimes between local men and women. Local men resort to providing services to the emerging factories such as labour contracting.

Focusing on the role of "other agencies that become involved in the reproduction of labour" under the "employer-led accommodation" typology, this paper argues that the point of departure from the DLR centres on these labour contractors, who work closely with employers (locals or international immigrants in case of the Chinese-associated firms) and private landlords. Such labour contractors carry out recruitment drives in other states of India (including bringing women workers from the North-Eastern states), transport migrants to Noida and liaise with PGs/control where the migrants find accommodation. In some cases, contractors also act as landlords and house workers on their property. Such housing arrangements offer the labour contractor a unique position to control the movement of migrants even after they are in the city and outside of their work hours. The companies rely on labour contractors to not only recruit workers but also to assist in managing the migrant workforce in the city.

As Burawoy's (1987: 1082) contention that the "significance of migrant labour lies in the separation of the processes of maintenance and renewal" makes clear, migrants' place of origin acts as the locus of labour reproduction (e.g. housing) with the destination acting as a site of maintenance (e.g. recruitment). Engaging with this, the paper will examine how labour contractors contribute to the reproduction and renewal of the migrant workforce in the destination. It suggests that labour contractors play a pivotal in shaping labour housing arrangements which dictates how migrants experience regimes of labour control.

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## **The work of nurses in German hospitals – between domination and resistance**

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In recent years – starting before the pandemic – there has been a shift in the political regulation of nursing work in German hospitals. After decades of economization and devaluation of nursing work, some of the new political measures intend to revalue nursing work by improving the working conditions and changing the remuneration system in the hospital sector. These developments are, at least in part, a reaction to new struggles, including strikes, of nurses and other (health) workers in German hospitals in the past years. However, our research shows that few of these political changes are generating experiences of revaluation on the ‘shop floor’ level.

To shed some light on this dynamic constellation, our contribution aims at utilizing and elaborating the concepts of domination and resistance. Following recent debates (cf. Heiland/Schaupp 2023; Mader 2022) and assuming that the concept of resistance should be linked to that of domination (Schaupp 2023), we want to show the merits of elaborating both concepts in close relation to each other and based on qualitative empirical research. Our empirical data originate mainly from qualitative case studies in two non-profit hospitals in Germany. The case studies included problem-centred interviews with nursing staff and different management actors as well as observations of meetings at different management levels. In addition to the case studies we also draw on interviews with nurses who went on strike in the summer of 2022.

In the first part of our contribution we will discuss the specific features in which the field of nursing work in German hospitals differs from fields of work in contexts of private capital accumulation (1.). As the reference to political changes already indicates, the regime of domination of nursing work in hospitals does not add up to strategies of managerial control. This is also what our empirical findings suggest. In the second part we ask: (2.) How do ward nurses experience domination? Both parts will show that the heteronomous regulation of work and working conditions in this field is much more complex and includes at least – and in addition to different forms of managerial domination – political domination as well as the domination exercised by medical staff.

After differentiating the intra-organizational and societal relations of domination that are relevant in the field of nursing work, the third part deals with the question: (3.) What forms of resistance do ward nurses develop individually and collectively in relation to the experiences of domination? The underlying thesis is that the various forms of resistance can be better understood by relating them to the experiences of domination that are made in the field.

Although we attempt to map some forms of domination and resistance in the field of nursing work, our contribution does not claim to be exhaustive; rather, we want to illustrate the potential offered by the proposed mediation of the two concepts.

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## **Exploitation and/as non-work: case studies of domestic human trafficking in Spain, Ukraine and the UK**

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Irrelevance of the victim’s consent to labour exploitation is the thrust of the legal concept of human trafficking, yet consent has been at the centre of defining the offence in theoretical debates and judicial practice. In a similar mode, although exploitation is the ultimate objective of trafficking and thus key to understanding the practices described as such, it is essentially excluded out of the remit of the term and, accordingly, out of the scope of antitrafficking legal and policy frameworks. The socio-political significance of antitrafficking regimes lies therefore

not just in reinforcing the fiction of clear-cut consent as a boundary of free versus unfree labour, thus legitimising non-coerced exploitation as potentially present in all labour relations, but also in casting the non-consensual, or “trafficked,” labour, as non-work. Use of categories such as “modern/contemporary slavery,” and campaigns encouraging consumer boycotts of products made with “slave labour,” illustrate discursive devaluation of the work seen as unfree; meanwhile, on the legislative level, careful separation of labour rights enforcement from criminalisation of trafficking is matched by the policy prioritisation of the latter at the expense of the former, as “mere exploitation” seems not to warrant dedicated responses. While the antitrafficking measures have primarily targeted migrant workers, with immigration control rightfully considered the central function of the international and national antitrafficking regimes, this paper focuses on a less examined phenomenon of so-called domestic trafficking, namely, the extent to which exploitation of citizens and permanent residents within the borders of one country has been included into the antitrafficking regimes. It argues that, when enacted on nationals, the antitrafficking regime may play into the double exclusion of persons recognised as trafficking victims, i.e., “modern slaves,” whose vulnerabilities contradict the basic premises of a liberal society based on the individual free will. By the same token, accepting domestic trafficking as something that may be happening not only to immigrants, whose rights and belonging are anyway conditional, but also to full-fledged citizens of the community, contributes to the ontological insecurity of a neoliberal society devoid of social protections. The issue of consent re-emerges here as irresponsible complicity in one’s own exploitation, preventing meaningful solidarity among exploited and precarious workers across national and class barriers. The paper explores these conceptual claims via case studies of antitrafficking regimes in Spain, Ukraine and the UK, employing the socio-legal method; it analyses the evolution of national antitrafficking and anti-exploitation laws, case law, policies, and discourses. The diversity of the sample in terms of social, economic and political conditions in the three countries explains the important differences, but at the same time highlights the commonalities observed in the way domestic trafficking has been approached in each. The research shows how the antitrafficking regimes, despite their pronounced rupture with the “commonplace exploitation” and explicit accent on coercive non-consensual practices, reflect and contribute to the ongoing global transformations of labour markets and the labour process.

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### **"Learning from Labour": challenging migrant student worker’s precarity in the UK**

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This paper addresses workplace precarity involving migrant student workers in the UK. The paper identifies the regulatory regime, labour market dynamics and labour process that make this category of worker a primary target for work informalisation in the UK. University students’ labour market and work-study-life balance challenges at EU/UK level are well known. Specific concerns are raised about working-class students employed on part time and zero-hours contracts in low skills/low pay jobs in sectors such as food and hospitality. Our research focuses on the less explored workplace dimension of precarity. Findings come from action research on students’ educational and employment challenges carried out in 2022-2023 at a UK post-92 University during the Covid-19 pandemic. Using multiple methods, the research explored students’ work experiences and their knowledge of employment rights. Diaspora and migrant students are found to fill extremely taxing low-paying jobs in sectors and workplaces where labour rights violations are widespread. The pandemic conjuncture has negatively impacted students with fewer jobs, higher workloads and more unpredictable schedules and employment terms. With post-Brexit restrictions on low-skill migration, these categories of workers are primarily targeted for achieving maximum internal and external flexibility. Coping strategies include silent endurance but also small-scale resistance. Respondents’ accounts portray highly exploitative workplace regimes which rely on student-worker’s transient condition and tight regulation for their reproduction. This situation makes labour mobility rather



than labour power the prevailing form of resistance and labour scarcity the main challenge for their exploiters. The project's ongoing impact strategy suggests a critical pedagogy approach to raise workers' awareness and increase their agentic power.

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## **Organisational Tension in Worker Cooperatives: Labour Process under Worker Control**

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The paper explores the organisational dynamics and production processes of worker cooperatives in an attempt to analyse their potential as alternative non-exploitative spaces of production within the broader capitalist economy. Drawing from qualitative data collected from five worker cooperatives in the United Kingdom the paper identifies two major organisational tensions experienced by worker-members. The first, is the tension between empowerment and (self) disciplining - particularly the empowerment that worker-members experience by being co-owners and by having the ability to collectively control their cooperative, versus the disciplining that is imposed on their work in an attempt to maintain and improve operations in a competitive capitalist market. The second is the tension between democratic governing and producing – describing the conflict that arises as worker-members need to take decisions regarding the organisational structure and governance of the cooperative while having to effectively run operations. The two tensions are theorised as manifestations of the management contradiction and the worker-owner contradiction, both of which are stemming from the broader contradiction between socialisation and valorisation in production.

Two major arguments are made in this paper. Firstly, that the above tensions vary in the way they are experienced from the tensions identified in capitalist enterprises, due to the fundamentally different conditions of production. Meaning, that unlike capitalist enterprises, in worker cooperatives, the collective worker owns the means of production and has control over the production process. Secondly, the paper argues that even though these tensions are inevitable, their effect and intensity can vary depending on the organisational and decision-making structure, the size and industry of the worker cooperative, as well as the priorities of the worker-members.

Given the above, the research illustrates how worker-members are able to collectively address and alleviate some of the pressures of production within capitalism through experimentation and organisational adaptation. In particular, the findings suggest that decentralised systems of governance and management are more capable in alleviating some of the pressures through responsibility sharing and more flexible decision-making processes. Overall, the paper demonstrates on the potential production under worker ownership and control, while recognising the limitations imposed on it by the broader capitalist relations of production.

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## **The Labour Process and Its Impact on Workplace Gender-based Violence and Harassment**

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Gender-based violence and harassment at work (workplace GBVH) is a complex and intractable issue that impacts the lives of millions of workers. However, for a long time, this issue remained unremarked upon and undealt with. This has changed in recent years with the adoption of the International Labour Convention on Violence and Harassment at Work (C190) and related campaigns to address workplace violence around the world. As is the case internationally, however, our understanding of GBVH at work in the Cambodian context is limited by the lack of attention to the labour process and its impact on opportunities for, or prevention of, GBVH at work.

Global academic research tends to take two different approaches to the study of workplace GBVH. The first of these focuses on workers' experiences of sexual harassment, including risk factors, psychosocial impacts of these experiences and attempts made by employers to address the problem, for example, through reporting mechanisms. The second approach takes a feminist structural perspective, adopting a wider conceptualisation of violence at work to include its gender-based forms. The fundamental premise of this second approach is that violence is structural and systemic since it targets both men and women due to their socially constructed gender roles and is therefore both structural and systemic. As a consequence, violence manifests itself not only in harassment, bullying, and physical violence but also in more structured violence that is embedded in day-to-day practice of the organisations.

This paper bridges the gap between these two approaches by building on Parkin and Hearn's (2001) model of macro, meso and micro-organisation violations to advance our understanding of workplace GBVH in male and female-dominated workplaces in Cambodia. Drawing on a total of 126 qualitative interviews with female workers, group leaders and supervisors, trade union activists and managers, it teases out the links between the experience of workers and the ways in which the workplace is structured. Based on this analysis, the paper argues that it is necessary to pay greater attention to the labour process when explaining our understanding of workplace GBVH.

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## Exploring Well-Being and Engagement in Hybrid Work for the Higher Education Sector

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For the Higher Education (HE) sector, this is a time of work transformation. The new style of working remotely or in a hybrid manner and the transformed work environment in the neoliberal university are placing pressures on the wellbeing of the academic. Mental health and wellness of employees has assumed great significance in current times and it is essential for universities to understand how engagement and wellbeing in the academic can be improved. This research considers the HE sector in particular and investigates the experiences and events that influence engagement and wellbeing of academic staff.

In addition, sustainability issues related to the wellbeing of employees are central in hybrid work. The United Nations has proposed 16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 3 refers to the wellbeing of the workforce mainly, 'Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.' This study aims to offer recommendations to improve employee engagement and wellbeing for academic staff in HE, so that strategies to promote one outcome, such as productivity, do not undermine another, such as improved wellbeing of employees. It is in the backdrop of the transformed work environment in HE, that the researcher aims to propose a conceptual framework for sustainable engagement and wellbeing for academics.

Research Focus: Specifically, the research addresses three questions:

1. What are the perceptions of academic staff in HE about the factors that influence work engagement and wellbeing in the post-COVID-19 era?
2. What interrelations exist in the factors of wellbeing and work engagement that impact the current body of knowledge in this discipline?
3. Which factors would have the biggest impact on the wellbeing and employee engagement of staff in remote and hybrid work?

While progress in the field of HRM has acknowledged the benefits of Employee Engagement to Performance Outcomes, the search for a link between productivity and performance has been pursued at the expense of a concern for employee wellbeing. Furthermore, changes in the nature and context of work (remote and hybrid work) support the case for a greater focus

on well-being. While there have been previous studies that discuss Employee Engagement and Wellbeing, few have been applied to the context of universities and hybrid work. The research will analyse the key constructs of the existing theoretical frameworks Guest (2017), Jobs Demands-Resources (JDR framework), and Asset framework of Wellbeing.

A systematic review of the literature is carried out using the PRISMA technique-this provided the researcher with key theoretical frameworks and concepts for the research. In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews are used as the key tool to gather detailed, qualitative data for the study. Interviews with 30 full-time academic staff and 20 wellbeing experts are transcribed and analysed using the NVivo software. Thematic analysis is adopted to identify the key constructs to propose a conceptual framework to improve work engagement and wellbeing in hybrid work.

The Stage of the Research: Data Analysis and Finding.

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## **Digitalisation, Labour Process, and the Experience of Work in an Indian E-Commerce Fulfilment Centre**

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With the innovation in and development of information and communication technology (ICT) traditional retailing have transformed to online e-commerce. The effect has not been confined to customers' shopping or sellers' selling experiences, but also to a reconfiguration of the loci and mechanisms through which workers are instructed, monitored, and evaluated in the process of progressing orders from vendors to customers' doorsteps. Against this background this paper investigates the consequences of ICT on labour process in the fulfilment centres and hubs of a major e-commerce enterprise. The first objective is to describe and analyse how ICT-enabled tools including algorithmic processing interfaces, cloud computing software, QR codes and Barcodes have become central to organising, controlling, and disciplining the labour force within these facilities. The second objective is to understand how these ICT-enabled tools, amongst other factors, contribute to work intensification and novel job related insecurities which confront the workers, and their concomitant challenges in developing resistance and collective responses. This paper engages with labour process theory approach, considering the ways in which technology is enmeshed in the labour process and is implemented by management in the furtherance of capital accumulation with the purpose of organizing work and controlling workers (Thompson, 1989; Thompson and Newsome, 2004; Hall, 2010). The study draws on evidence from four months' field work conducted in 2022 at the 'Soukya Logistic Hub', a special economic zone hosting more than 50 warehouses of e-commerce companies like Amazon and Flipkart in Bengaluru, India. Data from 78 semi-structured interviews with workers, and managers were triangulated with a month long participant observation as a worker in the largest e-commerce fulfilment centre in India. The paper demonstrates that ICT-enabled tools microscopically progress items through the centre and micromanage workers performance. Supervisory digital control captures real-time accounts of workers' productivity through a plethora of metrics, including numbers of items processed per unit time and non-productive time. The article demonstrates how workers experience to a harsh, digitalised regime of intense, target-driven task performance, combined with profound vulnerabilities and insecurities emanating from an array of techno-bureaucratic controls and employment practices relating to hiring and firing, payment structure and job contract. Employers thus combine bureaucratic and technical (digital and algorithmic) control with labour utilisation strategies to configure the labour process at the warehouse, the point of production in the logistic production chains and networks of e-commerce. Accordingly, it is argued that this novel melange of controls has further exacerbated the already precarious and informal nature of job in India's urban economy.

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## **The ‘ecological blind spot’ of labour process theory: insights from the offshore wind industry**

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This paper explores the troubled relationship between the labour process and ecology through field work interviews with workers and managers in the offshore wind turbine supply chain. Drawing on interviews conducted at operations and manufacturing sites in east England and northern Germany, the paper examines patterned relations between environmental and working conditions, materials impacts in the production lifecycle, and profitability. The findings explore the multiple ways in which capital mediates ecology in the offshore wind labour process – at the levels of transportation, construction, and O&M work, as well as in the extractive process for raw materials for turbine components manufacturing. The structuring of the labour process also carries environmental implications for understanding why, for example, significant parts of the decommissioned turbines will not be recycled in production or organically at the end of their lifecycle but will be rendered as unrecoverable waste.

The paper also has a theoretical contribution: it develops and deploys conceptualisations of, firstly, theorisations of the socio-ecological indeterminacy of the labour process and, second, arguments exploring the real subsumption of nature to capital. Whereas the notion that the labour process acts as a metabolic transformation of nature has clear ecological roots, studies in the tradition of labour process theory have been criticised for neglecting questions of nature and sustainability (e.g., Baglioni and Campling 2017). Instead the connection between the exploitation of labour-power and stresses on ecologically regenerative capacities is often theorised at a highly abstract level, à la systemic ‘metabolic rifts,’ or in relation to national political economy and interfirm relations. More recent contributions to the ‘labour regimes’ approach posit materiality as a concept through which to investigate how ecology relates to the indeterminacy of the labour process (Baglioni et al 2022); other interventions have stressed the distinction between the economic form determining the labour process and its material side, and invoking the real subsumption of nature concept as an increasing entanglement of ‘form’ and ‘matter’ (Saito 2023). This paper provides insight into such debates by looking at the labour process across the supply chain of wind turbines in terms of both labour production and ecological extraction. In doing so, the findings deepen understanding of the energy transition, of the implications of the transition for labour processes, and of the political economy of sustainability.

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## **Workers’ power resources in the context of multiple precarity. Fragmented employment of migrants in parcel logistics in Austria**

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Since the pandemic, a shortage of workers has been increasingly noted in many sectors, especially in labour market segments where insecure, atypical employment and precarious working conditions dominate. In addition, these – often essential – fields show a high degree of dependence on migrant labour. In this paper, we seek to answer the question of whether – as suggested in power resources approaches (Wright 2000; Silver 2003) – there is a positive correlation between labour shortages and increased bargaining power of migrant workers vis-à-vis their employers to achieve higher wages and better working conditions. Based on a qualitative study of migrants’ work in parcel logistics in Austria, we argue that, despite labour shortages, migrant workers’ power resources are limited.

Our empirical material suggests that the reasons lie, first, in the fragmentation of workers via outsourcing to (sub-)subcontractors and use of temporary agency work, which leads to gaps in worker representation (e.g. Weil 2014) and increased inequality between workers (Marchington et al. 2005; Flecker 2010). Second, migrant workers’ power resources are limited

due to “multiple precarity” (Birke 2022; Neuhauser/Birke 2023). For example, an uncertain residence status, limited access to social benefits or poor language skills can lead to migrants not asserting their rights despite massive violations of labour law and bring them into “forced loyalty” with employers.

Still, we do recognize at least minor forms of protest and (individual and to a lesser extent collective) bargaining in which migrant workers seek better conditions in the workplace based on the power resources at their disposal. The interviews show that knowledge about working conditions and labour shortages is shared by workers in co-ethnic networks (e.g. in social media) and – at least in some cases – also used in workplace conflicts, an observation linked to the “marketplace and workplace bargaining power” of Wright, Silver and others (Wright 2000; Silver 2003; Schmalz et al. 2018). In these cases, workers threaten with quitting or switch to employers with better conditions, showing the options of “voice” and “exit” (Hirschman 1970).

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## **Consent and Conflict on the Shop Floor: the Introduction of Group Work in the West German Automotive Industry, 1970s–1990s**

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The economic decline of the 1970s sparked a new quest for efficiency in the West German automotive industry. Two opposing paths towards rationalization appeared most promising: automation that included robotization and digitalization as well as a reorganization of labor practices that included group work. This paper explores the ways in which German automakers introduced group work to boost their economic competitiveness. It probes how group work was implemented on the shop floor. It further examines the consent between workers and management but also the tensions and conflicts that arose for and between management and workers as a result of these changes and also how they affected attitudes towards rationalization.

In particular, I show that group work initiated a shift from a rigid assembly line system to flexible production methods. My paper further argues that, for a short period in the early 1980s, robotization appeared to be key to economic success. Yet automation was gradually superseded by group work, which became the new “magic formula” of rationalization starting in the mid-1980s. Thereby, I trace the factors that contributed to this change and challenge the perception that workers opposed rationalization measures. Rather, they actively participated depending on race, class, and gender—which includes not only skilled male worker but also unskilled (female) workers and migrant workers brought to West Germany.

I base my argument on archival sources of German automakers and labor unions as well material published in engineering journals. My presentation contributes to our general understanding of how both digital technologies and social rationalization measures have been closely intertwined and how their implementation is linked to gender, social background, and education.

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## **Organizing fragmented labour: the case of migrant workers at Helping in Berlin**

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The presentation addresses the issue of the self-organization of migrant workers on cleaning platforms through a case study of Helping cleaners in Berlin. It aims to explain why attempts to organize in the field have failed to scale up to levels that have been seen in other forms of platform work, such as ride-hailing and food delivery. The presentation argues that the spatial dispersion of work across the city, lack of occupational identity and the legal framework of the activity make worker organizing difficult for cleaners in Berlin. Still, these factors do not lead to an absence of collective practices. Helping workers practice mutual aid in messenger groups, make use of a community center for help and exchange and have been in touch with political groups in the city. Based on the case study, the contribution discusses potentials and hurdles for the development of collective counter-power.

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## **Unusual Suspects: Migration and White Collar Conflict in Berlin’s Tech Industry**

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Platform companies, high tech firms and startups have witnessed a rise of labor disputes in the last decade. Much knowledge has been produced since then about the labor process, control and struggles of low-paid gig workers in such companies. However, less is known about the grievances of higher-paid office workers (tech workers) and their relation to other worker groups. Although the income level, labor process and social status of office workers often translates into more leverage in the workplace, labour conflict has also unfolded among white collar workers in tech within the last years.

To shed more light on this phenomenon, my contribution looks at the organizing efforts of tech workers based in Berlin (Germany) and on their role within the city’s organizing eco-system. In recent years, tech worker collectives in the city have helped to establish works councils in companies and launched grassroots campaigns against unfair pay, surveillance or corporate layoffs. The paper argues that experiences of mobility and migration have shaped the organizing activities of this group in crucial ways. It argues that this manifests in three main ways: (1) language and culture barriers, (2) lack of access to legal resources, and (3) conflicts with the trade union system in Germany. Many of these experiences are also shared by recently migrated, low-income gig workers in Berlin, which at times has enabled cooperation among the groups. Reflecting this finding, the paper argues that both the trade union system

and the labor law framework in Germany have been unable to deal with the high degree of transnational labour mobility and the venture capital-driven business models of tech corporations in Berlin. This has led to the development of grassroots workers collectives in the city, which often serve as arrival infrastructures for mobile workers and do not shy away from more political forms of labour organizing.

The analysis of this paper is based on the framework of class composition analysis, in particular its reformulation by the collective Notes from Below, which proposes to look at the lived experiences of workers through three interrelated lenses: the technical composition (labour process and its immediate context), the social composition (social status of workers in society and their social reproduction) and the political composition (how workers organize politically). Based on this analysis, my paper concludes that the specific situation of recently migrated tech workers in Berlin and their conflict lines vis-à-vis management, labor law and unions have enabled them to create bonds among each other that allow not only for common organizing on an industry-level, but also allow for cross-status cooperation with gig workers. While cross-status cooperation offers opportunities, it also remains fragile and undermined by the existing segmentation of workforces in the industry.

The paper is based on an analysis of 14 months-long ethnographic fieldwork in Berlin as well as 30 qualitative interviews with tech workers, gig workers, union representatives and local experts.

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## **Losing Unequally: Financialisation, Productivity & the Finance Wage Premium**

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This paper provides an expanded conceptual framework for the analysis of the effects of financialisation on the finance wage premium. Current studies primarily focus on how financial deregulation has increased employee compensation in the financial sectors through rent-sharing. We argue that rising financial payments - the source of financial rents - also induce wage suppression in the rest of the economy. First, non-financial corporations pass increases in their financial payments to workers through wage reductions. Second, simultaneously, indebted workers lower their wage demands to avoid unemployment and personal default. Thus, understanding the growth of the finance wage premium requires scrutinizing the impact of business and household indebtedness.

To evaluate this argument, we calculate the finance wage premium in Greece since its introduction to the Eurozone in 1999 and examine the determinants. The wage reduction policies that have been implemented as part of the post-Global Financial Crisis economic adjustment programmes in Greece have been on the news for more than a decade. However, the distribution of wage losses among workers has been unequal, particularly between workers in the financial sector and the rest of the economy. This is particularly important for a rapidly financialising economy like Greece, since workers in the financial sector often enjoy corporate benefits linked to financial profits. Interestingly, the evolution and drivers of the finance wage premium in Greece remain unexplored in the wage inequality literature. Using the quarterly data from Eurostat for Greece over the period 1999Q1-2021Q3, we show that increases in all components of private debt are strongly associated with positive changes in the finance wage premium.

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## Meaningful work in voluntary sector social care: the compensating role of subjective dignity and recognition

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The contemporary provision of social care is largely defined by a managerialist logic where efficiency, customer responsiveness, and performance are prioritised (Pollitt, 1995). The existence of social care quasi-markets has demonstrably driven the deterioration of employment conditions in commissioned social care, as cost pressures remain a defining characteristic of what some term the outsourcing of austerity (Cunningham and James, 2014; Glasby et al, 2020). While the living wage has been implemented by many independent providers in the sector, the associated benefits have been limited (Cunningham et al, 2023). Ultimately, the downward pressure on conditions has culminated in high turnover rates in the sector and persisting recruitment and retention challenges (SSSC, 2023). Care work appears to be devalued via the social framing of care as dirty work and women's work (Atkinson and Lucas, 2012) but also institutionally in comparison to statutory providers of equivalent service (e.g. Rubery and Urwin, 2011). Laaser and Karlsson's (2022) typology of meaningful work is adopted to explore the interplay between the above structural context and the agential responses of workers. Drawing on semi-structured interview findings, this paper explores how and to what extent subjective dignity and recognition could compensate for the lacking in their objective counterparts and thus keep employees in their jobs.

The preliminary findings suggest that the main threat to meaningful work is the lack of objective dignity - compensation was widely considered inadequate, job security was threatened under short-term funding arrangements, and respect and civility were not guaranteed in interactions with challenging service users and line management. Employees emphasised the above as the key factors driving their desire to quit but these were rarely found in a bundle. The felt mutuality and sense of self-worth awarded by positive workplace relationships, especially with service users, were often identified as compensation for poor conditions. It emerged that interviewees often transferred their discontent with conditions to the purchaser of the service (i.e. the state), hence altering how the wage-effort bargain is evaluated. Employees re-framed their experiences in several other ways, such as emphasising the worth, importance and demands of their work but also by elevating their care jobs by juxtaposing them against other jobs in the sector. While solidarity amongst colleagues was prevalent and there was an appreciation of the equal other, some employees, including those in more senior roles, felt an absence of recognition from their seniors, an absence that was attributed considerable weight. The latter was often associated with a 'us' and 'them' rhetoric which underscored the senior's lack of understanding of the work and skill required (e.g. Dejours et al, 2018). Overall, it was found that the subjective dimensions of meaningful work compensate for some of the adversity found in care jobs to a point. Where that line is drawn depends on the degree and nature of adversity, as captured by Laaser and Karlsson's typology, but also factors beyond it, such as the socio-demographic background, experiences, and dispositions of the employee.

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## Informal work in Northeast China county regions: From traditional workers to self-employment store owners

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Northeast China is experiencing economic and industrial transformation, especially in the county regions. More and more informal workers and self-employers are arising in the Northeast County regions due to the geographical space and industrial structure. Self-employment is more heterogeneous today, including self-employed entrepreneurs who succeed in the market and unstable workers who always struggle for living. However, informal workers in Northeast China counties seem to be a group between the top and bottom class of



self-employment. They are forced to enter self-employment due to the unemployment and disadvantage in the labor market, but they are more likely to have created a new way of working to lead a relatively stable life.

This article takes N County as a case study to describe the process of changes in the last 30 years. Using qualitative method, 45 people from different jobs were interviewed from 2020 to 2022. The case study shows that after the reform and marketization, the stable working space once constructed by the national capital quickly lost advantage and disappeared. Now there is nearly not any industry in most counties of Northeast China. Except the out-migration, laid-off workers who stay there are widely forced to employ themselves into self-owned business. They are using very limited family capital to create new working spaces in their own stores, at the same time create new ways of working and social relationships. The new working and living space are highly embedded into each other, which means an integration of "store and family". It is because that their daily life, family and social relations are all closely connected with working, they can develop a relative stable form of self-employment. Furthermore, they are also continuously reproducing a similar structure of working and living by intergenerational succession. The article also demonstrates significant differences between these workers and traditional workers in state owned enterprises.

The way of working in N county shows now it is difficult to distinguish between those who own the capital and those who provide labor. They own means of production while also provide their own labor. They are not in an employment relationship and can't be explained by the traditional labor progress theories. They always have multiple identities and diverse roles, for example purchase supplies and raw materials, get premises and equipment, sell goods and services, negotiate with one or more departments, which makes things more complex. Also, this way of self-employment is usually low in technology, limited in core family members and can't expanded. Therefore the main way of working in Northeast China counties is usually self-sufficient and difficult to attract more population and capital. The research reflects the changes of the labor foundation and traditional work, and try to help find new perspectives for promoting the revitalization of Northeast China.

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## **Career Transitions to paid employment: At what point does training placement provision move between up-skilling to exploitation?**

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Precarious work that becomes a 'stepping stone' to decent work (McGuinness and Wooden 2009, Nunley et al 2017; Munoz-Comet and Steinmetz 2020) is the bargain struck for many learners leaving education and accessing employment, typically via placements and internships. However, the growing prevalence of unpaid, free labour as a stepping-stone to precarious, insecure work is becoming the new level of analysis in career transitions under a political backdrop of never-ending austerity. The UK mental health sector is ripe for study, due to the increase in demand for services, post Covid-19 pandemic, but utter lack of public funding available for up-skilling and accreditation.

In this exploratory study, we stratified 10 trainee mental health counsellor interviews out of a larger data set with experienced practitioners, who had completed a variety of unpaid placements as part of their training program and accreditation process. We asked the following research questions: (1) How do trainee therapists negotiate the expected "free" work of placements while paying for therapy, supervision and ancillary costs and balancing volunteering with paid work and caring commitments? (2) To what extent might the costs of 'free work' enable or hinder eventual career entry in to secure paid labour?

Our findings reveal a system of mental health care built on free labour, where services substitute paid labour with free labour; where trainees are providing extra services via discretionary and coerced effort; where organisations off-set the costs of up-skilling and the

direct costs of work and resources onto the trainee. The placements do offer up-skilling opportunities, but the associated costs and labour substitution act as barriers to entry into paid and secure work. Examples include NHS services, where only (underpaid) doctors are paid at all and everyone else works for free; essential charitable services where trainees ‘borrow’ time from their paid work to complete voluntary but essential tasks and eventual paid work which is characterised by part time hours, opaque contracts and work intensification. The trend emerging is one where the career ladder has been lengthened, to include a new rung at the bottom which goes beyond altruistic volunteering and is now exploitation of the educated, up-skilled, hopeful.

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## **Menopause Symptom Severity and subjective well-being: the role of exhaustion and job satisfaction**

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At some point, biological females will go through a menopause transition, a process that has garnered significant attention in the management studies literature over the past decade with increased academic interest more recently (Brewis et al., 2021, Kagan et al., 2021, Rowson et al., 2023, Steffan and Potočnik, 2023, Whiley et al., 2023). The growing importance of understanding the impact of menopause in the workplace is trenchantly observed in a recent Mayo Clinic report that found adverse work outcomes increased with menopause symptom severity resulting in an estimated \$1.8 billion annual loss in the U.S. due to workplace absence (Faubion et al., 2023).

A number of recent menopause studies have highlighted the impact for workplaces, and for older women who remain in, or return to, the workforce in greater numbers (OECD, 2023, Faubion et al., 2023) with estimated cost of between \$1.8 and \$2.2 billion in lost productivity among women aged between 42-64 in the US (Kagan et al., 2021, Faubion et al., 2023).

A nascent body of research exploring work characteristics and their impact on menopause is emerging, and has highlighted that symptom reporting and severity is associated with aspects of work design and the psychosocial environment such as workload, social support, stress, work pattern (Jack et al., 2016, Brewis et al., 2017, Steffan and Potočnik, 2023, Bariola et al., 2017) as well physical work environment factors such as workstation design, confined spaces, temperature control, noise, crowding (Griffiths et al., 2013, Hardy et al., 2019, Jack et al., 2019). There is, however, a relative lack of research on how menopausal transition is related to work behaviors and the impact of menopause on many well-developed work constructs has been under researched (Converso et al., 2019, Jack et al., 2016).

To address this lacuna, we explore the relationship between Menopause symptom severity and subjective well-being in the work context, as well as the role job satisfaction plays in that relationship. Utilizing Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hall et al., 2006, Hobfoll, 1989, Hobfoll and Lilly, 1993) as our theoretical framework, we explore the myriad of factors that can influence the behavior of those experiencing menopause in the workplace. COR theory is at its core, a model of stress that helps explain the need for human behavior to acquire and conserve resources for survival, which is, ‘central to human behavioural genetics’ (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p.104).

Using an online, self-report Qualtrics survey, the sample comprised of over 1,100 pre-menopausal and menopausal female employees from six Irish public sector organizations. Our research makes a number of contributions to the gendered, age-related work literature. First, we highlight how exhaustion is a key mechanism linking menopause symptom severity to well-being, which impacts work outcomes, speeding up the resource loss cycle. Secondly, we find that job satisfaction (an energy resource) acts a buffer interrupting the resource loss cycle.

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## **Identity and organisational Identification in the context of changing work environment**

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The concept of organisational identification as the oneness with or belongingness to an organisation has long been considered key in management research (Weisman et al 2023). Organisational identification is deemed to be significant as it mirrors individuals' attachment to their workplace, given identification is accompanied by emotional and value significance (Brown, 2015). Consequently, organisational identification generates positive outcomes for the individual staff member, including a sense of belonging, greater self-esteem and self-efficacy, and feelings of psychological safety (Hogg and Terry, 2000; Bartels et al., 2006). A key antecedent of organisational identification and identity is through interpersonal interaction among co-workers. Social identity theorist also conclude that when individuals work closely together and share a common role or interest with other members, they are more likely to develop social identities (Haslam, 2004; Ellermers and Rink, 2005; Spears, 2011). Others have promoted the ability for material discourse to shape individuals' identity and identification, and studies that have explored this line of research have argued that place plays an instrumental role in the understanding of identity formation and maintenance. Such that, place has been linked to physical workspace, location and city of work: and these places have been found to carry meaning which have the tendency to shape individuals' identity. In line with this, Millward et al. (2007) found that the physical arrangement of the workplace influenced individuals' identification, in that those who were assigned a work desk identified with their workgroup, while staff who were hot-desking identified with the organisation. Consequently, organisations have been identified as a domain for constructing various identities through a range of discourses within the context.

However, work has shifted dramatically in the last few years, where there has been an increase in a range of flexible working arrangements. Additionally, Covid 19 has accelerated some of these changes leading to predominant virtualisation of work, which saw a large percentage of the workforce working from home across the globe. These developments challenge existing research underpinning identity construction, which has largely been examined from the context of the workplace. Additionally, with the increasing blurring of employee home and work life, it is unclear how work and non-work identities are negotiated. As such, the aim of this paper is to explore how employees negotiate their identities considering the changes in the workplace, and the implications on their identities and organisational identification.

### Questions

If employees are no longer physically present in the workplace do, they still have a strong identification with the organisation? If so, how do employees construct their work identity and identification?

Are there any tensions between employee work and non-work identities? How do they negotiate the tensions between their identities?

How do these changes impact organisational identity theorising? And employee sense of belonging.

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## **Housing of Women Sanitation Workers in Mumbai**

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What is the nature of the work lives, social worlds, and self understandings of Dalit women sanitation workers in contemporary Mumbai? How do these women negotiate the oppressive structures of class, caste and gender in their everyday lives? I intend to address these

questions by studying the lives and testimonies of women sanitation workers, who work for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) or Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) in a neighbourhood in the Mumbai Central region. I investigated the experiences these women have at work and home through an ethnographic study of the three dimensions of worker's life worlds. These dimensions are: i) caste based work and its functioning, which deals with the negotiations women workers have to make as well as the strategies they use for survival; ii) lives in the neighbourhood and the family, which explores moving beyond the tasks assigned at home and deals with these around kin systems (production and reproduction); and iii) perceptions of the self, which studies the understandings and views these women hold, and the different meanings of agency for themselves (empowered/ victims/ complex). This chapter focuses on the housing colonies of BMC provided to the sanitation workers as a strategy to control their work and workforce. To incentivise the work, the Bombay Improvement Trust (BIT) was a housing project of the colonial state to provide housing to the conservancy workers, thereby, perpetuating caste based occupation to exist even today. This chapter will argue that how providing housing for the sanitation workers in the city of Mumbai is used as a tool of the state to control and discipline the workforce through the Preferential Treatment (P.T) policy which makes it possible for the workers to transfer their jobs to their next kin, or children or when they retire or they died while in service; and was institutionalised for caste based reservation in employment. Through housing colonies or staff quarters for sanitation workers, the state is perpetuating families of sanitation to engage in the occupation for generations in order to maintain housing. This paper will articulate the caste based occupation is viewed as a government job and refrained from perceiving as 'casteist' even after its precarious and hazardous work conditions. This research aspires to make a significant contribution to the field of gender and Dalit studies through a multidisciplinary study of labour politics and subaltern politics, with gender overarching the two.

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## **Working Holiday Visas Fueling Berlin's gig economy**

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An increasing range of services in different sectors have been gigified over the last decade, from the highly visible ride hailing and delivery apps to more hidden services such as cleaning, babysitting or caring for the elderly (Baum and Kufner, 2018; Ticona 2022), firmly establishing digital platform companies as new labor intermediaries (Ravenelle, 2019). This place-based platform work is predominantly carried out by migrants and racialised workers (Altenried, 2021; Gebrial, 2022; McDonald et al., 2019; Piasna et al., 2022; Van Doorn, 2022; Van Doorn et al., 2022; Zhou, 2022). With the exception of Lam and Triandafyllidou (2021), however, platform research has so far not systematically incorporated the role of visa and immigration status in its analyses. Yet, visa categories and legal statuses have a profound long-term impact on migrants' labor market integration, wages, and often ability to stay in a country (Könönen 2019; Söhn 2019; Strauss and McGrath 2017). In Europe, many platform jobs have been filled in by workers on so-called working holiday visas (WHV) (Orth, 2023; Floros and Bak Jørgensen, 2023; van Doorn, 2020), as the expansion of the WHV scheme and the expansion of platform jobs have coincided. The contributions of this study are thus two-fold. First, it highlights that the working holiday visa is an important, emerging category of labor migration that labor scholars should take note of. Second, it is an intervention in the debates of platform labor and migration, highlighting the nexus between temporary visa status and the transient nature of platform-mediated work. The multi-sited research design follows the trajectories of prospective working holidaymakers from their pre-departure plans in their home countries to the realities of 'making ends meet' once they arrive in Europe. The study draws on biographical interviews conducted in Chile, Argentina, and Germany in 2021-2023.

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## **Realization Labor: Labor Regimes and the Movement of Goods at the End of the Supply Chain**

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At the penultimate end of the supply chain there is a chain of work that encompasses moving goods, relating them to customers, receiving payment, and moving customers in and out of the retail store. The process also creates an experience that brings commodities into the realm of use value, objects that enter into the lifeworlds of consumers bringing utility, emotional pleasures, identities, entering into relationships all in the reproductive realm. Thus to situate the retail labor within larger commodity chains, and comprehend the labor process in relationship to them, I term work at the end of the supply chain Realization Labor. The phrase takes Marx's understanding of capital as a circuit that is only completed when value created by labor is realized in the marketplace. Realization Labor directs analysis to relationships among multiple categories of worker in a chain of labor that moves products between spaces in the store and relates them to customers in varied ways. Realization labor, then, encompasses a range of work, from the physical movement of products, to maintaining the retail space, relating products to customers and processing payment for goods. Realization labor aids in the process of stabilizing and routinizing unpredictability and vagaries of consumption among sometimes fickle consumers at the end of the commodity circuit, by delivering goods when needed, enhancing the allure of products to customers and generating new needs for commodities, by eliminating theft and ensuring the timely payment of bills. We can think of this kind of labor as an internalized supply chain, that pairs consumers with commodities and moves both through stores. It also reconciles use and exchange values, the speed of production and delivery with the paces of consumption. Drawing on a decade of research at Walmart retail stores in China, I examine three types of labor and their corresponding regimes at the end of the supply chain: sales labor organized as an entrepreneurial hegemonic regime, storage/replenishment characterized as semi-panoptic despotism, and cashiering driven by techno-despotism. The distinctive labor regimes, despite worker presence in a single space, moves goods and customers through the supply chain, attempting to limit blockages and backups, but also distracting and delaying customers at strategic points. The paper contributes a critical perspective to analyses of retail labor that take firms as organizing singular labor regimes. It also widens our frame of service labor, situating types of work (aesthetic, emotional, triadic, bodily, routinized) to a more encompassing movement of goods in the circuit of capital.

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## **Labour Process in Employment Contract in India: A case analysis of Regular wage/Salaried and Casual worker**

Padhan Bikash, Sinha Rishiraj

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The lack of written job contract in the employment of the workers, represents the poor employment relation between the employers and employees. Indian employers are bound by statutory labor laws but in order to enhance efficiency, employers use various methods to raise the flexibility of their workforce. A great share of these employment types are involuntarily chosen by the workers which consists majorly of young, females and less skilled labor market participation. Flexible contracts have gaps in terms of social security benefits. The lack of employment continuity and social relation in the employment represents the precarity and economic hardship at the time of crisis. The paper presents the development of poor employment relations and degrading social security in the employment sector of India using data from Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2021-22. Cross tabulation has been done to check the employment and social relation in India among the regular wage/salaried and casual workers (15 years and above ages) across the individual, demographic, and socio-economic

variables. Multivariate logistic regression has been used to estimate the chances of having written job contract, paid leave and social security benefits among the workers. We further apply labor process theory from a Marxian lens dwelling into the free wage labor to conceptualize the weak labor market institutions crucial to bridge the gap between permanent and non-permanent labor force in India through a mixed method complimenting aspects of labor process like skills, scaling, control and alienation of work.

In India, 80.41% have no written job contract, 75.05% are not eligible for paid leave and 77.22% are not eligible for any Social security benefits. The lack of employment and social relation are higher among the casual workers than the regular wage/salaried. The cross tabulation results shows that workers belong to the rural areas, Islam, ST, illiterate, without technical education, widow, low household monthly consumer expenditure, more household size, old ages, informal sector have higher percentage of no employment and social security. The multivariate logistic regressions shows that the individual, demographic, and socio-economic variables are statistically significant.

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## **Subcontracting as Financing from Below: Lessons from the Construction Industry in Beijing**

Pang Irene

Simon Fraser University

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Labor exploitation is well understood as the extraction of the surplus value of labor by capital. Yet what if capital relied on labor not only to generate surplus value through commodity production, that is, the augmentation of  $M$  to  $M'$  captured in Marx's General Formula of Capital –  $M-C-M'$  – but also to finance the process of production, that is, to provide at least part of the starting  $M$  in the  $M-C-M'$  formula? This case study of the construction industry in Beijing exposes how subcontracting, as a specific form of nonstandard employment, can service capital as a mechanism of financing from below. While the organizational and managerial logics of subcontracting as well as the impact of subcontracting on labor has been well-studied, less considered is the financial logic of subcontracting. This study shows how, by manipulating the temporal structure of payment periods, subcontracting allows capital to leverage what is effectively a loan from labor to alleviate capital's liquidity constraints and finance production. To the extent that capital relies on labor to subsidize the ownership of the means of production, mechanisms of financing from below may call into question existing understandings of the relationship between capital and labor.

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## **The best time to be young? A retrospective study of graduates' transitions to employment in Romania's business service sector**

Pantea Maria-Carmen

Universitatea 'Babeş Bolyai'

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The theory of structure of opportunities states that different generations have different labour market outcomes, depending on inter-relationships between family backgrounds, education, labour market processes and employers' recruitment practices (Roberts, 2009). The theory interrogates the myth of 'occupational choice' and argues that young people enter employment based on the 'opportunity structures' that are made available to them depending on their social location (Roberts, 1968). The main tenet is that young people do not choose as much as they adjust themselves to external conditions based on class, ethnicity, and gender ('who they are' according to Roberts). The opportunity structure theory was revitalised after the crisis of 2008, yet, with a focus on the predictive capacity of one's class position. People's bargaining capacity on the labour market was seen as a matter of educational capital and of the financial/ social resources they (and their families) can mobilize (Butler & Muir, 2017; Cuevo & Wyn, 2014; Wyn et al., 2012). The opportunity structures provided by the economic transformations, including transition to capitalist economies in Eastern Europe were researched less from this perspective.

How do the structures of opportunities in a country undergoing economic and political transition, intersect graduates' personal transitions to employment? The research explores the subjective experiences of transition to employment in the business service sector from different cohorts. It draws on over 70 interviews with young graduates in their early 20s, as well as more senior employees (in their 30s and also 40s) in Romania's main cities. The presentation searches to unpack the perceived opportunities at the time of entering employment, and also, participants' understanding of the enabling circumstances that were available for other cohorts. It tries to map how different 'tidal economic waves' involved in Romania's economic transition, intersected personal biographies since the 90s, up to post-Covid.

The research discovered a large agreement – among junior and more senior respondents- that now 'is the best time to be young'. Indeed, the thriving business services sector provides many middle-class employment opportunities. Some are able to lead to respectable white-collar careers that would not have been possible decades ago or in the absence of outsourcing/offshoring. Yet, informed by elements of political economy (Romania as a semi-periphery cf. Ban 2019), the paper opens up several elements of inquiry that challenge the idea that those entering labour market are, indeed, in a privileged position. In doing so, it argues that the careers are reconfigured with a larger proportion of low to mid-level jobs and a decreasing top managerial stratum. Also, the opportunities for horizontal mobility risk deviating the focus from upward mobility, whilst location limits the range of career options available in the country. Ultimately, the paper calls for more longitudinal research into the long-term occupational prospects of those joining the entry level positions.

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#### **4th Industrial Revolution and the fusion of digital, physical and biological: a response to failing labour processes**

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This article goes through the different terminologies in political economy and labour processes with regards to technology, technics, and automation and mechanisation. The differences are presented based on a Marxian framework. Not distinguishing the difference between those two is its usual blind spot in political economy and occasionally in labour processes. To address this point, this article revisits two significant but underappreciated scholars. Ramtin (1991) and Frison (1988) are the two scholars who provided some crucial insights in their distinction. For Ramtin it is some sort of 'tangibility' criterion, where he distinguishes 'technics' as methods of production and organisation of labour, representing an objectification of human productive knowledge and experience, while 'technology' includes the above, but in a tangible form. For Frison (1988) though, it is the use of 'the labour-power' criterion, where 'technics' includes the analysis of labour-power as a social actor, while 'technology' as an analysis of the relationship between the instrument of labour and labour-power but abstracting from the latter. In other words, one cannot critically examine aspects of the labour processes if they do not have labour power as a reference point in their analysis.

Bearing labour power in mind, this article starts with the concepts of mechanisation and automation to reach the narrative of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). While mainstream economic analysis does not distinguish between those two, other alternative approaches do. Several criteria have been put forward with regards to what distinguishes those, this article is going through the criteria of 'mental-manual' labour, of the 'degree of control' over the labour processes, of the 'compartmentmentability of information' in labour processes, and concludes with the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) both as a reality to happen, as a narrative and as a capitalist wishful thinking. This means that the 4IR that at its core, advocates for the fusion of physical, digital and biological is in fact a consolidation of technics and technologies that emerged during the centuries of the social division of labour to one single employee; this 'augmented workforce' that the World Economic Forum (with Schwab, 2016) and the McKinsey (2022) corporation envisage is bringing the previously compartmentalised labours (physical

and digital) together with aspects of nature(biological) operationable to the production process. This business plan and long-term strategy encompassing futuristic technics and technologies although powerful instruments of 'liberation' from and domination of 'domination' over labour are not independent of capital production as the self-expansion of value. In fact, they are seen as the exodus to the productivity crisis that capitalism faces, and they still entail the progressive deepening of the inherent contradictions of capital itself as self-expanding value.

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## **Labour social reproduction and collective actions in Italian agri-food systems: Issues and debates**

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This presentation aims to examine the connection between work and accommodation in Italian agri-food systems, with a focus on migrant labourers. It is structured in three parts. First, I will shortly describe the transformations in Italian agri-food systems over the last 30 years, as well as some characteristics of agricultural labour markets, employers' needs and workers' mobility patterns. Second, by critically engaging with the labour reproduction-production integration types, advanced by the call for papers, I will propose a typology of accommodations of migrant agricultural workers in Italian agri-food systems. A particular attention will be paid to the debates – among scholars, unions, activists and policy makers – concerning the precarious informal settlements where migrant labourers live, when they follow the seasonal harvests in several areas of intensive agriculture (an example of "worker-led collective provision of accommodation"): these debates mainly revolve around the role of informal labour brokers (called "caporali") in the management of (and power hierarchies in) these settlements. Third, a typology of labourers' collective actions that emerged in the different work-home arrangements will be suggested; in particular, I will analyse how and in which cases these mobilizations address production and / or reproduction issues. The paper is based on my empirical qualitative studies on the commodity systems of processing tomatoes (2010-2017) and of ready-to-eat bagged salad (2018-2020, with M. Lo Cascio) in both Southern and Northern Italy, as well as on a review of the literature in social sciences on migrant labour in Italian agri-food systems in the last decade.

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## **Subcontracting and segmentation of labour force in Italy: the role of "cooperatives of convenience"**

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Università degli Studi di Padova

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The paper aims to contribute to the current debate on the segmentation of the labour force and organization of the labour process, by looking at the role of subcontractors, in particular of the 'cooperatives of convenience', emerging since mid-1990s in the Italian context. Notwithstanding the formal objective of guaranteeing its members better working conditions and wages that those prevailing on the labour market, in recent years – thanks to a favorable tax regime and labile legal boundaries – cooperatives have become particularly suitable to



support outsourcing processes, providing companies a low-cost and just-in-time labour force. According to the official statistics (Istat 2022), in 2021, 1,090,920 workers were employed in 49,997 cooperatives, representing around 6.2% of private sector employment, excluding agriculture. Therefore, cooperatives do not constitute a small niche, but a significant share of the Italian economy, growing significantly over the past three decades, and employing mainly migrant workers.

Based on research carried out in three different sectors in Northern Italy where cooperatives are widespread (agriculture, meat industry and logistics), this study aims to understand: what is the role of cooperatives of convenience in producing segmentation of the workforce? What forms of segmentation do they foster? For this purpose the authors realized 154 in-depth and semi-structured interviews from 2019 to 2023. In particular, 97 interviews were conducted with migrant workers from Northern and Western Africa, Indian sub-continent and Eastern Europe, and 57 with key informants (unionists, managers, institutions...).

Our findings show how, in Italy, cooperatives of convenience play a pivotal role in producing different forms of segmentation of the workforce. Across the three sectors, we identify three main types of segmentation: 'contractual', 'work', and 'spatial' segmentation. 'Contractual segmentation' relates to labour conditions: since cooperatives hire workers with job contracts that are cheaper than those used by companies, this entails the coexistence of several pools of workers, even in the same plant, with different pays, workload, forms of control, etc. With 'work segmentation' we refer to the actual content of work; being assigned to a specific task or service, cooperatives strongly contribute to implement a targeted hirings, employing a gendered and racialized workforce, with different legal statuses: male migrant workers are usually hired for the dirtiest and more demanding tasks (such as slaughtering, picking heavier lifts); female (both Italian and migrant) workers in more repetitive tasks, or in those feminized tasks such cleaning or cooking; asylum seekers – considered as a temporary workforce – in seasonal occupations, such as grape picking, etc. Finally, with 'spatial segregation' we refer to the spatial divisions that take place both within and outside the workplaces. While inside the workplaces the areas accessible to cooperative workers are detached from those assigned to in-house workers, outside the plants the formers are usually lodged in different type of accommodations. Cooperatives, actually, play a pivotal role in recruiting workers, often recently arrived, lodged in reception centers and refugees camps. In conclusion, the paper argues that cooperatives exploit, but also play a pivotal role in reproducing labour force segmentation and segregation.

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## **Reconceptualising responses to the Modern Slavery Act: Paradoxical management**

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Due to the complex nature, and extent, of subcontracting in the UK construction industry, there is little-to-no visibility of working conditions in the lower tiers of supply networks, typically populated by small companies. This applies not only to small projects, but also those run by the UK's largest and best-resourced contractors. This provides an ideal context for workers to be exploited, which is why construction is one of the sectors most impacted by modern slavery, or unfree labour, as well as other less severe forms of exploitation such as bogus self-employment. This can include domestic workers, but those most vulnerable are migrants who work in the sector. The passing of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015 has prompted construction companies to begin reckoning with at least the most egregious forms of exploitation. This is due to the requirement to produce a modern slavery statement detailing what efforts are being made to address these risks. The question is, how can large contractors attempt to address these complex issues while operating in an environment driven by low profit margins, and where competitive tendering for work is decided primarily on lowest cost? This question is explored through paradox theory, which helps to make sense of the competing tensions—both

environmental and personal—that exist alongside each other. This research draws on data generated by 50 semi-structured interviews with practitioners in the UK construction industry, including those working for contractors, such as supply chain and sustainability managers and directors, as well as third-party organisations. The result is twofold. First, data show that the construction industry’s response to the Act has been very poor; a point not disputed, but rather made, by the practitioners themselves. Second, this research presents a reconceptualization of the way competing pressures interact to create responses to the Modern Slavery Act. Four strategies are identified within this, the combination of which explain not only the sector’s poor response to the Act, but also why these poor responses are produced even by those acting in good faith who wish to see change in the sector in relation to exploitation. In other words, these strategies can be explained as the result of the paradoxical tensions existing between the desire to be ethical and an acknowledgement of the limitations of what can be achieved when operating in a competitive capitalist environment.

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## **Forestry’s dual crisis: Work and environment in industrial forestry**

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This paper centres on the life histories of forestry workers in the midst of two ongoing crisis—one hand, the intensification and growing precariousness of labour, and on the other hand as the environmental pressures exerted by industrial forestry.

The Swedish forestry workers union, GS, describes strong downward pressure on working conditions in the industry due to fierce international competition and financialization and increased demands on profit distribution. The labour process of industrial forestry has undergone significant mechanisation and routinisation. Crucially, until the late 1970’s, the labour process included all parts of the life cycle of a planted tree – from plantation, grubbing and thinning, to the final cut (Söderberg & Söderberg, 1993). Today, these tasks are performed by different work teams and organisations. This division of labour reflects a segmentation of the internal labour market in forestry – with a few machine drivers permanently employed by the forestry companies, grubbing and thinning subcontracted to local operators, and plantation organised as seasonal labour carried out by lowly paid migrant workers. According to the union, the fragmented production process and the large number of subcontractors hinders the fulfilment of environmental requirements (Brolin, 2023). Meanwhile, the dominance of clear-felling and the production rate of industrial forestry are increasingly being questioned. Environmental movements and researchers draw attention to the fact that Swedish industrial forestry, as it is organized today, threatens biological diversity and the forest’s capacity as a carbon sink (Karlsson, 2016; Lindahl et al., 2017).

Given this, it is justified to investigate how these changes to the labour process are experienced and how it affects the relationship between work and the environment. Following Barca’s call to centre the labour process as a socio-ecological process, the paper addresses the interlinkage of pressures on working conditions and on the forest environment. Based on Marx, Barca (Barca, 2012, 2019b, 2019a) argues that through the labour process, workers encounter nature in a commodified form, something that is owned and controlled by the employer. Nature thus appears as alien, reified object and “the other” of labour (Räthzel, 2021; Räthzel & Uzzell, 2012). However, this research tends to either assume alienation based on theoretical arguments or focuses on trade union ideological formulations of the labor/nature relationship. Focusing on life histories enables analysis of how workers experience their relationship with nature both at and away from work, and how this has evolved in response to changes in the labor process.

This paper presents initial findings from an ongoing PhD-project, employing a narrative ethnographic approach that closely examines the life histories of forestry workers in Sweden and how socio-ecological conflicts are interpreted and narrated by trade unions and environmental activists. Data consists of life history interviews with forestry workers, fieldnotes

from workplace shadowing and semi-structured interviews with representatives from trade unions. Through these narratives, the paper asks what interlinkages can be discerned between changes in the labour process and the environmental impact of industrial forestry, how socio-ecological conflicts are interpreted by individual workers and their collective organisations.

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## **A Gendered Labour Process in Academia? Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Academic Work at Brandenburg Universities**

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The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted numerous aspects of society, including our very own work-life as academics. The labor process was radically changed through protective measures by the state since direct contact between employees as well as employees and students became a rarity, being substituted by digital alternatives. Our study, conducted as a quantitative survey among 420 employees and as qualitative interview study with 14 employees at all eight universities and colleges in the state of Brandenburg, Germany, examines the multifaceted impact of the pandemic on the work lives of academic professionals, with a particular focus on the gendered experiences and implications. How was the increase in work intensity received? What are the effects, in which way are they “gendered”, and how did the employees react? To answer these questions, I will use the concepts of coercion and consent as well as a more nuanced concept of subjectivity as introduced by Knights (1989, 2016), opening a window for a gendered exploitation of labour power (see Davis, 1990).

The pandemic precipitated a series of challenges that reshaped the academic labour process. Workload increased, with half of participants indicating an inability to complete their tasks within regular working hours. Administrative and teaching duties intensified and digitized, pushing the majority to work evenings, nights, or weekends. Over 60% of respondents spent most of their working time in home offices, with 40% experiencing much higher stress levels due to this. The absence of personal contact with colleagues and students left over 80% of respondents feeling disconnected and isolated. As a result, a substantial 25% contemplated leaving academia, while 29% admitted to no longer enjoying their work.

As our study also shows, gender disparity was heavily accentuated by the pandemic's implications. Female academics, who often bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities at home, were disproportionately affected. Half of them reported heightened stress as they juggled academic work as well as their family and household, compared to 24% of their male colleagues. The shift to remote and thus digitized work was especially strong among women, often being the only (not best) way to reconcile both. Also the amount of time spent in teaching, student supervision, and caregiving responsibilities at work was gendered, and contributed to a quantitative reduction in publications and research output among female academics, potentially leading to long-term career setbacks.

Our empirical study reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic exerted significant pressure, leading to the academic workday being longer and more intense. The work became less collaborative and more solitary, while being (potentially) more monitored digitally. Also, the negative implications of the mental and physical health crisis primarily affected women, as care work at home and in the workplace as well as emotional work became heavily accentuated. The resulting problems show the need for an analysis of the academic labour process as a gendered process, as well as the gendered subjectivation behind coercion and consent.

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## **Gendered Impacts on Alienation in Academic Work: A Case Study of Brandenburg Universities During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered unprecedented changes in the labour process, accelerating processes such as digitization while setting back the process of gender equality in the workplace and at home. Our empirical study investigates the profound impact of the pandemic on academic professionals, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of alienation and gendered subjectification in the region of Brandenburg in Germany. Our study delves into the experiences of academics in times of crisis, and the effects on their work, showcasing the enduring relevance of Marx's theory of alienation through a comprehensive survey of 420 employees and qualitative interviews with 14 academics on all eight universities and colleges.

In German academia, the coercion and consent dynamics in the labor process take on a specific form. In this highly competitive career path, so-called junior scientists in their 20s to 40s, are mostly granted fixed-term contracts, eventually having to relocate to a new city every couple of years. Having to prove their value to academia, their workload is mainly divided into the acquisition of external funding, strong publication numbers, networking and organizational talent as shown through (international) collaboration and the organization and participation in conferences, as well as well-evaluated teaching within their universities, depending on their position and job description. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all of these main pillars of academic work were affected, becoming more digital, more lonely and more cumbersome to organize.

Our empirical study establishes a "stress pyramid" that maps the spectrum of deteriorations and increased stress levels experienced by all academics at Brandenburg universities. While the effects of the pandemic clearly had an impact how almost all academics dealt with their work, gender disparities became starkly apparent, as women were more significantly impacted by the additional load of family work. Mobile work, often seen as a solution for work-life balance and manage elderly and childcare in times of a health crisis, further complicated the research environment. As academic work became increasingly digitized and subject to new control mechanisms, including videotaping talks, keeping students' attention in a technologically immature digital classroom, being potentially available by mail, chat and video-talk during the whole workday and far beyond, while not being able to physically reaching out to colleagues and staff, literally losing contact with students during a physically and psychologically difficult time, the traditional understanding of alienation is challenged. The blurred boundaries between personal and professional life, the utilization of emotional capabilities, the actual loneliness at the remote workplace with simultaneous 24-hour accessibility through digital devices and extensive self-responsibility as a mode of rationalization therein, all contribute to the encompassing experience of alienation in academia in times of a pandemic, resulting in heightened psychological stress and physical health concerns. Also, 'caregiving' in the digital classroom and through student counseling as well as contact to colleagues and staff were more central to the working day of female academics, as our study indicates, making digitization and remote work a gendered experience.

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## **The struggle of workers and the consent of the state? Strategies towards platformisation in the case of Amazon in Poland**

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The goal of the paper is to show the impact of GAFAM's infrastructural power (Mann 1984) using the example of Amazon in Poland and its influence on the collective interest representation of workers, employers and the responses of state institutions in the context of the process of platformisation of the national economy and the growing power of infrastructural

architecture created by GAFAM companies in Poland. We seek to answer the following questions. What is the impact of platformisation on the dynamics, forms and regulations of capital-labour conflicts? Does platformisation deepen the crisis of traditional workers' and employers' interest representation or, on the contrary, contribute to new forms of interest representation?

We explore the strategies of industrial relations actors towards platformisation using as a context the concept of 'patchwork capitalism' (Rapacki eds. 2019) which refers to an incoherent institutional order combining various influences without an overarching logic. In industrial relations, it underpins the combination of features of liberal and neo-corporatist systems with a strong role of both the state and transnational corporations.

The paper is based on qualitative interviews with Amazon blue-collar and white-collar employees, expert interviews with various actors at the national level and European level, supplemented by the secondary sources.

Based on the analysis so far, some tentative conclusions can be formulated. Firstly, institutional heterogeneity typical of patchwork capitalism favors the entry and expansion of new global actors, such as Big Tech, and the development of a platform economy as well as the increase of infrastructural power of GAFAM in Poland. In addition, phenomena such as the socioeconomic crises triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the rising cost of living and energy, further make the national economy and state institutions dependent on the influence of GAFAM.

In this context, the entry of capital in the form of labour platforms and GAFAM such as Amazon into Poland has consolidated their structural power, which is used both in the economy and in influencing state institutions and the public sphere. The Polish state is on the one hand dependent on the digital infrastructure provided by GAFAM and Amazon to deliver public services to citizens, and on the other hand deriving various kinds of profit from the presence of GAFAM due to the dependent market economy (Nölke, Vliegenthart 2009) of Poland. In other words, the state seems to favour capital interests. Furthermore, looking for new ways of representing and protecting the interests, domestic 'traditional' employers are forced to seek new avenues for lobbying their businesses, which are threatened by the global capital. Labour (especially Traditionally Excluded Communities of workers such as women and migrants) mostly have to cope informally, by mobilising a range of private resources (such as family and peer support) to get by. Simultaneously, the paper notes a new wave of labour conflicts and trade union organising across the Big Tech companies in which new radical unions and broad cooperation between unions and political parties, non-union workers' organisations, social movements and civil society organisations play a crucial role.

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## **Shaping Technology – Shaping Care Work? A Social Shaping of Technology Analysis of the Digitalization of Care Work**

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In the past decades, care and care work have undergone a drastic economic shift, accompanied by the emergence and implementation of a variety of digital technologies in the field. These technologies reach from electronic health records or digital documentation, to ambient assisted living systems, platforms, sensors and robots. While some of them are already an integral part of care work, others are slowly entering care centres or remain pilot projects. Studies researching the technologisation of this – often imagined as rationalization-resistant (Aulenbacher 2021) – sector show, how these technologies result in an intensification of work (Moore and Hayes 2017), being a means of control (McDonald et al. 2021) or foster new divisions of labour. These tendencies mostly resonate with labour process analysis of technologies, rendering the introduction of new technologies as a means of the management to increase control over the labour process (Hall 2010). According to Hall (2010) and more recently Thompson and Laaser (2021) labour process analyses of technologies need to be

renewed or revitalized. In doing so, they reference the Social Shaping of Technology (SST) (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1999). While Thompson and Laaser (2021) focus on the political and economic forces that shape technology at work, SST emphasizes more aspects, such as the role of the economy, the state, gender and race inequalities as well as technology itself and path dependencies. My contribution draws from the empirical work conducted within the research project “Digitalization and work organization: narratives, practices and opportunities for participation”, funded by Vienna Chamber of Labour, where we conducted qualitative interviews with care and tech workers as well as a document analysis of care technologies. Based on this research, the contribution scrutinizes the following: First, it analyses how care technologies (i.e. robots and digital documentation systems) are socially shaped by the antagonism between capital and labour but also by the gendered character of technology and care as “masculine” or “feminine” and narratives in the field. Second, it sheds light to the effects digitalization has on care work. Lastly, it concludes with a reflection on how the findings are connected to the perceived “rationalization-resistance” of the sector. These findings show an ambivalent picture, while the implementation of digital documentation systems resemble a quasi-taylorization of the work, as in other sectors, the deployment of robots in care homes is not in line with the often-prevalent control imperatives.

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### **The indeterminacy of tasks in domestic and agricultural labour: everyday bargaining practices between employers and migrant live-in workers**

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With the aim of contributing to the ongoing debate on “dormitory-labour regimes” (Pun&Smith 2007; Goodburn&Mishra 2023), the paper delves into working and living conditions of migrants living at work in Italy. Particularly, it hinges on two case-studies, investigated by the authors through long-term qualitative research (more than 100 interviews and several years of ethnography between 2007 and 2020). Both cases focus on East-European migrant workers living in their work environments: female live-in domestic workers in Northern Italy, and male and female farmworkers lodged in shacks located inside greenhouses companies in Southern Italy.

The paper illustrates the specificities of the local live-in regimes, characterized by high levels of informality, workers’ segmentation, and social isolation. It shows how, in both cases, the axes of gender, nationality, migration status and class, together with the overlapping between living and working spaces and times, positioned migrants, in particular women, in a situation of vulnerability and physical and mental suffering. In particular, the paper explores what we call the ‘indeterminacy of tasks’ (cf. Smith 2006), namely the everyday bargaining practices between migrant workers and their employers for what concerns tasks definition, that is strengthened by the overlapping between work and life space and time. The bargaining of tasks represents a contested terrain, as formal and informal rules are both in place (Edwards&Scullion 1982) and employers’ assumptions and expectations on gender, race, nationality and class of workers play a pivotal role to define socially constructed patterns of employment. In both our case studies, the difficulty to codify tasks depends, on the one hand, on the employers’ imaginaries and on their strategies to control and demand workers’ consent; and on the other hand, on workers’ ability to negotiate spaces of manoeuvre.

Therefore, the paper sheds light on employers’ strategies to enlarge the borders of what is prescribed for a given position: for what concerns domestic labour, it is frequent that female migrant workers are asked to perform tasks that are clearly unrelated to the care of the assisted person, such as ironing other people’s clothes or preparing their meals. For what concerns agriculture, instead, employers often require migrant workers lodged in their properties to provide maintenance and cleaning for the company premises, or eventually also cooking for the employer.

Further, the paper delves into workers' room for manoeuvre in the two contexts. In the case of domestic labour, for instance, the affective relation between the employer and the employee was sometimes used by the latter as a tool to reduce the tasks, negotiate free time and other small improvements in their working and living conditions. In the case of agricultural labour, instead, pushes to reappropriate spaces of social reproduction (i.e. by bringing families in the context of migration), are used as tools to limit employers' requirements.

In conclusion, by exploring the indeterminacy of the tasks in live-in domestic and agricultural work, the paper sheds light on the everyday bargaining practices between employers', their requests and social expectations, and migrant workers and their spaces of manoeuvre and agency.

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## **Confronting the degradation of labour and the nature in agro-industrial commodity chains in Brazil: the 'quilombolas' resistance**

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As a result of the international division of labour, countries in the global south particularly suffer from a vulnerable labour situation caused by contemporary slavery. Given that Brazil is a country that developed from a slave-based economy and social system, with deforestation activities continuing in order to develop the agribusiness chain for the export of commodities such as soy, corn, cotton, and cattle, it is necessary to research into slavery in this context.

In the process of modernization of agriculture, authors of Brazilian Rural Sociology Jose de Souza Martins (1985) and Graziano Neto (1972, 1998), analyzed the insertion of capitalism in the countryside in Brazil, and found that there is a mix of industrial and non-industrial labour in the same production process which lead to an erosion of tradition standards of living.

In the actual scenario, this research, which is under development, seeks to analyse the dialectical movements in the social, territorial, political and economic spheres, which contribute to the permanence of contemporary slavery, as well as the resistance of quilombolas rural workers (traditional community of African's descents). This research is being carried out in the state of Mato Grosso, which is the largest agribusiness producer in Brazil and part of the Legal Amazonian.

The methodology combines analysis of secondary data from public databases and evaluation of primary data through exploratory fieldwork, participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. 45 workers were interviewed (15M/30F), as well as partners like activists and government' staff.

Preliminary findings reveal an ongoing immigration process, where men from quilombola's communities move to agribusiness cities, which mainly produce soy and cotton, to work in semi-industrial, temporary and precarious occupations. It also appears that the workers interviewed were either rescued from contemporary slavery labour situation, or were subjected to conditions of contemporary slavery without being rescued, or at least one person in the family was rescued. All workers interviewed who work or have worked in the cotton production chain reported having suffered an accident at work, or knew someone who had suffered an accident at work in the cotton industry.

The migration process of quilombola's workers is due to political and economic pressures external to the community, which has supported the expansion of agribusiness in the state of Mato Grosso, affecting the territory of traditional communities. Where nature and life were previously preserved, today there is deforestation and contamination by pesticides, in addition to the loss of territory due to conflicts over land ownership, which also make traditional populations even more vulnerable.

However, it was found that even with such pressures and migrations, there is still resistance on the part of immigrant workers. For example, they organize to live in community, they

maintain ties of solidarity even outside their territory; and women who remain in the community in particular, lead different forms of political struggles to preserve the cultural identity of the quilombola's people.

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## **Workplace Geopolitics: Industrial Relations, International Relations and International Political Economy**

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Two decades ago, the study of industrial relations looked to international political economy and the 'other IR'—international relations—in order to understand the emergence of globalisation (Giles 2000). The end of the cold war seemingly invalidated any alternative to the hegemony of Western liberal democracy, opened up the world economy to transnational flows of capital, weakened the role of the nation-state and challenged the capacity of workers and their representatives to wield power nationally, internationally and in their workplaces.

Here, we consider what the study of industrial relations can (again) learn from IPE and the 'other IR' as globalisation unravels and we witness in its place the emergence of deglobalisation. This puts into reverse many of the phenomena that produced the earlier engagements between industrial relations and IPE. The dawning of a 'second cold war' is cleaving in two the global economy between competing ideological poles; companies are encouraged to 'reshore' or 'friendshore' production; the search for supply chain resilience and the imperative of digital and green transition is driving a 'new state capitalism' centred on infrastructure spending and industrial strategy; and the evolving needs of revitalised industries for skilled labour is putting work and workers back at the centre of policy debates.

We argue that, just as industrial relations looked to IPE in the past to locate the labour process within global shifts, it should look to IPE again today, learning from its analyses of the 'second cold war' and 'new state capitalism' (Schindler et al 2023). In turn, we suggest that industrial relations – and labour process analysis more specifically – also has a contribution to make to this growing literature, fleshing out a missing sense of what the geopolitical reshaping of economic relations means for everyday working lives. This interface between industrial relations and international relations we call 'workplace geopolitics'.

First, we revisit the literature connecting industrial relations, international relations and international political economy, in the context of both the rise of globalisation and its potential waning. Second, we discuss contemporary geopolitical shifts and their implications for industrial relations through an analysis of 'workplace geopolitics' in four exemplary cases we perceive as central to the strategic reshaping of the economy: green tech and renewables; defence manufacturing; primary commodity extraction/production, and digital/cyber industries. These cases enable us to propose potential future research directions in this area.

We close by outlining the implications for actors and practitioners in industrial relations at both the national and international levels. The return of industrial policy as a response to geopolitical tension, military confrontation and competition over digital and green transformation on the part of the state, twinned with a restructuring of the organisation and regulation of international production on the part of capital, may well create opportunities for decent work in countries still dealing with the longstanding impacts of the decline of manufacturing and other primary sectors. However, industrial relations and labour process analysis suggest that the upsides of an unravelling world will not fall into workers' laps without a fight.



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## **The Concept of Total Talent Management: Discourse Production in the Employment Industry**

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Temporary staffing agencies offer to integrate their services for temporary employment and personnel recruitment by publicising the concept of 'total talent management' (TTM). For decades, leading staffing agencies such as Randstad, Adecco, Manpower or Allegis have been diversifying their services by acquiring companies engaged in complementary lines of business. With TTM, they offer services across the entire spectrum of employment. Although it primarily serves to market a combination of managed service provision (MSP) and recruitment process outsourcing (RPO), this conception also includes the placement of jobs through crowdworking or by turning to self-employed workers (in individual cases even volunteer workers or artificial intelligence).

In this paper, the narrative construction of total talent management is analysed extensively, because it reflects the industry's aspiration to adopt a leading role in shaping employment relationships. At the empirical heart of the analysis is the reconstruction of the TTM narrative on the basis of publicly accessible documents from temporary staffing agencies, software providers and business consultancies. The analysis draws on the theoretical concept of labour-market intermediaries and closely relates to debates on the deregulation, diversification and digitalisation of labour markets.

The results show that the notion of 'talent' is used to abstract from the specific type of employment relationship. Terms such as salaried employee, temporary worker or freelancer explicitly indicate the mode of employment, whereas talent refers to the generalised potential of labour power. Distinctions such as the type of contract, job tenure or length of employment fade into the background and with them also the precarious working conditions of a contingent workforce. By interpreting temporary workers as equivalent members of a fictitious total workforce, their politically controversial status loses its relevance. Besides integrating the business areas of MSP and RPO, this discursive strategy aims to generally level the differences between types of employment.

The TTM narrative defines the variable combination of different forms of employment as the norm for flexible staffing. Permanent employment is not to be replaced but rather integrated into a flexible combination of employment models that are considered to be equivalent. As a business model, total talent management might not prove as economically forceful as hoped for. Yet, this narrative is an expression of the industry's self-confidence, organisational capacity and socio-political aspirations. In the deregulation of labour policy, the large employment agencies and their associations have demonstrated their collective agency. With TTM as the narrative framework for the diversification of its services, the employment industry is meanwhile working to transform society's fundamental understanding of employment relations.

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## **The 'priceless' value of accompanying the dying: Unpaid labour, voluntarism, and palliative care**

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While a lot has been said about unpaid reproductive labour in an informal domestic setting, formal unpaid labour – voluntarism – has not caught so much attention within the debates on social reproduction, despite occupying a salient role in delivering welfare services (Saunders, 2001; Scott, 2018). This paper will close that gap by focusing on one area of social reproduction that has always been closely tied to volunteer work, that is, care for terminally ill and dying people or palliative care. Especially in the last few decades, during the emergence of neoliberal capitalism, the reliance on volunteer work through NGOs for providing palliative

care has become a common practice all over the globe, and in Global North in particular (OECD, 2009, 2011; Regeringen, 2012; Wheelan, 2012). Yet, how this work and its value are conceptualised and measured is context specific. Based on my ethnographic research on palliative care volunteering in Austria and Croatia, the paper discusses these issues by analysing both differences (e.g., economic development, welfare regimes) and similarities (e.g., Catholicism, identity markers of volunteers) of the researched contexts. In so doing, such a comparative study of volunteer engagement in end-of-life care, can, therefore, contribute not only to the literature on (modern) hospice movement and long-standing feminist debates on care work, but the scholarship on the sociology and anthropology of work more broadly, thus deepening our understanding of unpaid labour relations and organising social reproduction in the context of post-socialist Europe and developed capitalist democracies under the current socio-economic order.

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## **How platforms shape the market: A study of care platforms in Belgium**

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Existing literature on labour platforms (hereafter only platforms) have considered platforms as market self-organizers which set the rules which govern the economic exchange between service providers and clients (Frenken et al., 2020). Platforms thus operate as 'marketplaces' by controlling private market governance principles through deciding, for example, who can enter the platform, the rules that should be followed when labour provides services, and if and when to dismiss service providers (Kirchner and Schüßler, 2018). The consequence is that platforms reduce the autonomy of service providers, for example, to set prices vis-à-vis clients by intensifying transnational cost-based competition through exerting price pressures on service providers (Pulignano et al., 2023). Platforms often do this by potentially bypassing national state regulation (Niebler et al., 2023). Yet, platforms are digital market organizers in markets which are neither inevitable nor natural. Hence the key question is: how platforms shape the market where they organize their economic transactions?

This paper will tackle this question by studying two care platforms (Helpper and RingTwice) which are market leader in the care services (including domestic and care work) in Belgium. We use both a social-constructivist approach in the economic sociology and labour process theory in the sociology of work to unpack the black box of market creation by examining how platform, together with other actors, such as clients (individuals, organizations), workers, and labour market intermediates, in a specific local context featuring distinctive national regulation, confront the problem of the supply and demand and information sharing. Importantly, we point to the way in which the investigated care platform accounts for shaping the market by governing the labour force, thereby organising the economic transactions in the market, in conjunctions with clients, workers, state policy and other labour market intermediates operating in the care sector.

In essence, we argue that the investigated platform makes it easier for those in need of care services, including those who receive benefits from the state (e.g., people with disabilities), to buy those care services at a cheap price so that they can feel as if they are benefiting from an economic system that, in reality, offers them relatively low real incomes in relation to the high taxes. This is possible by the platform hiring workers through a peer-to-peer self-employed status as introduced with the De Croo law in 2017 to allow citizens to do small jobs for total earnings up to 7.170€/year (in 2023, indexed yearly). Under the peer-to-peer regime, workers' gross earnings are taxed at 10.7%, and no social contributions are to be paid. Peer-to-peer workers can be hired through the platform by both single individuals in need of care services and formal organizations, including those doing volunteering work. Thus, care platforms outsource cheap and/or unpaid voluntary work (see Taylor, 2005) by peer-to-peer workers to organizations who may experience labour shortages or who organise voluntary work in the no digital market.

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## Extreme work in the academy: The realities of overwork in academia

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Leaveism is an important yet underresearched phenomenon in contemporary work and employment. It refers to employees using allocated time off to work, such as taking work home that cannot be completed in normal working hours, working while on leave and working while ill (Hesketh et al 2014). Despite having negative implications for employee well-being and performance (Hesketh et al 2015; Gerich 2015; Miller 2016), leaveism remains pervasive across a range of sectors (CIPD 2018), highlighting its relevance to labour process studies.

This paper aims to deepen the understanding of leaveism through a case study of UK academia. A number of studies have recognised that “being an academic is not a 9-5 job” (Sang et al 2015:235), suggesting that leaveism, or overwork more broadly, are becoming normalised in academia. However, the extent of leaveism in the profession, as well as its function and effects on academics, are less well-known. Consequently, the research questions that this paper addresses are (1) how pervasive is leaveism in academia?, and (2) what are academics’ experiences of leaveism?

Data was gathered via an e-survey on personal experiences of leaveism that was distributed primarily via Twitter but also through LinkedIn and Facebook. The survey was not exclusive to academics and was completed by 1237 people. Nearly 500 participants provided comments on their experiences of leaveism, generating approximately 34 000 words of qualitative data. From this sample, we have separated quantitative data provided by academics (n=403, or 32%), as well as analysed qualitative comments that explicitly mentioned academia (n=143, circa 11 200 words).

A full analysis of data is ongoing and is set to be completed by November 2023. Analysis conducted so far sheds light on causes, rhythms and feelings about leaveism, cutting across macro-, meso- and micro-levels of analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that organisational factors such as unrealistic workload models, underfunding, lack of support from managers or lack of job stability are among the main causes of leaveism. Furthermore, work is not only extensified but also intensified, and leaveism is usually necessary to perform ‘deep work’ tasks such as research. Although often accepted as “just part of the job”, leaveism is largely experienced as a negative phenomenon and resistance seems to be growing. The paper concludes by examining theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

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## Vagrancy and its revival: State's regulation of labour and the criminalisation of migrants in Malta

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The “vagabond” appears as an archaic figure, a remnant to be found only in law books. In the criminalisation of certain mobilities, this forgotten outsider has long been supplanted by “illegal migrants” amongst political anxieties. Yet in Malta, one of the main points of entry into the European Union for those who cross the Mediterranean Sea, a growing number of Sub-Saharan migrants are convicted as “vagabonds” every year. In a context where asylum seekers receive scarce public assistance, the “rediscovery” of vagrancy by local tribunals, a legacy of the British rule over the island, appears as an opportunistic move for judicial actors to prosecute migrants who get involved in illicit activities and cannot demonstrate a durable attachment to an employer and to a job. Comparing the prosecution of vagrancy during the colonial era with vagrancy today, my communication aims to discuss the role of state attempts to regulate the working world in criminalising certain groups of the population.

Drawing primarily on an original collection of archival documents and judgments both from the end of the 19th century and from the last decade, I wish to make four successive points. I highlight first how the introduction of anti-vagrancy law in the colony of Malta at the turn of the 20th century was entangled with the state's efforts to regulate local economic activities in a British military base. I show then how changes in the migrant detention policy in contemporary Malta resulted in the growing of a wandering and destitute population on the island, ultimately prompting local judicial courts to recourse to the old anti-vagrancy provisions. The new “vagabonds”, however, are much different from the criminalised poor of the last century. Analysing the trials of several Sub-Saharan migrants suspected of vagrancy, I question how local judges came to consider the latter as “leading an idle and vagrant life”, as the provision of the local criminal code goes, and highlight convicts' failure to comply with the state's regulations of foreign labour on the island. At odds with the dominant focus on border control in the vast literature on migrants' criminalisation, I argue that the state's efforts to regulate local capitalism and its effects still largely infuse the distinction drawn between individuals who occupy their expected place in the realm of production and criminalised outsiders. The ancient “vagabond” and the “illegal migrant” of today converge, therefore, not merely as concrete cases of social exclusion, but as figures against whom social order and the virtue of employment are asserted and defined.

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## When is work meaningful? Experiences from a job guarantee measure for the long term unemployed

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A job guarantee is a labour market policy measure aimed at providing employment to the long-term unemployed who have been excluded from the labour market so far. The state acts as an ‘employer of the last resort’ to achieve full employment and thus social inclusion through work with a living wage (Wray et al. 2018). In contrast to workfare, it is not about tying unemployment benefits to work but offering jobs in the public or non-profit sector to the long-term unemployed on a voluntary basis and directly tackling long-term unemployment and its negative effects on people and society.

In 2020, the public employment service of Lower Austria started a model project called “Modellprojekt Arbeitsplatzgarantie Marienthal” in the small town of Gramatneusiedl. They invited all jobseekers who had been unemployed longer than nine months to take part in the job-guarantee measure. The work consists in non-profit activities within the community and the jobs are created by the project executing agency together with the local public employment service, the municipality, and the participants. The jobs are paid according to the relevant

sector-level collective agreement. The model project offers guaranteed employment within the subsidized employment project for three and a half years. The project is financed and commissioned by the public employment service.

Right at the beginning of the model project, we started a three-years evaluation study to analyse the effects of the measure. The main aim was to assess the impact on the former long-term unemployed and how the participants perceive the measure. With half of the 42 initial participants we conducted at least two in-depth problem-centered interviews from the beginning of the project over the course of two years. Almost two-thirds of the initial participants were surveyed three times using a questionnaire. A key result in addition to the positive effects on the participants was the importance of meaningful and useful work.

The contribution to ILPC 2024 will present findings from the longitudinal qualitative data, focusing on meaningful work. It will discuss if and how the workers experience their work within the job-guarantee as meaningful. The results show that the workers' claims towards work and therefore their perceptions of meaningfulness differ depending on their life course and (un)employment history as well as experiences of recognition within the job-guarantee measure. In the paper, we present the development of the workers' experiences over the course of two years and discuss how the demands they make on work change over time.

Wray, L. Randall, et al. (2018): Public service employment: A path to full employment. Research Project Report. Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.

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## **One factory, many regimes. Outsourcing, segmentation and industrial relations in Fincantieri yards**

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This proposal discusses the results of our research focusing on labour process and workforce composition transformations in the shipbuilding industry and how these affect factory regimes, workers' voices and industrial relations. The research is based on empirical evidence from the case of Fincantieri, collected through interviews with workers, trade unions and managers in the shipyards of Marghera (Venice) and Monfalcone.

For years, Fincantieri has pursued organisational rationalisation through outsourcing and constructing complex subcontracting chains. These changes are part of medium- to long-term transformations of labour processes that result in greater standardisation and acceleration of specific activities (especially the construction of hulls). In Fincantieri, as elsewhere, organisational changes based on decentralisation and outsourcing lead to a strong segmentation of employees' working and contractual conditions and weaken the power of workers and trade unions. One of the most transformations stimulated by corporate restructuring is the change in the technical composition of direct workers. While the number of direct workers steadily decreases, the distribution among different jobs shows a significant increase in technical employees, who control some labour process segments. In contrast, the number of direct blue-collar workers decreases rapidly. Therefore, technical employees have turned into supervisors of indirect workers.

Different wage, protection and social reproduction regimes apply simultaneously to the various workforce segments in the same workplace. In addition, both the internal change in the technical and social composition of direct employees and the outsourcing of a large part of blue-collar work underlie the erosion of power and the qualitative transformation of trade union representation. Starting from this framework, our research objective is to investigate how the workforce management system is reorganised and, secondly, what reactions of consent, adaptation or resistance – by the workers involved - are provoked by this peculiar organisation of work and workplace policies (the so-called 'Fincantieri model'). Our results indicate how workforce management strategies in Italian shipyards are based on the internal and

simultaneous overlapping of different factory regimes (hegemonic, despotic and hegemonic despotism) that have led to new forms of hierarchy and stratification even in industrial relations, ultimately hindering solidarity processes.

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## **Recognition and Power Resource Theory. New perspectives on labour struggles in the Italian food delivery**

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In this contribution we continue our work of theoretical conceptualisation on labour struggles in the Italian food delivery. By also adopting the methodology of co-research (Woodcock, 2014), we conducted an in-depth study on the union experience of Riders Union Bologna (RUB) and the overall pathway of food delivery workers' struggle in Italy (including national workers' assemblies, collective agreement negotiations, institutional meetings).

We start by using the Recognition Theory [RT] in order to reinterpret the focus, practices and outcomes of this labour conflict. Despite the recognition category has long-standing sociological roots (Pizzorno, 1978; Honneth, 2008), it is still underutilised in the Industrial Relations debate. Nevertheless, we argue its potential in understanding platform workers' struggles, their successful path in establishing IR in an anti-union environment. More specifically, we explore three dimensions of the struggle for recognition. Firstly, the internal recognition is built through solidarity practices and that is fundamental in forming workers' collective identity. Secondly, the institutional recognition is achieved by combining practices from both union and social movements, leading to the development of new regulations in the sector. Lastly, the recognition by employers is achieved once workers have been able to establish the necessary conditions for collective bargaining.

At this point, we develop our theoretical and empirical reflection, by enlarging the perspective to Power Resource Theory [PRT] (Schmaltz et al., 2018) and combining the latter with RT. Every dimension of the recognition struggle is in fact connected with specific power resources. The internal recognition is linked to the necessity to build an associational power in lack of the structural power. This stage represents the precondition of the success of this labour struggle. The institutional recognition calls into question both the coalitional (alliances between traditional trade unions and worker collectives, broader social alliances etc.) and institutional power. We interpret the latter more widely than the traditional PRT literature (e.g. by analysing the law-making influence of the labour struggles). Finally, the recognition by employers refers to the use of traditional union power resources in a sector without the classic protections of collective bargaining and Industrial Relations.

Combining RT and PRT is therefore useful to understand the complexity of food delivery workers' struggle, the set of practices and strategies adopted to achieve their outcomes. In conclusion, after highlighting the main evidences of the research, reflections will be conducted on the potential of the dialogue between RT and PRT literatures in the renewal of labour studies, starting from the struggles of most precarious and vulnerable workers.

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## **Living like "Murghi" (chicken): Bangladeshi migrant workers' accommodation experience in Monfalcone and Marghera, Italy**

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Scholars have highlighted the widespread "dormitory labor regimes" and "sleeping regimes" across Europe (Smith, 2003; Pun & Smith, 2007; Ceccagno & Sacchetto, 2020) and Asia (Goodburn & Mishra, 2022; Ceccagno, 2015) that have led to improved managerial control over workers everyday life beyond the factory. Accommodation of the workers can contribute to the strengthened labour regime and increase value extraction on a global scale. This paper pays attention to the workplace-residence configurations specifically adapted locally and the

intricate network of actors involved in the shipyards' labour process. Drawing from 2 years of ethnographic fieldwork and 79 in-depth interviews with workers and union and community leaders, this study highlighted the accommodation experience of the workers engaged in Fincantieri shipyards at Marghera and Monfalcone, Italy. This study highlights, first, in what ways and how housing experiences shape Bangladeshi migrant workers' (BMWs) everyday reproduction. Second, how does the factory extend its control over the workers to individual accommodations without offering a dormitory. The BMWs community in both port cities enables employers to recruit from a pool of available workers willing to accept lower wages. The Bangladeshi community also helps employers promote the idea that the wage rate is better than the country of origin, thus decreasing claims for higher wages. Regardless of housing type, workers depicted that they were living like "Murghi (chicken)" in crowded rooms with precarious conditions. During fieldwork, two types of labour accommodation among the BMWs emerged: self-accommodation and supervisor-led accommodation. Self-accommodation is self-managed by workers themselves for cooking and maintaining cleaning and hygiene. However, in some houses, the housewife (the wife of the owner) contributes to the social reproduction of their own family and children as well as of the hosted workers. For workers, sharing rooms with others can reduce the cost of living and facilitate remittance for the social reproduction of families left behind. Despite some mismatches, workers enjoy relatively higher freedom in self-accommodations. Differently from self-managed accommodation, some workers have to stay at supervisors' and labour intermediaries' houses to maintain their jobs at Fincantieri. Accommodation within the intermediaries' houses supports monitoring and regulating workers within and outside the factory. Single workers living in supervisor-led accommodation have to respect restrictions on the freedom to move and to meet other people. Further, these workers are also controlled for drinking and, more generally, their behaviour. Finally, this practice limits the workers' ability to join a union or organize to contrast forms of exploitation.

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## The Future of Work in Iceland

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The 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) with its new technologies has impacted the way we live, work and interact. Iceland is no exception, and this paper examines how the Icelandic authorities are reacting to the changes brought about by new technologies in the labour market.

Very little discussion has taken place on the impact of new technologies on the labour market and there are no policies or programmes addressing the issue directly. Iceland has not implemented general strategies, policies and programmes to react to the changes taking place due to new technologies in the labour market and there is no general industrial strategy in place. Furthermore, the labour market in Iceland is currently experiencing both lack of workers as well as a skill gap according to the OECD, where there are jobs available but no workers with the right skills for them. However, according to ministerial reports, the emphasis in Iceland is not on lack of workers but lack of work. Additionally, the government is not actively analysing the future trajectory of skills or addressing these skill mismatches. Various social partners have proposed recommendations on industrial strategy as well as the future trajectory of skills, but it is unclear how much that transpires into government discussions, policies and programmes.

The paper to be presented at the ILPC conference therefore concludes that Icelandic authorities are not proactive in managing the direction of change brought about by new technologies on the labour market and needs to adopt a more proactive approach to address issues such as lack of workers and the skill gap. This discussion will be related to different debates and various scenarios about what the future of work will entail, such as those who predict large scale technological unemployment to less pessimistic scenarios where shifts in the labour market due to new technologies will see new industries replace old ones and new jobs created in parallel to others disappearing, in large part due to automation. Also, Iceland has not been a part of international research and analysis on labour market trends, or any

welfare regime typology, this paper aims to fill that knowledge gap by placing Iceland within the welfare regime typology and analyse the state of its labour market.

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## Criticism of the prevailing power relations in labor relations at Austrian universities

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In spring 2023 several demonstration of Austrian universities scientist took place with about 2000 participants united under the motto "Fair instead of precarious! Rethinking universities". These protests aimed to improve working conditions and denounce current practices at universities. In this article we want to analyze and discuss which power relations, hegemonic structures and logics of action are active in the higher education sector as in the working conditions at Austrian universities, which are perceived as increasingly precarious, as well as the counter-hegemonic actions that challenge them. Based on Antonio Gramsci (1983), we assume, - that hegemony is understood as the ability of a ruling class or stratum to maintain dominance without using direct forms of repression or violence. A major concern of our contribution is to adequately reconstruct the functioning of hegemonic practice (Laclau/Mouffe 2014) and to make it visible for working conditions in the university sector, which seem to be accepted by wide circles and are now increasingly debated in public (Partheymüller/Pühringer 2023).

In addition, the self-image as well as the composition of the scientific staff has fundamentally changed in the last two decades. Universities are now staffed by stratified workforces whose composition often changes, but which demand transparent, accessible and plannable career models. At the same time, union density in the university sector is extremely low (Schmidt/Wegscheider 2022). The introduction of the Universities Act 2002 (UG) reorganized, among others, university funding, governance and labor relations.

Previous works have been dealing with organization of personnel policies and the impact on working conditions among scientific and artistic staff at Austrian universities (Baierl 2021; Schmidt/Wegscheider 2022), but the specific hegemonic structures, power relations and the logics in this context, has hardly been investigated yet. We assume that different interests, power relations, and negotiation mechanisms play a role that can be gleaned from the structures and discourses. In our contribution, we therefore pursue questions that deal with how the repertoires of action at the operational and supra-operational level have changed at universities since the introduction of the UG 2002 and how power relations and their lived practices are shaped at Austrian universities:

What specific hegemonic arrangements are present in the university field? Which actors are active in the field?

Which fields of interaction and conflict as well as negotiation mechanisms in labor relations at universities can be identified? Which logics do they follow?

Drawing on Antonio Gramsci (1998) as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014) theoretical frameworks, we want to examine the power relations between the actors inside the university landscape. Besides we will provide an in-depth analysis of labor relations at universities. Subsequently, we show which arrangements, logics and mechanisms serve the manifestation of hegemony or can be classified as hegemonic and how and where counter-hegemonic views are now increasingly entering the public sphere. To support our argument, we draw on data from two research projects conducted at Johannes Kepler University (JKU) Linz in the field of sociology (Rami 2023a, 2023b).



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## Skilled rural transitions: digital capacitation programmes in Portugal and their impact as active labour market strategies

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Transitions from school to work in rural environments present challenging characteristics when compared to urban ones. Difficulties concerning spatial mobility, the lack of adequate job offers, the scarcity of training or even cultural expectations regarding gender roles, can influence the opportunities and aspirations of young people living in rural areas. With the Covid 19 pandemic and the widespread use of remote work, some of these challenges seemed to be overcome, at least to those with digital literacy and whose functions could be performed remotely, as long as infrastructure existed. However, many young people in rural areas do not have the skills or internet access to establish a reliable connection and make remote work a viable option. As such, the digital factor could become an obstacle.

Digitalisation as a process plays a critical role in providing employment and training opportunities to young people. During the pandemic, many PES services were forced to adopt digital tools and technologies to continue providing essential services to citizens. Such changes required a steep learning curve on the part of both services and their users. Knowing this, the Portuguese government is implementing a strategy on several fronts, through training programmes and internships aimed at unemployed people with the minimum mandatory education. But although the digitalisation of services may be the only answer that guarantees remote assistance, profiles such as those of rural NEETS may require a more individualised and in-person approach to overcome labour market barriers.

Following a comparative approach, this contribution presents three case studies relating to active employment programmes aimed at unemployed young adults. The first case focuses on entrepreneurship and makers, the second on remote digital training and the third on digital upskilling through internships. Using document analysis, on-site visits and interviews conducted with PES technicians, mentors, and young NEETs based in rural areas aged between 25 and 30 years old, we outline the main characteristics of the successful interventions promoted by PES services and local partners. The results point to the relevance of such programmes, especially for the increasingly qualified NEETs with higher education who face skills mismatches

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## Europe's Education-to-Work Transition Regimes in the Twenty-First-Century

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This paper defines 'transition regime'. It explains that attempts to devise typologies of Europe's regimes have failed, and that the sole classification that proves operable situates regimes along a continuum with European multi-track regimes closest to one ideal typical pole, and single procession regimes at the other pole. The USA is closest to the latter ideal type and Germany is closest to the former. During the twenty-first century European countries have all moved closer to the single procession pole. The drivers have been young people's reluctance to be side-tracked, and employers' reluctance to invest in training. There are no implications for the occupational class structures in which transitions end. These are set by political economies. During the twenty-first century the countries' class structures have changed and, more ominously, there have been inter-generation declines rather than rises in the purchasing power of wages and salaries. This turn-around began at the bottom, has spread upwards and in the twenty-first century it has hit public sector professions. An outcome is an increasingly urgent push for more upward mobility. This leads to congestion at ports of entry to what were hitherto regarded as normal and normally accessible graduate careers, then competition among starters to stay in and 'get on' in their management and professional occupations. There

is a north-south difference in Europe. In the north young people must avoid unemployment and step not too far down the labour market if necessary. In the south young people are more likely to delay, engage in qualification and diverse experience accumulation, while employers are unwilling to offer career jobs until young adults are seeking (and needing) to settle. Rates of relative inter-generational class mobility are unchanged, but absolute volumes of upward mobility have been overtaken by downward movements. This is a threat from which middle class parents seek to protect their own children. At present politics offers no solutions to young people's (and their parents') anxieties. Conclusion: European transition regimes and politics are currently chronically unstable.

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## **Union renewal, territorial power and workers spatial agency: Trade unions in the port of Algeciras**

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One of the areas in which Labour Process Theory has expanded is the study of union traditions embedded in particular places, which have been somehow successful or have maintained through time. Literature has paid attention to the different power resources unions employ in specific contexts. Drawing on this theoretical perspective, this paper discusses the concept of structural power, which is closely linked to particular spatialities, to understand workers' agency and trade union strategy. The paper analyses the case of Coordinadora de Trabajadores de los Puertos Andaluces (CTPA) union in Spanish ports, paying attention to the geographical dimension of union practice and thinking. CTPA union was founded in 2009 in the port of Algeciras with the support of stevedores' union. Since then, it has grown substantially until reaching most of the union delegates in the port and has expanded to other ports in Andalusia and the rest of Spain. The union has managed to displace Spanish major unions, CCOO and UGT, to a secondary position at the port of Algeciras. Although it has to face important challenges related to liberalization and automatization, the way in which they have been able to build a strong and successful union can contribute to shed light on existing debates about trade union revitalization. The key element of their strategy is the use of territorial power through practices of solidarity and spatial control over labor processes in the port.

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## **The interplay between social reproduction and the labour process when remote working. Insights from ongoing research in Northern Italy**

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The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a massive adoption of remote work, especially in countries such as Italy which used to be among the EU countries with the lowest use of this working modality. Remote workers passed from corresponding closely to 500,000 workers in 2019 to include over 7 million of them in 2021 (ISTAT 2020; INAPP 2022). In the post-pandemic phase, many of these workers continue to perform their tasks at a distance using hybrid forms of remote work (Yang et al. 2021; Countouris et al. 2023; INAPP 2023), which consist of working partly on-site and partly remotely.

Recent publications have analysed how the overlap between times and spaces of living impacts the gender distribution of care work, especially when remote work is performed from home (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020), and translates into expanding the working time (Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė et al. 2022; Romens, forthcoming). Other studies have focused on labour control, underlining how remote work modifies (or not) direct forms of control (Iannuzzi, Campolongo, 2023; Fullin, Pacetti, 2020) and eventually increases internalized forms of control, through the phenomena coined as the flexibility paradox (Chung, 2022). However, there are no studies that specifically analyse how the interplay between social reproduction and remote work modifies the labour process. In this regard, feminist scholars have underlined

that social reproduction is crucial to understanding exploitation and labour regimes (Baglioni et al. 2022), as well as the labour process and labour control (Baglioni, Mezzadri, 2020).

Based on empirical material, the contribution aims to study how social reproduction shapes the labour process in the context of remote work, by focusing on both workers' daily reproduction (such as eating, resting, and healing in case of illness) and workers' intergenerational reproduction (care for children, elderly and other dependents). The paper is based on a mixed methodology that included a survey with 285 remote workers; 24 in-depth interviews with union officials, shop stewards, remote workers, and HR managers; and 3 participatory meetings in which preliminary findings were discussed with participants.

First, the contribution stresses that the overlap between time and space of production and reproduction leads to increasing the working time while decreasing breaks and the time necessary for workers' daily reproduction (eating, sick leave, etc.). Second, it highlights that remote work is being used to ensure intergenerational social reproduction (care work), leading to forms of internal return migration. However, using remote work as a care strategy is associated with feelings of guilt that intensify internalized forms of control, leading to overwork. Finally, the paper also stresses how the interplay between social reproduction and remote work impacts workers' organizing capacities, highlighting that remote work is increasing the participation of workers with care responsibilities to unions' activities. On the one hand, problems that connect to social reproduction and remote work lead workers to come closer to the unions, and eventually become union members; on the other hand, the remotisation of union activities facilitates the participation of workers with care responsibilities.

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## **'Home is Where my Laptop is': Voicing the Life and Work of an Employed Digital Nomad**

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Digital nomads are rapidly increasing in number. By 2022, there were an estimated 35 million digital nomads worldwide, with 1 billion projected by 2035 (Lytton, 2022). Whilst understood in the literature to be freelancers and entrepreneurs, in the US the number of digital nomads with traditional jobs has more than tripled to 11.1 million, two-thirds (66%) of their total of 16.9 million (MBO Partners, 2022). This article gives voice to Joe, one such employed, American, digital nomad. Joe's digital nomadism commenced pre-pandemic, when conventionally-employed workers were a minority of digital nomads: 44% or 3.1 million in the US compared to 4.1 million independent workers in 2019 (MBO Partners, 2022). Covid made flexible work – at least work-from-home (WFH) if not work-from-anywhere (WFA) – compulsory in many professions across the globe. Thus, as Bonneau, Aroles and Estagnasié state (2023, p.84): 'While it may be argued that digital nomadism solely concerns a fringe of the population... it is likely to attract new adherents who wish to take advantage of evolving organisational policies to increase their flexibility in the future'. The omission of conventionally-employed digital nomads from the academic literature will therefore become increasingly stark.

Joe's direct worker voice, unmediated by social media or a co-working space, gives detail and nuance to our understanding of the reality of digital nomad practice, adding support and contrast to the extant literature on freelancer and entrepreneur digital nomads. As an employed digital nomad, Joe could maximise the financial benefits of arbitrage – in his case, earning a US salary but spending in cheaper Eastern Europe – but his freedom to travel were more constrained by considerations of overlapping working hours and tax residency rules. The importance of a strong WiFi/internet connection remained consistent with the extant literature, but the utility of a strong passport was lessened as an American in and around the Schengen zone. Due to the pandemic, to this was added the additional constraint of Covid-related travel restrictions through much of this period, although these could also be arbitrated away, at least to an extent. At the same time, the pandemic enabled digital nomadism by turbo-charging changes to working practices. Contrary to the literature, Joe found he could be more nomadic

as an employee than as an entrepreneur. His shift from employed digital nomad to entrepreneur confounds the typically assumed link between entrepreneurial endeavour and mobility and reveals the need to further research how digital nomadism can shape, or be curtailed by, career aspirations. Little is known of what happens to the careers of digital nomads over their life course (Tomlinson et al., 2018) as they career from one location to the next. Are they as boundaryless (Arthur, 1994, Arthur and Rosseau, 1996) as their cross-border travel suggests, or more protean (Hall, 2004) or mosaic (Morris et al., 2021)? Phenomenon such as digital nomadism has the potential to contribute to this literature on the multi-faceted reality of non-traditional and flexible careers through empirical insight and related career conceptualisation.

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## **New public management within the higher education sector, and the silencing of the academic voice**

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This paper examines new public management within the higher education sector, and the silencing of the academic voice. One of the ultimate goals of capitalism is to maximise profit by reducing human labour to a unit of analysis; subjected to the same measurements, monitoring, and investigation as any other piece of machinery (Baverman, 1974). Employers are committed to seeking more intensive ways to utilise all forms labour power, such as skills, knowledge, and the mobilising of emotional and aesthetic labour (Thompson and Smith, 2009). This leads to an erosion of worker autonomy and de-professionalisation. The UK Higher Education sector is an excellent example of such processes; where education is positioned as a marketplace that must meet externally-imposed targets and produce two measureable products: teaching output and research output (Alakavuklar et al, 2017).

While there is much literature on new public management in the higher education sector, and widespread discussion on managerialism, there is little research that directly explores the relationship between new public management and the silencing of the academic voice as a form of biopower (Gill, 2009).

Based on doctoral research, this paper draws on data derived from a case study of a single post-1992 university. The data includes 17 semi-structured insider interviews, and is supported by document analysis. This paper explores how the institution extracts labour by minimising scope for autonomy, ensuring conformity of the academic population through coercion and the hegemony of marketised discourses and performance metrics that seek to silence the academic voice. However, this is countervailed by an exploration of academic resistance, that includes the use of silence as a form of subversion.

While this research was conducted, academic colleagues voted for industrial action which in turn was disrupted by the Covid-19 crisis, meaning that the nature of oversight and control shifted and now contested. The paper concludes with a reflection on ongoing industrial action for both the higher education sector, and other professionals who work for the public good, as we enter a contested liminal period of disruption and contest over the labour process.

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## **Employment relationship in caregiving in the private household: between the private and the professional**

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The demographic ageing of societies gives rise to the importance of organizing care for the elderly across European countries. Whether social care is dominantly organized by the state, the market or their combination, the trend of marketisation of the care sector is taking shape. While caregiving in the private household is becoming the greatest sector of employment of migrant caregivers, this process includes the rising obligation of private persons to become

employers in order to organize paid care within the family. As a workplace, the private household is shaped by relations involved in the doing of care work, with various meanings attached to the work position and the caregiving work itself. At the same time, it is poorly regulated, or when regulated, poorly supervised. By focusing on the caregivers' work experiences in the private household abroad, the aim of this paper is to present how employment and care relationships are established in the context of circular migrants' caregiving for the elderly.

This research aim demanded the use of narrative methodology due to its exploratory strengths and 11 narrative interviews were conducted with caregivers from Slavonija, a region of Croatia, who circulate for employment in Austria, Italy, and Germany. The participant caregivers were aged from 50 to 76, had high school education with previously developed careers or experiences of owning private enterprises, and lived in various household structures where five lived alone, two with their husbands and four with their husbands and adult child(ren).

The narrative interviews were analysed via coding and show that the daily caregiving work of migrant caregivers' is situated within employment and care relationships that move between the private and the professional domains in several ways. Firstly, caregivers struggle to negotiate this boundary since the management of caregiving is split between the caregivers, care recipients and their family members who act as either employers or superiors. Their interests collide to create a variety of care relationships exhibiting differing power relation patterns especially when care recipients with medical needs are involved. These unpredictable conditions directly spill over into the domain of care responsibilities so that the content and scope of care work are continually negotiated during the first several migration cycles. Secondly, the conflation of workplace and accommodation within the care recipient's household makes them constantly engaged in either material or immaterial aspects of care work, while also drawing them into the harmonious or discordant familial relationships between the care recipient and their relatives which they must manage. Finally, caregivers look to their previous career experiences to negotiate distance and professionalism within this new employment context, however, the notion of paid care that both the caregivers and employers hold is at times rooted in the experiences and expectations that stem from the unpaid housework and care performed by migrant women in their own households. This reliance on gendered expectations of what is proper or suitable caregiving held by both employers and caregivers simulates domestic-like relations and distorts the contractual nature of paid caregiving.

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## **Of Labour Rights and Embedded Conflicts in Kolkata's Sonagachi Brothel**

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In Kolkata, sex workers occupy a significant place in the city's socio-economic and political landscape. Sonagachi[i], Kolkata's largest brothel area, has now gained international importance as a group of sex workers, and their organization explicitly demands the legalization of sex work in India and an attempt was made to form a trade union. However, the state is yet to grant trade union rights to sex workers in Sonagachi. Apparently, the reason is the fact that sex work in India is not recognized as legitimate work.

In this paper, we are going to examine the struggle of sex workers to gain labour rights and form trade unions within the broader labour market paradigm. Further, in this connection, we will try finding out a linear history of struggle among Kolkata's sex workers to get social recognition as well as labour rights. The methodology adopted here is a mix of ethnographic accounts of a few sex workers in Sonagachi as well as primary data collected through a questionnaire.

In this connection, a few points should be mentioned to further understand the complex sociological matrix of the brothels in the Sonagachi area. In this brothel area, cohesion and conflicts are intertwined with each other. On the one hand, the working girls are generally

residing according to their race, language, and region from where they have come, as well as maintaining their class-caste origin. Very interestingly, it is perhaps the source of strong cohesive forces in this area. On the other hand, sexual jealousy, minor issues in day-to-day living, the assertion of the power of experienced workers over the newcomers in this trade, problems due to unfair business deals resulting in lesser wages, etc. work as an anti-force to form a single force of cohesion. Rather, it indulges in forming various power centres within the brothel areas. These counterpower centres are always keeping divisions alive: The division between a section of workers who demand labour rights for working girls and another section who, out of ignorance, opposes it. The NGOs are also divided into these two broader groups in this area, such as: some of them do right-based activism and fight for the rights of workers or the legalization of sex work; another, the abolitionist schools still prefer to identify the women in sex work as dirty work and seeking its abolition.

Sex work nowadays is much more widespread beyond the brothel areas as facilitated by technology and increasing buying capacity of buyers of sex services. Despite that, Brothel remains a major source and network of labouring forces in sex work. That is why in this paper we are focusing on brothel-based sex work only and demand for labour rights or their struggle to achieve a right to form a within a broader labour market ecosystem.

[i] The largest red light in present-day Kolkata is known as Sonagachi. It is located on the east bank of the Ganges at the heart of northern Kolkata.

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## **The plight of migrant informal workers in India in the context of COVID-19 and the inadequacy of existing labour legislation**

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The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown exposed the vulnerability of the informal sector workers in India. They found themselves without jobs overnight. They were engaged in casual and contract work and some of them were self-employed doing petty economic activities. Lockdown rendered them jobless. Usually, they earn just enough to subsist and few even earn less than minimum wages. Petty economic activities are not economically remunerative and, in most cases, not even cover basic sustenance needs. Under such circumstances, informal workers with very little or no savings could not survive beyond a few days of the lockdown (Dandekar & Ghai, 2020).

Among the informal workers, Inter-state migrants were especially disadvantaged as they did not have enough money to pay rent or buy food. After a few days, they started to leave cities and in the absence of public transport started their long walk back to native places sometimes as far as 2000 km away. The entire nation witnessed to these phenomena during the months of April, May and even June. Many such workers perished in the process too.

Existing protective legislation did not apply to Inter-State Migrant Workers. The current act has been determined to be insufficient in dealing with current conditions. During the previous three decades, migration architecture has changed dramatically. As stated in the ISMW Act 1979, such migrations are not contractor-guided. Contractors and agents' roles in migrations have diminished, and most migrations are distress migrations that occur on their own through closely held networks. Inter-state migrant labourers, meanwhile, continue to move from one state to the next in quest of better job possibilities. In the literature, this phenomenon is referred regarded as "footloose employees," and it is extremely difficult to document such movements within the scope of the ISMW Act of 1979. Essentially, existing labour legislation, particularly the ISMW Act of 1979, has made it extremely difficult to capture the spirit of contemporary immigration. To be relevant in today's environment, this piece of legislation requires a complete makeover.

Most of the labour laws do not apply to informal migrant workers. Informal migrant workers remain mostly undocumented. The fact that informal migrant workers underwent relatively

higher suffering during the pandemic induced lockdown because protective labour legislations were absent (Aiyar, Kapur, Mukhopadhyay, Naik & Singh, 2020). Access to social security was inherently non-existent for almost all the informal workers particularly migrant workers. This paper examines the legal protection or lack of it for the informal workers in India in the context of covid-19 pandemic.

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## **Labour Process Theory in the Age of Climate Crisis: The Case of Construction Work**

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Climate change dramatically reorders work, yet labour process theory (LPT) has not yet engaged with it systematically. This paper explores the potentials of LPT for an analysis of new conflicts that arise in the world of work due to climate change. Empirically, the paper draws on a series of interviews with workers, supervisors and trade unionists in the Swiss construction sector, who were asked how climate change affects their work. The paper argues for a multi-level analysis that can contribute to an understanding of how politics at the level of the workplace and at the level of institutional regulation interact in mediating causes as well as effects of climate change in the world of work. For example, our data shows that vulnerability of construction workers towards heat stress is produced by a combination of precarious employment and precarious residence status. A LPT approach can also help understand corporate practices of maladaptation as well as their contestation. This is exemplified in our data by the attempt to raise working hours in response to climate change, which was prevented through the collective action of workers. Conceptually, the article argues that research on climate change can profit from an LPT heuristic as it helps to understand work as a political field, but LPT needs to take into account more systematically the natural environment. For example, the technical rationalisation of work as a core theme of LPT always has an ecological dimension. This is present in automation, where human labour is replaced by the expense of (mostly fossil) energy). It is also present in de-skilling, for which the iconic form in construction is reinforced concrete. This allowed construction companies to massively cut labour costs, because concrete largely erased the occupation of the traditional bricklayer: Walls were now simply cast in molds. At the same time, however, the production of concrete is a major contributor to the climate crisis as it is responsible for around 8 percent of global CO2 emissions. Thus, the labour process must be understood as central to climate change – in causing it as well as in suffering its effects.

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## **What Does Chinese Direct Investment Mean for Co-Determination? A Comparative Study in the German Metal and Electronics Industry**

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The German metal and electronics industry has seen a wave of Chinese foreign direct investment in the mid-2010s. These seemingly strategic acquisitions have not only led to industrial policy responses by the German government and the European Commission, but have also influenced labor relations at the plant level. Drawing on a sample of 15 company case studies in the German metal and electronics industry, we observe two important developments: 1) While Chinese state-owned investors tend to establish close relationships with the works councils, Chinese private acquisitions tend to be more conflict-ridden at the company level, as in some cases Chinese employers terminate collective bargaining agreements or even support local “yellow unions”. 2) In addition, in many cases, Chinese investors undertook overpriced acquisitions of unprofitable companies which later led to financial distress and conflicts at the company level. This also led to a deterioration of cooperative relationships between the management and the works council. We discuss our findings by referring to labor process theory and more recent discussions of the German model

of industrial relations. We conclude that further research is needed on the development of Chinese company sites (of both the investor and the acquired company) to have a full picture of Chinese brownfield investments in the German metal and electronics industry.

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## **‘Democratic spillover’ through industrial action in East Germany?**

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Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the East-West divide remains a sensitive issue in Germany with regards to living conditions and political culture. In the East German State of Saxony, political deprivation and far-right sentiment are widespread (Decker et al., 2023; Kiess et al., 2023). Saxony is also associated with a lack of democratisation in the world of work: The extent of unionization and the spread of works councils is significantly lower than in Western Germany (Kiess, 2020; Schulten et al., 2020). Still, in recent years, there has been a notable surge in industrial action and workplace organizing. In this paper, I present initial findings from an ongoing ethnographic study, which investigates four cases of industrial conflict in Saxony focusing on questions of workers empowerment and democratic learning. The research seeks to contribute to the debate on the "democratic spillover" effects of industrial action (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2019; Pateman, 1970), that is the assumption that industrial action can lead to a decline in political marginalisation and far-right politization (Holtz & Wilde, 2021; McAlevey, 2021). For our initial case we joined the striking employees of a mid-sized food producer in a Saxonian smalltown, conducting participant observations, ethnographic interviews and group discussions during strike actions for several weeks in 2022. The low-paid workers demanded a pay rise from the Western- German company owners and the union framed their demands as part of a struggle for "wage justice", i.e. to make the low East German wages match West German standards. For most of the employees, it was their second time participating in industrial action, only four years after they had started to organize and established a works council despite opposition from the employers. In my contribution, I will elaborate on processes of empowerment that became evident as part of the collective action of the workers. I argue that, in order to gain a richer understanding of these processes, we need to take into account the "standpoint of the subject" (Thiel, 2019). For the workers we observed, their participation in industrial action meant challenging both their desire to experience recognition from their management as well as putting into question their identification with the company as a "community of fate". Expressing their demands also required them to reinterpret internalised norms and self-understandings of their East German peer group, which would imply that everybody has to humbly endure hard working conditions and that one should not demand too much. In response, the workers presented their struggle as confident, yet modest, 'self-defence' and largely resisted political interpretations of their strike other than the narrative of an 'East-West struggle for justice'. These narratives helped to mobilise workers and, thereby, reshape their sense of collective agency. At the same time, however, to some extent the narratives that were constructed collectively to legitimize industrial action limited the potential for negotiating political conflicts and structural dimensions connected to their struggle – beyond the framing of an East-West divide.

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## **When the unexpected is recurrent: The challenges of standardising work in long-term care**

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Populations in the OECD countries are increasing in age and facing an ever-growing demand for long-term care (LTC). This has been identified as a major challenge by all three actors in the sector: government, employers and employees (via trade unions). Yet despite this acknowledgement, the turnover rate in long-term care continues to increase and it is difficult



to recruit new workers, having instead to rely heavily on migrant labour. As a result, the quality of care for residents has decreased as working conditions deteriorate for the care workers. As this process continues, it amplifies the circle of turnover for the sector. Through our qualitative study, we argue that a central contributor to this problem is the attempt to standardise the tasks in the labour process of LTC through rigid planning, indicators and documentation. Here we find a contradiction since working in LTC requires multifaceted tasks that cannot be narrowly defined nor planned, and require a degree of autonomy. The ability to respond to both regular and irregular events is therefore paramount for workers to succeed in providing satisfactory care and mitigate personal stress. Succinctly, the logic of care is at its core a logic of action. To explore this issue further, we utilized *conricerca* (embedded research) to collect a rich interpretation directly from workers. Our research design entailed training trade union militants and front line LTC workers to deliver group interviews in pairs. Several group interviews were conducted across three linguist areas of Switzerland (French, German, Italian) and involved different front-line LTC professions.

The discussions produced themes that the current labour process in Swiss LTC obstruct the elements required for quality of care as viewed by the workers. These elements revolve around the competence and skill to care, and the ability to respond. Many workers alluded to the fact that unexpected events created a ripple effect that contributed to understaffing, lack of training, and a void in time for other residents. This often resulted in workers accepting this reality and working beyond their work hours and capacities ("prisoner of love"), while feeling personally responsible for the lack of care. Ultimately this leads to burnout for the worker and perpetuates the cycle of turnover, as the worker feels increasingly alienated from the perceived role of their work. This alienation is particularly concerning as so much of care requires emotional and relational work to provide a good standard of care for residents. Our research suggests that the labour process makes it almost impossible for LTC workers to provide the care they want and feel the residents deserve, while at the same time alienating a workforce that is desperately sought after.

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## On the Road to Deskilling? Truckers, Technology, and Tacit Skills

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Truck-driving work has a reputation for low-quality jobs with strenuous physical labour, long working hours, and low wages. The German transport and logistics sector has been facing a persistent shortage of skilled labour, with truck drivers being particularly scarce. Notably, one-third of truck drivers in Germany is over the age of 55, while the number of trainees to succeed retiring drivers decreases each year (Kübler, Distel & Veres-Homm 2015:61).

The logistics industry has undergone profound technological advancements in the last decade, fuelled by an ever-increasing need for more efficiency. The introduction of digital technology in trucks, such as board computers, handhelds, tachographs, diagnostic tools, or route optimisation algorithms, opens up new opportunities to upgrade truck-driving work and reduce the physical and mental workload associated with the job. At the same time, it can also shift the balance between coerced adoption of new technology and the preservation of truckers' invaluable tacit skills (Polanyi 1966) within the labour process.

In the realm of truck-driving work, 'tacit' or 'implicit' skills refer to the practical knowledge that experienced truckers accumulate over the course of years spent behind the wheel. These skills encompass a deep understanding of route intricacies, a 'feel' of the machine, and the ability to respond quickly to disruptions on the road. As automation and smart systems become more entrenched, these skills may become redundant.

The paper presents preliminary findings from an ongoing qualitative study of truck drivers in Germany, drawing on more than 30 in-depth interviews with truck drivers with varying levels of professional experience and management, as well as ethnographic data from workplace observations. Firstly, the paper examines how truck drivers perceive and adapt to the new

technologies integrated into their daily routines. Secondly, it investigates the extent to which the use of digital technology in the trucking industry contributes to the potential de-skilling (e.g. Braverman 1974; Wood 1982) of tacit skills honed through years of practical experience.

Initial findings suggest that digital technologies have become indispensable for carrying out truck driving work. While truck drivers acquire and incorporate technology they find helpful into their experiential knowledge, they also engage in subtle acts of resistance by choosing to ignore or deactivate any system perceived as too disruptive or technologically flawed. In these instances, their tacit skills take precedence over technology in handling unforeseen challenges, ensuring safety, and maintaining operational efficiency. At the same time, some skills rooted in experience, such as vehicle mechanics and navigation, though still present in older drivers, become obsolete in the face of automation. This shift could contribute to an increased reliance on less skilled and cheaper labour in the sector.

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## **From interested self-endangerment to toxic work effort: Gender perspectives on (new) technologies and (techno-)stress at the office**

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“Information, knowledge and affection have become the cutting edge of the new economy. [...] This movement has led to the calculability and commodification of what were once considered to be intangible human traits” (Pujol & Montenegro, 2015: 176). We take this enhanced commodification of affective skills – qualities traditionally considered feminine – as our starting point. In this paper, we look at the affective intensities involved in digitally-enabled interactions in the field of knowledge work. Communication technologies play a critical role in enabling remote work, virtual collaboration and in the sharing of knowledge and ideas. On the one side, this might lead to a greater degree of flexibility and control over work location and working time (Chesley, 2014). On the other side, employees have to be available to multiple channels of communication and to respond (or at least) react to a myriad of electronic messages (Barley et al., 2011). Our aim is to provide insights into the specificities of affective labour involved in the use of digital communication tools and new work arrangements, which – amplified by the pandemic and across professional fields – is central to contemporary work relations and alludes to the importance of gendering of affects and emotions at work

As an interdisciplinary research team, we look at the interactions between new forms of work, digitalization, gender and affects from various angles: In our ongoing research project “ShapeTech” (2021-2024) we use two different self-tracking tools (headband and smartwatch) to collect biometric data to monitor stress and concentration-levels of employees in the field of office work. Participating employees wear the tracking tools for combined two work weeks and will self-document their workdays in a diary study. The data obtained, together with qualitative interviews with the participants, are processed and interpreted in individualised reports, which will give the participants as well as us researchers important information to reflect on job situations, the use of digital technologies and potential stressors. The employees participating in the study discuss their individual experiences in focus groups to strengthen workers’ participation in work design.

Following the perspective of social shaping of technology (Williams & Edge, 1996) and drawing on Orlikowski's practice-based approach (2007), we argue that communication technologies both spawn new practices and reconfigure old ones. Hence, we look at technology as indispensable for any organization of work – an aspect of the present working environment which not only holds opportunities, but it also carries risks: It ensures greater flexibility and thus an active shaping of the work-life balance, but it also harbours risks for health, performance, and (gender) equality if the shape and use of these technologies are not consciously questioned.

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## **Consent and Conflict in the green modernization of German steelmaking**

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The steel industry is at the centre of efforts to decarbonise industrial production. Pure electrification of primary steel production is not possible. The envisaged replacement of coking plants and blast furnaces with hydrogen-based direct reduction has significant consequences for production flow and work process. The modernisation investments will also be accompanied by productivity gains, with the global steel market already characterised by significant overcapacity. The steelworkers' union IG Metall is nevertheless committed to advocating the transformation process and plays an important role in building a shopfloor consensus on technical modernisation. In terms of industrial policy, it is pursuing a corporatist strategy for the promotion of the hydrogen economy and, together with industrial associations and the chemical workers' union IG BCE, is lobbying for extensive state subsidies and regulatory incentives. However, the foreseeable high importance of importing hydrogen and the advocacy of hydrogen from fossil energies accepts injustices in the North-South relationship and ecological inadequacies in order to preserve German production sites.

At the same time, the union is using its comparatively high mobilisation capacity to push through a working week of 32 hours or 4 days in collective bargaining for the first time. This approach of reducing working time refers to an understanding of transformation that goes beyond technological modernisation and is connectable to ecological movements that argue for a different understanding of prosperity and development. The paper describes this constellation as an attempt to position the trade union as an offensive driver of transformation and asks about its contradictions. It presents empirical results from a short-term research project on "Transformation and Workers Participation".

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## **Controlling labour by controlling living labour: The role of class divisions, migrant status and social reproduction in value appropriation struggles**

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The neoliberalisation of the state in Europe has created a fundamental shift in labour market, social, fiscal, and economic policies, which have sharply reshaped the nature of work and employment, social reproduction, migration, and social protection. Above all, the paradigm governing the relationship between the political and economic facets of society, and specifically between states and markets, has been such that markets, having previously been construed as a problem needing to be confronted through equality-enhancing redistribution, have been redefined as a solution to all social problems through the enablement of workers for competitiveness and entrepreneurship in support of their own destinies. Concomitantly, economic globalisation, in whose service state neoliberalisation has reshaped European integration, has promoted a transnationalisation of labour, including above all through the movement of workers in search of employment opportunities across borders.

While the effects of marketisation on the nature of work across a range of sectors (see Greer and Umney, 2022), and its effects through labour flexibilization and intensification (Vidal, 2022) and the expansion of the realm of surplus value appropriation (Pitts, 2022) have now been well established, what is less well known is the role of class division facilitated by transnational labour in the continuing ability of capital to keep reshaping the labour process such as to include a wider array of labour in the circuits of capital to ensure an expanded production and appropriation of surplus value in the face of a slow-burning crisis since the 2008 great recession.

To zoom in on class division as a problem of control, this paper proposes to examine developments in the domain of social reproduction, and focuses on the case of Polish and Ukrainian migrant workers in Germany, Poland and the UK employed in care, food and housing sectors, domains critical to the reproduction of societies which have experienced state retrenchment, market expansion, and face aspects of a crisis of social reproduction (Fraser 2014). Using an extended case methodology, combining in-depth interviews with migrant workers and secondary data analysis of labour market, sector developments and the nature of labour experienced by the migrant workers, the paper considers the effect of market-reach deeper into and surplus value appropriation from areas of social reproduction as a new frontier of control.

By exploring the dynamics of social reproduction provisioning (which typically entail a balance of market, state and household sources of the reproduction of living labour), the paper shows how state retrenchment that depletes households, encroaching markets that intensify and lower labour rewards, degrade the physical state of workers. In these circumstances, the existence of divisions between migrant and non-migrant workers functions as a practical device for extending capital's control over labour on a number of levels. The paper concludes by arguing for the need to extend the lens of labour process analysis to consider the role of markets and marketisation, value and value struggles, and expanded reproduction of surplus value its generative preconditions.

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## **Flexible working arrangements and organizational citizenship behavior: The importance of national job security regulation**

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Organizational citizenship behavior, as the voluntary contribution to an organization beyond formally required tasks, needs to be examined in the new reality of flexible work arrangements. Arguments of the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggest higher voluntary contributions in exchange for enabled flexibility. Opposing arguments of the social presence theory (Short et al., 1976) suggest that flexible working arrangements contribute to lower social presence and higher felt distance between coworkers, resulting in a lower willingness to perform organizational citizenship behavior. Moreover, the varieties of capitalism approach (Hall & Soskice, 2001) assumes different dynamics according to the commodifying and decommodifying forces in the economy. For instance, national job security regulations (Emmenegger, 2014) might alter the effects depending on the stability of employer-employee relationships.

This study examines the association between flexible working (schedule control and telework) and the willingness to perform organizational citizenship behavior at the workplace and whether the effects vary by the national regulation of dismissals in 17 European countries. The variation in the willingness to perform organizational citizenship behavior is investigated from the individual- and country-level perspective with a multi-level analysis based on data from the European Social Survey (round 10) enriched by OECD macro data.

The results indicate a higher absolute willingness for employees who are working flexibly, as assumed by the social exchange theory, speaking against the social presence theory. Moreover, occasional telework predicts an even stronger effect on organizational citizenship

behavior than everyday telework compared to no telework at all. Considering the national context, high job security regulations are related to a higher willingness for organizational citizenship behavior. In detail, cross-level interactions reveal a stronger organizational citizenship behavior-enhancing effect of the strictness of regulation of dismissals for employees who are not working flexibly than employees who are working flexibly.

Based on the findings, it is likely to assume that flexible working arrangements and strong job security regulations can support the willingness to contribute to organizational citizenship behavior. The study highlights the importance of the joint examination of flexible working arrangements and job security regulations to understand the complex effects.

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## **‘Reins, bridle, spurs, carrot, whip’: Labor Process Theory and Commercial Office Architecture**

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Conventional histories of the commercial office would have us believe that we are living in the glory days of office design. Commentators suggest we are the beneficiaries of a century-long evolution of these spaces from the dank and oppressive cave-like offices of the early twentieth century to the rationalized and streamlined spaces of the midcentury, to the technology and amenity-laden campuses of contemporary Silicon Valley (Duffy, 1997; Haigh, 2012; Liming, 2020).

In actuality, the broad design of white-collar workspaces seems to have stayed remarkably static since the first commercial office spaces at the turn of the twentieth century. Open offices, characterized by large spaces with minimal levels of visual and auditory privacy can be identified as the dominant typology throughout history from the strict uniformity of Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1908 Larkin Administration building to the contemporary Clive Wilkinson designed Googleplex. The open office has persisted despite both loud and sustained displeasure from office workers, and decades of peer-reviewed quantitative studies calling into question the ultimate efficacy of such designs (Bernstein and Turban, 2018; Brenan, Chugh and Kline, 2002; Hedge, 1982; Morrison and Macky, 2017; Oldham and Brass, 1979; Kaarlela-Toumaala, Helenius, Keskinen and Hongisto, 2009; Kim and de Dear, 2013).

This paper argues the technology and task-based approach taken by much of the literature toward understanding various changes (or stativity) in office architecture and design falls significantly short of providing meaningful explanations for the sustained prevalence of the open office. In place of traditional architectural analytical methods, this paper posits that analysis based on Labor Process theory is best positioned to explain the contradiction of the longevity of the open office design.

Labor Process Theory, the paper argues, reframes the specific architecture and design features of the office as a tool of managerial control, a method of ensuring worker compliance with management-dictated labor processes, and a means of reminding workers of their place within capitalism. The open office design is one way, this paper argues, that management implements Harry Braverman’s conception of the ‘reins, bridle, spurs, carrot and whip’

(Braverman, 1975) of managerial control. Through this lens, the open office has remained prevalent because of the design's unique ability to enable managerial control over the labor process while simultaneously engendering employee self-regulation, and continually enforcing corporate hierarchies and power dynamics.

Furthermore, the paper argues that locating the genesis of the open office design within the capitalist labor process begins to shed light on why so many optimistic and perhaps well-intentioned office designs, such as Herman Miller's Action Office system, have a plethora of unexpected negative outcomes; these systems are attempting to solve a political problem with a design intervention – an impossible, Sisyphean task.

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## **Transient Livelihoods - Livelihood Transitions of Young Men in Mtwara, Tanzania**

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This paper draws from part of a larger project that set to understand what it means for youth to secure livelihood options within the context of an emerging but precarious gas industry in Mtwara, Tanzania. Through an exploration of youth aspirations and subsequent strategies to securing such livelihoods, the project explores the nexus between the expansion of the gas industry and young people's strategies towards attaining economic independence—a key but precarious marker in their individual and social transition to adulthood. The proposed paper will therefore provide insight into the lives of motorcycle (boda-boda) taxi drivers- a popular livelihood alternative during the gas boom that moderated young men's transition from school to work and their individual and social transition into adulthood in the new gas economy.

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted from 2020 to 2022 in Mtwara town, a peri-urban area, this paper explores the experiences of young men working as boda-boda drivers as they transition from school to work. The article sets out to answer the following questions:

- How do young men navigate their transitions from school to work and in what ways do they occupy their time during these transitions?
- What other livelihood options are evaluated by young men before deciding to work as boda-boda drivers and what needs (personal subsistence, housing, familial support) do they seek to satisfy in opting to work as a boda-boda driver?
- How are boda-boda drivers viewed by their communities and what factors influence these perspectives?

Through the exploration of the lifecycle of the gas industry as a contextual backdrop, this paper demonstrates how work as boda-boda drivers gained respectability, especially during the boom phase of the gas industry as it provided young men with a fastened upward social and economic mobility that many other livelihoods could not provide during that time. As one of the more accessible and lucrative livelihoods, young men were not only able to more steadily transition from school to work, but they were also able to attain social-cultural markers associated with adulthood. For the young men, becoming a boda-boda driver acted and continues to act as a transient conduit in their a) school-to-work transitions, b) their attainment of markers associated with adulthood, and c) a terrain through which they continue to pursue other, less precarious livelihood aspirations, such as moving from being a boda-boda driver to becoming future motorcycle owners and starting other entrepreneurial activities.

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## Understanding the lived experience of workplace coercion, exploitation, and modern slavery in the community across Nottingham

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Conference themes: changing forms of formal and informal employment relations; social division of labour; and power, inequality, and labour market segmentation.

This paper makes a methodological contribution through a place-based approach to the study of informal employment relations and labour market segmentation. The research focusses on the underrepresented emic perspective of exploited workers and the lived experience in defined city localities. The research concerns the nature of labour exploitation which include unsafe or abusive working conditions, excessive working hours, and trafficking and draws on the International Labour Organization's 11 Indicators of Forced Labour.

The research questions focus on journeys into exploitation, perceptions of exploitation and the solutions that workers seek with the aim of informing policymakers and regulators to improve protection for marginalised workers. The research explores cross-sector exploitation in sectors with large proportions of temporary workers including hospitality and domestic work (Shepherd and Wilkinson, 2021), food delivery platforms that classify workers as self-employed (Mendonça et al., 2023) and stigmatised industries where exploitation is normalised (Ram et al., 2020).

Interrelations will be explored between individual-level conflicts and interests and structural inequalities that reinforce social division and segment the labour market including poverty, social isolation and immigration status. Macro-level factors strengthen employer power over workers in the labour process through a fragmented approach to UK labour-market enforcement and neoliberal policy of deregulation (Shepherd and Wilkinson, 2021). Employers gain an advantage in the workplace from the economic, social, and legal vulnerabilities of labour. Workers who lack the prerequisites for formal employment face constrained employment choices, compelling them to accept informal work for necessary income (Crane, 2013).

The research centres on hidden populations and hard-to-reach workers, often in the gig economy, whose presence is under-reported in Census data and HMRC employment statistics. Participants are selected from within Nottingham city using purposive sampling on the basis that they work in unregulated or informalised ways. Semi-structured interviews with workers, local organisations and enforcement agencies will explore experiences and perceptions of exploitation. Through ethnographic observations of the same workers, I will observe physical workplace environments, interactions, and activities. The data is analysed through qualitative thematic analysis.

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## **Just-in-Time and Out of Sight: Forced Migrant Labour in Volatile Times**

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According to the ILO, forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking are increasing worldwide. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to this trend, both through predatory recruiting schemes in countries of origin and substandard employment in countries of destination. Since the global pandemic, labor shortages have intensified the demand for low-cost migrant labour. So why is it that states are restricting access to their labour markets? Drawing on interviews with NGOs at multiple levels of governance, this paper argues that the expansion of forced labour in a range of industries is the effect of a hyperpolitical response to accelerating transformations in the world of work. The inflationary impact of the pandemic on a financializing global economy has converged with supply chain volatility and automation to mask the continuing reliance on migrant workers, with dire implications for their fundamental human rights.

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## **Welfare For The Numbers, By The Numbers: Digitisation of Welfare Schemes and The Situation Of Community Care Workers in India**

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The welfare schemes in the Global South are witnessing an increasing emphasis on digitisation. In the overwhelming push towards platformised delivery of services and datafication of the subjects of welfare, the ones supposed to be the grassroots implementers of this shift- the frontline service workers witness the most apathy and marginalization. This paper analyses the transformations in the world of work of one such class of workers in India, as they become a part of the digital infrastructure, reflecting on the fundamental break such digitisation creates in the logic of welfare.

With the objectives of improving maternal and child health, enabling last-mile delivery of welfare provisions, and creating a connect between the state and the communities, the Indian state created an army of exclusively women scheme workers. Two such scheme workers- the Anganwadi Workers and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs)- form the backbone of Indian public health provisioning. Imagined as social caregivers, these workers are drawn from local communities in 'voluntary' employment, and compensated in 'honorarium.' The Anganwadi and ASHA workers have been in struggle with the state over the non-recognition as workers, meagre honoraria, ever expanding scope of responsibilities, lack of social security, harassment, and precarity as everyday realities. While the struggle for decent work continues, the schemes have been witnessing a push to newer digital tools for data collection, recording, monitoring, training, and service delivery purposes. Anganwadi work has taken a mandatory turn to a common application system linked to dashboard governance of welfare objectives, and ASHA workers are being experimented with various apps for community health monitoring. Along with the state, several private and non-government entities have also been experimenting with digital technologies and artificial intelligence in public health, employing the labour of Anganwadi and ASHA workers.

In discussing the intersection of the digital with frontline health work, the paper analyses three fundamental questions- 1. How does digitisation/platformisation of scheme work alter the logic of welfare through community participation, especially since it involves algorithmic monitoring of health; 2. What does this shift mean for the everyday working conditions of frontline workers



and how do they respond to it; and 3. What are the apparent as well as possible implications of such a shift on the imagination, design and conduct of the said schemes. The study draws on secondary literature as well as on an ethnography with Anganwadi and ASHA workers and the related stakeholders in Delhi, conducted over a period of nine months.

The paper argues that digitisation efforts in this domain are inconsiderate of both the imagined objectives of the schemes and the everyday contextual realities of work for Anganwadi and ASHA workers. In an attempt to standardise a community-facing, highly irregular form of work, they often further marginalise the workers and the communities they serve. However, entering the digital landscape is complicated by the gendered nature of this work. It has also fostered new forms of solidarities and provided new protest constituencies for the workers, the benefits of which are slowly becoming apparent.

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## **Home-Based Workers and Their Access to Social Protection In India**

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A significant portion of the economy in the developing world is outside the regulative control of the state; in India, the informal sector employs up to 94% of the total labour force participation. The informal sector in developing countries has been expanding since the 1980s, and so is the share of the workforce in it. The proportion of workers in the informal sector who receive little or no work-related social security after working their entire lives is increasing. Over the years, the government of India has attempted to provide social security coverage for workers in the informal sector. However, the social security entitlement backed by legislation has remained mainly for the formal sector workers. The legislation-backed social security through the welfare fund model is limited to workers in certain occupations. Realising the social security needs of the informal workforce, the government of India introduced legislation in 2008 to provide social security coverage to the informal workers. Additionally, as citizens living below the poverty level, informal workers in India are eligible for state-provided social assistance; however, the amount is relatively minimal. This aid includes pensions, health insurance and life insurance. For informal workers, health security, among other social security, becomes relevant as good health can ensure a continuous flow of income, simultaneously reducing out-of-pocket expenditures. A catastrophic risk could lead a household towards a vicious cycle of income deficiencies and debt trap for the whole family. Thus, on this background, I aim to explore how do home-based beedi workers deal with their health security needs. It aims to understand whether the workers are dealing with catastrophic health risks with the support of government-provided health insurance schemes or on their own. Further, I attempt to understand the reasons behind choosing one over the other. For this study, the state-funded health insurance programs since 2008 have been included for investigation, which are Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) and Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PM-JAY). To fulfil the research goals, I employed a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with the home-based beedi workers. The data is analysed using the MAXQDA 2020 version by following the principle of the Qualitative content analysis approach. The research findings highlight the aspects where the informal workers willingly choose not to utilise the benefits of the welfare programs and rather trust their informal security regimes over the state welfare programs. In the field of work and welfare, this study contributes to understanding the functioning of welfare programs in the context of informal workers. Further, this paper, within its limitations, attempts to explain why welfare programs fail to achieve their goals in terms of the effectiveness of the program.

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## Labour process in institutionalized exploitative workplace terrain of tea industry in India

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This paper identifies how the exploitative practices in the Indian Tea Industry have itself become labour market institution resulting in the homogenisation and degradation of labour.

The tea plantation was among the first industry established in India which was owned and managed by colonial planters for international consumption. Tea plantation is an extremely labour-intensive work for which an indentured labour system was adopted by the British to heavily maximize profits as the labour had no voice or bargaining power. This led to a process of labour exclusion and marginalization of tribal groups brought from eastern and central India as the labour was brought and held captive by luring, deceiving, and kidnapping them (Xaxa, 2019).

The structure of Colonial Plantation has caused systemic disruption in the tea industry where social norms of workers are very difficult to break it. The presence of labour lines, command, control systems, etc. in their social relations keeps the workers in a marginal position (Bhowmik, 2015). As the industry was based on exploitation, the change in ownership had no major impact on their lives. Rather, post-1990s due to the decline in export and high domestic consumption it has become worse with the abandonment of tea estates in many cases making the labour vulnerable, without any other employment opportunity in those isolated areas and wages which are one of the lowest in formal sector work in Eastern India (Assam and West Bengal). Labour market institutions like trade unions which are supposed to fix wages through collective bargaining are failing to provide minimum wages to the workers. This alongside wage theft through non-payment of wages, underpayment, and methods of wage cut puts the workers in a vulnerable state. (Saha et al 2023) The workers are trapped in a vicious cycle where we can observe that exploitative practices have themselves become institutions.

This study draws from primary data of tea workers from two Indian states of Assam and West Bengal. It reflects on the failure of labour market institutions to safeguard workers from exploitation. I zoom on the scope of and causes of such failures by using labour process theory and looking at the workplace and beyond as tea plantation workers are not just economic production units but social institutions in themselves which control the lives of their resident workforce. I observe that firms' practices overpower the pre-existing labour market institutions and are responsible for creating a new exploitative institution of their own.

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## A Place to Work, A Place to Live - Accommodating Workers and the Labour Process

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This paper develops a typology for exploring the different ways in which workers are accommodated by employers, and how the provision of accommodation facilitates the capture and utilization of labour power. The typology below highlights different ways in which labour is accommodated with more or less dependent relationships with owners of capital. The paper will outline and refine these types, but also focus on employer-led provision. For example, employer-led provision is often subcontracted to 'labour contractors' who manage and provide accommodation. And Felstead (2023) has rightly subdivided homeworking into three practices: 1. those working at home; 2. those working remotely, which can be anywhere with internet connection other than the employers' premises; and 3. those working from home, that is running a business from home but conducting work in the clients home or somewhere else – builders, trades of all types, white collar workers, freelancers etc.

In capitalism as a political economy, in contrast to slavery or feudalism, retaining labour for repeated use was thought of as a purely economic exchange, but when firms are established their continued existence matters to both owners and workers, especially in conditions of monopoly, with one or a few employers dominating the labour market. With continuity of employment comes employers interest in the reproduction of labour power. The provision of accommodation by the firm for workers is not widespread, and is linked to industrial welfare and paternalism, the employer extending the exchange with labour in order to secure labour for long-term use because of skill shortages, general labour shortages, rural isolation, or managerial ideology linked to 'personal control' by the employer.

There are two central elements in the issue of employer-provision of accommodation. One relates to the wage, and the removal of the rental element by the employer, which may increase wages by reducing worker's dependency on the market; as well as obscuring the market exchange as the charging for accommodation is kept hidden from the worker. The second element is control, tied accommodation can mean tied work, as to move employment can mean to lose accommodation, and can act to bind the worker to the employer. Within both there are finer issues; with female labour in the early textile mills in the US, provision of accommodation by the employer was also a way of controlling consumption of the worker, as the leisure time of the worker was managed within the boarding house, and women hours were set, free movement commented upon, and morals and behaviour controlled, all of which restrained the consumption choices of the individual worker, and contributed to savings from wages being very high (Ginger 1954). The ideal of capitalism being an economic exchange between two parties through the 'cash nexus' is infringed, as the employer seeks to control the consumption decisions of the worker, through the provision of accommodation. Both wage and control (reproduction and production) elements will be explored in the paper.

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## **Morality under construction. Reasons and processes why Romanian construction workers in Germany stay with their employers and rebel against them**

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Ten thousand Romanian workers work in the German construction industry under exploitative conditions, which they evaluate negatively as back-breaking, drudgery, or slave work. Due to the high numbers of temporary Romanian migrant workers, circulating job opportunities in social networks as well and because of a Europe-wide Romanian-speaking microbus network, workers have plenty of different employment opportunities at hand. From an observer position, this combination of negative classifications, exploitation, and mobility (Morrison, Sacchetto, Croucher 2020) raises the question of why these workers remain in exploitative work arrangements.

This paper sheds light on this question by focusing on workers' interpretations and their interplay with employers' strategies. It is grounded in a two-year multi-sited ethnography of Romanian construction site workers in a German city and their home villages in Romania. The paper combines labor (Baglioni et al. 2022, Burawoy 1979, Edwards 1979), resistance (Scott 1990), and cultural sociology (Bourdieu 1989, Lahire 2011, Swidler 1986). It finds that workers evaluate their employers according to standards which are part of developing a moral field. Crucially, both work perceptions of workers as well as strategies of employers are involved in shaping a shared moral field.

Regarding worker perceptions, they are informed by the cultural repertoire of Romanian workers as social classifications of work. Migrant workers classify their construction work along ideas as work as an income, a binding agreement between employer and worker, as a source of male, dignified identity, or as normalcy in strict opposition to non-working persons. Each perception of work comes with standards, according to which workers evaluate their

employers. However, it is only through employer-worker interactions that some of these standards are established as legitimate claims within this relationship.

Regarding employer strategies, some strategies through which employers try to legitimize exploitative working conditions overlap with these standards. Employers promise a small wage to increase over time, to limit income-based mobility, and to legitimize small salaries. Others conduct informal negotiations on wages, vacations, health insurance, and working hours with their workers. Handshakes ratify such agreements, thus legitimizing even unlawful work. By delegating responsible tasks to workers and by addressing them as family, employers tap into the cultural ideas of skilled male labour. Finally, employers offer accommodations and financial assistance through loans, thus deepening dependency. In such constellations, a job loss usually means the loss of accommodation.

Taken together, the interaction of employer strategies with workers' perceptions of work produces a shared moral field, which renders workers vulnerable to exploitation. At the same time, the fulfillment of workers' claims turns some demands into legitimate ones within the worker-employer relationship. In the informal construction sector, workers take their bosses at their word. Such a moral order is permanently under construction and requires constant maintenance, because once employers break their promises and violate the established moral order, open and hidden resistance among workers occurs.

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## **"The work isn't hard but the heat kills me" Heat Vulnerability, Romanian Workers and the Labor Process in Austrian greenhouses**

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Rising global temperatures are reshaping the world of labor, with profound and uneven consequences across in sectors. Interdisciplinary scholarship examines heatwaves as simultaneously individual experiences, biophysical changes, and socio-political phenomena (Boni et al. 2023). In particular, agriculture is subject to both biophysical heatwaves as well as the stratification of labor markets, producing "extreme environments" (Saxton 2015) that position migrant workers at the forefront of heat exposure (Arcury et al. 2015, El Khayat et al. 2022). Recently, this led to a surge in heat-related deaths in agricultural sectors (Horton 2021).

Against this broader background, I examine the labor process and migrant worker vulnerability through the lens of heat. Famously described by Marx, the labor process encompasses the actual physical production of values in constant interaction between labor and the environment. In the following, I ethnographically substantiate the view that integral to the labor process are (1) the visceral and embodied dimensions of labor, as well as (2) the interminglings of labor and (heated) environments, which produce new forms of vulnerability as well as political contestation.

I build this argument by discussing material gained from four months of a workplace ethnography, and eighteen months of overall ethnographic engagement with Romanian workers in a greenhouse complex in Vienna. This greenhouse complex spans over 300 hectares and accounts for 70% of Austrian cucumber production. In the peak season between May and September, around 1500 workers are employed. Being mostly from Romania, they are subject to exploitative and regimented labor regimes that are characteristic of intensified horticultural production (Zloliniski 2022).

Ethnographically, heat becomes relevant in at least two ways: First, heat exposure fundamentally shapes the subjective experience of the labor process among greenhouse workers. As the title indicates, many workers refer to heat exposure as the actual source of exertion during the harvest of vegetables. In this sense, the activity of work becomes synonymous with learning how to cope with and endure the bodily sensations of heat. Here, I analyze how this viscosity is shaping the labor process and is framed by workers and growers along racialized ideas of bodily endurance and skill. Second, heat emerges as a new

biophysical condition that requires new forms of regulation. In the heatwave summer of 2023, the Austrian Labor Union advocated for stricter regulations of hazardous workplaces, with similar developments in Spain and the US. In this light, heat acts as a force in its own right and opens new possibilities of political contestation around the labor process. Here, I analyze the contingency of these processes by tracing a fatal heat-related accident in the greenhouse, confronting the systemic flaws that are inherent in regulatory institutions and that become visible through heat.

Both aspects call for renewed attention to the labor process as producing migrant vulnerability through the complex interaction of labor, bodies, the environment, and politics of regulation. Taken together, this view is inspired by and contributes to the literature of Marxist ecology that rethinks work and the environment amidst global ecological crises.

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## **Understanding Digital Restructuring of Global Value Chains and its Impact on Workers – the example of H&M, Inditex/Zara and IKEA**

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Digitalization is changing the shape of global value chains. Growing online trade/ E-commerce, digital supply chain management, and new digital production technologies on all stages contribute to further integrating the different stages of value chains, changing the division of labour and accelerating spatial reconfiguration, and thus reshaping power relations on both macro- and micro-levels.

This paper analyses the digital restructuring in the global retail sector at the example of three case companies: H&M, Inditex/Zara and IKEA and contributes to a more detailed and differentiated understanding of digital technologies and modes of restructuring. We address the impact of digitalization on labour processes and working conditions on the three stages 'production', logistics' and 'retail'. By adopting such an analytical perspective, we want to add to the further development of global value chain frameworks in the context of digitalization and to better understand the impact of digitalization on workers. Envisioning the whole value chain allows for:

A deeper understanding of the overall company strategies concerning digitalization, as usually single technologies, apps etc. are being implemented in a fragmented way not only along the chains/between different stages, but also within the stages, eg. between different stores, logistic centers, or production sites. This poses major challenges to workers and trade unions to become aware of the interconnectedness/ the full dimension of digital restructuring and its impact. Digitalization is already in an advanced process of implementation, however still following a 'trial and error' approach and identification of best practices by most companies.

Understanding the reconfiguration of inequalities along the chains, as digitalization goes along with an increasing precarization of work and employment on all stages of the value chains. This includes changes in the gender division of labour and an increased recourse to migrant labour.

Analysing new modes of domination by fragmenting and precarizing labour through processes of digitalization, and by implementing new forms of labour control in digitalized labour processes.

Such a perspective does not only help to frame the global changes and new forms of integration of labour and production processes through digital technologies, but also shows the need for new – transnational - approaches of trade unionism and interest representation of workers. Resistance against negative impact on workers through digitalization and the active shaping of new technologies requires awareness of the overall company strategies and new forms of organising and collective bargaining (both in content as well as mobilization).

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## **“If you work like this again, you’ll be gone” – Digital surveillance and management control over migrant agency workers**

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This paper’s findings are based on an ethnographic field research over the course of one month in a logistic-center of an e-commerce corporation in Austria and on problem-centered interviews with seven migrant workers. The analysis of the ethnographic material focuses primarily on the labor process and management strategies and practices within it. Digital control and surveillance measures are especially scrutinized in terms of their enforcement and meaning for the power relations between management and workers. The analysis of the interview material re-enacts the recruitment-practices of migrant workers into temporary employment agency work. The interviewed shed light on their lack of alternative opportunities on the labor market and about multiple precariousness of working and living conditions (cf. Birke 2022, 74) due to low wage and high turnovers among other reasons. Digital management control measures must be analyzed in this social-structural context. The management strategies in this digital-tayloristic work environment, evoke self-exploitation due to managers’ promises, that a securer form of employment is achievable by higher performance at work. Performance is tracked through digital surveillance of small-scale tasks. Digital taylorism refers to the resurgence of tayloristic work organization (micro tasks, that lead to deskilling and lower pay) combined with digital surveillance and control of the overall labor process (cf. Altenried 2017, 182).

The management narrative on the shop floor is consistent with the one told during recruitment, keeping migrant agency workers in a state of disinformation and steady alertness, by holding up the promise that direct employment with the company can be achieved if the performance measured suits the management. By continually nudging migrant workers towards digitally surveilled performance, managers keep agency laborers in competition with each other, which leads to fragmentation of the workforce. Dismissals happen regularly due to agency work, which enables the management to adapt the staff numbers to market cycles.

Some interviewed workers and ex-workers partly believe the management narrative and are kept in a mode of permanent hope of promotion into a direct contract with the firm or hope to become employed again by the corporation after being sent back to the agency. This illustrates the precariousness of migrant agency workers and how the corporation exploits it.

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## **System Failure – Why sensemaking is crucial in digitalized labour processes**

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In the first lockdown, a friend told me that he had a lot of free time at the moment. Every morning he would try to log on to the company network with his computer, but because the company was not prepared for 100% work from home, the servers were completely overloaded and virtual access to data and tasks was only possible sporadically. This shows that objects and technology do not -actively- do anything, but they do have consequences. However, one could have made a different decision in this situation. Contacting colleagues in a roundabout way, for example, to coordinate tasks. This means that the impact of technology - especially in the context of work - can be studied more productively if its embedding in social systems is emphasised. Social systems are to be understood as chains of communication and, in Dickel’s sense, critical decision points of communication can be understood as interfaces. Here it is particularly important for the communication participants to interpret how to proceed from there. From this perspective, technology is never unambiguous, but its output must always be interpreted. The lecture proposes to use a system-theoretical perspective on communication in labour relations in order to systematically reflect on the influence or effect of technology and

also unruly objects on it. At the same time, this should reconstruct that technologies and social systems are not independent antagonists, but should be seen as interdependent. Interfaces between technology and social systems are conceptualised as 'social interfaces' in Miebach's sense. Finally, the consequences of 'unruly objects' will be treated as specifically social translations. Translations are reconstructions of meaning of their own quality. They are also system-specific. This in turn means that translations made to a concrete situation by the actors involved are not automatically connectable to the level of the organisation, but the latter has to undertake this translation process again. Overall, it is made analytically strong that despite technology being implemented more and more in work processes and objects or artefacts arising from it, social systems are still the ones that then have

to connect meaningful communication to it. As work processes become more automated, the relevance of this assumption does not diminish, but rather increases. For the 'connection points' for meaning become fewer and the demands on them grow, their complexity processing level must increase. This conceptual proposal aims to make a contribution to being able to reconstruct the complex links in work between technology and social actors in a way that is adequate to the subject matter.

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## **Miscommunication, Misunderstanding or Mismanagement? Resistance in the face of Digital Change; a social care worker perspective**

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Recent advances in the use of assistive and digital technology within the social care sector in the UK are influencing how workers experience work. The rationale for the implementation of this technology is focused on garnering greater levels of efficacy. Specifically, addressing the increasing costs of delivering a social care service that is fit for purpose, whilst reducing the reliance on low-paid labour. The increased usage of technology is being argued as the potential solution to funding shortfalls in the sector as well as being able to address the continuing provision of labour. Up until now, the implementation of new forms of digital technology, specifically, on social care workers has been largely ignored; this research attempts to address that gap. Resistance is implicit within change, particularly change which is designed to transform organisational systems and processes. This resistance from workers is often due to several differing factors. One specific aspect is that workers need to be properly consulted and prepared for the change; having the capability to work with the new technology is a core consideration if resistance to change is to be minimised. The implementation of technological change, where the technology has a direct impact on workers' jobs and roles, has the potential to engender even higher levels of worker resistance. The current study researches the implementation of digital change within a not-for-profit social care housing organisation in Scotland. The data was collected from managers and workers involved in working with the new digital technology and those who were responsible for its implementation. The results show that resistance to the change was present from the start and that there were specific actions that managers could have undertaken to minimise this resistance and prepare workers for the ensuing change. The discussion focuses on the reasons for resistance during change, levers the key theory in this area and goes on to consider the findings from the research in relation to the implementation of technological change and its implications for worker resistance and engagement.

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## **Self-automation and the Labour Process**

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This paper is a theoretical intervention which comes out of empirical study of data science work in the artificial intelligence (AI) industry and software work more broadly. It concerns the unsolved problem of how to understand and theorize computationally-mediated work. The

paper proposes that the computational mediation of work should be understood as the automation of labour, but not in the orthodox sense developed by much research in Marxism and labour process theory, in which labour and automation are taken as antithetical (Briken et al. 2017). The argument advanced here is that computationally mediated work is indistinguishable from automation, except that it is a process not implemented directly by capital. The argument is that the production of software entails the use of software, and perhaps the predominant function of software when deployed to produce software, is the self-automation of labour. The case is made through empirical evidence from the research on the labour processes of machine learning production and synthetic data production. Both of these studies show how automation becomes an integral component of labour, one which is under the control of labour, and which is embraced by labour. This, it is argued, is what distinguishes computationally mediated work from other categories of work—control by labour over the means of automation. This theoretical contribution will be of value to labour process studies, but also engages with the prevalent notion of “immaterial labour” developed by the postoperaismo line of thought (Lazzarato 1996). Immaterial labour theory holds that the digitization of work renders labour increasingly autonomous from capital, which can no longer measure and control it, but only appropriate its output after production. However, this theory has been demonstrated to be theoretically inadequate (Pitts 2017) and empirically dubious (Steinhoff 2021). However, a replacement theory has yet to be offered. This paper also contributes to the debate over what exactly is meant by the term “digital labour”: whether it refers to all kinds of work related in some way to computers (Jarrett 2022) or whether such a definition is so encompassing as to mean nothing at all (Gandini 2021). In sum, this paper will develop a conception for critical scholarship of how labour and automation become intertwined and perhaps indistinguishable, in some contexts.

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## **Labour Unions and Migration in the Logistics Cluster Leipzig**

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Butollo and Koepp (2020) argue that logistics companies have the managerial problem to match the number of employees with the volume of commodities handled in the warehouses to keep low the circulation costs. They rely on a flexible employment model with precarious employment relations as temp agency work or short-term contracts. Post-industrial regions with high unemployment rate like Leipzig in the 1990ies are ideal locations for the requirements of the sector. Until the early 2010s, the labour power regimes in the regional logistics sector were based on the exploitation of German citizen, so called “ostdeutsche Arbeitsspartaner”. Dörre and colleagues (2016) argue that this segment of the working class experienced precariousness as consequence of the capitalist transformation of Eastern Germany in the 1990ies. These experiences made them to bear the working conditions dictated by the management without resistance. The labour unions had problems organizing the workforces and effectively representing their interests in this polit-economic environment.



Today, the logistics companies are faced with the problem of a shortage of labour power. The managements use new strategies to mobilise workforce. A strategy is the socio-spatial fix (Butollo & Koepp: 2020). Logistics companies have expanded the space where they look for new workers. They mobilize different types of migrant workers like refugees or temp agency workers from the European Union. We observe the emergence of a heterogenous labour power regime which integrates different subjectivities on the one hand different types of migrant workers, on the other, “ostdeutsche Arbeitsspartaner” in the region. The concept of “differential inclusion” (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013) of the labour power can help us to analyse these labour power regimes.

Studies have shown that labour unions need to strengthen their associational power resources to be able to blockade the “choke points” of the logistics chains. (e.g. Anderson 2022) The change of the the ethnical class composition of the workforce have implications for the strategy of the union in the logistics sectors. In the context of my dissertation, I interviewed union staff, workers representatives and workers in different type of logistics companies (E-Commerce, Automotivelogistics and Express-Logistics) about these implications. Based on these Interviews I will show, firstly, how the concrete labour mobilising strategies of the companies differ depending on the position of a logistics company in the supply chain. Secondly, I will analyse how different labour power regimes face challenges to the labour unions, and how labour unions deal with those challenges to organise workers and to represent their interests at the workplaces.

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## **Working conditions and collective representation of truck drivers in the Italian and German labour market**

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Recent events have revealed how essential and system-relevant the driving profession, and has increased the awareness of the interdependencies between economies and of the need for organizations to reflect on the configuration of their business models. In this sense, the transport logistics sector is a dynamic field, highly impacted by labour disputes and other processes such as innovations and digitalization developments. By considering the truck driving case in particular, it is possible to see that not only future trends on autonomous driving but also currently, new business and organizational models such as Uber Freight are introduced in Europe. The trucking industry is characterized by intense subcontracting, escaping institutionalized regulation on national level and atomization (pre-cursor of platforms), from which derives issues on employment security in an atomized and weakly regulated labour market. In this context, trade unions, professional associations and business organizations play a central role since they are involved in negotiating working conditions, in a sector undermined by precarious work, low wages and irregular income, flexible atypical employment, and unacceptable labour regimes. The decentralized structure of industrial relations in Europe likewise leads to fragmentation of the social partners, which in road transport is multiplied by the variety of business and employment models. Digitalization, different market structures and new forms of organizations may further fragment truck drivers, in particular those working as

independent contractors. Thus, new collective actors beyond trade unions and employers' associations are relevant, including self-employed organizations, agencies and platforms themselves.

Against this background, it is the aim of this analysis to compare the forms of precarious and decent working conditions, as well as the forms of collective representation, in the Italian and German labour market, by exploring the case of truck drivers. We assume that the structuration theory provides a solid basis for the analysis of industrial relations in both countries. We choose a qualitative research design to analyze the set of constraints that influence labour regimes. Furthermore, we take a comparative perspective to identify the major similarities and differences in the trucking industry of two distinctive contexts, which represent two logistics models with similar features. We find, first, that regarding industrial relations and trade union participation, Italy has less formalized and less institutionalized employment relationships. Trade unions do not play a dominant role and there are fewer co-determination rights for workers. In contrast, Germany has a strong tradition of co-determination and cooperation between employers, employees and trade unions. The German model emphasizes the role of worker representation in organizational decisions and promotes consensus between employers and workers. Second, historically, liberalization shaped the development of the transport logistics sector in both countries. However, this was to a different extent, which is why the resulting market structure today and its influence on industrial relations and working conditions of professional drivers in a direct comparison of the two countries reveals significant differences. As the research process is still ongoing, the results presented here are preliminary in nature and will continue to be analyzed in detail in our further research.

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## **Mobilizing Value: Labour Contracting Chains in India's Construction Industry**

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The increased pace of urbanization and infrastructure development in India following economic reforms in the 1990s led to a rapid expansion and consolidation of the construction sector, which is amongst the largest employers in India today. Although the construction industry is now highly organized and dominated by a few very large corporations, it continues to rely on a largely unregulated labour market based on informal labour contracting. In booming cities such as Bengaluru, large-scale construction projects utilize large numbers of short-term migrant workers recruited from increasingly distant regions of India. Yet the mobilization and management of construction workers and mechanisms of control over the labour process at construction sites have not been well documented. Further, research on brokerage and labour migration in the global South has focused mainly on the relationship between labour contractors and workers, exploring questions of patronage, exploitation, or social reproduction, while the organization of the labour contracting system has received less attention.

The paper presents key findings and emerging questions from an ongoing study of construction labour contracting in India that was designed to address these gaps. One objective of the research is to investigate modalities of surplus extraction and distribution amongst different actors in the labour value chain – from real estate and construction companies at the top to workers at the bottom, who are connected through diverse and shifting types of intermediaries and contracts. Our focus on the labour process, including the production and management of a highly mobile and temporary workforce, will elucidate the new forms of accumulation and labour that have emerged in post-liberalization India.

Methodologically, the study mapped the various relationships and contracts that govern labour supply and the labour process at selected construction sites in Bengaluru, by tracing chains of actors linked through labour contractors as the pivotal agents. The paper draws on a large database of interviews with contractors (thekedars) and their on-site supervisors, site

engineers and project managers employed by construction companies, workers, and other key informants; as well as on observations and interactions at construction sites and migrants' home villages in Bihar and Jharkhand. Through qualitative analysis we develop a schematic model of the labour contracting system and the chain of intermediaries that enable surplus value extraction from construction labour.

The analysis highlights new and evolving ways in which 'formal' and 'informal' labour relations and modes of organizational control are tightly entangled within this long-distance labour supply system. By shifting focus from the relationship between labour contractor and worker to that between labour contractors (and their agents) and contracting companies, we build a nuanced argument about the modalities of labour exploitation in the Indian construction industry. Our findings contribute to ongoing debates around labour mobility and capital accumulation in the global South; the incorporation of different forms of labour into global value chains; and the shifting nature of 'informal' employment in the organized sector.

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## **Employers' associations or service providers? Collective bargaining strategies of German and Irish employers' organisations**

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Germany and Ireland are used in comparative capitalism research as prime examples of the two ideal types of capitalism. A major difference lies in the institutional design of industrial relations. In theory, this also explains the interest of firms in collective bargaining and social partnership. According to the Varieties of Capitalism approach, in Germany's coordinated market economy, the chemical, metal and electrical industries has a structural interest in social partnership and collective bargaining because of its export orientation and the need to avoid disruptions. In Ireland's liberal market economy, by contrast, there would be no such need and interest in collective bargaining. Ireland is heavily dependent on capital imports and uses its weak institutional labour force as an advertisement to attract foreign direct investment. When tripartite social partnership was abandoned in Ireland during the euro crisis, while crisis corporatism was one of the main reasons for the rapid revival in Germany, the hypothesis of the VoC approach seemed to be confirmed. The Irish employers' organisation IBEC bypassed the established system of collective bargaining, while the employers' organisations in the German metal and electrical industries sought to negotiate with the trade unions.

At second glance the interests are far from clear. Collective bargaining coverage in Germany has been declining for decades and more and more companies are opting out of collective bargaining. The employers' associations have reacted to this development by blocking the extension of collective bargaining and preventing reform measures to strengthen collective bargaining coverage. Moreover, they have created an way of circumventing collective bargaining through OT membership in order to keep companies willing to leave in the association. In Ireland, on the other hand, there has been a slow restoration of the bargaining partnership. This is being driven politically, not least by the employers' organisations. Contrary to the assumptions of the VoC approach, the main employers' organisation, IBEC, is very much in favour of strengthening collective bargaining. Recently, IBEC was even part of a High Level Group that advocated a fundamental reform of the Irish collective bargaining system and the restoration of tripartite social partnership.

What explains these developments? This question is the subject of the paper, which uses the power resources approach to analyse the development and bargaining strategies of employers' organisations in Ireland and Germany from a comparative perspective. The paper is based on 32 semi-structured expert interviews with representatives of employers' organisations and trade unions from Ireland and Germany. It is based on the thesis that traditional employers' organisations have lost their attractiveness for capital. In this respect, the developments can be understood as different strategies of employers' organisations to respond to the loss of relevance. While in Germany the focus is on strengthening

organisational power by expanding services for members, the Irish employers' organisations are pursuing a strategy of strengthening or reintroducing the institutional power resource of social partnership. However, the paper argues that the legitimacy and *raison d'être* of employers' organisations for capital is linked to the institutional power resource of collective bargaining autonomy.

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## **Working Conditions of Freight and Logistics Drivers in Taiwan: A Preliminary Study**

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In Taiwan, the number of freight and logistics drivers is gradually increasing yearly, and the freight and logistics services have been vital in a variety of industries, such as high-tech, e-commerce, etc. However, The Taiwan Industrial Union of Freight and Warehousing Workers complains about their members experiencing difficulties to establish different enterprise unions to protect their labour rights in workplaces. Quite a few drivers seem not satisfied with their working conditions, since long working hours, low wages, traffic accidents and occupational diseases are often heard as parts of their jobs. To find out the reality of the working conditions of freight and logistics drivers, this study first examined the official statistical database of labour force regarding regular wages and working hours of freight and logistics drivers. Then this study organized three focus groups of drivers in different area in Taiwan during March and April 2023, to understand their own perspectives of their jobs. A questionnaire was distributed to participants for more information in each focus group. Some drivers further provided their pay slips to support their responses. Later there was a forum for drivers with experts and scholars in May 2023, as a dialogue for people seeking solutions to improve their working conditions. Apparently freight and logistics drivers face several problems worsening their working conditions, and the main concerns are the complexity of pay structure and long working hours. It is not easy for drivers to understand how they get paid or not paid. If they would like to secure a better pay, working overtime is the only way. Furthermore, drivers are also worried about other issues, such as the difficulty of occupational disease identifications, the responsibility of traffic accidents and liability for compensations, the lack enforcement of labour inspections, as well as the limitation of collective union organisation. This study preliminarily suggests the government for gradual improvement of working conditions of freight and logistics drivers as follows: implementing the wages and working hours regulations, establishing reference guidelines for freight and logistics labour contracts, enforcing labour inspections for freight and logistics, promoting work and life balance, supporting collective bargaining for freight and logistics unions, and advocating social dialogues for freight and logistics industry. Furthermore, it relies on long-term cooperation of the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, to promote better working conditions of freight and logistics drivers in Taiwan.

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## **Labour Relations of the Indian Coal Sector – Analysis through secondary sources**

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The economies worldwide have demonstrated a proclivity towards market-oriented, competitive, and globalized value chains (Kuruvilla, 1996; Lakhani et al., 2013; Lane & Probert, 2009). These economic shifts significantly impact the workplace's industrial relations (IR) scenario. India took the ambitious step of economic liberalization in 1991, and ever since, successive governments have focused on the growth of GDP and rankings in ease of doing business (Chandra, 2018; Sengupta, 2009).

To cement our understanding of IR transformation in the coal sector in India, we rely on the logic of action framework (Frenkel & Kuruvilla, 2002) and anchor our work on Lahiri-Dutt 's

(2016) framework providing a typology of the coal extraction economy workforce in India. Standing on the shoulders of giants, we have conducted the content analysis of the ten industry-wide collective bargaining agreements/Long term wage settlements in the coal industry covering a period of more than five decades (1975-2021) (Besamusca & Tijdens, 2015; Kuruvilla & Li, 2021). For the informal workforce, we analysed the recommendations of the High Powered Committee (HPC) on wages and working conditions, the provisions of relevant legislation, internal circulars of coal companies, and important judicial pronouncements. In doing so, we are able to get an understanding of the evolution of the IR systems through the lens of collective bargaining.

Our results highlight a paradox in the IR transformation of the Indian coal sector compared to the changes in the industry and economy. Paradox alludes to components that might be logical and plausible independently but seem incompatible when combined, and consequently, there is an inherent tension (Lewis, 2000). While the permanent workforce despite its fewer numbers has five active trade unions, they are able to negotiate better terms including social security benefits and compassionate employment, the informal numbers despite their burgeoning numbers are still dependent on legislation or the judiciary. Based on our analysis we also speculate that the permanent workforce owing to the wage premium that they earn, may be erecting barriers for informal workers in the coal sector to collectivise (Sarkar, 2023). Amidst the transition to a liberal market economy and privatization, the SOEs in the coal sector seem to have adopted a model of adaptive capitalism.

Our study provides some significant contributions to the literature. First, we join the debate on IR transformation by testing established measures in a unique context of IR (i.e., the Indian coal sector). So far, extant research has focused on Western and developed economies or India as an overall economy (Bhattacharjee, 2001). This investigation contributes to the IR literature by unveiling one hidden context of IR transformation in a developing economy. Second, we examine the alignment of IR transformation by focusing on one of the critical sectors and comparing it with the trend of the whole country and global context. This study will contribute to the IR literature by highlighting the anomalies in the same economy, which may have a different set of IR though operating in the same economy.

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## **Fighting Contemporary Slavery: International Human Rights due Diligence Regulations and their Impact on the Brazilian Supply Chain**

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An international movement against all forms of corporate human rights abuses has gained momentum in recent decades, as globalisation, combined with the process of technological evolution, has transformed social and economic relations, breaking up the productive space into chains that extend beyond territorial borders, linking producers, companies and workers (BALWIN, 2012). Since 2017, several European states, including France, Germany and the Netherlands, have begun to adopt versions of human rights due diligence legislation. In 2022, the European Commission began negotiating a draft Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive that was approved by the European Parliament in June 2023. The final result is expected before the European Parliamentary elections in early 2024. The draft regulation requires large EU companies, as well as companies outside the EU that do significant business with the EU, to assess their actual and potential human rights and environmental impacts throughout their operations and supply chains, and to take steps to identify, prevent and mitigate these potential conflicts. Thus, given the likely approval of the Directive, and Brazil's important role as a supplier of various raw materials that feed the supply chains of European companies and their global supply chains, this paper proposes to investigate the potential impact that this legislation could have in Brazil, mainly because of the weakening of national

labour legislation and the increase of precarious work, such as forced labour. In fact, in 2023, the practice of contemporary slavery reached a record number for a first quarter in 15 years in Brazil, with the rescue of 918 workers in this condition from January to March, a large number of them within the context of supply chains. It also seeks to assess how the existing international legislation on corporate human rights due diligence can serve as a parameter for the inauguration of a new management model for Brazilian companies, giving robustness to internal mechanisms for mapping, traceability and transparency in the supply chain with regard to human rights and consequently becoming a valuable instrument for combating contemporary slavery in Brazil. The theoretical framework is based on Genevieve Lebaron's studies on the failure of corporate governance processes to combat contemporary slave in global supply chains (LEBARON, 2020). It uses theoretical research, with qualitative and quantitative approaches, explanatory and exploratory objectives, bibliographic and documentary procedures of doctrine, jurisprudence and official data from the Brazilian Government and deductive and hypothetical-deductive reasoning.

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## **Labour in the Global Waste Recycling Process: The Intersecting Power Relations in the Waste Supply Chains Between Germany and Turkey**

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This research problematizes the significance and veracity of the circular economy from a labour process perspective focusing on the essential - but often invisible - labour in the circular economy. Circular economy, one of the flagship policies under the European Green Deal, aims to fundamentally change waste management globally, yet there are questions about the paradoxes and issues it creates.

On the way to green economies, recycling has become central as resource recovery is seen as a means to sustainable production while the recycling industry might boost the economy and increase employment. However, as Gregson et al. (2016: 542) raises the question 'what kind of work has accompanied the rise of recycling?' which highlights a critical and more generic dimension for the global recycling industry and the power dynamics in the waste supply chains.

The research focusses on global waste recycling on the basis that a large proportion of recyclable plastic waste from global North countries is exported to countries with precarious labour and weaker environmental standards. The research traces the processes underpinning the export of plastic waste from Germany to Turkey by locating the socio-politic and economic processes in the circular economy. Specifically, it questions the extent of recycling to identify the socio-spatial power dynamics within the waste recycling industry. In problematising the circular economy, the research makes a contribution to the Global Production Networks (GPNs) (Coe et. al., 2008, 2019; Coe and Hess, 2013) that to date has solely focused on production, disregarding the dismantling stage of the product cycle. The labour process of waste disassembling hasn't been analysed sufficiently although this process is significant for recycling, reusing and the sustainability of a circular economy. Both as an informal and formal activity, 'working on waste' is considered disconnected from the production process (Rainnie and Herod, 2022). The research thereby addresses a significant gap in the literature and it aims to identify the socio-spatial power dynamics of waste supply chains, including formal and informal labour and labour process of the resource recovery.

The research uses ethnographic mapping to track the process by which recyclable plastic waste is treated and exported from Germany to Turkey and its treatment in recycling sites and sorting centres in Germany and Turkey. Ethnographic work in this research aims to capture the nature of the work and 'habituated elements of work environments' also to 'get closer to the materiality of the workplace and 'embodied labour process' (Gregson et al. 2016). Using expert interviews with trade unionists, civil servants and government officials, NGOs and journalists both in Germany and Turkey we will identify and negotiate access to four recycling treatment and sorting centres, where we will conduct interviews with workers in two countries.

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## **Exploring the impact of childcare provision on the opportunities for women garment workers and their families in Bangladesh**

Tasnim Gulfam

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The importance of reproductive labour in the process of capital accumulation has been widely discussed. Feminists in the 1970s critiqued Marxism (Federici, 2012) and highlighted the fact that in identifying value producing work as synonymous with commodity production, Marx could not capture the full extent of capitalist exploitation of labour, as the role of reproductive labour in the process of capital accumulation was not addressed. Reproductive labour plays a vital role in the functioning of the economy by sustaining and reproducing workers. However, capitalism only recognizes labour for the market as the sole form of legitimate work (Bhattacharya, 2017) and naturalizes reproductive labour into nonexistence. Women undertake more reproductive labour compared to men (Antonoupoulus & Hirway, 2010), but do not receive recognition for this disproportionate share of labour. Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) considers the labour dispensed to produce commodities and the labour dispensed to produce people as the systematic totality of capitalism (Bhattacharya, 2017) and seeks to make reproductive labour visible. This research will utilize SRT and ethnographic research to explore whether and how an initiative providing childcare for children of women garment workers in Bangladesh impacts women garment workers' engagement with capitalism. Previous research finds that the export-oriented garment factories in Bangladesh require long hours from workers (Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004) and employers in the Bangladesh garment industry seek capitalist 'time discipline' which conflicts with the reproductive roles and responsibilities of women garment workers (Siddiqi & Ashraf, 2017). Research also finds that women garment workers' responsibility in social reproduction influences the nature of their paid work, terms of employment and forms of workplace control in Bangladesh (Anwary, 2017) and that international interventions have a positive impact on women garment workers in Bangladesh by enabling women to exercise agency over their household allocation thereby transforming gender norms and dynamics in their home lives (Pike & English, 2022). Building on prior research this paper will examine a childcare initiative funded by Textile Reuse and International Development (TRAID). TRAID is a UK charity that funds and works with partners Nagorik Uddyog (an NGO in Bangladesh) to run two day-care centres and two drop-in centres in Dhaka, Bangladesh for the children of women garment workers. These centres provide learning and play for children aged between 2-5 and provide literacy, numeracy, and life skills support to children aged between 6-16. The paper will examine whether and how TRAID's childcare initiative allows women garment workers to navigate waged and reproductive labour efficiently as they engage with capitalism and will also identify whether the initiative enables women workers and their families to resist exploitative conditions that capitalism imposes on them.

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## **Crises responses and the role of trade unions in the Brazilian and Indian automotive industries**

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This contribution will compare crisis reactions to Covid 19 and the role of trade unions in Brazil, and India. Central dimensions will be: the governance of value chains, national systems of industrial relations, and the impact of these on the conditions of work and economic development. The presentation will utilize a theoretical framework developed during the team's research conducted in the project: Varieties of COVID-19 Reactions and Changing Modes of Globalization in the Global South, GZ: TE 393/2-1 (financed by DFG). This project analyzed the unprecedented, rapid crisis responses that COVID-19 made necessary for the global economic system and explored the manner of transformation specifically in two selected major emerging economies. The presentation will primarily focus on Global Value Chains (GVCs) as an essential analytical space for examining interdependencies, power asymmetries in the global economic system and institutional path dependencies in national policy regimes. The structure of the presentation will be the following: After a theoretical discussion, we will build on analyses from three research projects to examine industry trajectories, over the past 15 years until the present. Methodologically, we will do this on the basis of selected case studies and expert interviews.

If we consider the development in Brazil, plant unions were struggling to maintain employment levels during the Covid 19 pandemic despite the former president Bolsonaro's weakening of union rights. In India, the vulnerability of employees is significantly more precarious due to the high share of informal employment, the lack of their employment security and welfare state protection, the weak role of trade unions, and the long-standing market-despotic labor-regulation regime in India. From an overall perspective, neither national sector can be regarded as a winner in the global restructuring wave led by core countries of the automotive industry. This is due to a lack of effective industrial policy in both countries, but also to the strategies of the headquarters and the inability of the local actors to intervene in this global division of technological upgrading.

The theoretical contribution will be to understand the role of Brazil and India as two emerging economies in light of a set of interrelated factors. These include existing power asymmetries in the value chain, the capacities of national industrial policies, and low-road competition in labor policies, albeit to varying degrees nationally.

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## **Resonance and Alienation: Analysing Contemporary Labour Relations through a Rosanian Lens**

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Alienation has a classic status in Marxian terminology for analysing the relationship between the worker and his working environment in five different spheres. This concept of alienation is still used for analysing contemporary labour processes. Nevertheless, it seems like the Marxian concept is more appropriate for analysing industrial labour relations than for contemporary labour relations. There are new alienation concepts for instance, the socio-philosophical approach of Rahel Jaeggi (2014) and the sociology of world relations by Hartmut Rosa (2019), which do not necessarily aim to analyse work, but which could nevertheless be considered for an analysis of the world of work today. The motivation behind this theoretical analysis is to attempt to apply a modern concept of alienation, in this case, Rosa's, to current labour relations. Fundamentally, the question is posed as to the possible applicability of Rosa's concept to the critical analysis of current labour relations. Furthermore, it is of interest whether Hartmut Rosa's concept of alienation succeeds in analysing topic forms of work in which it seems like the Marxian terminology comes to a limit of application. Rosa constructed his theory



differently from other theorists, trying to solve the vagueness of 'alienation'. At first, he does not explain the term "alienation", but begins his conceptualisation by introducing the term 'resonance', to which alienation is the counterpart. According to Rosa, resonance implies that the human subject exists in a functioning relationship with the world around them, acting as an active and responsive entity (Rosa 2012). Alienation, on the other hand, is found in purely instrumental relationships with the world, where the subject and the world meet each other as muted entities (ibid.). Additionally, Rosa portrays alienation as an experience of suffering (ibid.). Above all, his theory analyses the mode of relationship to the world and the consequences of it.

For developments in current labour relations, it is referred to Dieter Sauer (2012) and his diagnosis of the dissolution of boundaries in the world of work. Here, topic labour relations are characterised by trends towards flexibilisation and de-standardisation which result in increasing individualisation and 'subjectification' of work. Individualisation in labour can be found among others in the differentiation of the employment landscape, in flattening hierarchies and the active involvement of employees (Kratzer 2005). Subjectification takes place in a dual structure. On the one hand, through subjectification, the demand for living out subjective claims in labour is heard. On the other hand, the gap that is created through flexibilisation and de-standardisation is filled with the subjective abilities of the working individual (Kratzer and Sauer 2005). The instrumental use of the worker's subjectivity makes direct control mechanisms obsolete (Lohr 2003).

Whether individualisation and the resulting dismantling of non-instrumental relationships can lead to a potential alienation with the Rosasian concept of alienation, and whether the rational exploitation of the subjectivity of the working individual fundamentally speaks against the possibility of resonance, will be examined in depth in this work.

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## **Alienation in the Imaginaries of Social Transformation**

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In order to further our understanding of alienation as a phenomenon beyond the effects of Taylorist control, this contribution will present findings from an empirical analysis of software workers' and change managers' work experience. Instead of limiting the concept of alienation to experiences of rigid control in the labour process, the presentation aims to put forward an understanding of alienation as a distorted relationship between work and social transformation. I argue that this view on alienation allows for a critique of our current economic system as society's current crises and challenges (such as a just transformation of the economy) call for more democracy not only in the organisation of work but also in the contents and goals of work.

This contribution builds on Marx's concept of the alienation from species-being, understood as an alienation from a main characteristic of the working collective: the capacity to consciously and socially create and alter society and history. The two studied occupations represent high-skilled, well-paid and relatively secure employment as well as responsible autonomy and new ways of work in the labour process. Thus, they serve as a field to study alienation as the effects of the contradictions between the social use value (Nies 2021) the respondents perceive and the restrictions they face within capitalist exploitation. This conception of alienation focuses on the work ethos and the ways workers make meaning of their work as well as their imaginaries of the future and of the role of their work in society.

Presenting the results of an analysis of 30 interviews and 4 group discussions with software workers and change managers, I will argue that we can find traces of alienation from species-being in the respondents' imaginaries of society, the future, work in general and its use value. Using abductive principles (Tavory and Timmerman 2014) and an in-depth linguistic analysis (Kruse 2015) including a metaphor analysis (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), I reveal patterns of alienation in the material. Software workers create the technology of the future, but always have to adhere to company strategies and customers' wishes. Change managers value

helping people to develop and grow, but do this to the ends of an efficient labour process in the company and profit maximisation. The ways the respondents make meaning of these contradictory experiences reveal either potential for the critique of capitalist work organisation or legitimations of the status quo. Conceptualising alienation as a certain mode of relating to social transformation thus offers a new perspective on the legitimation and contestation of a capitalist organisation of work. The contribution empirically grounds this new concept of alienation, which aims at understanding disengagement, powerlessness and the futility of critique in a world with growing crises and problems that would require the collective capacity to create a better future together.

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## **Regain power by conditional collective bargaining: a deep dive into a promising German union revitalization strategy**

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### Focus of research

This contribution is about a renewal strategy that emerged in German unions – the so called ‘conditional collective bargaining’ (CCB) (bedingungsgebundene Tarifarbeit). The aim of this approach is to convey to employees that without a large number of employees joining the union, an improvement of their working conditions cannot be achieved. This strategy has hardly been rigorously studied scientifically. This desideratum is regrettable, considering that different German unions reported remarkable successes using this method. This contribution is based on a research project (PhD thesis at the Friedrich Schiller University) that sheds light on this approach.

### Theoretical orientation

This research is part of the labor revitalization studies paradigm (e.g. Turner 2005). Its analytical heuristic combines key insights of John Kelly’s (1998) mobilization theory with a power resource approach (amongst others Schmalz/Dörre 2014) and the sociology of representation (esp. Hege/Dufour 2002, Dufour/Hege 2010). This research approach takes in to account that the workplace is a contested terrain (Edwards 1979, Thompson/Vincent 2010).

### Methodology

The research to be presented is based on in-depth case studies of company-based unionization and collective bargaining processes in ten plants - six hospitals/rehabilitation clinics and four food industry plants. The successes and setbacks are reconstructed essentially based on 70 interviews (problem-centered and expert interviews), that the author carried out mainly between 2015 and 2018. Union members and activists, union officials and non-/former members were interviewed to analyze the initial unionization startup and its course over a period of usually at least eight years. The leading question was why conditional collective bargaining (CCB) is an effective approach to renewing union organizing power in the short and medium term in some cases and in others not.

### Selected findings

- CCB does not equal CCB. Three types of how CCB is implemented can be identified: conditional collective bargaining (1.) as a collective process, (2.) as reinforced agency, and (3.) as barter.
- To understand the initial union organizing successes in all ten cases, three effective union tactics are elaborated (e.g. the ‘condition’ of a necessary minimum rate of union density and its framing as necessary counterpower), which will be explained at the ILPC 2024. Depending on the type of CCB, the three tactics come into play to varying degrees.

- CCB as collective process proves to be more promising - under otherwise similar circumstances. The organizing successes turn out to be higher and more sustainable. Core difference to the others types of CCB is a closer link between members and union representatives (activists and officials) and the framing of a necessary minimum rate of union density as necessary counterpower (and not as a kind of deal to exchange membership dues for a collective bargaining agreement to be delivered by union officials).
- In the case of CCB as a collective process, a positive spiral is initiated which especially goes along with a very committing experience that I call 'collective union self-efficacy'.

Implications for the labor process and the union renewal debate can be discussed.

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## **Union Positioning towards Fragmentation and Precarisation in migrant-dominated sectors: Evidence from the Parcel Delivery Services**

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The German labour market is increasingly characterised by a division into segments, marked by different standards in working conditions. While traditional labour standards tend to maintain in a certain segment, the so-called secondary segment is defined by precarious working conditions, low wages, and a high share of migrant work. Exemplary for this stands the Courier-, Express-, and Parcel Delivery-Sector, that is characterised by a rapid growth, following the boom of e-commerce and the pandemic situation, as well as a high competitiveness. Along with these conditions go insecure employment relationships like subcontracted or self-employed work of the often migrant workers in the sector. In this highly fragmented context, unions face a difficult stand, shown in low figures of union membership and an especially low density of works councils and tariff agreements. Having a long history of ambivalent attitudes towards migration, union strategies in precarious sectors in recent years have been split between neglecting the difficult to organise group (or even opposing migration generally as a gateway for poor working conditions) and embracing the issue by addressing them distinctively to combat an overall decrease of union representation.

This work investigates how the union Ver.di (Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft; engl.: united services union), that is responsible for the CEP-sector in the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), deals with this setting and what positions it develops to address workers in the sector and the political sphere. Here, the question of whether and how the union addresses the specific conditions of migrant workers is of special interest. The investigation consists of a document analysis of union positions in the CEP-Sector, based on the Grounded Theory Methodology. It focuses on data from 2019 to 2023 (starting with the public debate on the Paketbotenschutzgesetz (engl.: "Parcel Deliverer Protection Act"), that was introduced in 2019, and ending with the recent campaign "Fair zugestellt statt ausgeliefert", (engl.: "Fairly Delivered instead of at mercy")), containing public statements of Ver.di that express how the union views problems, solutions, and strategies of precarious and migrant work in the sector. Next to insights on the general positioning of unions towards migration, the findings also contribute to recent debates on the stratification of the migration regime along criteria of exploitation. While the consequences of this in terms of social rights and participation are lively debated within the sociology of migration, this work aims to transfer the discussion to the study of unions: It has been noted that the complex arrangement of inclusion- and exclusion mechanisms, to which migrants are subject, produces certain conditions on the labour market for them and makes them more available for precarious work. This results also in different power resources for unions in migrant-dominated sectors. Using the Jena approach on power resources as a frame, the findings are used to analyse how the stratified migration regime restricts unions' power resources in these sectors and thereby shapes their positioning and strategies.

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## **“Strikes were something we never had before” Re-regulation and the unionization of migrant workers in the German meat industry**

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The paper examines the impact state re-regulation measures of labour and employment relations in the German meat industry have on the unionization of migrant workers. Based on an explorative case study, it describes how the ban on subcontracting in the meat industry (Arbeitsschutzkontrollgesetz[1]) and the subsequent changes in employment conditions had a lasting effect on collective forms of interest representation.

Drawing on the power resource approach (Schmalz/Ludwig 2018), it can be shown that the interplay of institutional, societal and structural (labour market) power could significantly improve the initial conditions for a workplace organising process: After spontaneous work stoppages of Eastern European workers formerly employed via onsite-subcontracting, improvements were initially enforced independently of the trade union. Subsequently, union organizing was intensified and for the first time representatives of the migrant workforce were elected to the works council.

Within the conceptual framework of the power resource approach, it can be shown that due to the employment conditions changed by the new legislation (institutional power) and a critical public (societal power), the former subcontracting workers in the case company developed a new self-confidence which made frequent job changes (labour market power) and spontaneous work stoppages (production power) possible in the first place. These experiences have also led to a strengthening of the (trade union) organizational power of the workers, which goes beyond the previous basic forms of spontaneous solidarity or solidarity organized within the framework of manageable groups. In addition, the latter are now also gaining access to the works council and are thus tapping into institutional power resources from which they were previously excluded.

If the changed composition of power resources is analyzed in its dynamics and interactions, it opens up an analytical view of the initial conditions for the capacity of workforces to take action. The case shows how the combination of power resources and the resulting interaction led to a setting that noticeably strengthened the workforce's capacity to act.

Literature:

Schmalz, S., Ludwig, C. & Webster, E. (2018). The Power Resources Approach: Developments and Challenges. *Global Labour Journal* 9 (2), 113 – 134.

Birke, Peter (2022): Grenzen aus Glas. Arbeit, Rassismus und Kämpfe der Migration in Deutschland.

[1] In the summer months of 2020, there were massive corona outbreaks in several large companies in the German meat industry, which led to the temporary closure of plants. In December 2020, the federal government passed a law (for the history, see Birke 2022), which provides for a ban on subcontracting and temporary agency work in the meat industry, thus making the prevailing employment model in the industry impossible.

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## **The Emergence of Private Rental for Migrant Factory Workers: Comparing Reproductive Arrangements in China and Vietnam**

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This paper comparatively examines housing arrangements for migrant workers employed by global factories in China and Vietnam. Dormitories are common housing provisions for workers in both countries. Previous literature has shown that dormitory labor regime (DLR) plays a

significant role in labor control by connecting and disciplining sites of production and reproduction (Siu, 2020; Smith & Pun, 2006; Unger & Siu, 2019). However, recent land restructuring in both countries along with the introduction of global factories in inland regions have significantly reorganized migrant factory workers' living arrangements. A vigorous private rental market has emerged in both countries while migrant factory workers attempt to find alternatives to satisfy their reproductive needs and avoid rigid rules of living in dormitories.

In China, due to land expropriation and local state-led urbanization projects, rural land has been gradually replaced by resettlement housing and urban villages close to newly industrialized sites. As a result, more rental options become available for factory workers such as single rooms in these mixed spaces. Similarly, in Vietnam's import-export zones, migrant workers also start to rent in local residents' houses close to the factory sites. Unlike dormitories shared by at least eight workers with different shifts, these rental options provide privacy for married couples with children, close proximity to grocery stores and entertainment facilities as well as options to cook.

However, we argue that rising housing arrangements as such create a new mix of care that allows deeper penetration of the market in workers' reproductive routines. In Vietnam, migrant factory workers have to shoulder the costs of privatized housing and child care as well as high expenses on utilities given the state does not provide adequate welfare for them and their families in newly industrialized areas. Yet in China, the local state not only builds infrastructures such as roads, schools, and shopping malls but also provides resettlement housing for landless peasants through the so-called "land-for-welfare" schemes. It in turn provides conditions for the rise of marketized services and for the locals to lease their apartment rooms to migrant workers with a competitive edge to the dormitory. In order to cover the increasing associated costs with rented accommodation, migrants are kept working for the factory. In other words, although the states' responses to workers' reproductive needs in China and Vietnam differ, in both countries, not only DLR but also workers' payment streams function as regimes of control.

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## **Migrant cooperatives in Barcelona. (Self)organizing precarious work beyond (self)exploitation?**

Tietje Olaf  
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With the end of the Franquismo in 1975, a form of industrial cooperativismo developed in Spain, which enabled a (renewed) growth of the number of cooperatives in Spain due to various legal adjustments. Catalonia is currently the comunidad autonoma with the most cooperatives in Spain, of which 20% (861) exist in Barcelona alone (Fernández & Miró 2016). At the same time, migration to Spain began to play a much larger role and many immigrants found wage work, particularly in the low-wage sectors. With the global financial crisis of 2007/08, there were severe slumps in the labour market, so low-paid jobs in the construction sector were eliminated (Valero-Matas et al. 2014). The effect was a decrease in migration to Spain, but since 2010 at the latest, migration to Spain has again increased sharply, with more than 5,7 million immigrants registered as permanent residents (Capote & Nieto Calmaestra 2017). However, it is still difficult for many immigrants to find wage labour outside of the low-wage sector. One possibility here seems to be the form of cooperation, which plays a particularly important role in Barcelona.

In my contribution, I will show how self-organized cooperatives of migrants are intervening in precarious living conditions. I will show this following my research in Barcelona (northern Spain) on the everyday organizing of migrant workers in small self-constituted cooperatives (I have been conducting interviews and participant observations since 2022 in Barcelona). I am following the questions of how migrant workers assess their working conditions and how they are trying to improve them?

For this aim, I will first describe the situation of immigrants in Spain and more in detail in Barcelona. Second, I will present how the migration regime and labour regime are interwoven

in the city and third show - following some empirical examples - how groups of immigrants are using the legal opportunity of building small cooperatives to establish better working and living conditions on their own – nevertheless they have to exploit one's own labour power in order to escape exploitation in the labour. Overcoming the precarious situation is not easily possible and means having to take big risks, especially when starting a small cooperative. Nevertheless, the necessary self-exploitation in the context of self-organization also seems to indicate a certain level of satisfaction.

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## **Barriers to Women's Progress in Attaining Decision-Making Roles in India**

Tripathi Tulika, Denis Litty  
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Gender parity in leadership roles has been a persistent challenge across many developing and developed countries. Despite substantial progress in recent years, the female labour force participation in India remains much below 30 percent. Their representation dips to 6-8 percent when it comes to attaining leadership roles. Even though India had some of the first women party presidents and prime ministers, yet it couldn't sustain the momentum and attain it at all the levels. This phenomenon is just not an outcome of public policy deficit, infrastructure or education rather it includes multifaceted barriers that impede women's progress in attaining decision-making roles. This abstract delves into the insights gained from interviews conducted with 20 women occupying diverse leadership positions across various industries into private and public sectors.

The interviews illuminated a spectrum of barriers that leads to hinder women's advancement into decision-making roles. Discrimination surfaced as a recurrent theme, manifested in various forms. Structural biases within organizations were cited as a primary obstacle, exemplified by glass ceilings that curtail upward mobility and systemic gender biases prevalent in promotion processes. These discriminatory practices not only limit opportunities for women to access decision-making roles but also foster an environment that undermines their credibility and potential.

Another notable barrier was the intersectionality of challenges. Women from underrepresented communities faced compounded obstacles, experiencing a double bind of gender and caste, biases. The convergence of these intersecting identities increased their obstacles towards the leadership roles, further deepening the disparity in decision-making roles.

Work-life balance emerged as a pivotal concern for women navigating leadership roles. The absence of supportive infrastructure and ingrained societal expectations often force women to grapple with the relentless tug-of-war between professional advancement and personal responsibilities. This imbalance not only affects their ability to progress but also perpetuates a prevailing myth that leadership roles demand a sacrifice of personal life, dissuading many from aspiring to such positions.

Additionally, the absence of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities emerged as a critical impediment. The scarcity of influential advocates and mentors further alienates women from key networks, inhibiting their exposure to opportunities and guidance critical for navigating the complexities of reaching decision-making positions.

The findings from these interviews shows the multifaceted and deeply entrenched nature of barriers obstructing women to reach and sustain on decision-making roles. Addressing these challenges not only require the women's reservation bill as is recently passed in Indian parliament but it requires the gender strategy from creating supportive infrastructure, care economy to change in perception about women on leadership roles in offices as well as families. It demands a concerted effort encompassing policy interventions, cultural shifts within organizations, targeted mentorship programs, and advocacy for inclusive leadership models.

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## What is human augmentation and why should sociologists of work care about it?

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The notion of human augmentation and enhancement, commonly referring to the use of technologies to enhance the physical and cognitive capacities of individual humans beyond what could be accomplished “naturally”, has gained traction in journalistic and policy debates around the future of work. It is also likely to become an increasing presence in the future. Examples range from wearable technologies like augmented reality glasses, to devices like exoskeletons or even human modifications such as robotic limbs. Sociologists of work have examined some specific “human augmentation” technologies empirically, and often very critically, as when wearable technology is shown to contribute to greater routinization of work and quantification of the worker (e.g. Moore and Robinson, 2016).

However, there has not been systematic engagement with the concept of human augmentation itself. This matters, because the mainstream debate on human augmentation promises “solutions” (Morozov, 2013) to problems such as inequality, deskilling, and alienation in the workplace, which are clearly important to scholars in the sociology of work, while notably lacking the critical perspective on these issues that our field can provide. This paper will seek to stimulate such an engagement, setting down some analytical tools which can aid in a critical interrogation of ideas around human augmentation.

First, the presentation sets out a conceptualisation of human augmentation which is embedded in debates around the social shaping of technology (SST). Rather than identifying specific technological artefacts as inherently “augmenting” by their nature, it will argue that the design and implementation of human augmentation technologies are influenced by social relationships embedded in deep power inequalities and the imperatives of capitalist production. However, the baby should not be thrown out with the bathwater. We argue that certain technologies have “intractable properties” (Winner, 1985) that present more opportunities for emancipatory applications in the workplace than others, and sociologists of work should engage more closely with human augmentation in order to grapple with the significance of these developments.

To evidence these points, we present data from a series of interviews with key informants in the UK warehousing industry, including technological developers, unions, industry representatives, and policy actors, plus a systematic review of documentation on technological change in the sector. The dataset enables us to elucidate the social influences, power relationships, and ideologies (Noble, 2017) which shape the design and application of “human augmentation” technologies. However, it also discusses the characteristics which may give certain artefacts potential to meaningfully “augment” workers; in other words, facilitate upskilling and autonomy rather than control and routinisation.

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## Standardized creativity – solo-self-employed work under economic conditions

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The work of solo self-employed creative workers has characteristics that clearly distinguish it from what is typically regarded as “normal work”. They work as entrepreneurs of themselves (cf. Bröckling 2007; Voß/Pongratz 1998), freed from external control mechanisms (cf. Bührmann/Pongratz 2010), and are confronted with the challenge of continuously producing something new (cf. Reckwitz 2014) - that is, being permanently creative. Solo self-employed creative work thus seems to be the opposite of standardised work processes, as the producers must be given the opportunity and freedom to be creative.

As solo self-employed entrepreneurs, however, they are not only free from organizational influences, but also from economic safety nets. This is particularly true in the creative markets, which have been opened up (internationally) by digitisation and which, due to the low importance of formalised degrees (cf. Hanemann 2016: 23f.) and low capital intensity (cf. Arndt et al. 2012: 10), provide access for many people. The solo self-employed therefore compete with each other and have hardly any hedging options against economic risks outside of informal and collegial networks (cf. Will-Zocholl et al. 2019: 47). A tension is therefore emerging between economic precariousness and freedom, which is determining for the activities of the solo self-employed.

This proposal argues that the tension between freedom and competition results in the necessity to optimise the work process and to make it more predictable and efficient. This is achieved by solo self-employed creative workers through standardisation processes that relate to the product, the process and the action. On the level of the product the solo self-employed are frequently confronted with recurring requirements of customers, which lead to the fact that they continuously reproduce similar to same products. At the level of the work process, they react on those standardised demands by extensively standardising the work process. On the level of action, the solo self-employed react to the far-reaching standardisation of work product and work process and thus try to create opportunities for creativity. This argument is empirically based on qualitative interviews with solo self-employed entrepreneurs from the digitalised cultural and creative industries, conducted in Germany between 2018 and 2019. It will be shown that the economic and structural (non-)embeddedness of solo self-employed creatives lead to the standardisation of creative work, which at the same time limit the creative potential of the work process and also enable it.

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## **Semi-Formal Labor Dynamics in Kerala's Solid Waste Management Sector: A case study of Alleppey Municipality in Kerala, India**

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The discourse surrounding formal and informal work has long been a focal point in the field of labor studies. This discussion has primarily revolved around understanding the boundaries and transitions between these two categories. However, the understanding on 'semi-formal work' is less discussed and explored in literature. In this context, our research delves into semi-formal work within the realm of sanitation, exploring various facets and factors associated with it. The focus of this study is the "Harita Karma Sena," often referred to as the Green Army of Kerala's Local Self-Government. This women-led consortium is primarily responsible for solid waste collection, segregation, and packaging before it is sold to recycling companies. As per Kerala government documents, the Harita Karma Sena was established to address the state's acute waste problem in a decentralized manner, grounded in the notion of transforming waste into income. This initiative receives substantial state support and collaborates with various governmental agencies working towards a cleaner and healthier Kerala. Through an exploration of the experiences of Harita Karma Sena workers in the Alleppey municipality, this study sheds light on the state of the women's Green Army engaged in solid waste management in Kerala.

Employing a qualitative research approach, the study employs methods such as in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis to provide an intricate portrayal of the work-life dynamics within consortium of workers. The findings from the work of the Harita Karma Sena challenge the conventional dualist model of formal and informal work, as proposed by Keith Hart, and transcend the understanding of formality and informality as a spectrum. This case does not neatly fit into the categories of self-employment or municipal contractual employment; rather, it represents a collaborative effort by a consortium of women workers supported by local self-governments as they work for them.



It serves as an exemplary case of semi-formal work in the context of precarious and stigmatized work. Key distinctions in the nature of work, workers' backgrounds, their relationships with government entities (in a way their employers), wage conditions, and the precarious nature of their employment, absence of unionisation collectively highlight the complexity inherent in sanitation work in Kerala. The study underscores the need for nuanced labor rights and improved job security within this pivotal sector, reflecting broader demands for less precarious employment opportunities. In conclusion, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of semi-formal work in the sanitation domain and serves as a valuable resource for policymakers and labor scholars seeking to navigate the intricate landscape of labor dynamics and workers' rights.

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## The Illiberalized Biography: Informal laborers and Liberalization in West Bengal

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West Bengal, well-known for its massive informal sector, has experienced the liberalization in every branch of the informal sector since 1991 onwards, while the informal sector has been growing ever since[1]. The literature on liberalization indicates mostly the structural changes during this period[2] and the biography of workers and their life courses are absent and understudied. This paper aims at filling this gap in the labor related studies by questioning how structural economic changes affect the life courses and coping strategies of informal workers.

According to Bourdieu, the social structures exist once as objective structures in the 'outside world' and once as structuring structures 'inside' the agents also known as Habitus[3]. From this point of view, reconstructing the habitus is essential for studying the informal sector, where labor and life courses of laborer are inseparable in absence of regulation of wage, working hours, protection and sick leaves[4], in contrast to formal labor, where a clear line is claimed to exist between labor and personal life course established by contracts. I expect that workers' reactions to liberalization are strongly shaped by their habitus, as a product of their unique access to different types of capital[5], while the door to studying these inherent structures is the biographical narrative of the informal laborers[6].

This paper begins from a close link between labor and biography in the informal economy of West Bengal. This connection is illustrated by using first hand interviews with informal workers in three branches of construction, agrarian field work and domestic work, taking advantage of the documentary method of Bohnsack[7] and using MAXQDA for qualitative analysis. The first results demonstrate a very strong bond between social status of the informal laborers based on gender, caste, religion and family background, and their access to different types of labor, their challenges and their coping strategies.

[1] Ahuja, "Das Ähnliche Speist Den Unterschied : Die Globale Wohlfahrtsdebatte Und Die Erzeugung „ in - Formeller Arbeit " Im Indien Des 20 . Jahrhunderts," 123–24.

[2] For instance see: Mahmood, Globalization and Labour Reforms: The Politics of Interest Groups and Partisan Governments; Chakraborty et al., Limits of Bargaining; Chakraborty, "Contribution of the Unpaid Family Labour in the Handloom Sector of Textile Industry in West Bengal"; Banerjee and Goldfield, Labour, Globalization and the State; Topalova, "Trade Liberalization and Firm Productivity: The Case of India."

[3] Bourdieu, "Outline of a Theory of Practice," 53.

[4] Breman, "Labour Relations in the 'Formal' and 'Informal' Sectors: Report of a Case Study in South Gujarat, India-Part 2"; Breman, "A Dualistic Labour System? A Critique of the 'Informal Sector' Concept: I: The Informal Sector"; Breman, "A Dualistic Labour System? A Critique of the 'Informal Sector' Concept: II: A Fragmented Labour Market"; Breman, "A Dualistic Labour System? A Critique of the 'Informal Sector' Concept: III: Labour Force and Class Formation"; Mayer-Ahuja, "Arbeit, Unsicherheit, Informalität."

[5] Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 104–5.

[6] Bohnsack, Nentwig-Gesemann, and Nohl, *Die dokumentarische Methode und ihre Forschungspraxis*.

[7] Bohnsack, Nentwig-Gesemann, and Nohl.

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## **"Work more to earn more" or "Just work"? The construction of the interests of platform workers**

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Our contribution aims to explore the processes of construction of subjective interests at work inscribed in the respective factory regimes of two platforms in place in Brussels: TakeAway and Uber.

The argument is based on in-depth interviews with 16 workers of both platforms and ethnographic observations of the different platform workers' demonstrations that took place in Brussels in 2021. We framed our analysis through the theoretical lenses developed by Michael Burawoy about the workers' consciousness and participation. This perspective aims to link the organization on the platforms' apparatus with the subjectivities observed. This allows us to root the comparison of types of work involvements through an analysis of the variations in the organizational structures and in the management of both platforms.

We found that the motivational logics that dictate the involvement of workers in the activity differ significantly between the two platforms depending on the socio-professional situation of the mobilized workers. Uber favors a «work more to earn more» logic whereas TakeAway favors a «just working» logic. Those types of motivational logics are built from the recruitment of the workforce to the design and the infrastructure of the digital interface which manage the work.

We then show that these logics are concretized in the organization of the work of these platforms, which produces the practical and consenting engagement of the worker in the activity. Those subjectivities give us some insights on the form that collective action takes for each case. Indeed, the demands of uber drivers are structured by the desire to maintain the self-employment, the condition of the «work more to earn more», whereas the Takeaway riders find more coherence between their salarial status and «just working» logic, and are thus less concerned by collective action.

This approach inscribes us in a more comprehensive way to analyze workers interests. Rather than to deduce "false consciousness" as the traditional theory of alienation does, we explore, through inductive and empirical methods, the construction of interests from the organizational level. This opens up perspectives for addressing the subjectivity of gig workers, taking their aspirations and involvement in work seriously as an object of research.

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## **Historical materialism and contradictions at work**

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This paper is a defence of the concept of contradictions, used within a historical materialist framework. McGovern (2013) recently launched a broadside attack on the use of historical

materialism – and specifically the concept of contradiction – as an analytical concept in work and employment research, calling for a moratorium on its use. McGovern writes:

The danger is that any concept ... remains so vague that it cannot be used to identify appropriate observations, with the result that the related theory cannot be refuted.... a striking example of this failing can be found in the sociology of work, especially as it is practised in Britain. One of the more significant problems, I suggest, is the persistent and uncritical use of theoretical concepts that have their origins in Marxism and purport to explain much of what is sociologically significant within the employment relationship. A striking example is the concept of contradiction.

McGovern suggests “the relative success of Labour Process Theory can hardly account for the extraordinary surge in usage [of the concept of contradictions] over the past three decades, especially as this has been a period in which Marxism has been in retreat as both an intellectual and a political force.” This assertion, for which he provides no evidence, is demonstrably false. Citations to Marx on Google Scholar have seen a continuous and uninterrupted increase since 1984, starting at 1,578 citations, increasing to 6,558 citations in 2004, to 20,575 in 2014, and to 26,532 in 2018. The popular Marxist magazine, Jacobin, which began in 2010, currently has around 75,000 subscribers and three million online viewers per month.

McGovern asserts that “Marxist theory insists that the prevailing form of economic organization acts as a constraint on the development of the productive forces within society.” This is a crude caricature, based on a limited reading of Marx – citing only The Manifesto, a short political pamphlet. It ignores Marx’s extensive work refining the theory over decades, as well as the extensive body of Marxist historiography and historical sociology on these themes.

McGovern (2013: 9, 11, 12) notes various attempts to distinguish the Marxist concept of material contradiction from the concept of a logical contradiction, he asserts that “once the term ignores simple everyday logic it suffers an obvious loss of meaning that limits its social scientific value.” But he does not say why various formulations he discusses, which theorize it complex social relation, ignore simple everyday logic. He notes how the concept has been used in ways that allegedly fail to distinguish contradictions from conflict or tensions, but pointing out that a few authors have deployed a concept in sloppy ways does not undermine the concept as such, and such distinctions are easy to make. Contradictions are a specific type of tension, which may manifest when a social relation/process consists of two interdependent relations/processes that are potentially in conflict.

This paper concludes with suggestions for how the concept of contradictions can be fruitfully employed for research on work and employment relations.

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## **The impacts of algorithmic management on workers’ Voice, Exit, and Loyalty – a large N survey of managers’ perceptions**

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As part of the transformation of work and employment relations powered by Artificial Intelligence, algorithms are being used to automate and augment managerial tasks, through what is called algorithmic management. The literature is marked by a great divide on its effects. Some works underline its virtues, highlighting how algorithms are fairer, more efficient than human beings, and therefore, indispensable tools for success. In contrast, other studies underline how running workplaces with algorithmic tools may bring about negative consequences for workers.

The current article builds on the famous theoretical framework exit-voice-loyalty coined by Albert Hirschman and investigates how the deployment of algorithmic management tools in a workplace is associated with (i) higher difficulties in retaining workers (exit), (ii) increased proneness to expressions of workers’ discontent (voice), and (iii) worse quality of management-workers relationship (loyalty).

We draw on the 2019 wave of the European Company Survey where the human resource managers of a large representative sample of companies in EU countries (N = 21,869) were asked factual information and their perceptions regarding the functioning and working conditions in the company, including on the three outcomes of interest. The main explanatory variable is a synthetic dummy indicator for the use of algorithmic management. We run linear and logistic regressions to estimate the association between the presence of algorithmic management and managers' accounts of exit, voice and loyalty in the workplace they run. The analysis is further deepened with the introduction of moderators for the national unemployment rate and the reported influence of workers on the company's decision-making processes. Models control for a set of variables related to working context and circumstances in the company (establishment size, occupational sector, percentage of temporary workers and use of incentives to employees) and include country dummy variables.

Findings suggest that algorithmic management is associated with turbulence in workplaces, with a higher probability to face workers' collective action related to issues specific to the establishment than in workplaces where this technological approach is not in place. In other words, consistently with one of our hypotheses, in establishments using algorithmic managements workers voice their discontent more. Managers of companies using algorithmic management declare greater difficulty in retaining employees and worse management-worker relationship, however the coefficients are small. Furthermore, we do not find that workers' involvement in decision making makes any difference in their proneness to engage in collective action in workplace, as would be commonly expected in the literature. Somewhat surprisingly, the link between algorithmic management and voice is slightly stronger where the unemployment rate is higher, while between algorithmic management and exit it is slightly lower.

Overall, we find evidence that the deployment of algorithmic management tools is transforming workplace dynamics, creating a new contested terrain in both platform work and conventional employment settings. Longitudinal and qualitative studies will help us better understand the dimensions and nature of this emerging reality, shedding light on its implications for workers, managers, and organizations as a whole.

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## **Between control and consent: insights from dark stores into middle managers' roles and organizational dynamics in algorithmic management contexts**

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Last decade's technological advancements have introduced a major transformation in the world of work: the inception of algorithmic management. While workplace monitoring and assessment through performance metrics are not new, algorithmic management takes a giant leap forward by leveraging the computational and deep learning abilities of algorithms to assemble and process vast amounts of data, enabling automated or semi-automated decision-making. In light of this, some scholars have explicitly or implicitly predicted a future where the role of human managers, particularly low- and middle-level managers, will become insignificant compared to that of algorithms.

However, against this potentially overly deterministic prediction, other studies have argued that the deployment of algorithmic management tools does not, and will not in the foreseeable future, eliminate the need for human managers. Indeed, middle managers remain a salient and everyday presence in the labor process of organizations despite the deployment of algorithmic tools. This is because, despite the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and computational algorithms to improve firms' efficiency, some critical managerial traits cannot be automated.

This article aims to understand how algorithmic tools reshape the role of middle managers and how this, in turn, transforms the dynamics of managerial control in workplaces. Drawing on 51

semi-structured interviews with managers and shop-floor workers from last-mile grocery delivery warehouses - a sector we consider both revelatory and critical for our purposes - our findings show that, notwithstanding the automation of several coordination-related tasks, middle and low management retains a crucial role in organizations. This role has two facets that appear contradictory but are, indeed, complementary.

On the one hand, middle managers use algorithmic and AI-powered tools to continuously improve workflow efficiency through trial and error. This is done both in real time (e.g., GPS tracking and general performance metrics) and retrospectively (e.g., incredibly detailed individual and collective performance metrics). This fine-grained surveillance, in which human and machine complement each other, exhibits clear traces of direct and technological control, increasingly referred to as digital Taylorism.

On the other hand, middle managers also play a role in producing worker consent. Again, they use algorithmic and AI-powered tools to enhance normative control techniques (e.g., teamwork, gamification, etc.) that keep workers to a large extent docily immersed in the labor process. Managers and their unautomatable cognitive and emotional skills thus emerge as irreplaceable – even if augmented – "producers of consent" who elicit worker surrender rather than resistance expected by some theoretical accounts.

We therefore conclude that the idea that the idea of "algorithmic control" as a new form of control in itself may obfuscate the acknowledgment that deploying algorithmic tools does not represent an absolute break with past forms of control. If anything, what is unprecedented is how it allows for maximization and blending of different forms of control. In this context, middle- and low-managers are less likely to disappear than they are to become at once Tayloristic forepersons and normative controllers with exacerbated powers, thus becoming central figures in organizational dynamics.

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## **Yes, we care? Sociomaterial perspectives on care work and robotic technology**

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With the end of the so-called Fordist sexual contract (Adkins and Dever 2016) and an aging society, many industrial countries face an increasing demand for care services. There are certain hopes that the technology of the future can provide solutions to social problems. The intentions of so-called care technologies range from increasing the autonomy and quality of life for clients to "creating work that is smarter and more qualified" (Kamp et al. 2019:1). Besides these goals, political strategies also intend to produce "labor-saving technologies" (Kamp et al. 2019:2). This emphasizes the relevance to examine critically how these new technologies are designed and how they are perceived by the workers affected.

To date, the technology development in the field of elderly care has predominantly been driven by technological feasibility. Instead of searching for meaningful roles of technologies in a care context, new application fields for emerging technologies are searched. This limited view does not do justice to the potential of new and innovative technologies such as robotics and AI, nor to the requirements of professional care.

To overcome these shortcomings, we propose to take Wanda Orlikowski's (2007: 1437) sociomateriality approach to understand the "constitutive entanglement" of the social and technological. With her practice lens, Orlikowski (2000) emphasizes the importance of the (technological) context in investigating organizational social practices. Applied to a healthcare setting, this approach was used to detect shifts within the power configurations of different occupational groups when introducing a robotic system (Barrett et al. 2012).

In the context of the research project "Caring Robots//Robotic Care," we analyze from a sociomaterial perspective how robotic technology affects care workers' perception of their own professional identities and their role within the labor process. Previous studies (e.g., Kamp et

al. 2019) showed care technologies failing and provoking resistance among workers when they conflict with care values and professional identities. We want to understand how far new (robotic) technologies are perceived as unruly objects or to what extent they can be reconciled with the values and professional identities of those working in care. Furthermore, we want to investigate how power, control, and skills within work relations are (re-)negotiated regarding new robotic technology in care (Windsor 2015, Frennert et al. 2020, Ajslev et al. 2019). Therefore, we additionally draw on Feminist Science and Technology Studies (Wajcman 1991, 2010), as technology is still strongly associated with a hegemonic form of masculinity, while care and medical professions have a long history of gendered hierarchies and skills (Wetterer 2002).

To reconstruct the entanglement of care work and technology, we combine a participatory design methodology with analysis methods based on Grounded Theory (Frauenberger et al. 2019, Teram et al. 2005, Charmaz 2008). The presentation focuses on the theoretical and conceptual analysis and presents research questions and the first empirical findings.

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## **Between algorithmic visibility and leadership culture: insights from the failure of a global skill management platform**

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**Focus of research:** Based on insights from an in-depth qualitative case study, our paper highlights the fault lines and conflicts, socio-technical challenges and unintended dynamics emerging during the implementation of a data- and algorithm-based global skill management platform (SMP) at a leading global supplier of technology and services with headquarters in Germany.

**Theoretical orientation:** Our analysis explores the expectations, interpretative patterns, and interests as well as the experiences of relevant organizational stakeholders during the implementation process of a complex socio-technical system. We combine a social constructivist view on sociotechnical complexity and micropolitics in change processes (Aanestad & Jensen 2011, Skorve & Aanestad 2010, Kotter 1995, Bijker et al., 1987) with a critical perspective on data and algorithms, potentially leading to new forms of social ordering, self-presentation, and valorisation (Yeung 2017, Mau, 2017).

**Methodology:** We applied an in-depth case study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2012, Langley & Royer, 2006, Merriam 1998), based on a data and methods triangulating procedure, combining qualitative expert interviews, group discussions and document analysis. A total of eleven expert interviews with different stakeholders (HR, Executives, Data Scientist, Works Council) were conducted. In addition, three group discussions were held with highly qualified employees who tested the tool. The qualitative data analysis method used was based on Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The qualitative software tool MaxQDA was used to support the analysis.

**Findings:** The SMP was conceived as a driving force for organizational transformation, implementing the managerial vision of a global digital networking and collaboration culture. This vision was based on two pillars: 1) the principle of individual employee's initiative, willingness to learn and to network and 2), the logic of generating data- and algorithm-based transparency about existing skills, competencies, learning and career aspirations of employees, as well as the staffing of project assignments worldwide. Our findings show that although the general works council was an important promoter of the SMP and the implementation process was based on broad participation of different stakeholders, disappointed expectations, irritations, fears, and micropolitical conflicts were triggered, which in sum contributed to a failed implementation. These dynamics can be outlined as follows:

Disappointed expectations: Criticism of the non-integration of the SMP into the company's technical ecosystem, unclear added value, limited functionalities and low usability of the platform, difficulties in the cooperation with the external software developer. Tensions between the algorithmic creation of individual visibility in the internal labour market on the one hand, socially defined affiliations of project staff to departments and teams on the other. Fears about possible consequences of a rule-free/anomalous use of the SMP for established management and cooperation relationships as well as for management role understandings and zones of uncertainty. Concerns about the emergence of a competitive, opportunistic lone wolf culture of the "visible" and "loud". Uncertainties about questions of appropriate self-categorization or unclear standards for the validation (self-assessment and assessment by others) of skills within the skill management platform.

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## **Occupational labour mobility and spatial labour mobility in the production of digital platform: the mobility power of Chinese technology workers**

Wang Lu

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Over the past decade, the development of digital infrastructure and electronic manufacturing boosted internet-based businesses worldwide. Chinese internet companies have seen exponential growth and sharp stagnation within a short period of time, and accordingly, labour relations between tech workers and employers have evolved rapidly. With the suggestion that labour turnover is an equally important component of labour process (Smith, 2006), this paper examines the formation of tech workers' mobility power in moving between firms and cities. It argues that skilled tech workers are able to develop mobility power during the rapid growth phase, while such power can be easily weakened when the industry matures during economic downturns. Hence, the high labour mobility within the industry shifts from a signal of prosperity to precarity, and the previously cooperative labour relationship between tech workers and employers quickly turns into a "functional" regime (Smith et al., 2004) that helps companies to expand and contract flexibly to the market fluctuation.

Specifically, the paper centres on the career mobility and spatial mobility of Chinese tech workers as the tech industry expands from big cities to smaller ones. The research interest arises in the context of the geographical expansion and recession of China's internet industry. As leading internet companies expand from megacities to emerging cities, it on the one hand duplicates the capitalist production mode from the new world to the old, and on the other, provides an opportunity for tech workers to retreat from the increasingly precarious labour market in megacities. In the field of digital labour studies, the classic presumption of workers' collective actions no longer explains the agency of individualized technology workers.

Thus, this research seeks to study this group of workers from the perspective of their mobility strategies. It asks two questions: (i) how tech workers change jobs during the booms and downturns of China's internet industry, and (ii) how tech workers achieve upward social mobility through downward spatial mobility. By investigating the process by which tech workers move from developed cities on the eastern coast to interior emerging cities, it argues that the translocation of the internet industry has formulated a technology community that spreads capitalist production and reproduction to larger geographical scopes.

Through an on-site internship and six months of fieldwork in China's two cities – Beijing city, the most developed tech hub in eastern China and Chengdu city, an emerging city that has been receiving numerous immigrants and tech companies in the past decade, the author collected observation data and interview data with 30 tech workers. After data coding and analysis with the Atlas.ti, it has been concluded that (i) the sufficient labour supply in China's market has enabled internet companies to absorb and dismiss tech workers at will, which contributes to forming a "functional" employment regime (Smith et al., 2004) favourable to capitalists, and (ii) tech workers are strategizing spatial mobility to survive the precarious labour market, despite the limited job opportunities of the employment structure.

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## The Organization of Socio-Ecological Working Societies. A Cybernetic Thought Provocation beyond Marxism for ILPC 2024

Weingärtner Simon

Leibniz University Hannover Institute of Sociology Labour and Organizational Sociology  
SASE - Network G ESA - Section Economic Sociology DFG DFG-Sektionen: Soziologische  
Theorie, Arbeits- und Industriesoziologie, Wirtschaftssoziologie SAMF e. V. GIRA ver.di

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Since Braverman's study (1974), the "labor process perspective" (LPP) has made numerous invaluable contributions to the fields of labor, organizational and economic sociology as well as to the field of political economy more broadly. Against the background of the so-called "Polycrisis" of capitalism (Tooze, 2021), the ongoing digital transformation as well as the (alleged) political fragmentation (cf. Mau et al, 2023) and imminent ecological destruction of human civilization, the analytical limits in (neo-)marxist theorizing have become more and more apparent:

- The role of digital platforms not only challenge the Marxist "production-bias" but also lead to increasingly complex social configurations and hybrid identities which transcend the labor-capital divide.
- Political Economy needs to be complemented by a Political Sociology-perspective which functions as a "Sociology of Critique" by taking seriously the individual criticisms of individual workers in organized interaction (e.g., Hochschild, 2016; Mishra, 2019).
- Quantitative and merely economic growth can and will no longer be the pacifying force in labor conflicts in the 21st century. The increasing scholarly and political (!) attention given to concepts like "social resilience" (Hall & Lamont, 2013; Sandel, 2021), "social transformation" (Polanyi, 1944), "artificial communication" (Esposito, 2022) and "second-order observation" (Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2021) point to a revival of constructivist perspectives (cf. Moeller, 2012) on the labor process in our highly differentiated working societies.

This contribution introduces a new framework for analysis which is rooted in Luhmann's "second-order cybernetics" as well as in more praxeological organizational, field- and network-theories. Advanced sociological systems- and organizational theory is based on the idea, that it is in fact communication, and not (only) the "will to power" and/or class-struggle which define modern society and organizational life. Taking on this analytical lens, the importance of the principle of organization in providing solutions for collective problems has largely escaped the analytical grasp of LPP, because of its inherent class-prism on social structures and dynamics (Marxian dialectics). Rather than copying the "anthropology" of mainstream economics (e.g., Becker, 2008; Hayek, 1968), social theory should focus more closely and ethnographically on the "structural couplings" between individual "psychological systems" in its constant "co-evolution" with various social structures of communication.

Newer approaches have proven successful in tackling the role of "identity technologies" like "prolificity" (Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2021), the pacifying role of "organizational structures" (cf. Luhmann, 1964) and above all, the phenomenon of "artificial/algorithmic communication" (Esposito, 2022). The latter has the potential to not only transform work and markets on the global scale (cf. Weingärtner, 2021), but also calls for a more advanced analytical perspective in the critical analysis of interactional, organizational and societal structures. Structures, of which the world economy is undoubtedly the most important and most precarious one (Kühl, 2018), because of the commodification and ubiquitous communicative function of money, which can only be properly understood by its societal/communicative embeddedness in (geo-) politics, law, economy, art, familial structures, hegemonic modes of organization, social movements et cetera.



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## **Are unpaid Internships in the workplace coercive? Social class, blurred boundaries, and labour mobilisation**

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Are unpaid Internships consensual? Or are Internships auto self-exploitative wherein interns place themselves in precarious working environments, or is precarity a coercive relationship where students are compelled to complete an unpaid Internship to be successful in their career ambitions? Neoliberal and meritocratic narratives within higher education:- ‘employability’ directives describe ideal workers possessing an elevated level of education alongside extensive; relatable; relevant work experience (Watt and Costea, 2020). These prerequisites are endorsed and reiterated by highly competitive industries such as law, finance, politics, and cultural and creative industries deeming the professions almost impossible to access and secure success within unless a person has both dimensions (Friedman and Laurison, 2019).

In contrast to this meritocratic narrative The Institute for Fiscal Studies (Van de Eyre et al., 2023) finds that social mobility within the UK is at its slowest rate since the 1970s due to the cost-of-living crisis and the number of potential opportunities in varying geographical locations. Moreover, social class resistance within the UK has only slowly expanded into general consciousness over the past few years, for example, the ‘93% club’ run by, Lawyer, Sophie Pender has gained popularity amongst students and professionals who have been marginalised by class to resist social reproduction in highly competitive industries. Therefore, the conceptual underpinning of this paper considers whether unpaid Internships exist within capitalist work relations to socially reproduce embedded class hierarchies and segregate the workforce into those who can or cannot complete an extended period of unpaid work. That is, as a socio-economic subsidy to capital. Such segregation also impacts on gender, race, and disability dimensions of work relations in capitalism. We argue that actors within organisations use unpaid Internships as a mechanism to mobilise and exploit ‘free’ labour under the false premise of meritocracy, self-improvement and equal opportunities but never offer these individuals further opportunities due to the hierarchy of Internships that is split between: paid; unpaid; and ‘micro’ lines.

To address these research questions we draw on Bourdieu’s (1973) social reproduction and Becker’s (1964) human capital theory to conceptualise the use of unpaid Internships within the workplace labour process and how this may segregate the workforce in the post-pandemic world. We also question who has the right to highly competitive opportunities by considering approaches embedded in elite theory. For example, the AGCAS (2023, pp. 37) employability report suggested that a way to improve social class diversity is for organisations to offer ‘micro-Internships’ where organisations request completion of a task in exchange for a ‘LinkedIn recommendation.’ Although superficially beneficial, these flexible options may merely mobilise labour for the benefit of capitalist organisations by exploiting working-class labour that may not have the time, networks or economic capital to undertake a traditional Internship.

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## **“There is Power in a Union” – There is Power Elsewhere. Reassessing Power Resources, Interests and Strategies in Labour Conflicts**

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Amid debates within labour revitalisation studies, issues of conflict and mobilisation are back on the agenda. Among the widely discussed models is the power resource approach (PRA) (Wright 2000; Silver 2003) which is used to determine key success factors of collective action. The PRA is appealing as it emphasises positive examples of mobilisation and unionisation in times of a diagnosed decline and legal disempowerment of trade unions in western industrialised countries. However, various strands of critique can be discerned, all of which

concur that the PRA addresses industrial relations in a “reductionist” manner (Fox-Hodess 2017; Nowak 2021; Gallas 2018).

By now, this hodgepodge of criticisms has not yet led to a consistent theoretical extension capable of illuminating the existing blind spots and current phenomena in the field of industrial relations. We argue that three theoretical adjustments are necessary: (1) a concept of interests and orientations by which collective actors access power resources; (2) a bargaining perspective that takes into account the power resources, interests and orientations of the employer side; (3) a shift from unions to the “employee side” with its different organizational forms (e.g. works councils, non-statutory bodies of representation) and their interplay.

In its current form, for instance, the PRA can hardly grasp multilayer systems, competing collective actors, and their divergent political orientations, strategies, and interests. One example is the deregulation of collective bargaining processes in Southern Europe (Westerheide, Kleemann, Matuschek 2023) that in Greece led in practice to a complete individualization whereas in Spain a centralised system was kept in place by force of will of the social partners. This demonstrates how employers’ associations’ and unions’ strategies differ, although relying on comparable (institutional) power resources. Underlying interests, political goals and orientations of the actors remain largely unaddressed in the PRA. Instead, they are mostly replaced by a normative perspective that industrial dispute should extend the agency of the working class. Even though a relationality (Schmalz, Ludwig & Webster 2018) in the dependent relationship between capital and labour is proclaimed, this is neither worked out in detail nor redeemed in research practice. Nonetheless capital also mobilises different resources according to their specific interests, goals and orientations – an aspect for instances reflected in union busting vs. trade union friendly strategies (e.g. Thünken et al. 2020).

As a synthesis, the contribution poses the following research question: What interests, strategic goals, and orientations guide collective actors? Which power resources do they mobilise in negotiation processes with capital to assert their interests and orientations? The contribution elaborates a theoretical conceptualisation that takes into account both the structural conditionality of interests of collective actors, their strategies and orientations. It parallelises them with power resources and the specific interests of capital. Correspondingly, it bridges the PRA, strategic choice (Huzzard 2004) and an elaborated concept of interests (Westerheide 2022) by referring to empirical examples from our previous and ongoing research.

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## **What we talk about when we talk about care: ‘caring’ technologies and the commodity fetish**

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Technology is presented by government and industry stakeholders globally as a solution to the seemingly perpetual crisis of care – as a method of resolving both unmet care needs and workforce shortages. Looking at this technology ‘fix’ in England, this research analyses how technologies used in the provision and management of adult social care relate to forms of labour. It asks first how technology alters – and is altered by – caring labour, and second how the use of technology in care provision changes what forms of work count as caring labour. These questions are explored using interviews with stakeholders including local authority employees, technology developers, managers of care providers, and care workers. Technology used in this context has shifted from telecare devices, e.g., ‘wearables’ such as pendant alarms, to digital technologies like monitoring systems, care management platforms, and (less frequently) AI powered robotics (Wright and Hamblin, 2023). While the Covid-19 pandemic provided a disruptive interference into the labour of care in part by accelerating technology use, care is, already, a relatively unpredictable labour process. Care shifts between immaterial labour and material labour, and changes in health needs can lead to transitions into and out of hospitals and respite services. These transitions all disrupt care provision, and alter

the balance between immaterial and material work; in other words, the labour of care is unruly because bodies are unruly.

Forms of non-human technology are thus impacting a form of labour which is both unruly and generally assumed to be very human(e). Yet this research emphasises that technology too is unruly, as well as being produced by, and reliant upon, humans. It is a point which is both empirical and theoretical. The findings provide insight into the difficulties of implementing technology whilst ignoring the required 'wraparound' services of installing, updating, and replacing devices, as well as training workers to incorporate devices into their labour. Efficiencies in one area may shift into increased labour in another, such as in the 'care adjacent' or 'data work' related to monitoring devices (Hamblin, 2022; Pols 2012; Milligan et al. 2011) and the new labour of 'ghost work' – cleaning, coding, and classifying data often under exploitative working conditions (Jones, 2021). Transformative, 'innovative' technologies are therefore reliant on often mundane labour. As well as exploring these empirical issues, the paper has a theoretical contribution of: emphasising that promised efficiencies of technology obscure social relations of labour exploitation and the '[t]he fetish character of the machine' (Hornborg, 2001: 486); and theorising what counts as care. In other words, where should the boundaries of care be drawn, and why? Boundarying by government and industry actors increasingly highlights efficiencies and norms of progress in ideological ways – seeing non-human technological devices as (still) connected to human labour and to caring labour therefore presents a form of resistance.

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## **Automation – Blessing or curse for public administration work?**

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The debate on the consequences of new technologies in working environments largely follows the traditional automation paradigm: man vs. machine. Consequently, the assumption of a substitution of human labor by machines and artificial intelligence dominates (e.g. Frey/Osborne 2013; BMAS 2015; Levy/Murnane 2005). This is also true for the diverse ways in which working routines and activities become digitalized. This major narrative has two pitfalls. Firstly, it overlooks that the digitization of work and organization is – like every process of technization – socially and culturally shaped. The insight to understand technologies as social processes is by no means new (c.f. Biker et al. 1987; MacKenzie/Wajcman 1985). Yet technological determinism seems to dominate the field (Wyatt 2008), proposing to use every possible technology and negating the limits of technology in such a way that these "engineering bottlenecks" (Frey/Osborne 2013) become obsolete by technological fixes. Secondly, the process of digitalization is misunderstood to be just another step of replacing human skills by machines – thus ignoring the media and infrastructural side of any digital tool or system (Alpsancar 2012; Hui 2016). This is also the cause in the German public administration which is the field of research here.

Public administration is the activity of the state beyond legislation, jurisdiction and government (Seibel 2017, S. 5). As a distinctive field of the state's dominance, it tackled the interest of early sociological studies (e.g. Weber 1918). The state, and in particular its administrative force, had been a major application field in the history of information technologies, such as the broader usage of punch cards for data collecting and processing (Agar 2003; Heide 2009; Vahrenkamp 2017). In the 1960s the field of public administration became a distinctive focus of the automation debate (Wichum 2018). One reason for this was the fact that administrative action was largely based on laws and regulations, which led to the assumption that these could be mapped and implemented particularly well with automated procedures (Bull 1964; Luhmann 1966; Pollock 1964). At this time, public administration served as a testing ground for the use of new technologies and was characterized by an early use of computers. With the increasing spread of the personal computer in the public administration offices, the topic of "administrative automation" under "digitization and informatization of the administration" or „computer bureaucracy“ (Kuhlmann/Brinckmann 1990) was widely discussed (e.g. Kühn 1987;

Snellen/van de Donk 1998; Meijer 2007; Lenk/Traunmüller 2001). Even back then, authors emphasized that it is important to realize that organisation, not automation, was the key to success (exemplarily: Brinckmann 1985). Nevertheless, today's discussion is dominated by relief scenarios that are supposed to be associated with the introduction of automation technologies and that enable employees to devote themselves to "more interesting" or "creative" work. But what is it really like in practice when such technologies are used? how do workers deal with it? what are the consequences for digital governance? These and other questions are the subject of a current explorative study in the German Financial Administration which insights will be presented.

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## **Work from Home and Works Councils: Challenges and (new) answers?**

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Work from home fundamentally changed the world of work in the wake of the Corona pandemic. Recent studies for Germany (e.g., Emmeler/Kohlrausch 2021; Wirth 2022) suggest that the prevalence of work from home will not return to its low pre-pandemic baseline even after the end of the pandemic. Work from home will be one element of a "new normal" (Seibold/Mugler 2021). Against this backdrop, works councillors will have to adjust to a complete or partial spatial separation from workers in their workplaces. As a consequence, several problems for works councillors arise, in particular, a communication problem with workers in and beyond conflicts as well as new dividing lines between factions of the workforce.

Since works council co-determination in a German context is rooted in close relationships with workers (early Fürstenberg 1958) and a democratic but mostly to some degree selective representation of interests (e.g., Müller-Jentsch 1982) the use of communication channels from and in the workforce are crucial for participation in decision-making. Therefore, a communication concept is developed in the project 'Works council and home office workers' (Funding Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, Düsseldorf; project start: May 2023, end November 2024). The communication concept is produced using scientific methods and with the involvement of works councils. In this way, scientific quality criteria and social needs are taken into account and satisfied by the Project.

### Concept

The research project understands works councils as "boundary institutions" (Fürstenberg 1958), which act in the network of relationships between management, trade unions, other interest representation bodies like company-wide works councils and employees. In doing so, they negotiate different and common interests using their respective means of power in an organization which is shaped by an organizational culture and its contexts (Breisig 2016).

### Methodology

Methodologically, the research project relies on a combination of qualitative social research methods using expert interviews (Helfferich 2022) and action research (Kappler 1980; in employment relations research, e.g., Huzzard/Björkman 2012). While the former aims to capture the views and actions of works councils, the latter involves works councils in (the development of a) problem solving. Works councils from four automotive suppliers located in federal state of Hesse are involved in the research process. In this way, we will explore a first step how the previous practice of communication with workers from home was designed, what challenges arose, how the actors dealt with them, what results these practices produced and how the communicative cooperation between co-determination bodies and workers from home should ideally be designed. In a second step, we will examine which legal, collective bargaining and informal options for action already exist today or which should be developed in the course of a legal reform or by new regulations in collective agreements. Against the background of these considerations, these findings are to be condensed into a communication concept that is specific to each participating firm.

## Expected results

Since it is an ongoing research project the findings will be confined to the challenges, practices and the communication concept.

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## What is 'algorithmic despotism' and does it constitute a new workplace regime?

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A growing body of research investigates algorithmic management, that is the use of computer algorithms to automate managerial control and organisation functions (Wood, 2021). Algorithmic management at Amazon warehouses has been argued to lead to a regime of 'techno-economic despotism' (Vallas et al., 2022) and 'augmented despotism (Delfanti, 2019).' Likewise, Griesbach et al. (2021) conceive of delivery platform work as 'algorithmic despotism.' Schaupp (2022) uses the term 'algorithmic workplace regime' to cover workplace dynamics in a broad range of industries: warehousing, manufacturing, and food delivery. Workplace regimes are a construct for identifying historical and geographical tendencies in the political constitution of the workplace (Burawoy, 1985). Specifically, workplace regimes represent commonalities in the 'dynamics, institutional rules, and norms that workers encounter as they go about making their living' (Wood, 2020: 141). Burawoy (1979) initially identified two consecutive regime ideal types within the capitalist core: 'market despotism' (circa late-18th century) and 'hegemonic' (circa WWII). Subsequently, Burawoy (1985) documented a third 'hegemonic despotism' regime (circa early-1980s). However, as this third regime relied upon the very hegemonic apparatuses that its operation undermined it was invariably short-lived (Wood, 2020). What regime(s) followed has been an area of significant labour process debate. For example, Webster et al. (2008) make the case for the return of market despotism, Chun (2001) and Wood (2020) articulate a new regime of flexible despotism while Ackroyd and Thompson (2022) suggest a process of hybridisation in which 'after-Fordist' regimes retain many features of past regimes but with the addition of normative controls, flexibility, teamwork, and enhanced surveillance. Moreover, Ackroyd and Thompson (2022) maintain that 21st-century regimes have been further hybridised via growing precarisation as well as processes of platformisation, digital Taylorism and surveillance. Indeed technology is one of four factors that Burawoy (1985) identifies as shaping and differentiating regimes.

The current paper investigates claims that algorithmic management constitutes a new workplace regime by first reviewing detailed case studies undertaken in the late-1980s–2010s of manufacturing, call centres and retail. These studies highlight how regimes in this period frequently consisted of employer-controlled flexibility, surveillance (whether electronic-, customer- or team-based), strict discipline, and limited labour rights and protections. The emergent regime ideal type from this period is then compared with recent qualitative research of algorithmic management in platform work, warehousing, retail, and manufacturing. Reviewing the algorithmic management research highlights that it entails greater surveillance by automating performance monitoring and creating new methods of evaluation, reliance on discipline by automatically selecting workers for sanctions and heightening employer-controlled flexible allocation of labour and tasks while reducing opportunities for worker voice by autonomously allocating workers to shifts and tasks via opaque processes. However, when we consider these findings in comparison with those from the late-1980s–2010s it becomes clear that algorithmic management does not constitute a qualitative break from the tendencies present since the 1980s but rather reinforces and heightens them and as such it should not be considered as constituting new distinct regime but rather as a continuation of flexible despotism.

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## **Platformisation of work across the labour process: Evidence from the AMPWork Survey**

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Platform work is one manifestation of shifts driven by digitalisation and while there is a growing body of empirical research on the incidence and characteristics of platform work, as well concerns raised about the grey area which platform work inhabits in terms of the employment relationship, Purcell & Brooks (2022:391) note that there has been little accompanying theoretical debate, which they argue ‘has had consequences for the quality, form and potential of debates about platform work to date’.

Relevantly, some key elements of digital labour platforms, such as algorithmic management practices and digital monitoring, are seeping through to more conventional work settings, and likely to grow in the future (Urzi-Brancati et al. 2020; Woods 2021; Baiocco et al. 2022). In addition to concerns about the potential intrusiveness of digital tools and how constant surveillance may affect workers’ wellbeing, the breaking down of jobs into smaller tasks required by algorithmic management may lead to an increasing fragmentation and commodification of labour (Franke and Pulignano 2021; Ball 2021). Thus, a repositioning the traditional frames of the labour process is required.

Empirical data from the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) Algorithmic Management and Platform Work survey (AMPWork) is used to investigate how digital surveillance and algorithmic management are being used to organise, coordinate and control platform workers and regular workers alike. Stratified randomised sampling was used to target the working age population aged 16 to 64 living in private households in both Germany and Spain. The main field work comprised face-to-face (CAPI) interviews conducted between September 2021 and March 2022. Three fundamental elements of platforms in the workplace are explored: digital device usage, digital monitoring, and algorithmic management. A categorisation of the general working population according to the level of platformisation is used to review the labour process in terms of work organisation and working conditions outcomes.

The empirical analysis suggests that platformisation of work is a real phenomenon affecting the labour process in a small but not marginal proportion of workers in the two countries under examination. It also shows several differences between the two countries – Germany and Spain. For work organisation, platformisation is associated with detailed procedures, problem solving and complex activities, but not with time flexibility or autonomy. For working conditions outcomes, platformisation seems to be associated with less communication and greater autonomy. In addition, strong platformisation is mildly associated with stress at work and platformisation is stronger for those mainly working outside of their employers’ premises, namely in a vehicle, at home, or in public spaces.

Gaining a better understanding of how digital surveillance and algorithmic management are being used to organise, coordinate and control workers across the whole workforce, not just platform workers, will aid theoretical understanding on the impact of digital technology on the labour process.

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## **Alienation and Dynamics in the Digital Labour Realm: The Autonomy-Control Paradox and Virtual Presenteeism**

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In the era of remote and hybrid work, control via sophisticated surveillance tools has transformed the dynamics between employers and employees. While designed to ensure productivity, these tools inadvertently foster a culture of virtual presenteeism, revealing a

complex interplay between autonomy and control. Through two rounds of semi-structured interviews with 22 interviewees in China, this study delves into the multifaceted perceptions of organisational surveillance in remote work settings. Employees exhibit a spectrum of reactions, with some viewing surveillance as constructive and others as intrusive. The autonomy inherent in remote working parallels the ubiquitous surveillance and employee perception of organisational control in a virtual working environment, creating a paradox. While employees cherish the autonomy remote work offers, they also recognise the necessity of structured control to maintain productivity.

Furthermore, the study highlights that these perceptions are not formed in isolation. They are significantly moulded by the nature of leadership, organisational culture, and the specific surveillance mechanisms in play. A particularly salient finding is the crucial role of line managers as “moderators” between organisational control and employees’ perceptions, with their approach to surveillance either fostering an environment of trust and autonomy or engendering feelings of distrust and resistance. Moreover, the research underscores the significance of output-based evaluations in shaping employee experiences. Employees express a preference for clear and transparent evaluation metrics based on output rather than mere working hours. Such clarity in assessment criteria not only enhances job satisfaction and morale but also provides flexibility for employees to align their efforts with organisational expectations. In the absence of such clarity, employees grapple with feelings of anxiety, ambiguity, and a sense of underappreciation, which can adversely impact motivation and lead to virtual presenteeism.

In synthesising these insights, the delicate balance in the autonomy-control paradox underscores the need for organisations to navigate remote work settings. Aligning surveillance and control policies with organisational values, respecting individual working flexibility and providing clear performance metrics can benefit job quality and employee’s well-being.

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## **Getting old in the forever-young industry: Tech workers’ transition after the digital economic downturn in China**

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Google, Facebook, and TikTok—the major players in the digital age are not only super apps, but also megacorps with huge workforces. In China, a late-developing country, domestic digital tech giants such as Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu and ByteDance have served as the state’s economic engine and the national symbol of progress for the past two decades. They have become major job creators for young, skilled, and ambitious workers, shaping a work culture centered around competition, peer pressure, and long hours. Taking “codes as dreams”, programmers, data analysts, designers, and other professional workers in China’s tech industry view their jobs as agonistic efforts to cross the class divides. Over the past 20 years, China’s tech giants have contributed to the emergence of a “new middle class” in urban China and created numerous myths of youth, wealth, and success.

For these thriving young tech firms, their corporate life cycle overlaps with the life courses of their employees. The prosperity of China’s seemingly “forever-young” digital industry, however, came to a halt with unexpected speed and ferocity. Since late 2020, China’s major tech firms have faced the regulatory storm initiated by the state, the decline in stock prices in the global financial market, and the deterioration of Sino-US relations. In response to the crisis, Chinese tech giants have initiated extensive layoffs and wage reductions, shifting the costs of the industry’s decline seamlessly onto individual workers. In a work culture that values speed, competition, and high-intensity work, older workers are at a higher risk of being laid off. Aging tech workers are now considered “redundant” in companies and left in a state of radical precarity. Whether through resignation or being laid off, an increasing number of tech workers over 30 are leaving the industry. The experience of aging coincides with the industry’s downturn, making “transition” a central concern in the everyday lives of tech workers.

Leaving the tech industry means a transition in career, a reorganization of life, and more importantly, a reconfiguration of self-identity. This research aims to delve into the experiences of China's tech workers above the age of 30 as they navigate career transitions and reshape their self-identities after leaving the tech industry. What's their new job option? How do they understand and manage the transition? How do they reconfigure their self-identities in new life choices? By conducting field research and interviews with 40 tech workers in 2023, this study uncovers three approaches to career transition and self-reidentification: 1) Traditionalizing self: this involves exiting the high-tech industry in metropolises and returning to traditional industries, state-owned enterprises or government institutions, small counties and even rural areas, in order to "ruralize," "institutionalize," and "stabilize" the self; 2) Entrepreneurializing self: this entails leaving the megacorps and becoming self-employed, flexible workers; and 3) Caring self: this involves shifting the priority of life from work to counterproductive areas such as family, body and mind. With a focus on the transition of the "self", this research will contribute to the understanding of workers' subjective experience and agency in transition research.

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### **Precarious young professionals? Examining the career intentions and motivations of early career researchers in UK Higher Education during occupational deprofessionalisation**

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This paper explores the career intentions and motivations of young professionals in the UK in the context of occupational deprofessionalisation to understand what factors shape young professionals' decisions to enter, remain, or leave occupations undergoing deprofessionalisation. The paper presents data from 35 interviews with Early Career Researchers (ECRs) from all academic disciplines in UK Higher Education (UKHE), purposively sampled from pre- and post-92 UK universities.

The paper examines the specific areas of job quality, labour market knowledge, and views on the future of UKHE to explore motivation. It finds job quality for ECRs is generally poor, particularly contractual insecurity and workload. Intrinsic enjoyment of work and time-based flexibility were found to be positive aspects of job quality. ECRs possess limited labour market knowledge which inhibits job exit, although disciplinary variations existed. ECR views on the future of UKHE tended to be pessimistic, although high levels of support for unions and a desire for progressive change were reported, which can motivate ECRs to remain in UKHE.

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### **Seamless logistics, diverse workers: A comparative analysis of third parties' role in the recomposition of labour in warehousing across Europe**

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Over the past years, a burgeoning literature has documented the extremely precarious working conditions in logistics (Belzer, 2000; Bonacich and Wilson, 2008). This rising interest reflects the prominent role logistics has taken in the economy, a role that became particularly visible by the pandemic, which exposed vulnerability to long supply chain disruptions. Indeed, it has frequently been argued that capital accumulation today depends, more than ever before, on the smooth circulation of commodities along global value chains (Cowen, 2014; Danyluk, 2018; Gutelius, 2015; Harvey, 2006; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2015).

Public policy discourses of logistics as connection, collaboration, sustainability and speed (ALICE, [www.etp-logistics.eu/](http://www.etp-logistics.eu/)) hide harsh workplace realities. Across national contexts, logistics workers commonly work for low wages, in casualized contracts, and subject to high



flexibility demands (e.g. Delfanti, 2021; Dörflinger et al, 2020; Johnston & Mommadova, 2022; Schaupp, 2022). Warehouses are often managed in despotic ways, marked by low worker autonomy and participation. Digital technologies 'optimizing' operations intensify work and enable pervasive surveillance. This allows employers to continuously expel the least productive and/or most resistant workers (Bouquin, 2014), hampering the possibility of collective mobilization.

World-wide, the warehousing workforce is invariably mainly composed by the most marginalized workers, including migrants, ethnic minority workers (Alimahomed-Wilson & Reese, 2021; Askola et al, 2021; Bogaers et al, 2022; Jordhus-Lier et al, 2019; Schaupp, 2022), racialized minorities (Tapia & Lee, 2023), but also other groups ranging from formerly convicted individuals to elderly women from rural areas and LGBTQI+ workers (Zanoni & Miszczyński, 2023). Despite their very different profiles, they share a subordinate position in the labour market, vis-a-vis the state and in society at large.

This paper presents preliminary insights gathered in the ERA-CHANSE project Humans in Digital Logistics, which investigates the relation between companies' HR strategies, digital technologies, the working conditions and workers' voice in 12 warehouses located in four logistics hubs in Poland, Germany, Belgium and the UK. Initial interviews with the HR and line managers of warehousing companies as well as third parties (trade union representatives, public employment services officers, local government officials, grassroots organizations, sheltered workshops, and temporary work agencies) indicate that warehouses employ extremely diverse workers' populations through a variety of intermediaries and heterogeneous types of contracts.

Our analysis of the relation between socio-demographic profiles, types of contract (direct or third party, including 'new' actors) within specific regulation regimes (Alberti & Cutter, 2022), workers' position within the digitally organized labor process as well as in existing employment relations draws on critical theory of 'bordering' as the 'multiplication of labour' (Lazzarato, 2009; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). This approach conceptualizes the practices of (re)making borders and (contractual) categories as a form of labour governmentality, contributing to the conference's debate about the social de- and recomposition of labour in this phase of capitalism.

Our study thus comparatively explores: 1) the dynamic fragmentation of labour along socio-demographic lines, skills and employment status to make employment relations dynamic, fragile and uncertain (Silver, 2003); 2) the role of specific constellations of labour market actors supplying workers in this governmentality.

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## **The role of socioeconomic characteristics and family support in the transition to adulthood in Croatian youth**

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Youth in Croatia is facing similar problems as youth in other EU countries, most notably uncertainty and unpredictable economic prospects, which affect their transition into adulthood, opportunities for (financial) independence, self-reliance, and family formation. When compared to their European peers, Croatian youth exhibits prolonged average cohabitation with parents, while dealing with a problematic solution to the housing issue, high rates of fixed-term and seasonal employment and precarious work conditions. This has led to a situation in which a large proportion of young adults live in conditions of greater socioeconomic insecurity than earlier generations. While previous research has shown that the youth's transition into adulthood is shaped by institutional, cultural, and economic contexts in which they live, especially those closely connected with the education system and the labour market, this research aims to expand upon this by examining the role of family and social networks in the process of their transitions.

This paper analyses changes and intra-generational differences among older youth in Croatia, aged between 25 and 34, in critical life events that mark the transition into adulthood: entering the labour market and gaining stable employment, leaving the parental home, and experiencing first parenthood. The data was collected from a nationally representative sample of young adults (N=400) on sociodemographic characteristics, various aspects of the transitional period to adulthood, household organization, family, kin and others' support, and value orientations, within a large-scale mixed methods research project "Impact of public policies on family and work life quality and the demographic situation in Croatia – spaces of change".

While the analyses of the role of socioeconomic factors and family support are currently still being conducted, the preliminary results show that youth's pathways into adulthood took place differently for millennials. They are prolonged and de-standardized, depending on gender, economic status, education, urban-rural residence, and family support. The reliance on parental support as social security especially when solving the youth's housing situation is widespread, while this step simultaneously represents a prerequisite for youths' family formation. First parenthood is associated with other life events, such as entering a civil partnership or marriage, as well as settling the housing issue. This finding indicates the importance of harmonizing social policies that would facilitate the transition to parenthood for young people.

Further analyses will aim to grasp a more complete image of the indicated gender inequalities in the labour market entrance and transitions, as well as overall education differences as connected with the length of employment in fixed-term contracts, securing the first employment with a standard contract in occupational groups for which they obtained degrees, and perception of job security in their current employment. The contribution of this paper is to advance the discussions on youth's transitions to adulthood by examining national institutional specificities.

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## **Skill development and workplace housing provision: evidence from Japanese manufacturing plants in China**

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This study examines the use of dormitories in preserving skills within corporate employment systems. It builds upon the concept of the Dormitory Labour Regime (DLR), which views housing workers as contests of control and resistance extending from the point of production to the point of reproduction (Smith, 2003; Ngai & Smith, 2006; Smith & Pun, 2007). The conceptualisation of DLR does not explicitly address labour reproduction in terms of skill preservation, renewal, or succession. Instead, the primary focus of the DLR is the timely replenishment and redistribution of migrant labour through flexible external labour markets, often facilitated by state actors restricting both the work and accommodation choices of migrant workers (Smith & Pun, 2007). Long-term implications of labour reproduction, such as continuity and growth of skills, are beyond the concern of individual firms. Sustaining the DLR, therefore, depends on either work tasks being fulfilled by generic skills readily available in the labour markets or skill development being conducted outside the boundaries of the firm. Observing varied forms of workplace housing across countries, Goodburn & Mistra (2023) argue that workplace-residence system is integral to a global system that serves capital accumulation through spatial mobilisation of labour.

While abstracting DLR provides valuable insights into labour dynamics, the omission of skill development in its analysis limits its scope to address continuity in global production systems. This study aims to fill this gap by posing two critical questions: who is responsible for skill preservation, development, and succession under corporate employment systems built on labour mobility? How do these skill-related responsibilities interact within different workplace-residence configurations?

This study takes a comparative case study approach, focusing on four Japanese manufacturing plants in East China. These Japanese plants were set up to address shortages of young and skilled workforces in Japan. The findings from this study reveal diverse employer-led accommodation practices. In contrast to DLR's focus on growing flexibility in employment relationships, decreased job security, and workers moving through labour market to advance their interests, employer-led provision of housing in these cases is part of a benefits package aimed at attracting and preserving a portfolio of workforce skills desirable for the employers. This study concludes that understanding these diverse practices can provide valuable insights into how workplace-residence systems contribute to sustaining global production systems.

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## Gendered Early: Young students' engagement in paid employment in the UK

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Over the past few decades, student employment has become increasingly commonplace in the UK and globally. Most young people in full-time education engage in paid employment alongside their studies, in part because of labour market fragmentation, increased demand for part-time labour (Mizen et al. 1999) and rising education costs. Earning while learning is undertaken by both school students, the majority of whom will have done some form of paid work by the time they leave school (Hobbs et al. 2007) and students in Higher or Further Education. Recent surveys suggest that the current cost of living crisis is exacerbating these trends (APPG For Students 2023; Sutton Trust 2023; ONS 2023) with students working to support themselves and, sometimes, wider family. This has given renewed urgency to debates about earning while learning.

Working while learning is typically presented in binary terms, either as positive for developing young people's labour market experience and 'employability' and smoothing the transition to graduate work, or in contrast, as hindering students' ability to fully engage in their studies and academic work and retarding future transitions. Whereas the former approach focuses on internships, placements and 'CV enhancing' activities (with critical literature identifying unequal access to these), the latter presents students' paid work as empty instrumental activity. These latter studies identify and emphasise the negative impacts of work on student engagement, achievement and completion, positioning work as instrumental, temporary or detrimental to transitions into 'graduate careers' (Williams 2014).

This paper uses recent national survey datasets in the UK (LFS, APS, COSMO) to excavate the activities of student workers in more detail. The results of quantitative data are fleshed out by early findings from focus groups with student workers aged 14-23.

We argue that constructing earning-while-learning in binary terms, focusing on its impact on future transitions, glosses over the work that students are undertaking. Earning-while-learning is not simply a retardant or accelerator for future career transitions but is productive activity. At

the same time, early labour force participation may shape young people's understandings of work and prefigure later forms of occupational gendering.

Selected Findings:

- Our analysis shows that female young full-time students are significantly more likely to work while studying across all age-groups between 16 and 29. Yet, at younger ages male students typically work longer hours.
- Among student workers there are no overall significant gender wage gaps.
- One reason for such seeming equality is that the two most popular occupational locations for both young men and women (other elementary services and sales assistants and retail cashiers) have very minimal gender wage differences and offer the lowest hourly wages.
- There are instances in which either men or women gain within-occupation wage advantages. These occur in occupations in which there are typically fewer young student workers, and involve more gendering, with, for example, female dominated jobs in caring and administrative work, while male dominated jobs related to manual labour. Where there are within-occupation gender differences, men's earning advantages are typically larger than women's earning advantages.

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## **Temporary Workers in Triadic Employment Relationships in China's High-Tech Industry: Exploring New Coercion and Consent Mechanisms within the Labor Process**

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Over the last decade, the high-tech industry has been increasingly utilizing flexible workers in triadic employment relationships (Benner, 2002). The increasing number of flexible temporary workers has led to a segmented labour market and a growing division among workers (Hudson, 2007). Unlike traditional construction, low-end service and manufacturing industries, we can see that temporary workers in high-tech enterprises generally possess basic professional skills, perform similar tasks as regular employees of client companies, and collaborate with them side by side.

This study arises from a puzzling phenomenon in China's high-tech workplaces where temporary workers, despite facing clear disadvantages such as low wages, unequal benefits, unstable employment, limited promotion prospects, and job discrimination, exhibit consent and hard work instead of resistance. This research revisits the classic question of 'surplus value' discussed by Marx (1978, p.332) and Stated by Burawoy (1982, p.34) as 'Why do workers work as hard as they do?' However, in the modern flexible employment system, we need to reframe the question to why temporary workers in triadic employment relationships work diligently despite their disadvantaged position.

To unravel this puzzle, an ongoing case study of a multinational Chinese tech giant company is conducted to examine the labour control of capitalists and the subjectivities of temporary workers. It is worth noting that the Chinese government has tightened policies on the utilization of dispatched and outsourced workers in the past two decades, resulting in increased caution from capital when hiring and utilizing temporary workers.

Under the modern flexible employment system, the separation of standard and non-standard employees has complicated traditional control and consent mechanisms. Therefore, this study not only investigates the interaction between capital and temporary workers but also emphasizes the importance of exploring the role of regular employees who interact most with temporary workers in the work environment.

Preliminary results show that by categorizing workers into regular and non-regular groups, client companies establish regular workers as agents, along with employment work agencies, forming a triple control over temporary workers, making the direct control of capital less visible. As a result, the contradiction between temporary workers and capitalists is shifted onto temporary workers and regular employees. Additionally, the consent mechanism of temporary workers has changed due to the influence of regular employees. Temporary workers willingly provide mutual assistance to help regular workers complete their tasks, shaping their role as responsible for the personal career development of regular workers. Consequently, the control of capital and the consent of temporary workers undergo transformations influenced by regular employees in client companies.

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## **Traversing Racial Hierarchies: Chinese Entrepreneurial "Bosshood" and Labor Dynamics in Ghana**

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This research navigates the intricate racial and managerial dynamics among Chinese businesspeople and Ghanaians, exploring the nuanced articulation and navigation of racial identities within the ambit of 'bosshood.' The investigation is rooted in rigorous ethnographic fieldwork spanning seven months in Ghana, involving participant observation in Chinese capital-driven factories and companies, along with engagement during off-work periods with managers and workers. A comprehensive dataset was compiled through interviews with Chinese managers, Chinese workers, Ghanaian workers, and migrant workers from other West African countries, providing a multi-faceted understanding of the evolving labor dynamics.

Contrary to existing narratives that predominantly emphasize hierarchical and discriminatory interactions, this study unveils a more complex scenario. It critically explores how Chinese businesspeople's pursuit of entrepreneurial success is intertwined with racial discourses, often emanating from deeply ingrained beliefs and collective memories. Three distinct patterns emerge from the analysis: a) a racialized superiority complex underpinning the 'bosshood' identity, b) a pragmatic promotion of racial equality as a managerial strategy aimed at minimizing human capital costs, thereby reinforcing the 'bosshood' identity, and c) the nuanced vulnerabilities experienced by Chinese migrants, especially during interactions with local officials, showcasing a shift from a singular focus on racial superiority to a more balanced understanding of migrant statuses and inherent challenges.

Central to the discourse is the examination of racial capitalism, whereby discriminatory racial discourse serves to naturalize and legitimize exploitative labor relations, with Chinese ethnic identity being leveraged as a form of "confidence" in entrepreneurial pursuits. The study also employs an intersectional lens to dissect the complex racial dynamics at play, particularly under the mindset of bosshood, integrating Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality to better comprehend how racial discourses and practices encapsulate ideologies of self-governance within a capitalist context.

Furthermore, the research probes into the conditions rendering the migrant status of Chinese individuals as a point of vulnerability, investigating how this vulnerability intersects with racial discourses and is manifested through the deployment of "weapons of the weak" as methods of resistance or coping mechanisms.

By bridging micro-level identification of 'bosshood' with macro-level racial and capitalist dynamics, this research illuminates how historical (colonial) legacies and global economic structures are embodied and reproduced in daily work and everyday life, offering a nuanced understanding of racial interactions in labor management. This research augments the existing literature by providing a balanced and multifaceted perspective on racial dynamics, thus contributing significantly to the discourse on migrant labor dynamics, managerial strategies, and their broader socio-economic implications in emerging market contexts like Ghana.