



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

In the eye of the beholder

Ascribing value to work in the digital economy

Newlands, G.E.M.

Publication date

2023

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Newlands, G. E. M. (2023). *In the eye of the beholder: Ascribing value to work in the digital economy*. [Thesis, externally prepared, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Ascribing Value to Work in the Digital Economy

Gemma Newlands

In the Eye of the Beholder

Ascribing Value to Work in the Digital Economy

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

op gezag van de Rector Magnificus

prof. dr. ir. P.P.C.C. Verbeek

ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde commissie,

in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel

op 22/06/2023

door Gemma Elizabeth Marjorie Newlands

geboren 23 januari 1991 te London

Promotiecommissie

Promotor:	prof. dr. M.J.P. Deuze	Universiteit van Amsterdam
	prof. dr. C. Fieseler	Handelshøyskolen BI
Copromotor(es):		
Overige leden:	prof. dr. T. Poell	Universiteit van Amsterdam
	prof. dr. C.H. de Vreese	Universiteit van Amsterdam
	prof. dr. S. Milan	Universiteit van Amsterdam
	prof. dr. P. Tubaro	Centre national de la recherche scientifique
	dr. J.G. Meijerink	Universiteit Twente

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Front Matter

Acknowledgements: List of Chapters Based On Articles

Acknowledgements: Grants

Summary in English

Summary in Dutch

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Recognition and Evaluation at Work

1.3 Technological Intermediation

1.4 Research Approach

1.5 Chapter-by-Chapter Outline

1.6 Summary

1.7 References

2. ‘Anthropotropism: Searching for Recognition in the Scandinavian Gig Economy’

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Sources of Recognition

2.3 Neoliberal Paradigms of Recognition

2.4 Methods and Approach

2.5 Findings

2.5.1 ‘Every Little Human Exchange’

2.5.2 ‘You Are Literal Tools’

2.5.3 ‘This Chat Has Ended’

2.5.4 ‘You Want to Work for Someone’

2.6 Concluding Discussion

2.7 References

3. ‘This isn’t Forever for me’: Perceived Employability and Migrant Gig Work in Norway and Sweden’

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Perceived employability and the gig economy

3.3 Migration and perceived employability

3.4 The research context: Gig work in Norway and Sweden

3.4.1 Norway

3.4.2 Sweden

3.5 Methods

3.6 Findings

3.6.1 ‘We just pick up the work that they don't want to do’

- 3.6.2 *'This isn't forever for me'*
- 3.6.3 *'Don't romanticise this'*
- 3.6.4 *'When will you get a normal job?'*
- 3.7 Discussion and Conclusion
- 3.8 References

4. 'Algorithmic Surveillance in the Gig Economy: The Organization of Work through Lefebvrian Conceived Space'

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The Gig Economy
- 4.3 Multimodal Surveillance Assemblage
 - 4.3.1 *Algorithmic Surveillance*
 - 4.3.2 *Managerial Surveillance*
 - 4.3.3 *Customer Surveillance*
- 4.4 Henri Lefebvre's Spatial Triad
- 4.5 Data Doubles
- 4.6 Cartographic Dissonance
- 4.7 Space for Resistance
- 4.8 Conclusion
- 4.9 References

5. 'Lifting the Curtain: Strategic Visibility of Human Labour in AI-as-a-Service'

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Organisational secrecy and invisible work
- 5.3 AI-as-a-Service
- 5.4 The invisible backstage of AI production
 - 5.4.1 *Artificial intelligence preparation*
 - 5.4.2 *Artificial intelligence verification*
 - 5.4.3 *Artificial intelligence impersonation*
 - 5.4.4 *AI co-production: Lifting the curtain*
- 5.5 Extending the backstage
 - 5.5.1 *Interview services*
 - 5.5.2 *Chatbots*
- 5.6 Conclusion
- 5.7 References

6. 'Occupational Prestige and Occupational Social Value in the United Kingdom: New Indices for the Modern British Economy'

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Occupational Prestige

6.3 Bringing in Social Value

6.4 Methods

6.4.1 Development of Indices

6.4.1.1 Occupation List

6.4.2 Measurement of Occupational Prestige and Social Value

6.4.3 Sample

6.4.4 Analysis

6.5 Results and Discussion

6.5.1 Aggregate Results

6.5.2 Occupational Prestige

6.5.3 Occupational Social Value

6.5.4 Self Evaluation

6.5.5 Intersection of Occupational Prestige and Social Value

6.6 Discussion and Conclusion

6.7 References

Appendix A: Occupational Prestige and Occupational Social Value Index

Appendix B: Occupational Prestige and Occupational Social Value Indices arranged by ISCO-08 groups

7. 'Mapping the Prestige and Social Value of Occupations in the Digital Economy'

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Literature Review

7.2.1 Societal Perspectives of Digital Economy Occupations

7.2.2 Occupational Prestige and Occupational Social Value

7.3.1 Methods

7.3.1 Occupation List

7.3.2 Measurement

7.3.2.1 Measurement of Occupational Prestige and Social Value

7.3.2.2 Measurement of Independent Variables

7.3.3 Sample

7.3.4 Analysis

7.4 Results

7.4.1 Gig Economy

7.4.2 Online Freelancing

7.4.3 Social Media

7.4.4 Fintech

7.4.5 Data Entry, Validation and Trading

7.4.6 Digital Development and Design

7.4.7 IT Professionals

7.4.8 Digital Marketing and Sales

7.4.9 Technology Entrepreneurship

7.5 Discussion and Conclusion

7.5.1 Research Contributions

7.5.2 Implications

7.5.3 Limitations and future research

7.6 References

Appendix A: Occupational Prestige and Occupational Social Value Index

Appendix B: Regressions of Occupational Prestige on Predictors

Appendix C: Regressions of Occupational Prestige on Predictors

FRONT MATTER

Acknowledgements: List of Chapters Based On Articles

Chapter 2 is adapted from the published article: Newlands G (2022) Anthropotropism: Searching for recognition in the Scandinavian gig economy. *Sociology* 56(5): 821-838.

Chapter 3 is adapted from the published article: Newlands G (2022) ‘This isn’t forever for me’: Perceived employability and migrant gig work in Norway and Sweden. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*. Epub ahead of print 4 March 2022.

Chapter 4 is adapted from the published article: Newlands G (2021) Algorithmic surveillance in the gig economy: The organization of work through Lefebvrian conceived space. *Organization Studies* 42(5): 719–737.

Chapter 5 is adapted from the published article: Newlands G (2021) Lifting the curtain: Strategic visibility of human labour in AI-as-a-Service. *Big Data & Society* 8(1): 1–14.

Chapter 6 is adapted from the unpublished article: Newlands G and Lutz C (2023) Occupational Prestige and Occupational Social Value in the United Kingdom: New Indices for the Modern British Economy. *Manuscript Under Review*. Chapter 6 is the result of a collaboration with Dr. Christoph Lutz (BI Norwegian Business School). Both authors contributed equally at all stages of research design, data collection, data analysis, and writing.

Chapter 7 is adapted from the unpublished article: Newlands G and Lutz C (2023) Mapping the Prestige and Social Value of Occupations in the Digital Economy. *Manuscript Under Review*. Chapter 7 is the result of a collaboration with Dr. Christoph Lutz (BI Norwegian Business School). Both authors contributed equally at all stages of research design, data collection, data analysis, and writing.

Acknowledgements: Grants

The research for and publication of this doctoral thesis received financial assistance from the Norwegian Research Council (Norges Forskningsråd) within the FRIPRO TOPPFORSK project 'Future Ways of Working in the Digital Economy' (275347), within the SAMANSVAR project "Fair Labor in the Digitized Economy" (247725/O70) and by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Program within grant agreement 732117 "Ps2Share: Participation, Privacy and Power in the Sharing Economy".

Summary in English

In the Eye of the Beholder: Ascribing Value to Work in the Digital Economy

As new occupations emerge in response to the growth of the digital economy, the relationship between digital technology and labour has resulted in significant changes in how work is evaluated. By critically examining the ways in which humans and artificial intelligence (AI) are co-evolving and the ways in which work is becoming more technical and less human(e), this dissertation provides insights into the challenges and opportunities of this rapidly changing landscape. The integrated dissertation offers six distinct and self-standing articles which provide theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions to understanding the process of work evaluation in the digital economy. Taking a micro-level approach, I present the results of a qualitative interview study that I conducted with app-based food delivery couriers in Norway and Sweden on the topics of workplace recognition and perceived employability. I then take a meso-level approach by examining companies utilizing digitally mediated labour, investigating how these organizations surveil, measure and advertise the human labour they depend on. Finally, to address the macro-level societal perceptions, I detail the results of a quantitative study into the perceived occupational prestige and perceived occupational social value for a comprehensive and robust list of occupations, including those in the digital economy. This work is framed as a contribution that speaks to different audiences, primarily sociologists and other social scientists, but also policymakers, business leaders, and the general public, who all have a stake in understanding the implications of AI in the workplace.

Summary in Dutch

In het Oog van de Toeschouwer: Waarde Toekennen aan Werk in de Digitale Economie

Naarmate er nieuwe beroepen ontstaan als reactie op de groei van de digitale economie, heeft de relatie tussen digitale technologie en arbeid geleid tot aanzienlijke veranderingen in de manier waarop werk wordt beoordeeld. Door kritisch te kijken naar de manieren waarop mensen en kunstmatige intelligentie (AI) samen evolueren en de manieren waarop werk technischer en minder menselijk wordt, biedt dit proefschrift inzicht in de uitdagingen en kansen van dit snel veranderende landschap. Het proefschrift integreert zes afzonderlijke en op zichzelf staande artikelen die theoretische, empirische en methodologische bijdragen leveren aan het begrijpen van het proces van waarde toekennen aan werk in de digitale economie. Met een benadering op microniveau presenteer ik de resultaten van een kwalitatief interviewonderzoek dat ik heb uitgevoerd met app-gebaseerde voedselbezorgers in Noorwegen en Zweden over de onderwerpen erkenning op de werkplek en waargenomen inzetbaarheid. Vervolgens ga ik op mesoniveau te werk door bedrijven te onderzoeken die gebruik maken van digitaal gemedieerde arbeid, waarbij ik onderzoek hoe deze organisaties de menselijke arbeid waarvan ze afhankelijk zijn, bewaken, meten en adverteren. Ten slotte, om de maatschappelijke percepties op macroniveau aan te pakken, beschrijf ik de resultaten van een kwantitatief onderzoek naar het gepercipieerde beroepsprestige en de waargenomen sociale waarde van het beroep voor een uitgebreide en robuuste lijst van beroepen, inclusief die in de digitale economie. Het verzamelde werk in dit proefschrift is opgezet als een bijdrage die verschillende doelgroepen aanspreekt, voornamelijk sociologen en andere sociale wetenschappers, maar ook beleidsmakers, bedrijfsleiders en het grote publiek, die er allemaal belang bij hebben de implicaties van AI op de werkplek te begrijpen.