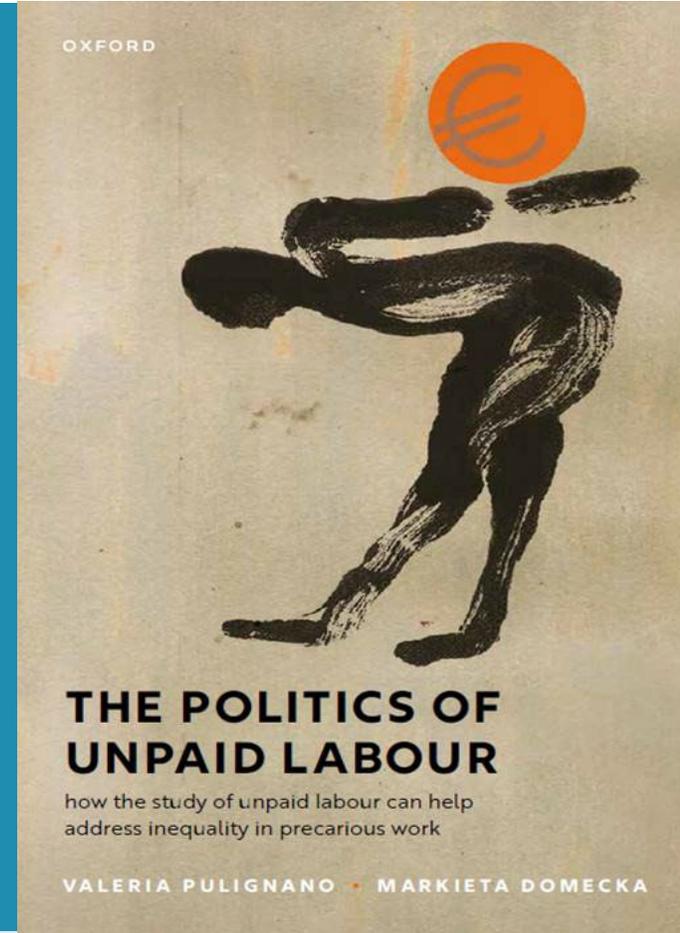


The Politics of Unpaid Labour.

How the Study of Unpaid Labour Can Help Address Inequality in Precarious Work



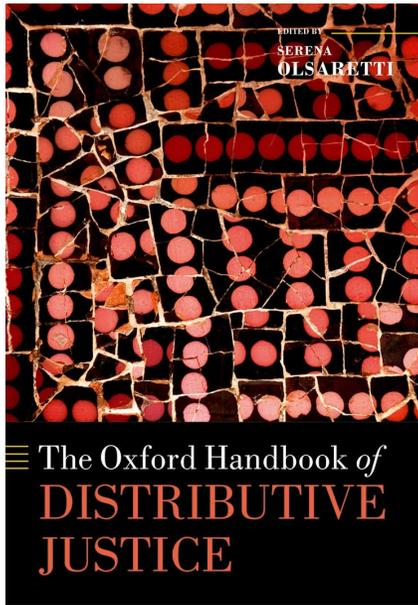
ResPecTMe





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Many individuals endure “*unjust harm through their labour*” including inadequate compensation that denies workers a dignified livelihood

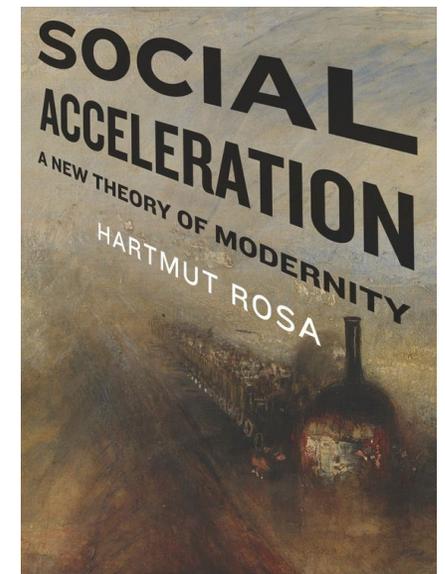
(Paul Gomberg, 2018: 559)

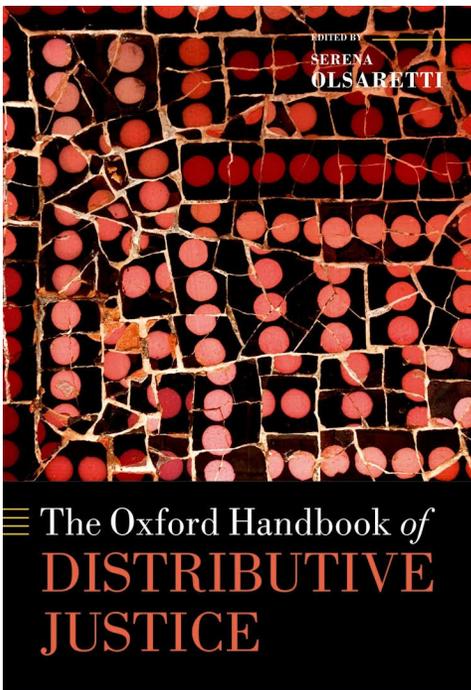
Societal Acceleration unfolds from the *integration* of digital technologies into daily life & *fragmentation* of work tasks & employment forms

(Hartmut Rosa, 2015)

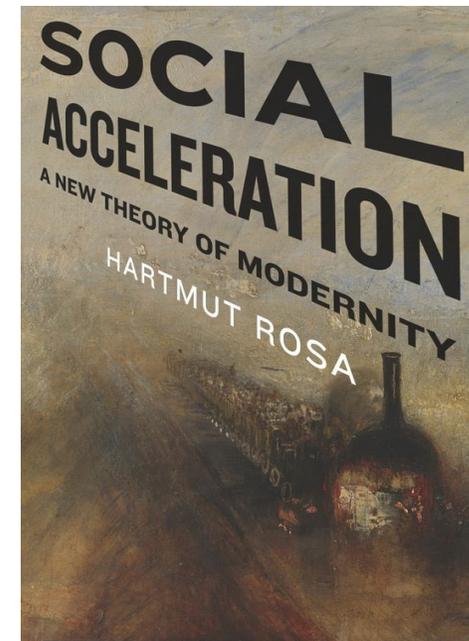


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Exploitation is workers creating more value than they receive in wages -
Extraction of *surplus value* from workers





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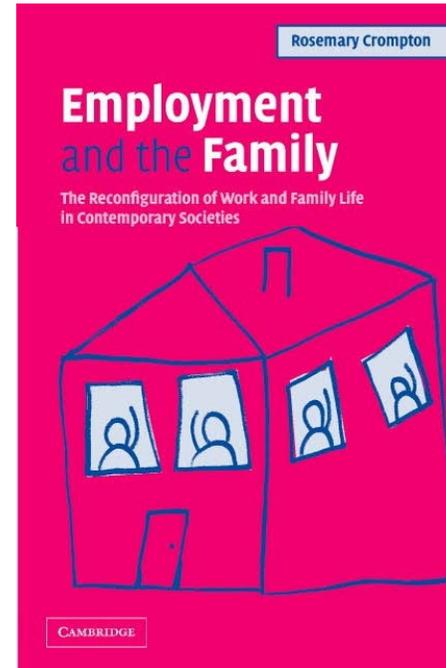
Dichotomy productive
(waged) & non-productive
labour

WAGES AGAINST HOUSEWORK

They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work.
They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism.
Every miscarriage is a work accident.
Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both working conditions . . .
but homosexuality is workers' control of production, not the
end of work.
More smiles? More money. Nothing will be so powerful in destroying
the healing virtues of a smile.
Neuroses, suicides, desexualisation: occupational diseases of the
housewife.

by Silvia Federici

Housework as a pervasive
manipulation perpetrated
against the working class



How may sets of institutions moulded to
the contours of the 'male breadwinner'
arrangement be reconstructed to new
realities, how do families adjust to these
changing circumstances



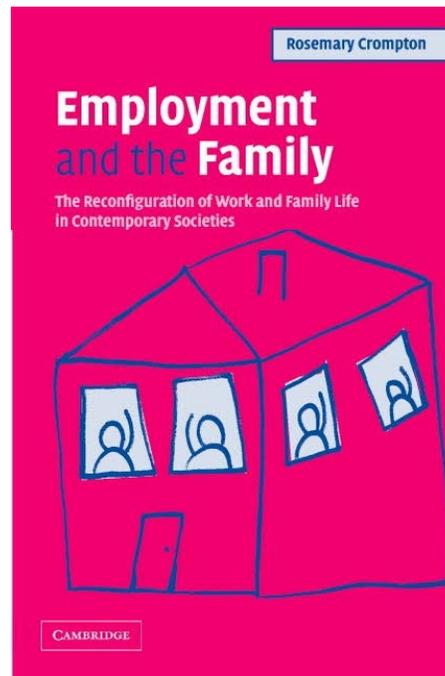
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Why the 'Politics of Unpaid Labour' ?



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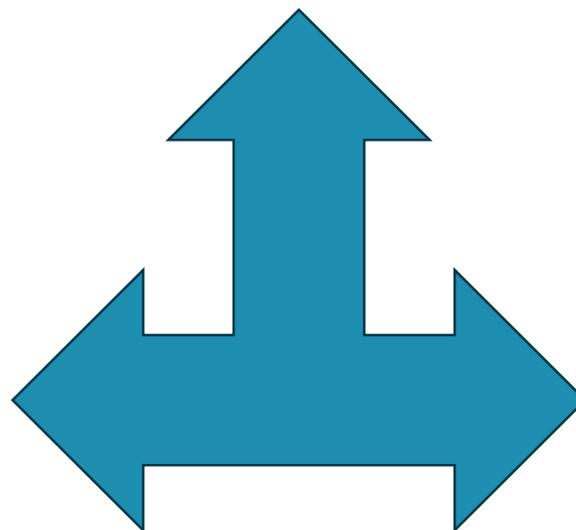




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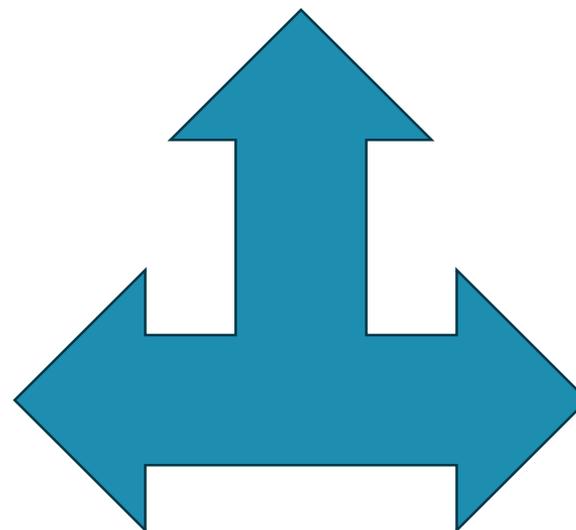
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Critique of how the new social division of labour, shaped by capitalism, depends & *justifies* un-under-paid labour



Precarious Work & Unpaid Labour

- Precarious (paid) work *inside* the market:
 - Which implications for (unpaid – socially reproductive) work *outside* the market;
- Unpaid work *inside* the market (i.e., ‘wage theft’, Cole et al. 2022; & voluntary work, Taylor, 2005) & precarious work (Moore and Newsome, 2018)

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 - **Whether & how unpaid labour entails to precarious work;**
 - **Whether & how precarious work automatically unfolds from unpaid labour;**
 - **How it intersects to unpaid (social reproductive) labour;**



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Work

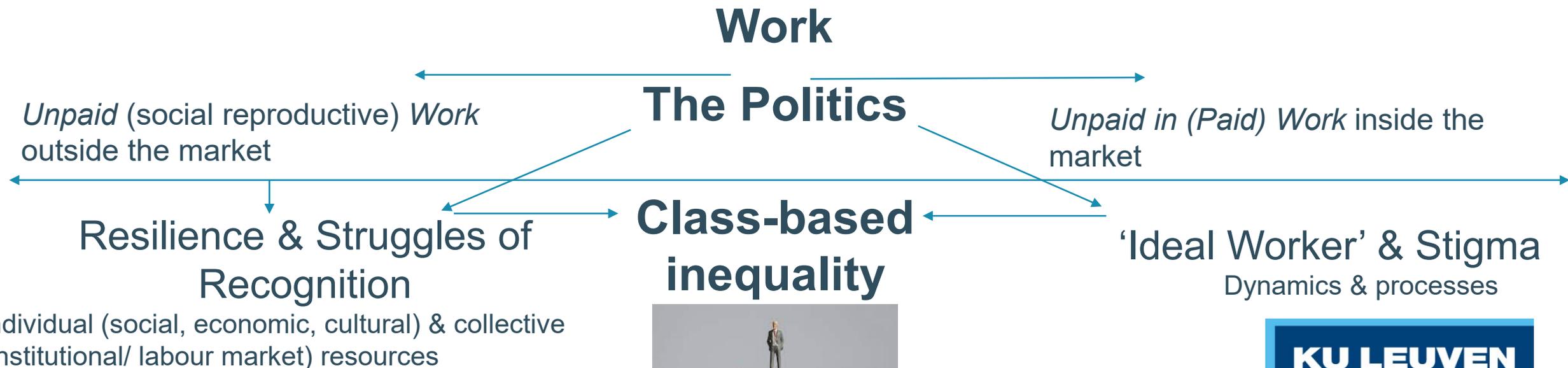
← Unpaid (social reproductive) Work
outside the market

→ Unpaid (Paid) Work inside the market



Precarious Work and Unpaid Labour

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Illustrations

Travelling time is unpaid, even though it's part of the job. All the admin work I do is unpaid. Going to performances, doing classes, training. **These are hours of work every day that you don't get paid for.** When you have time off between one project and another you can't stop training. **It's not an option to go to the gym or do dance classes, it's a 'necessity'.** Then you must pay for things like treatments, depending on your insurance which **most freelance dancers don't have.** Sometimes there's no work contract. You work ten hours, yet get paid for six. Generally, dancers are financially undervalued, **especially freelance dancers** as they do so much work that is not accounted for. (NL03_Lisa)



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When you come in at quarter to 8 then you might find that everyone is already there and they're waiting for breakfast. That's why I always come in at 7:15. So, for **five years I've been 'gifting' my employer half an hour each and every day.** So that I don't have this stress. You know? I come and everyone is waiting for breakfast and quick, quick, quick, I don't like it. I like to do it calmly, that's why **I come earlier and distribute breakfast in a proper way or prepare it carefully.** I also must make breakfast bite-sized for many people. Because of this half an hour that I always come earlier **I have some room to do something with people, to ask them how they are.** (DE12_Marianne)

Today as well I did things that I'll never be paid for, in the sense that **I'll never recoup all this from what I'll be able to 'price into my rates' and therefore eventually earn.** In the morning, I was doing research for my new assignment. I was looking for the key words, I was checking the websites of the competitors, and so on. It took me about an hour and it's for the assignment I hope to be offered. (PLO4_Anita, diary)

'Without good ratings, I can't increase my prices' (NL02_Marie).



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'Without good ratings, I can't increase my prices' (NL02_Marie).

'You always must be available, so obviously that makes us stay in front on the phone, in front of the computer **all the time,** just in case. And clients really love us being immediately available.' (15_Fanny).

'We're in three different time zones. Across the world. So, it means that there's always gonna be new work every few hours because someone's working in their time zone. And there are requests, and you need to react quick.' (09_Sasha).



Australia: no longer the lucky country?

Rates of unpaid overtime and the decline of the 38 hour week

86% of Australian full time workers do unpaid overtime.

Are you one of them?



* Over 85% of respondents reported working unpaid overtime each week.

- * On average respondents reported working 9.08 hours of unpaid work each week. In an average work year (48 weeks) this would represent 58.1 days or 11.6 weeks of unpaid work.
- * The financial value of unpaid work is \$21,583 per year for an average worker on a yearly income of \$96,660.
- * Over 70% of respondents reported working overtime on weekends. Almost half of this number reported they worked more than two weekends per month.
- * Respondents reported that on average they were skipping lunch breaks at least three times per week.
- * More than three quarters (77%) of respondents believe doing unpaid hours is having a negative impact on their life outside of work.
- * 79% of workers reported their mental health is negatively impacted by their overtime hours.
- * 69% of respondents have had friends and family comment negatively on the unpaid work they do outside of regular hours.

...ace would be able
...pondents) believed
...was career limiting.
...participate more in
...paid overtime work.

So viel Arbeitskraft und Lebenszeit verschenkten Beschäftigte 2022:



Unbezahlte Überstunden:
702 Millionen Stunden



Wert der unbezahlten Arbeit:
15 Milliarden Euro



So oft könnte eine vierköpfige Familie dafür in Urlaub fahren:
2,9 Millionen Reisen

Daten: Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, Statistisches Bundesamt, Stiftung für Zukunftsfragen.





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Theoretical Underpinnings

Theoretical Underpinnings: A Relational Approach to Work

- A relational approach to work – TSOL “each *work* activity has to be analysed in relation to each other” (Glucksmann, 2005: 24-25)
 - Relationships between work undertaken *outside* the market (socially reproductive/ gendered labour) & *inside* the market;
 - Relationships change over time & the need to understand how they change;
 - Extending a relational approach to unpaid labour & precarious work – i.e., Grey zones of precarious work at the interface work & home where support from family & households is continuously required to engage in un- or under-paid work inside the market (Pulignano & Morgan, 2022):

Theme Issue: Home and Work

WES

**The ‘Grey Zone’ at the
Interface of Work and Home:
Theorizing Adaptations
Required by Precarious
Work**

Work, Employment and Society
2023, Vol. 37(1) 257–273
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Valeria Pulignano 
KU Leuven, Belgium

Glenn Morgan 
Bristol University, UK

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 - Normalization of un-under-paid labour

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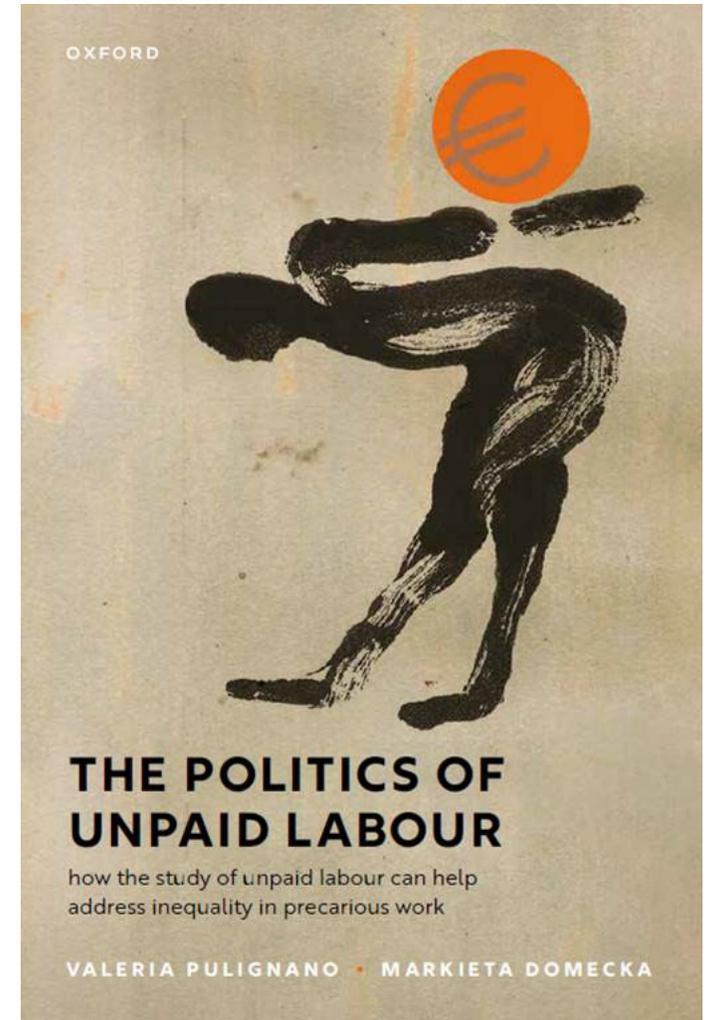


Valeria Pulignano 
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Objectives

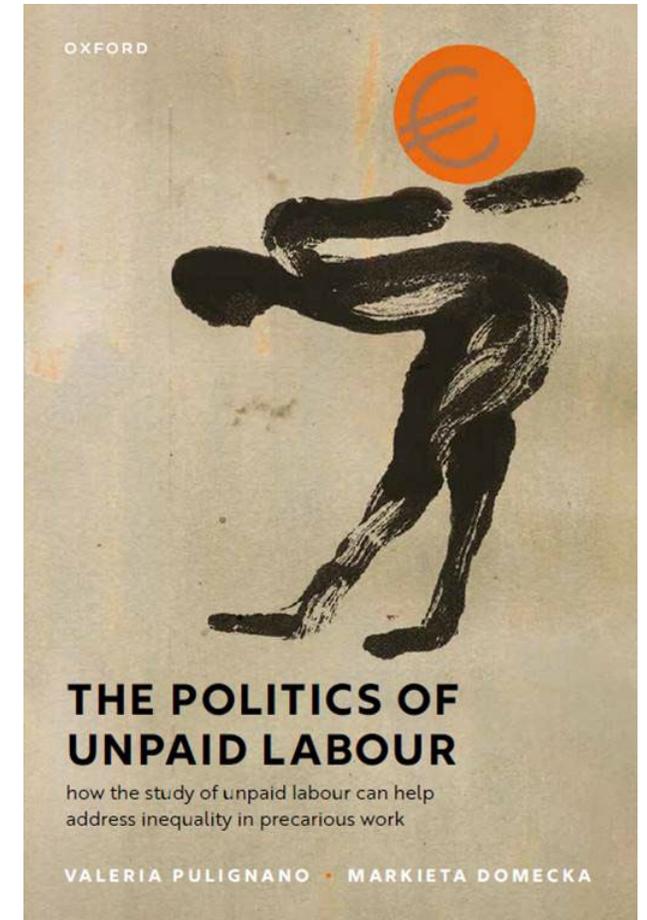
- Workers' meanings & motivations (Laaser & Karlsson, 2022)
- Distinguish 'wage theft' and 'income theft';



Objectives

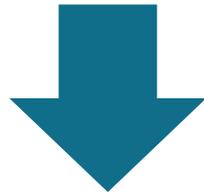
- Uncovering the workers' meanings & motivations of (Laaser & Karlsson, 2022)
- Distinguish 'wage theft' and 'income theft';

129 biographical narrative interviews (Schütze, 2008) with workers & 38 work diaries **Dance** (Sweden, the Netherlands); **Residential Care** (Germany, UK); **Freelancing Platform Work** (i.e., Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, The Netherlands)

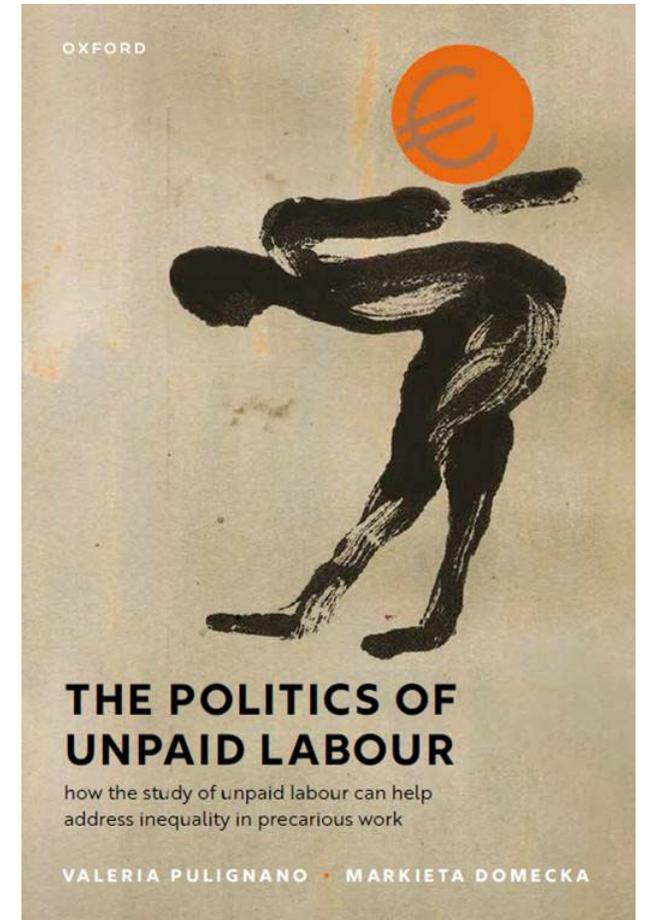


The Argument in a Nutshell

Unpaid labour & 'class-based' inequality in precarity

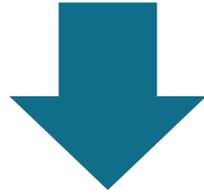


The Theory of the Politics of Unpaid Labour



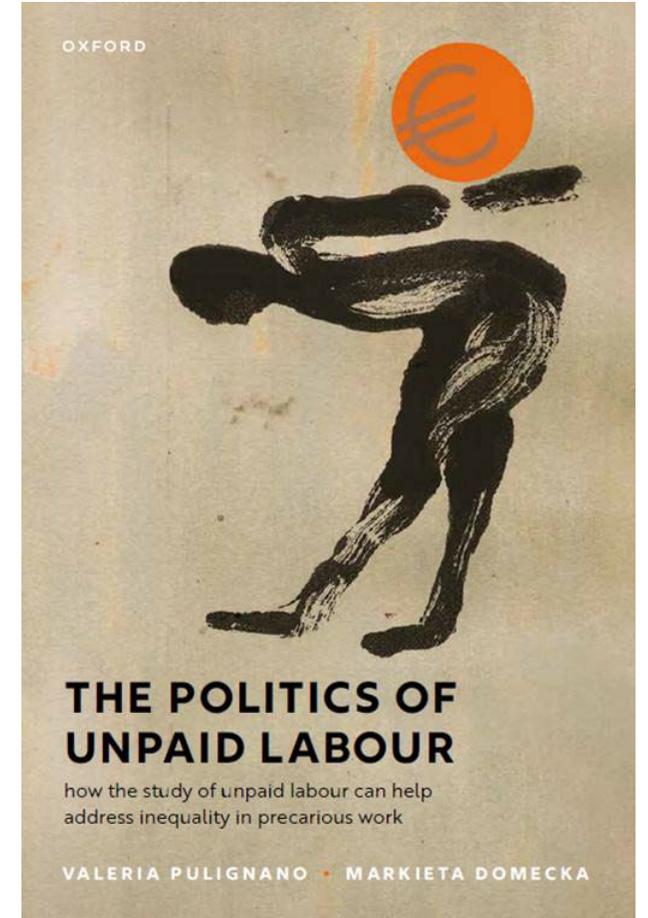
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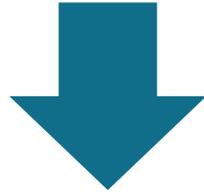
The Theory of the Politics of Unpaid Labour

- 'Ideal worker' & 'stigma/power': *cultural expectations, ideological processes normalizing & legitimising* unpaid labour as part of the new division of labour



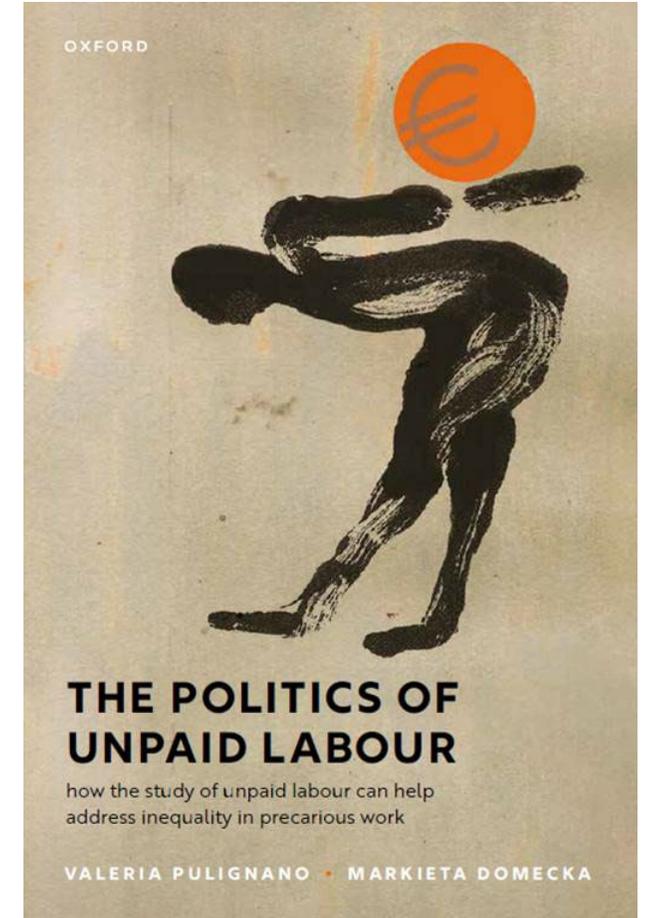
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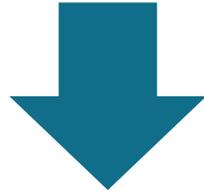
The Theory of the Politics of Unpaid Labour

- 'Ideal worker' & 'stigma': *cultural expectations, ideological processes normalizing & legitimising* unpaid labour as part of the new division of labour & the *value* people attach to work (the 'reality' of unpaid labour);



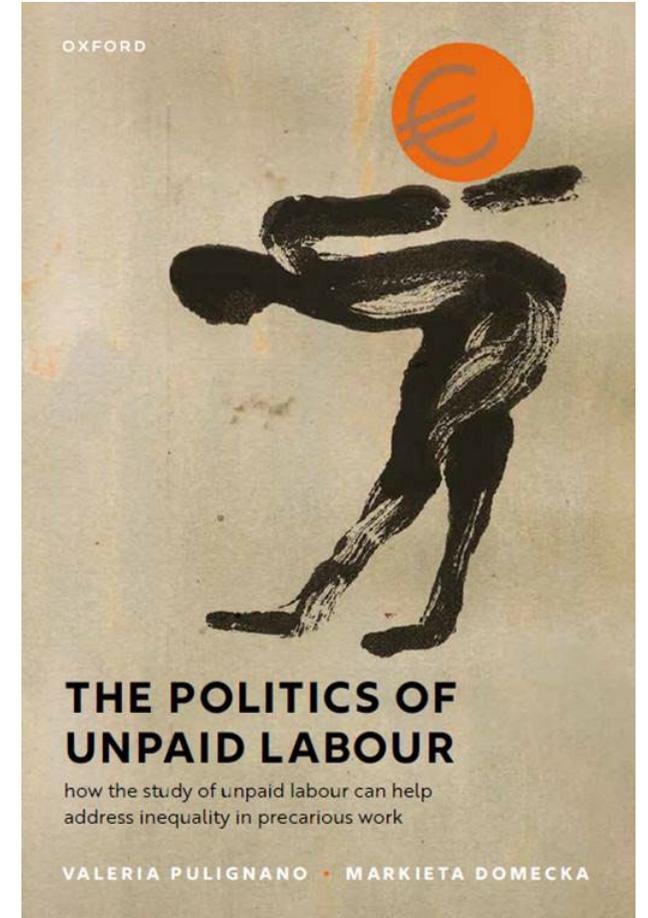
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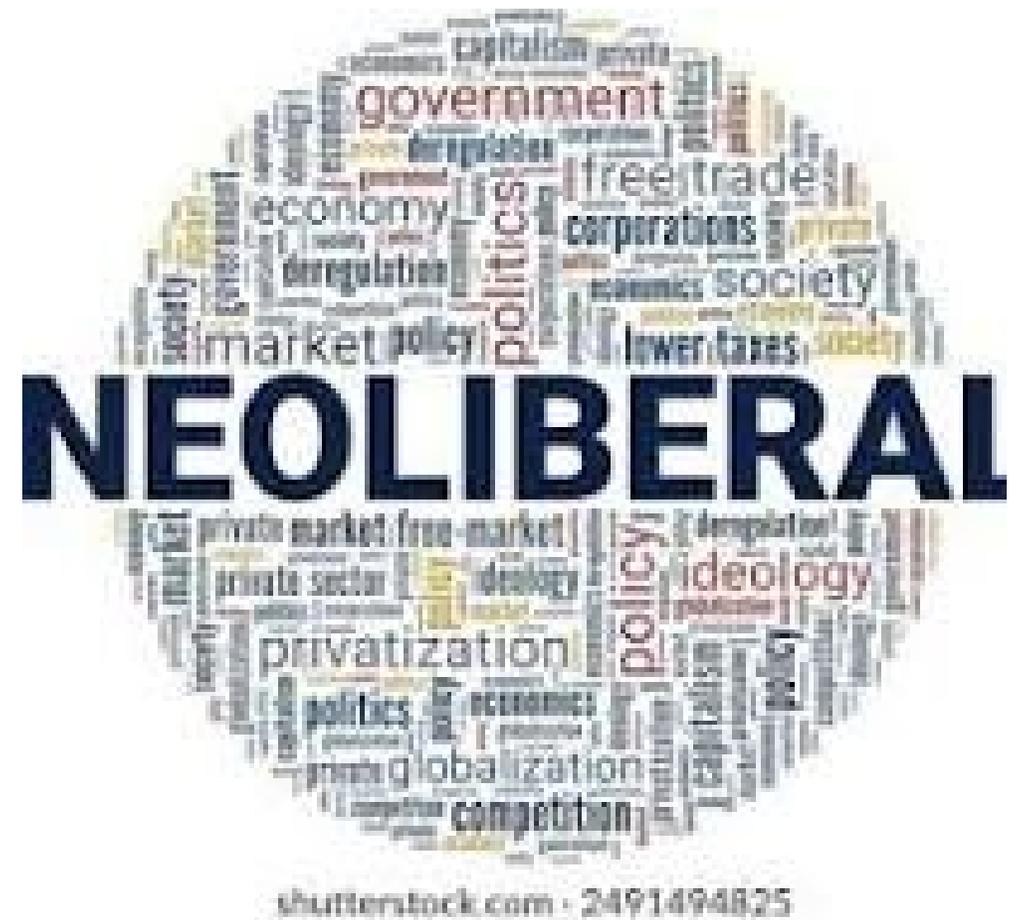


The Theory of the Politics of Unpaid Labour

- 'Resilience': *individual & collective resources* (Hall and Lamont, 2012) sustaining unpaid labour



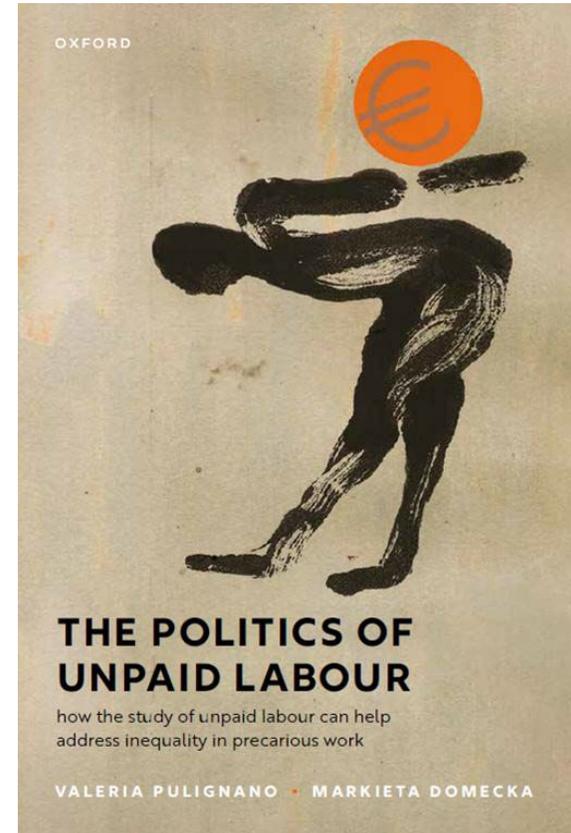
1. Unpaid labour is structurally embedded along class, gender lines
2. Regulatory arrangements & state policy shape whether unpaid labour can foster employability or arrest workers into precarious jobs



The Argument in a Nutshell

The Theory of the Politics of Unpaid Labour

- **Normalisation - Stigma** as the ‘social norm’ (Goffman, 1963)
 - **Struggles of stigmas** reflect ‘hierarchies’ at work (Tyler, 2000)
 - **Neutralization** of stigma → ‘opportunity structures’ (Tilly, 1998; Wright, 2001)
- **Power** as stigma serves the logic of the dominant class over the dominated – stigma is not divorced from power relations, stigma is ‘the exploitative apparatus [...] a device for thinking more deeply how power etches itself into us’ (Tyler, 2020: 29) “[...] it takes power to stigmatise” (Link & Phelan, 2014: 30)



Contributions

Precarious work :

*How can unpaid labour in both waged and no-waged (self-employment) labour triggers **inequality as class-based exploitation in precarious work***

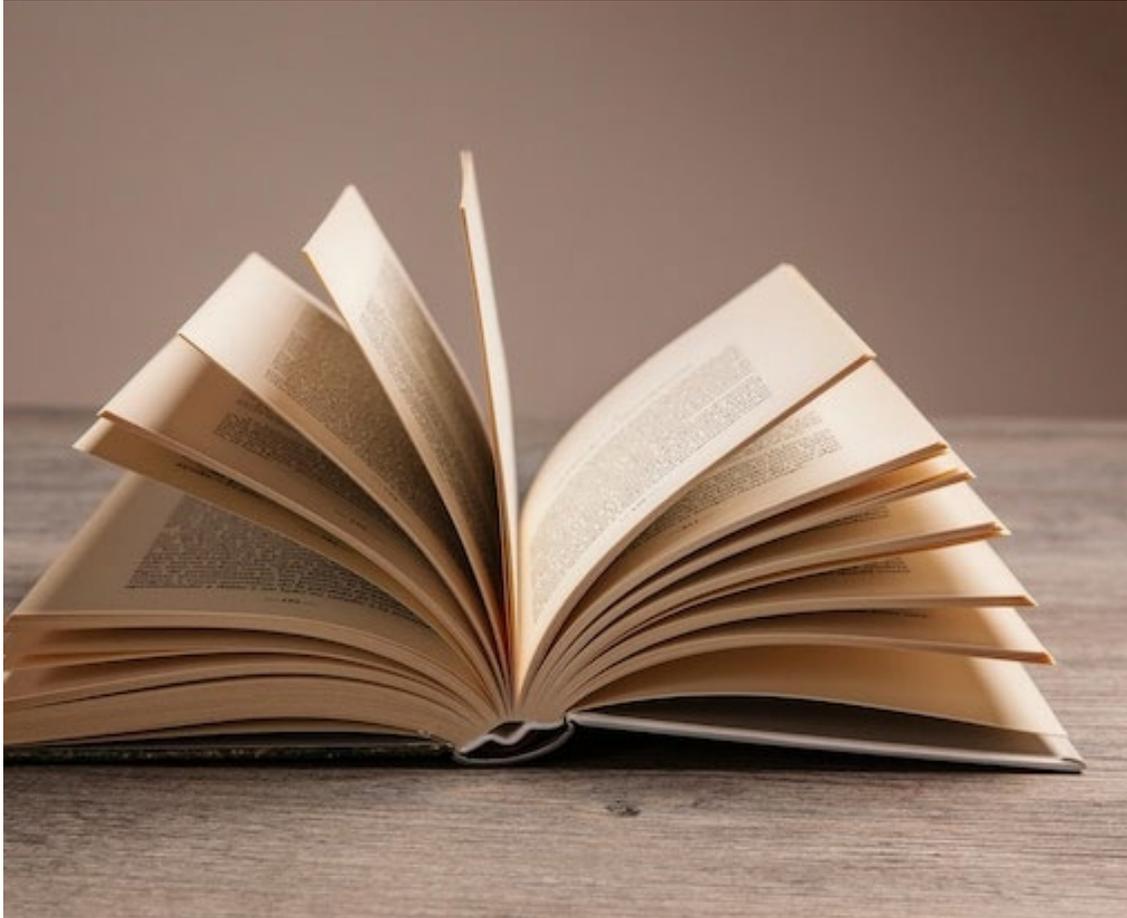
Social division of labour :

*How does unpaid labour, influenced by shifts in the new social division of labour stems from changes in the political economy of **welfare, employment & state policies.***

‘Capability’ approach in socio-economic studies:

*How does unpaid labour impact on ‘capabilities’ building (Sen, 1990) within respective opportunity structures within **labour markets.***

Structure of the book: 3 Parts; 7 Chapters + Conclusion; 300 pages



Introduction

- **Theorising the Politics of Unpaid Labour:** Unpaid Labour & Inequality in Precarious Work (Power & Class); Paid/Unpaid Labour Dichotomy; Establishing the Theory of the Politics of Unpaid Labor;
- **Empirical Evidence:** *Behind the Theory of the 'Politics of Unpaid Labour':* Dance for the 'Sake of Art'; Care for the 'Sake of others' (with *Me-Linh Riemann*); Freelancing for the 'sake of Reputation';
- **Implications for Theory & Policy:** *The 'Politics of Unpaid Labour' at the Crossroads of Sociology and Economics - Unpaid Labour, Labour Markets and Capabilities* (with *Bernard Gazier*)

Conclusions by *Damian Grimshaw*



Empirical illustrations: Creative Dance, Care, Online Freelancing

Work Extensification



Work Extensification & Work Intensification



Work Extensification & Work Intensification



Table 7.2: Prevalence of unpaid labour in creative dance (percentage of person-days, by form of unpaid labour)

Work sector	Forms of unpaid labour	Example quote	Percentage of days this form of unpaid labour was mentioned by workers (%)
Creative: Dance	1. Personal investment work: preparation, planning, rehearsals, promotion and networking	'You need to contact the right people, you need to collaborate with people, you need to think constantly how you can reinvent yourself. And you can't ask for too much [money], otherwise people won't work with you' (NL04_Sara).	64%
	2. Keeping in shape: training (physical and mental), rehab, warm-ups, diet and rest	'The day started at 8.20 with a rehab work that I have to go to because my work depends on me feeling good physically. So, I worked with a physiotherapist for my injured knee. So, it was a couple of hours consultation plus workout, rehab workout in the gym. (...) I also need time to rest. Otherwise, I'll get another injury.' (SE28_Jaime)	62%
	3. Travel time: touring and commuting	'Travel time is unpaid, even though it's part of the job. All the admin work I do is unpaid. These are hours of work every day that you don't get paid for.' (NL03_Lisa) 'I got up at 7am, prepared my food, took a train at 9am and before noon I arrived at [name of a city]. We had a class from 12 till 1pm, a class plus a warm-up. Then from 1pm till 6pm, we had time to work and then from 6pm till 7:30pm we had a dinner break. After that we had some time to prepare for a premiere, preparing for the show, costumes and stuff like that. Another warm-up and then the show from 8:30 till 10pm. Then the train back. I arrived home after midnight. The travel time was not paid. I also had to buy my tickets.' (NL07_Francesco)	34%
	4. Doing extra tasks: building the scene, doing the lightening cleaning, replacing colleagues, etc.	'[The theatre] didn't have money to employ everybody. So I had to clean the stage before the performance. I had to do the lights with the technician. Especially during the tour this was very tough because I had to unload the car, help set up everything. I was exhausted even before the performance started.' (SE11_Fabiano)	30%
	5. Creating job opportunities: networking, self-promotion	'I had to pay for the possibility to work, to meet people, to learn. I paid for auditions. I paid for my training to be able to participate in a show in New York for different audiences. It was an important experience, but I had to pay for it.' (SE02_Sandra)	36%
	6. Overworking to reach perfection	'We work as much as 150%, but we're only paid for a fraction of the work we're doing.' (SE02_Sandra).	8%



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Table 7.3: Prevalence of unpaid labour in residential care (percentage of person-days, by form of unpaid labour)

Work sector	Forms of unpaid labour	Example quote	Percentage of days this form of unpaid labour was mentioned by workers (%)
Residential Care	1. Unpaid overtime: staying at work after a paid shift is finished.	'It's normal to work overtime because something has to be finished. We're not paid extra for that.' (DE03_Doreen)	32%
	2. Coming to work early and working during breaks.	'For five years I've been gifting my employer half an hour each and every day. I come to work half an hour earlier, so I have some room to do something with people, to ask them how they are.' (DE12_Marianne).	40%
	3. Buying what residents ask for (pastries, socks, craft materials) out of one's own pocket.	'I buy the craft material that we use with the residents. They love arts and craft, and I pay for it out of my own pocket. Each time it is £4, £5, £6 worth.' (UK17_Tara)	4%
	4. 'Working for two' due to understaffing.	'We're so short-staffed. Let's say there should be four people on, and we got two and that was fairly normal, you know? The management wouldn't pay out any extra to get extra agency staff in and quite often no one was available anyway. So, you would work for two.' (UK15_Tina).	14%
	5. 'Stopwatch care' (' <i>Minutenpflege</i> '): the pressure to work fast in order to meet the targets.	'You're drenched in sweat, and they say: "You have to work harder. You have to do it faster!"' (DE02_Beate)	28%
	6. Working as an all-rounder (' <i>Mädchen für Alles</i> '): doing everything that needs to be done, irrespectively of the official job description.	'We were all-rounders: providing basic care and companionship, doing the cooking and housekeeping (...) We're supposed to do everything while taking care of 9 patients. But you can't be everywhere at once. How can you keep an eye on all 9 people with dementia while cleaning the windows?' (DE19_Eva)	48%
	7. Emotional labour: taking care of residents' emotional needs and managing one's own emotions.	'Often, I'd just stay longer or come on my day off. Not as a worker but as a visitor, just to sit together. With no rush.' (DE18_Eva)	74%



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Figure 2: Prevalence of unpaid labour in creative dance (percentage of person-days, by form of unpaid labour)

Work sector	Forms of unpaid labour	Example quote	Percentage of days this form of unpaid labour was mentioned by workers (%)
Creative: Dance	1. Personal investment work: preparation, planning, rehearsals, promotion and networking	'You need to contact the right people, you need to collaborate with people, you need to think constantly how you can reinvent yourself. And you can't ask for too much [money], otherwise people won't work with you' (NL04_Sara).	64%
	2. Keeping in shape: training (physical and mental), rehab, warm-ups, diet and rest	'The day started at 8.20 with a rehab work that I have to go to because my work depends on me feeling good physically. So, I worked with a physiotherapist for my injured knee. So, it was a couple of hours consultation plus workout, rehab workout in the gym. (...) I also need time to rest. Otherwise, I'll get another injury.' (SE28_Jaime)	62%
	3. Travel time: touring and commuting	'Travel time is unpaid, even though it's part of the job. All the admin work I do is unpaid. These are hours of work every day that you don't get paid for.' (NL03_Lisa) 'I got up at 7am, prepared my food, took a train at 9am and before noon I arrived at [name of a city]. We had a class from 12 till 1pm, a class plus a warm-up. Then from 1pm till 6pm, we had time to work and then from 6pm till 7:30pm we had a dinner break. After that we had some time to prepare for a première, preparing for the show, costumes and stuff like that. Another warm-up and then the show from 8:30 till 10pm. Then the train back. I arrived home after midnight. The travel time was not paid. I also had to buy my tickets.' (NL07_Francesco)	34%
	4. Doing extra tasks: building the scene, doing the lightening cleaning, replacing colleagues, etc.	'[The theatre] didn't have money to employ everybody. So I had to clean the stage before the performance. I had to do the lights with the technician. Especially during the tour this was very tough because I had to unload the car, help set up everything. I was exhausted even before the performance started.' (SE11_Fabiano)	30%
	5. Creating job opportunities: networking, self-promotion	'I had to pay for the possibility to work, to meet people, to learn. I paid for auditions. I paid for my training to be able to participate in a show in New York for different audiences. It was an important experience, but I had to pay for it.' (SE02_Sandra)	36%
	6. Overworking to reach perfection	'We work as much as 150%, but we're only paid for a fraction of the work we're doing.' (SE02_Sandra).	8%

Table 7.3: Prevalence of unpaid labour in residential care (percentage of person-days, by form of unpaid labour)

Work sector	Forms of unpaid labour	Example quote	Percentage of days this form of unpaid labour was mentioned by workers (%)
Residential Care	1. Unpaid overtime: staying at work after a paid shift is finished.	'It's normal to work overtime because something has to be finished. We're not paid extra for that.' (DE03_Doreen)	32%
	2. Coming to work early and working during breaks.	'For five years I've been gifting my employer half an hour each and every day. I come to work half an hour earlier, so I have some room to do something with people, to ask them how they are.' (DE12_Marianne).	40%
	3. Buying what residents ask for (pastries, socks, craft materials) out of one's own pocket.	'I buy the craft material that we use with the residents. They love arts and craft, and I pay for it out of my own pocket. Each time it is £4, £5, £6 worth.' (UK17_Tara)	4%
	4. 'Working for two' due to understaffing.	'We're so short-staffed. Let's say there should be four people on, and we got two and that was fairly normal, you know? The management wouldn't pay out any extra to get extra agency staff in and quite often no one was available anyway. So, you would work for two.' (UK15_Tina).	14%
	5. 'Stopwatch care' (<i>Minutenpflege</i>): the pressure to work fast in order to meet the targets.	'You're drenched in sweat, and they say: "You have to work harder. You have to do it faster!"' (DE02_Beate)	28%
	6. Working as an all-rounder (<i>Mädchen für Alles</i>): doing everything that needs to be done, irrespectively of the official job description.	'We were all-rounders: providing basic care and companionship, doing the cooking and housekeeping (...) We're supposed to do everything while taking care of 9 patients. But you can't be everywhere at once. How can you keep an eye on all 9 people with dementia while cleaning the windows?' (DE19_Eva)	48%
	7. Emotional labour: taking care of residents' emotional needs and managing one's own emotions.	'Often, I'd just stay longer or come on my day off. Not as a worker but as a visitor, just to sit together. With no rush.' (DE18_Eva)	74%



Qualifying Meanings of Unpaid Labour: Contextualizing Subordination



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Creative dance in Sweden & The Netherlands

Subordination:

“I was told that I should be careful of what I say, if I want to work here again” (SE21_Nadja)



Market competition: Everybody is ‘replaceable’

“This pressure to keep going because if you cannot do that, there is someone else who can. You live always with this idea that you are replaceable.” (NL06_Alessandro)

Residential Care in UK & Germany

Subordination:

“I’m doing the work of two people or more. But there’s no choice. Who will do that if I don’t?” (DE_Lara)



Labour shortage: Everybody is ‘needed’

“The money is so bad... but I’m so attached to the residents and there are not so many people left... I’ve gone through years with them. They’re like my second family. And I just don’t want to leave them” (UK05_Lynn)

What is Unpaid Labour ?



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Creative dance in Sweden & The Netherlands

'Body work' (NL01_Anis)

"A long and ongoing investment in physical capital", which is the result of "discipline, ongoing exercise and continuous diet you learn since you are a child".



Residential Care in UK & Germany

'Work of Love' (DE12_Marianne)

"Some residents tell me that they love me. And those are exactly the moments where I think: 'Yes, I did everything the right way. They value my commitment'".



Qualifying Meanings of Unpaid Labour: Normalizing Unpaid Labour



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Creative dance in Sweden & The Netherlands

Permanent availability: Have the body always 'ready' to perform

"It's a profession where you have to be in shape... I've often seen that dancers come back after some leave and injure themselves as soon as they're back, because you've been at home with your kid and then you're supposed to come back ready and do a lot of physically demanding stuff." (SE04_Jon)

Striving to achieve the excellence - the 'perfect end product' (artistic pressure)



Residential Care in UK & Germany

Permanent availability: Be always available for the people who need you

"You're a carer you really need to be caring, they say. You're a carer you need to do this, need to do that, no matter what. The elderly need you."
(UK15_Marija)

Striving to deliver the 'best' care possible, otherwise the elderly will suffer (moral pressure)



Normalizing Unpaid Labour: Class through Prestige & Gender Role

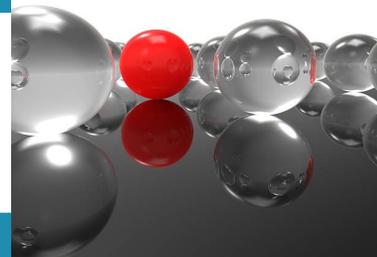


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Creative dance in Sweden & The Netherlands

Striving for perfection: Achieve the excellence to deliver the 'perfect' product

ARTISTIC PRESSURE



PRESTIGE

"This is all work you do for 'free' and if it does not work you are not paid at all .. Likely, my family can financially support me in doing this which not everybody can afford.. getting there is very prestigious and only some can reach there" (NL10_Ine)

Residential Care in UK & Germany

Striving for best care possible: Despite everything deliver 'best' care – otherwise the elderly will suffer

MORAL PRESSURE



GENDER

"There's not enough time to do what needs to be done. You try your best but still you stay after work to make sure everybody is taken care of. This is what we as women usually do" (UK05_Lynn)

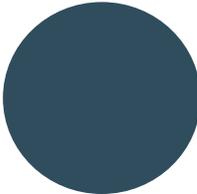
Unpaid Labour & Precarity

- **Dance: Non-binary relationship between unpaid labour & precarity**
 - Well-paid and/or resourced dancers enable creative unpaid labour

- **Care: Binary relationship between unpaid labour & precarity**
 - Even relatively more well-paid or stable female care workers (DE vs UK) regardless of their resources, struggle to sustain unpaid labour



Prestige-status



Class-reproduced



Gender-role



I remember my parents [in Spain] counting every penny to pay for the school. Sometimes when I was in bed, I would hear them with a calculator trying to figure out how to do it. Because when I started, there was this very cheap place and then I was so good that they wanted the best for me. People said, 'she's very gifted', so I guess my parents felt pressure to go on. ... My parents didn't have enough money for me to go for auditions. Indeed, they took out a small loan for me to come to Holland and audition here, but I basically did only one audition because that's all I could afford. (NL09_Alba)



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The Role of State Policy



- State-funded dance organisations
- Access to public-based individual grants regardless from the employment status;
- Access to social benefits: role of trade unions (e.g., *Dancealliansen* employs freelancing dancers & Unemployment insurance fund (*Unionens A-kassa*) (SW)
- Costly private childcare;
- Role of employment status: limited access to sick, disability & maternity benefits and social protections (e.g., zero-hours contract)
- Minimum wages

Table 7.4: Prevalence of unpaid labour in online platform work (percentage of person-days, by form of unpaid labour)

Work sector	Forms of unpaid labour	Example quote	Percentage of days this form of unpaid labour was mentioned by workers (%)	
			'Non-tournament' platforms: Jellow & Malt	'Digital tournament' platforms: Upwork & AddLance
Online platform work	1. Communication with clients	'I received a message from my English client, he wanted me to do a transcription of a video. We talked for an hour and then he changed his mind. He didn't give me this job.' (FRCM16)	32%	83%
	2. Buying platform currency to bid for tasks	'What bothers me is buying the currency, paying the commission fees and covering the transaction costs, like the exchange rate.' (FRCM16)	0%	3%
	3. Job searching and applications	'All the work I've carried out today was not paid for. It was just searching for jobs and applying for transcription and translation jobs. Nothing came out of it. And I earned nothing. Zero.' (NLMR08)	2%	40%
	4. Sending free samples of work	'They ask you to send things and then they actually use parts of the texts that I have written without paying me anything' (NLLV01)	6%	5%
	5. Work intensification & extensification	'Today I had to work for four hours without a break because the client was in a great hurry.' (FRCM16)	60%	97%
	6. Doing extra jobs to keep clients satisfied	'I am scared to say 'no' to the client as that may close some doors for the future.' (FRCM13)	19%	40%
	7. Investment in reputation building	'Your reputation is totally dependent on clients' good or bad will (...) one single negative review can destroy your reputation, and restoring it requires lots of time and effort' (FRCM02_Paul) 'I keep adding things to my website, my Instagram, doing a bit of marketing, a bit of connecting with people. I wrote a bit for my blog, which I hope will be paid for one day. I also wrote Christmas cards for my clients.' (BEMF13)	4%	15%



Platform disguises class-based differences through the (semi-) anonymous manner of working after someone enters the platform world (Martindale & Lehdonvirta, 2023).



Platform business model matters in polarizing class-based differences when working as online freelance through platforms



‘Digital Tournaments’: the colonisation of freelancers’ ‘free’ time and unpaid labour in the online platform economy

Valeria Pulignano^o, Stefania Marino^o, Mathew Johnson^o, Markieta Domecka^o and Me-Linh Riemann^o

This article challenges positive views of the assumed relationships between skills, productivity and rewards in self-employed digital freelancing. It suggests that the upfront investments made by freelancers to build up positive platform ratings are not necessarily recouped in the form of increased autonomy, guaranteed work or more lucrative ‘gigs’. Drawing on 38 autobiographical narrative interviews and 12 audio working diaries with diverse online freelancers in Europe, we show how the low barriers to enter platform work provide opportunities for those with limited work experience and other commitments outside of work. However, the intense competition between an ever-expanding pool of (both skilled and unskilled) task freelancers within ‘digital tournaments’ results in the colonisation of worker’s free time, and the normalisation of unpaid labour. This implies that ‘free time’ for freelancers is largely an illusion. Furthermore, the significant ‘sunk costs’ that freelancers make in terms of time, platform-specific skills, reputation and networks are not fully recovered and cannot be transferred to other platforms.

Key words: Working time, Free time, Freelancers, Digital platforms, Unpaid labour, Platform work
JEL classifications: I31, J24, J81

Digital Platform Model	Unpaid labour	Unpaid labour & precarity/poor quality jobs
<p>Jellow & Malt: Investment in portfolio & use of algorithm management (only Malt) – no bidding</p>	<p>YES - Unpaid used to build portfolio (valid on and off platform), which may include disintermediation when the platform uses algorithm management (Malt)</p>	<p>No-binary relation</p>
<p>Upwork & Addlance: No investment in portfolios & use of algorithm management (only Upwork) - bidding</p>	<p>NO - Unpaid not used for building portfolios (rating valid on platform only) & disintermediation implies losing ratings (Upwork) or being out of work through not buying credits (Addlance)</p>	<p>Binary relation – ‘Digital tournaments’ (see Pulignano, Marino, Johnson, Domecka, Reimann, 2022)</p>

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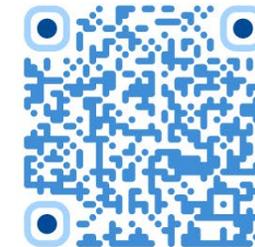
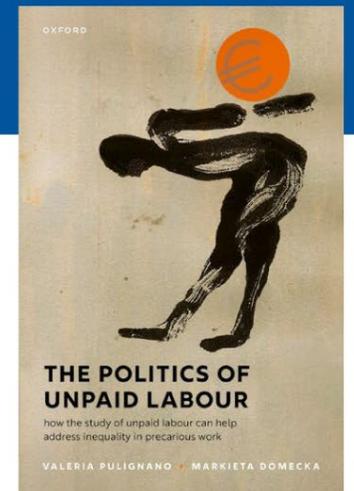


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