

Worth of platform work

Summary

Platform work constitutes the fastest growing segment of alternative work. While many problems (e.g. low wages, unfair treatment of workers) have been reported, the more existential question of worth has received scant attention. Other than providing an (extra) income and a flexible schedule, we know little of what makes platform work worth doing, and why. This is especially true for low-skill and low-status platform work such as ride-hailing or delivery work (often labelled as gig work). The goal of this research project, thus, is to explore why different types of platform work are considered work worth doing.

Research field:	Business
Supervisor:	Prof. Dr. Mari-Klara Stein
Availability:	This position is available.
Offered by:	School of Business and Governance Department of Business Administration
Application deadline:	Applications are accepted between June 01, 2023 00:00 and June 30, 2023 23:59 (Europe/Zurich)

Description

The project explores the topic of platform work's worth from the theoretical perspective of "account making" from organizational psychology and management (Lepisto and Pratt, 2017). Account making describes the process of socially constructing the worth of work, where workers justify why their work is worth doing (or not worth doing) by drawing on a set of "raw materials", such as culturally-defined values, job conditions present in their context, and the opinions of others (Tosti-Kharas and Michaelson, 2021). Platform economy is characterized by a transactional focus, lack of labor regulation, and algorithmic management - these characteristics generate a working environment that values independence, cunning and entrepreneurialism. Colloquially, this is often described as the "hustle and grind" – a do-it-yourself, work-hard-for-the-money, take-any-opportunity – kind of mentality. It is unclear what values are associated with this mentality and how they influence workers' constructions of work worth (or not worth) doing.

The goal of this PhD project is to address the following overarching question: How and why do platform workers justify their work as worth doing?

Responsibilities and (foreseen) tasks:

- The candidate's main task will be to prepare a doctoral thesis in the domain of digital transformation of work (with a specific focus on platform work) under the supervision of Professor Mari-Klara Stein.
- The candidate is also expected to engage in small-scale teaching and supervision as well as active participation in the department's activities.
- The candidate can also contribute to the organization of research and practitioner workshops where project findings are disseminated.

Applicants should fulfil the following requirements:

- A master's degree in social sciences (preferably in business administration, information systems or sociology)
- A clear interest in the topic of the position
- Excellent command of both Estonian and English
- Strong and demonstrable writing and analytical skills
- Capacity to work both as an independent researcher and as part of an international team
- Capacity and willingness to provide assistance in organizational tasks relevant to the project

The following experience is beneficial:



- Working knowledge of qualitative methods (e.g., case studies)
- Working knowledge of qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVIVO)

The candidate should submit a research plan for the topic, including the overall research and data collection strategy. The candidate can expand on the listed research question and tasks, and propose additional theoretical lenses to be used.

We offer:

- 4-year PhD position (employed as an Early-Stage Researcher at the Department of Business Administration) in a strong team of researchers with international publication records and experience in leading and participating in pan-European research consortia.
- The chance to do high-level research in a dynamic academic environment.
- Opportunities for conference visits, research stays and networking with globally leading universities and research centers in the various sub-fields of management.
- All PhD positions are guaranteed a gross income of at least 1718 EUR and Estonian national health insurance.

About the department

Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech) is an international scientific community with approximately 9,000 students and 2,000 employees, one of the largest universities in Estonia that is the leading EU country in digitalization. The strengths of the university are wide multidisciplinary study/research interests, modern research and study environment as well as strong collaboration with international educational and research institutions. TalTech is aiming to be an organization leading the way to a sustainable digital future.

The research carried out at the **Department of Business Administration** in the School of Business and Governance in TalTech deals with various aspects of business – entrepreneurship, sustainability, knowledge and technology transfer, operations and strategic management, digitalization, marketing, supply chain management, accounting and performance management. The School has over 200 employees.

The department is highly internationalised. Its staff have been involved in a multitude of international research projects with the EU (INTERREG, COST, Horizon Europe etc).

Additional information

For further information, please contact **Mari-Klara Stein** mari-klara.stein@taltech.ee and visit <https://taltech.ee/en/department-business-administration> and <https://taltech.ee/en/phd-admission>

TalTech has a green and one of the most compact university campuses in Europe that includes the Tehnopol Tallinn Science Park. Low hierarchy, academic freedom and a balanced work and family life are valued at TalTech. The university provides individual development and training opportunities, material and non-material tokens of acknowledgement, sporting opportunities at TalTech Sports Club and all-staff activities.

TalTech as an employer brings together representatives from a wide range of disciplines - engineers and economists, business and biotechnology, and data scientists - with a common mission to develop Estonian higher education and research. Keywords that characterize TalTech today are rapid development, interdisciplinarity, and internationalization. The university has an international working environment and the working languages are English and Estonian.



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