

Migration and the Future of Work



The gig economy: Constructing a platform-governed migrant division of labour?

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This talk will explore the narratives of three migrant gig workers in Amsterdam, Berlin and New York City, examining what drew them to platform-based labor, the challenges they faced and how platforms fit into their future plans. Platform labor is closer to a full-time job than a gig for these workers who are unable to find alternative employment that pays better because of their visa situation and/or educational qualifications and the competitive nature of the job market. By situating their platform labor amidst the institutional and regulatory apparatuses that mediate migration in each country, we argue that gig economy companies are complicit in the construction of a new migrant division of labor. We investigate how platforms interface with existing “migration infrastructures” that manage the movement of migrant workers and render them productive in the host country, forming a novel extension of existing migration infrastructures which is extremely volatile and offers few protections. We call for policy-making that is sensitive to migrant workers’ particular predicaments and how these are shaped by the complex interplay between platform business strategies, immigration policies and labor market regulation. Together, these (f)actors coalesce to turn gig work into migrant work, setting the conditions for a platform-governed migrant division of labor.