A competitive and inclusive Digital Single Market

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The 'Sharing Economy': A Virtual Wild West?





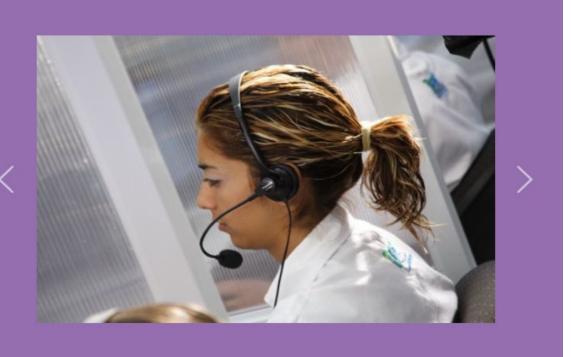
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Some buzz words

- Crowdsourcing
- Cloudsourcing
- Collaborative consumption
- Sharing economy
- Digital labour
- Prosumption
- Co-creation
- Digital commons
- Peer-to-peer networking
- Playbour



HOMEJOY

taskrabbit



Elance





Η





Shifting boundaries between production and consumption

- Labour externalized to consumers in the form of self-service (e.g. booking airline tickets)
- Labour externalized to citizens (e.g. filing tax returns)
- Consumer specification of products (e.g. custom sports shoes)
- Audience participation/content-generation in media (e.g. blogging, tweeting, posting videos on Youtube, 'comments' on news stories)
- 'Crowdsourced' provision of services:
 - Service suppliers linked with service users via online platforms
- Consumers' rights and workers' rights strongly inter-linked

Some general trends in crowdsourcing

- Rapid expansion of major corporate players (e.g Amazon, Airbnb, Uber, Elance) helped by:
 - Effective systems for international money transfer
 - Sophisticated use of big data targeted advertising
 - General network advantages (size and international spread make it more likely that consumers can find what they want where they want it)
- What began as a telemediated introduction of individuals to each other is increasingly involving companies e.g.
 - Commercial property companies using Airbnb
 - Companies using Taskrabbit and Homejoy to substitute for normal employees
- Emergence of new companies (e.g. Wonolo) specifically designed to cater to business market (substituting for temporary work agencies)
- Quasi-employment relationships (without employment rights)
- Development of a vulnerable underclass dependent on crowdsourcing as main source of income or supplement to it.

Unresolved issues

- Insurance
- Legal liability
- Professional qualifications
- Safety standards
- Dispute resolution
- Haphazard vetting processes
- Protection of vulnerable populations
- Application of existing legislation e.g.
 - Consumer protection standards
 - Temporary workers directive
 - Working hours directive
 - Minimum wage
 - Health and safety regulations
 - Data protection

Opportunities and risks

Opportunities

- Enables access to work for people who would otherwise be excluded (eg people with disabilities, carers, people in developing economies)
- Provides affordable services to consumers on a just-in-time basis
- Provides new opportunities for flexible ways to combine work and private life
- Reduces risks for employers and customers
- Enables low-cost entry into market for new enterprises or firms trying out new products or services
- Enables social innovation

Risks

- Lack of training risk of substandard / dangerous work
- Loss of commitment
- Loss of quality control
- Precariousness
- Race to the bottom (undercutting of good employers)
- Health and safety risks both to customers and workers
- Lack of regulation may lead to criminal activity (e.g. money laundering)
- Unravelling of national / EU regulatory environment

For more information

- http://dynamicsofvirtualwork.com
- http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/isch/Actions/IS1202
- http://monthlyreview.org/books/pb4635/

ECONOMICS / LABOR

'As always, Huws has a treasury of insights to offer: Use this book as a manual for understanding how the alliance of capital and digitization is reshaping the landscape of labor' —ANOREW ROSS, author, Creditocracy and the Case for Debt Refusal

> "Challenging accepted thinking and providing enough wisdom to fill several volumes, Huws has once again demonstrated her preeminence among analysts of work and inequality in digital capitalism" —VINCENT MOSCO. author, To the Cloud: Big Data in a Turbulent World

Ursula Huws ties together disparate economic, cultural, and political phenomena of the last few decades to form a provocative narrative about the shape of the contemporatry global capitalist economy. She examines the way that advanced information and communications technology has opened up new fields of capital accumulation in culture and the arts, in the privatization of public services, and in the commodification of human sociality by way of mobile devices and social networking. These trends are in turn accompanied by the dramatic restructuring of work arrangements, opening the way for new contradictions and new forms of labor solidarity and struggle around the planet. Labor in the Global Digital Economy is a forceful critique of our dizying contemporary moment, one that goes beyond notions of mere connectedness or free-flowing information to illuminate the entrenched mechanisms of exploitation and control at the core of capitalism.

URSULA HUWS is Professor of Labour and Globalisation at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK, and Founder of Analytica Social and Economic Research. She is the author of The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World.



Labor in the Global Digital

Economy

URSULA HUWS

"Ursula Huws is without peer as an analyst of life in contemporary capitalism." —LEO PANITCH

