

## Call for Papers

### International Conference

# Feminist perspectives on the platformisation of care work in European cities

at Europa Universität Flensburg, 2<sup>nd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> of July, 2025

Organised by the trinational research project “Urban Platform Economies”:  
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Anke Strüver, Janne Martha Lentz and Helena Bellgardt, University of Graz  
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and co-organised by Emma Dowling, University of Vienna

In cities across Europe, digital care platforms have become increasingly central in mediating services related to social reproduction, including grocery shopping, the preparation of meals, cleaning, child and senior care. By reconfiguring domestic tasks, most of which had formerly been unpaid, they **transform the gendered and racialised division of labour** in everyday life (Ecker/Strüver, 2023). Large cities are particularly attractive for platform business models, as they provide access to a wide customer base and a large pool of marginalised workers, whose alternatives in the local labour markets are often limited (Altenried, 2021). On the one hand, care platform companies have been criticised for taking advantage of such disparities by offering working conditions that are widely experienced as precarious and insecure (Strüver/Bauriedl 2022; Richardson, 2023). On the other hand, scholars also note that platforms may lower labour market entry barriers for marginalised workers and selectively formalise care labour (van Doorn, 2021).

We understand the rise of platformised care services as a response to **the ongoing crisis of care** (Fraser, 2016; Dowling, 2021). A combination of societal challenges, such as the intensification and delimitation of paid employment, cut-backs in public services as well as changing household structures and living arrangements have led better-off households to turn to the market to fill care gaps (Hester/Srnicek, 2023). The arrival of platform companies is thus symptomatic for the current capitalist societal order that capitalises on social vulnerabilities whilst continuously outsourcing risks and responsibilities to individuals (Srnicek, 2017; Rodríguez-Modroño et al., 2023).

The rise of the platform economy has been a **key concern for feminist scholars**, who analyse entanglements of macro-political structures of platformisation with the micropolitics of everyday life (Huws, 2019). These connections are reflected in the lived realities of platform workers, who are often marginalised due to a number of different **intersectional vulnerabilities** relating to: limited language skills, temporary visas, the non-recognition of foreign academic credentials and professional achievements, as well as experiences of sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination (van Doorn/Vijay, 2021; Orth, 2023). These conditions, which are deeply intertwined with wider political processes (e.g., EU border regimes), enable care platforms to recruit workers by offering comparatively low entrance requirements.

The ways in which intersectional insecurities unfold in everyday life depend, among other factors, on the type of care platform labour performed. Working in private homes is, e.g., tied to uniquely gendered insecurities such as the risk of sexual harassment (Pulignano et al., 2023). Food delivery riders spend large parts of their working days in public, where they are at risk of accidents and forms of (racial) discrimination. What many platform workers share is that they encounter various (invisible) forms of algorithmic control, which can limit their agency in situations of conflict (Wood/Lehdonvirta, 2023). In addition, while they free up time of those who can afford to outsource their reproductive work, platform

workers themselves systematically lose time and capacity to address their own care needs (Zampoukos et al., 2024). In turn, they adopt manifold strategies of individual and collective survival and resistance (Orth, 2022; Ettarfi, 2024).

Our conference is concerned with advancing the empirical and theoretical debates on the role of intersectional inequalities in the transformation of care services in the platform economy. We are particularly interested in gathering contributions that address how intersectional inequalities shape individual and collective working realities, and the wider societal impact of platformisation on the gendered division of labour in everyday life.

### **Objectives and Formats of the Conference**

*The conference aims at bringing together a wide range of feminist perspectives on platform capitalism, with a particular focus on its impact within the realm of care work.*

→ with contributions from scholars from **various disciplines and career levels**

*The conference aims at providing a space for vivid discussions on potential futures of this type of labour with:*

→ a **keynote** by Professor Kristina Zampoukos, Mid Sweden University

→ a **panel discussion** on “current perspectives and future challenges of feminist research on platform economies” with Dr. Dalia Gebrial (Kings College London), Dr. Barbara Orth (IRS Leibniz-Institute for Research on Society and Space), Yannick Ecker (University of Halle) and Dr. Mê-Linh Riemann (Europa Universität Flensburg) chaired by Prof. Emma Dowling (University of Vienna)

→ **sessions** based on oral presentations, interactive formats or pre-organised thematic sessions in more academic or activist formats.

*The conference aims at fostering the publication of a special issue on feminist perspectives on platformised care labour with:*

-> up to ten contributions of this conference intended for publication in *Geographica Helvetica* (tbc), a peer reviewed open access **journal** without fees for authors.

### **Organisational information**

There is **no fee** for attending the conference. Limited financial support for junior and/or precariously employed researchers is available. Childcare facilities with supervision are offered on demand. The conference facilities are wheelchair-accessible. If you require additional disability support or have further questions, please contact Mê-Linh Riemann: [me-linh.hannah.riemann@uni-flensburg.de](mailto:me-linh.hannah.riemann@uni-flensburg.de).

The conference will take place **in person** only. Flensburg is located at the German-Danish border at the Baltic Sea, and can be reached by train from Hamburg in two hours.

We invite **abstracts** of 300-500 words to be submitted online by the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, 2025 via [this link](#). Applicants will be notified of acceptance by the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, 2025.

For further information about the research project (TICS), please visit our [website](#).

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