

DIGITAL WORKING LIVES

WORKER AUTONOMY AND THE GIG ECONOMY

Tim Christiaens

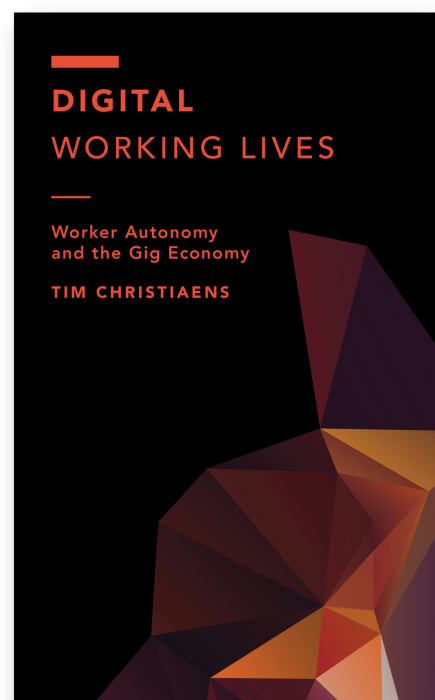
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"A penetrating and rigorous analysis of the digital gig economy and an inspiring account of how digital labour platforms could be reformed to become convivial tools. Tim Christiaens provides an essential read for anyone who believes in the emancipatory potential of modern technology."

—James Muldoon, University of Exeter

Recent innovations in digital technologies are fundamentally transforming the world of work. A digital gig economy is emerging that threatens to displace traditional labour relations based on legally regulated labour contracts. Companies like Uber, Deliveroo, or Amazon Mechanical Turk rely increasingly on 'independent contractors' who earn piece-rate wages by completing tasks sent to them via their smartphones. This development understandably pushes workers to desire more autonomy, but what would workers' autonomy mean in the digital age?

This book argues that the digital gig economy undermines workers' autonomy by putting digital technology in charge of workers' surveillance, leading to exploitation, alienation, and exhaustion. To secure a more sustainable future of work, digital technologies should instead be transformed into tools that support human development instead of subordinating it to algorithmic control. The best guarantee for human autonomy is a politics that transforms digital platforms into convivial tools that obey the rhythm of human life.



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