

# TURKU CENTRE FOR LABOUR STUDIES TCLS



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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## INTRODUCTION FROM DIRECTOR

Turku Centre for Labour Studies (TCLS) is a small Unit at the School of Economics, University of Turku, when measured by the number of posts. Despite the small size, TCLS has a strong track record in achieving competitive research funding (PROFI2&4-DF; STN-SWiPE; BF-ReGrow; German Wissenschaftskolleg), being part of national (BF-InChange, ETLA) and international (ESRC-UU, Lancaster University) competitive research funding projects, and being highly productive in academic activities, key ones of year 2023 documented and highlighted in this short annual report.

In 2023 we were successful in securing funding for two visiting professors (2023-24), ERC-funded professor Valeria Pulignano from KU Leuven, and professor Steven Vallas from Northeastern University. They both have offered support and intellectual stimulus to TCLS researchers, and to wider university community in many, highly important ways. On behalf of TCLS my warm thanks to both of them for enriching the academic community of University of Turku and School of Economics, also in the years to come.

I would like to thank Senior Research Fellow Seppo Poutanen for his great intellectual skills, capabilities and contacts as an active researcher, and his friendly team spirit at the Department and at the Unit. On behalf of the TCLS, warm thanks to Coordinator Marja Rautajoki for working diligently, friendly and efficiently with all issues, big and small, that relate to coordinating and ensuring that University level TYHE teaching modules run smoothly for all faculties and all students alike. In 2023 Marja Rautajoki started her PhD thesis on platforms, the key research topic of the Unit, and we look very much forward to support her research work. In 2023 we also had the opportunity to recruit Emmi Lehtinen as doctoral researcher, and hope to secure funding for a doctoral researcher position in the future as well.

In 2023 we continued our success with international WORK conferences that have extended from the first one organized in 2013. More details and facts from the WORK2023 and its international dimensions below in the report. Of the academic publishing activities worth mentioning is a monograph by Seppo Poutanen and Anne Kovalainen: *Skills, Creativity and Innovation in the Digital Platform Era: Analyzing the New Reality of Professions and Entrepreneurship*, published by Routledge. The book brings together important research areas on professions, platforms, and entrepreneurship, and the various dimensions of what platformization means to work and to professions in contemporary societies.

The annual report is evidencing the key activities of the past year of 2023. Based on last year's achievements and activities there are highly interesting things to follow in the future both in research and in WORK2025 conference. We look very much forward to the opportunity to hear from you, and to collaborate with colleagues on contemporary, important research topics.

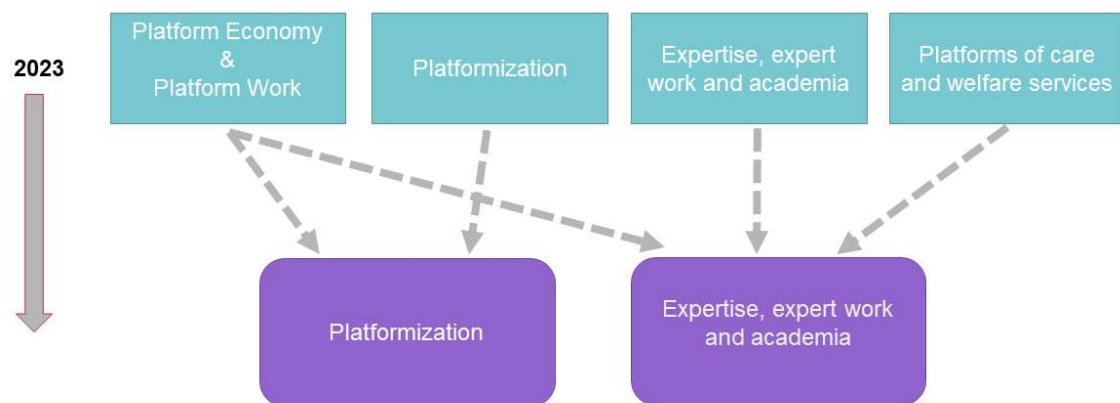
Anne Kovalainen

## RESEARCH WITH IMPACT

### RESEARCH AREAS

TCLS's research themes focus on the analysis of the relationships between expertise, new forms of work and their organization into forms of entrepreneurship, and more widely, to platform economy, digital economy and technology. Social science research in science and technology, and in society and economy are central in research. These include ethical and critical aspects of digital societies. The Unit's research themes relate to university's crosscutting thematic area of "Future technologies and the digital world".

### TCLS Research Areas 2023-



### INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

Unit's researchers collaborate with colleagues from Harvard and Northeastern Universities (US), and KU Leuven, Lancaster, Essex and Oslo Universities (Europe) in researching platforms and platformization. An ongoing research project, Digital Society, initiated by collaboration at the Department of Sociology, University of Paderborn and the Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaft, was successful in receiving German Wissenschaftskolleg funding for Finnish researchers (2020/21). Based on their research on platforms, Anne Kovalainen and Seppo Poutanen were invited to collaborate in ESRC -funded project, 'Universities and Unicorns' led by Dr. Janja Komljenovic at Lancaster University (2022-2023).

In 2023 the unit completed the ReGrow research project (2020-22), funded by Business Finland, which studies platforms and innovations as sources of economic growth and the national and international construction of innovation work, together with researchers from ETLA and from Oxford University. The research will continue with the internationally networked research group.

## WORK2023 CONFERENCE

# WORK2023

## Digital Capitalism: Peril and Possibilities

In 2023, TCLS organised the sixth international WORK2023 conference with the theme '*Digital Capitalism: Peril and Possibilities*'. The researchers of TCLS are key actors in the success of the conference and in establishing its global position: Professor Kovalainen as the leader of the scientific committee, Senior Research Fellow Poutanen as a member and brainstormer of the scientific committee, and Coordinator Rautajoki as the leader of the organising group and the person in charge of practical arrangements. The international group of scientific experts was strengthened by inviting Professor Jerry Jacobs (University of Pennsylvania) to the committee. The committee includes also Steven Vallas (Northeastern University), Jill Rubery (University of Manchester) and Silvia Gherardi (University of Trento).

The 2023 conference featured six globally renowned researchers as keynote speakers: professor Virginia Doellgast (Cornell University, US), senior research fellow Alex Wood (University of Oxford, UK), professor Valeria Pulignano (KU Leuven, BE), associate professor Niels van Doorn (Amsterdam University, NL), professor Mary Blair-Loy (UC San Diego, US) and associate professor Erin Cech (University of Michigan, US). The 18 research streams of the conference, with several sessions over three days accommodated altogether 198 researchers, of whom 45% were from abroad (29 countries).

# 6

international  
keynotes

# 18

multidisciplinary  
streams

# 198

international  
participants

The conference was organized as hybrid conference at the University of Turku (onsite) and Oxford Abstracts Conference platform (online) on 23-25 August. The WORK2023 Book of Abstracts is available at [university's UTUPub publication database](#). The conference was supported by Foundation of Economic Education (LSR), Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (TSV), The Finnish Work Environment Fund (TSR) and the Turku School of Economics Foundation.



<https://work2023.fi/>



<https://x.com/WORK2025fi/>



Alex J. Wood



Valeria Pulignano



Niels van Doorn

## HIGHLIGHTS OF PUBLICATIONS AND PROJECTS

2	1	3	3	7
RESEARCHERS	JUFO-3 MONOGRAPH	JUFO-3 ARTICLES	JUFO-2 ARTICLES	JUFO-1 ARTICLES

**Digital Society** See for more: <https://digitalsociety.fi/>.

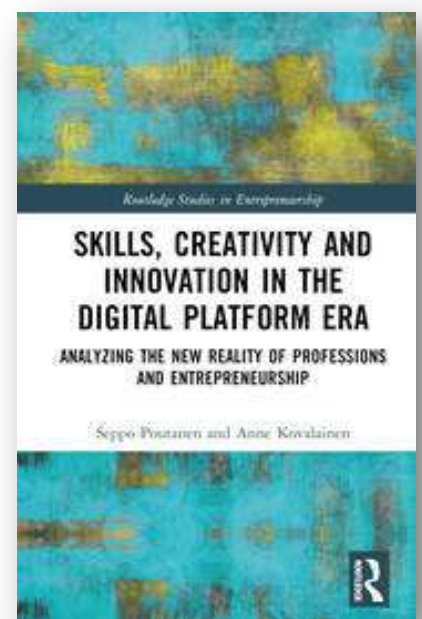
Digital Society project approaches digitalization by examining features of platformized expertise, its pitfalls, fractures and possibilities. One of the project publications in 2023 addressed the digital divide in Finnish society, and librarians' decisive roles in navigating the digital divide in Finnish society. The article *Librarians bridging the digital divide: Experiences from Finland* was published in the Journal of Access Services by Emmi Lehtinen, Seppo Poutanen and Anne Kovalainen in 2023.

Lehtinen, E., Poutanen, S. & Kovalainen, A. (2023) *Journal of Access Services* 20(3-4)  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15367967.2023.2292210>

## SKILLS, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN THE DIGITAL PLATFORM ERA: ANALYZING THE NEW REALITY OF PROFESSIONS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Senior research fellow, associate professor Seppo Poutanen and professor Anne Kovalainen published a monograph, *Skills, Creativity and Innovation in the Digital Platform Era: Analyzing the New Reality of Professions and Entrepreneurship* in the end of 2023.

The book brings together two important research areas: the separate research topics of professions, platforms, and entrepreneurship, and the various dimensions of what platformization means to work and to professions in contemporary societies. One of the most noteworthy global aspects in current societies is the intensifying presence of technology, to the extent that we can talk about the omnipotence of technologies, a kind of technological imperative that prevails in societies. This new type of technological imperative emerges in the working lives of practicing professionals from medical doctors to lawyers and from teachers to preachers. Platforms have become a powerful actor as enablers and reorganizers of work, creating new types of inequalities but also expanding the market relations for new professions such as social influencers. How do platforms govern and shape work and lead to new questions concerning organizing of work and professions? These are few of the key questions Poutanen and Kovalainen explore in this profound and insightful book. The book is published by Routledge, 2023.



## VISITORS AND VISITS – KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Professor Valeria Pulignano (KU Leuven, BE) and Professor Emeritus Steven Vallas (Northeastern University, US) resided as visiting professors at TCLS in 2023. Pulignano and Vallas, together with the unit's researchers study the technology and work issues of the platform economy.

Professor Valeria Pulignano is Professor in Sociology at the Centre for Sociological Research (CESO) - KU Leuven. She has published extensively on topics related to the sociology of work, comparative European industrial (employment) relations, labour markets and inequality, working conditions, job quality and workers' voice. Pulignano is PI of ERC Advanced Grant ResPecTMe, (2021-24) where she studies forms of unpaid labour in the platform economy, creative industries and care.

Professor Emeritus Steven Vallas is Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University in Boston. Most of his research is concerned with the transformation of work, struggles over new technologies, and responses to the demands of the new economy. He is currently working on US NSF-funded project analyzing the algorithmic workplace, focusing on ride hailing, home maintenance, courier, and caregiving platforms.

Associate professor, senior research fellow Seppo Poutanen visited University of Roskilde and University of Lancaster in 2023. He gave presentations at SCANCOR Harvard University seminar 4.5.2023, at University of Lancaster ESRC-project seminar 18.5.202 and at ATINER conference in July. He chaired two keynote sessions and a research stream at WORK2023 23-25.8.2023.

Professor Anne Kovalainen visited University of Roskilde and University of Lancaster in 2023. She gave keynote presentation at Roskilde University 3.11.2023, and presentations at SCANCOR Harvard University seminar 5.5.2023, at IAFFE Annual Conference 6.7.2023, chaired three keynote sessions at WORK2023 and a research stream at WORK2023 23-25.8.2023.

## INSPIRING LEARNING EXPERIENCES

### MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN WORK, WORKING LIFE AND HR RESEARCH (TYHE)

**915**

accomplished  
ECTS

**10**

bachelor and master  
level courses

**40**

completed  
study modules

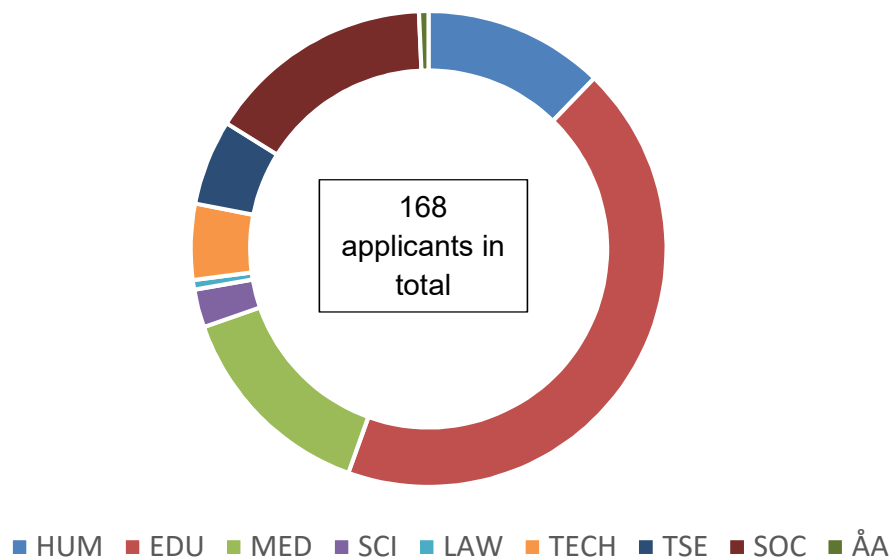
TCLS organises the Multidisciplinary Study Module in Working Life and Human Resources (TYHE) and coordinates the teaching modules of faculties of the University of Turku and Åbo Akademi University as part of TYHE. All teaching at TCLS is research-based, diverse, wide-ranging and multidisciplinary. TYHE minor subject includes courses produced by all faculties, and



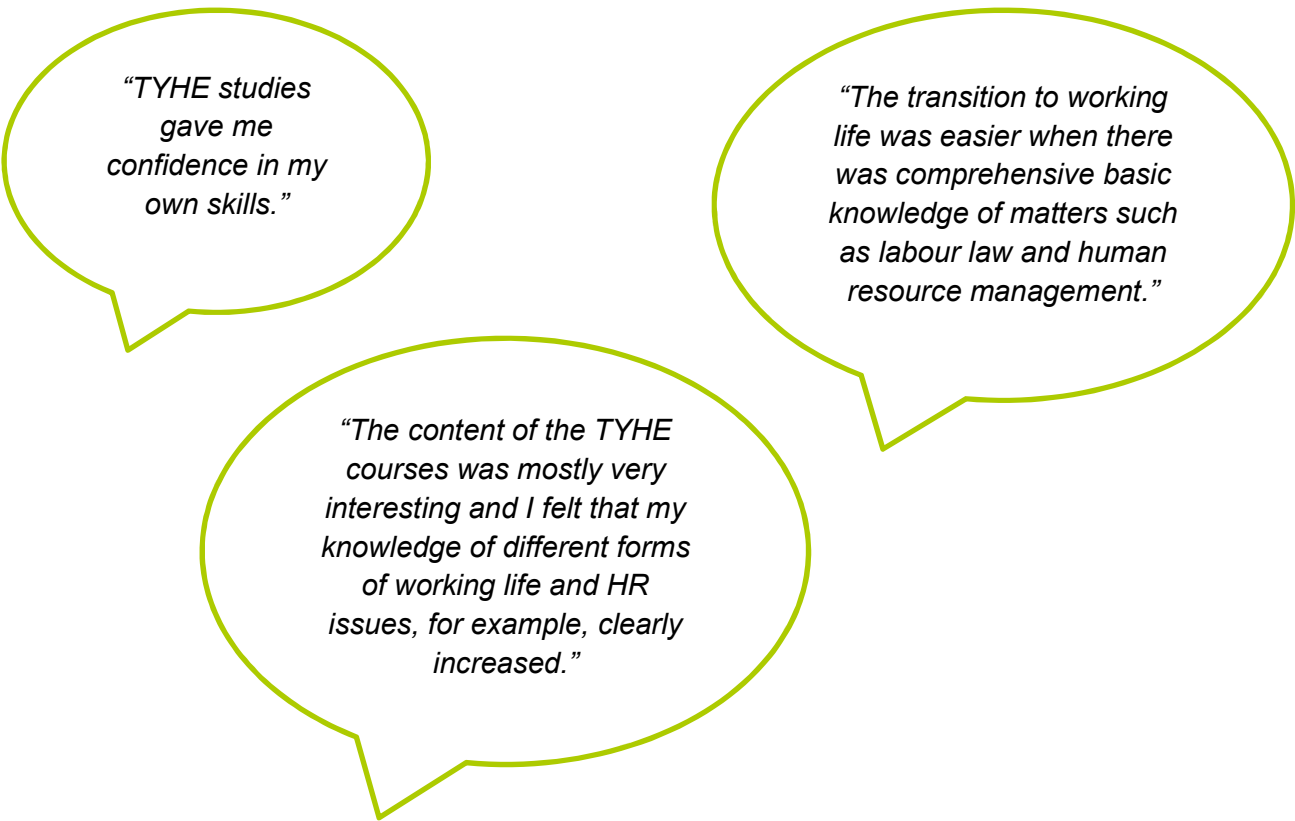
teachers with different scientific backgrounds. The teachers are faculty professors, teachers, researchers and experts. In addition, practitioners and alumni are involved. Together, the group produces a diverse, research-based and up-to-date understanding of working life, work, its different forms, changes in workplaces and organisations.

TYHE has established its place in multidisciplinary university studies curriculum. TCLS organizes an application process to TYHE studies each year. TYHE has become truly successful and interesting for students. The annual number of applicants from all faculties exceeds the intake. This is a concrete indicator of TYHE's societal impact and study success.

### TYHE applicants per faculties in 2023



The 2022-24 TYHE curriculum includes courses on new forms of work and working life and digitalisation based on current research. New forms of working life are present in teaching, as is the continuous learning. The curriculum emphasises diverse methods of learning, as well as distance and online teaching, in accordance with the university's policies for teaching. TYHE studies respond to the growing need for information on working life and, in addition to knowledge, provide students with multidisciplinary skills on a broader basis than their own major studies. Multidisciplinarity offers students opportunities to network, study and collaborate across faculty boundaries.



*“TYHE studies gave me confidence in my own skills.”*

*“The transition to working life was easier when there was comprehensive basic knowledge of matters such as labour law and human resource management.”*

*“The content of the TYHE courses was mostly very interesting and I felt that my knowledge of different forms of working life and HR issues, for example, clearly increased.”*

## **NETWORKING FOR EDUCATION**

### **NetForWork cooperation**

TCLS cooperated actively with all other Finnish universities to launch NetForWork, a dynamic network dedicated to providing comprehensive, multidisciplinary working life education. NetForWork's mission is to serve undergraduate and graduate students, PhD students, educators, and lifelong learners. The vision is to provide work-related studies for students across various educational levels. The network will start functioning in 2024.

### **EIASM-KATAJA cooperation**

TCLS researchers Anne Kovalainen and Seppo Poutanen organised and led a joint EIASM-KATAJA Seminar EDEN DOCTORAL SEMINAR ON QUALITATIVE METHODS IN BUSINESS RESEARCH. The seminar brought together doctoral students from eight different European countries, aiming to broaden the participants' knowledge concerning the various qualitative approaches, as well as to outline their potential for doctoral dissertations in the area of business research in various European countries. The seminar was organized on 22-24 May 2023 at Turku School of Economics, and coordinated by Marja Rautajoki, coordinator of TCLS.

## INTERACTION WITH SOCIETY

### SEMINARS

TCLS organizes annually public lectures and seminars on various topics in the field of working life research. In 2023, the unit organized a research seminar 'Role of the Board in CEO Succession: Do Female Members Favor Female Candidates?' on November 9<sup>th</sup> at Turku School of Economics. The guest lecturer of the seminar was research Advisor Petri Rouvinen from ETLA Economic Research.

### POPULARIZED PUBLICATIONS

Finnish Library Association published a column by project research Emmi Lehtinen and senior researcher Seppo Poutanen on their research on the work of librarians and how they bridge the digital divide. In various countries, public libraries play a crucial role in supporting citizens' access to public online services. In Finland, libraries provide both traditional library services and digital support to help customers access their personal bank accounts and health records. Qualitative thematic analysis revealed situational dimensions of digital care work, which encompasses ethical and emotional aspects.

Read more on Kirjastoletti (in Finnish): <https://suomenkirjastoseura.fi/kirjastoletti/kolumni-digineuvonta-on-myos-hoivatyota/>

### SOCIAL MEDIA



<https://x.com/WORK2025fi/>



[https://www.instagram.com/tcls\\_utu](https://www.instagram.com/tcls_utu)



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/tcls-turku-centre-for-labour-studies>

The WORK conference is recognized as high-quality international arena for working life research. The conference promotes the awareness of the University of Turku nationally and internationally and enables discussion between different disciplines. The conference and the University of Turku gained visibility through targeted information internationally and nationally to approximately 3500 recipients, through the university's media releases and in social media 03-09/2023, with an average of 400 views per publication, on conference days more than 2100 views per publication.

## APPENDICES

### KEY PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENCE COMMUNITY RELATIONS

#### National and International Professional Relations

Professor Anne Kovalainen

- The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Member, Selection Committee Member
- The Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, Member
- CORPUS project (Oslo University) funded by the Research Council of Norway 2019–2023, Advisory Board Member
- Academy of Finland, Strategic Research Council, Member
- National expert group for research on artificial intelligence and digitalisation 2021–2022, Member, Ministry of Finance
- ASA, ISA, Member

Senior Research Fellow Seppo Poutanen

- National Science Foundation (USA), Member of the Evaluation Faculty
- European Science Foundation, Member of the College of Review Panel
- International Sociological Association (ISA), European Sociological Association (ESA), British Sociological Association (BSA), American Sociological Association (ASA) and Society for Social Studies of Science (4S), Member

Coordinator, doctoral researcher Marja Rautajoki

- Langnet, a network for doctoral programmes in language studies, Member
- Langnet's Discourse research theme group, Coordinator

#### University Administration

Professor Anne Kovalainen

- Director and Chair of Board at Turku Centre for Labour Studies, University of Turku
- Member of Board at Turku University Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Turku (TIAS)
- Chair and member of the organising group of the University Profiling area in Digital Futures
- Member of Strategic Research Council at the Research Council of Finland

Senior Research Fellow Seppo Poutanen

- Member of Faculty level Expert Group at TCLS, University of Turku

Coordinator, doctoral researcher Marja Rautajoki

- Social Interaction (YVV) and Communications Working Group, School of Languages and Translation Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Member

### KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

## Positions of Trust

Professor Anne Kovalainen

- Editorial board memberships: International Small Business Journal, Research in the Sociology of Work, Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research, Work in the Global Economy
- Expert assignments: RAE University of Vaasa research assessment exercise, Chair of the School of Management international evaluation panel; member of the University of Vaasa evaluation panel; Expert for Belgian National Research Council on several research programmes; Expert for KU Leuven University on Rector's Funding Scheme; Member of the evaluation committee at Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

Senior Research Fellow Seppo Poutanen

- Editorial board membership: Work in the Global Economy
- Expert assignments for international publishers: Evaluation of book manuscript for Springer
- Referee statements on abstracts for several international conferences: in 2023: WORK2023 conference, RENT Conference 2023, ATINER Conference 2023.

## Activities in conferences, workshops and seminars

Professor Anne Kovalainen

- Chair of the organising committee at WORK2023
- Presentations at SCANCOR Harvard University, IAFFE and NSA Conferences

Senior Research Fellow Seppo Poutanen

- Organising committee member at WORK2023
- Scientific committee member at WORK2023
- Presentations at ATINER, NSA, SCANCOR, Harvard University and ICARSH Conferences

Coordinator, doctoral researcher Marja Rautajoki

- Organising committee member at WORK2023
- Presentations at WORK2023, AfinLA and Nordisco Conferences

## Scientific Activities of Visiting Professors

Professor Valeria Pulignano

- PI for ERC funded RESPECTME grant project
- Francqui Stichting Research Professor
- Principal Coordinator of the RN on Work, Employment and Industrial Relations, the European Sociological Association
- Member of Leuven.AI - KU Leuven University Institute for Artificial Intelligence
- Member of the Inter-university Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT)

Professor Steven Vallas

- Editorial work for 'Research in the Sociology of Work', ASA publication
- Member, Program Committee, ASA section Occupations, Organizations, and Work
- Member, Editorial Board of Work and Occupations
- Member, Senate Committee on Academic Protocols Governing Interdisciplinary Appointments, Northeastern University, US
- Co-chair, Graduate Committee, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Northeastern University, US

## FUTURE EVENTS

### WORK2025 CONFERENCE

Building on the success of the interdisciplinary conferences WORK2013, WORK2015, WORK2017, WORK2019, WORK2021 and WORK2023, WORK2025 will be an international forum for the exchange of research and experience among researchers and practitioners in the fields of work and working life. The conference will take place on 20-22 August 2025 in Turku Finland and online.

## KEY PUBLICATIONS

Poutanen, S., & Kovalainen, A. 2023. Skills, creativity and innovation in the digital platform era: Analyzing the new reality of professions and entrepreneurship. Routledge: New York.

Pulignano, V., Marà, C., Franke, M., & Muszynski, K. 2023. Informal employment on domestic care platforms: a study on the individualisation of risk and unpaid labour in mature market contexts. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 29(3), 323-338.

<https://doi-org.ezproxy.utu.fi/10.1177/10242589231177353>

Lehtinen, E., Poutanen, S., & Kovalainen, A. 2023. Librarians bridging the digital divide: Experiences from Finland. *Journal of Access Services*, 20(3-4), 120-140.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15367967.2023.2292210>

Mangan, D., Muszyński, K., & Pulignano, V. 2023. The platform discount: Addressing unpaid work as a structural feature of labour platforms. *European Labour Law Journal*, 14(4), 541-569.

<https://doi-org.ezproxy.utu.fi/10.1177/20319525231210550>

Vallas, S. and H. Johnston. 2023. Coercion, Consent, and Class Consciousness: How Workers Respond to Amazon's Production Regime. *Socius*, 9. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.neu.edu/10.1177/23780231231216286>

<https://doi-org.ezproxy.neu.edu/10.1177/23780231231216286>

Lehtinen, E. & Poutanen, S. 2023. Digineuvonta on myös hoivatyötä. *Kirjastolehti*, 15.8.2023.

<https://suomenkirjastoseura.fi/kirjastolehti/kolumni-digineuvonta-on-myos-hoivatyota/>

Pulignano, V., Grimshaw, D., Domecka, M., & Vermeerbergen, L. 2023. Why does unpaid labour vary among digital labour platforms? Exploring socio-technical platform regimes of

worker autonomy. human relations, 00187267231179901. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.utu.fi/10.1177/00187267231179901>

Schor, J., Tirrell, C. & Vallas, S. 2023. Consent and Contestation: How Platform Workers Reckon with the Risks of Gig Labor. *Work, Employment and Society*, 0(0). <https://doi-org.ezproxy.neu.edu/10.1177/09500170231199404>

Tapio, I., Jokisaari, M., Hyrkkänen, U. & Karppi, M. 2023. Projektitiimien jaetun johtamisen, toimivuuden ja hyvinvoinnin kehittyminen. Turun kauppakorkeakoulun julkaisuja, sarja E-2:2023. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-249-604-1>

Vallas, S. & Johnston, H. 2023. Labor Unbound: Assessing the Current Surge in Labor Activism. *Work and Occupations* 50, 3: 376-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07308884231162929>

Johnston, H., Mommadova, Y., Vallas, S. & Schor, J. 2023. Delivering difference: 'Unbelonging' among US platform parcel delivery workers. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economies and Society* 16, 2, July 2023: 303-318. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsac046>

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