

TL;DR

- Event: ICA post conference
- Theme: Labor and Play in Platform Society
- Place: Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic (hybrid)
- Dates: June 18, 2025
- Registration: Free
- Deadline: February 7, 2025

In this post conference, we will address the various forms of platform labor that take shape in the context of games and play.

Scholarship on ‘creator culture’ (Cunningham & Craig, 2021) and digital labor on social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitch, and TikTok has shown how platforms infrastructure and governance condition the work of content creators (Bishop, 2018; Gregersen & Ørmen, 2021; Kumar, 2019). For example, while YouTube videos prioritize followers and TikTok prioritizes content, advertisements, and subscriptions (subbing) all determine how content creators work and broadcast, underlining the ideological nature of these platforms by pushing the exploitation of laboring bodies further.

On streaming services such as Twitch and YouTube, content creators’ ability to build a following has been referred to as viewer or audience engagement. These strategies can range from streamers actively encouraging emotional engagement by using humor, adapting to viewer wishes, or responsivity in rapid succession on the side of the content creator. Media scholars perceive this as aspirational (Duffy, 2022), hope (Kuehn & Corrigan, 2013), or relational labor (Baym, 2018) that can be both physically and emotionally taxing. For game scholars, this is also the platform convergence of labor and play, as in the pursuit of interactivity with an audience, creators find themselves increasingly engaged in a mode of gamification (Deterding et al., 2011), such as setting donation targets sometimes in competition with other streamers (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019). These strategies can be viewed as monetization attempts or seen as ‘gamification-from-below’ where creators gamify their lives to make it through. But one of the most pressing questions is, how does this configuration of play and labor constitute working? What existing worker vocabulary, such as gig-work, freelancing, entrepreneur, or platform work akin to annotation or Amazon Mechanical Turk workers adequately describe digital workers at the intersection of play and labor?

This preconference invites scholars to reflect and discuss the configuration of labor, games, and play in a contemporary platform society defined by neoliberal markets and global exchanges of capital and labor.

While the outline above uses streaming services as an example, we welcome submissions addressing all kinds of work that addresses labor and/or play in, while not limited to, the context of games

Paper topics could include (but are not limited to):

- Platform monetization strategies
- Gamification of digital labor
- Laborification of play

- Labor in creator culture
- Platform governance
- Exploitation of Digital Labor
- Platform algorithms
- Platform policies and creator autonomy

Submission instructions:

Please submit an abstract of 250-500 words that provides an overview of the presentation's topic and includes a title, and reference list. Submissions should include names, institutions, contact details of all authors, and indicate whether the submission is for remote or in-person attendance.

Submission deadline: February 7, 2025

Submissions sent to: daniel.nielsen@fsv.cuni.cz

Organizers:

- Alessandro Gandini, Milan University
- Gaia Casagrande, Milan University
- Anne Mette Thorhauge, Copenhagen University
- Daniel Nielsen, Charles University, in Prague

References

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