Call for Papers

Thinking the City through Work: Blurring Boundaries of Production and Reproduction in the age of Digital Capitalism

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We are looking for papers to be published as part of a Special Issue planned for “CITY. Analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action”.

Work can hardly be understood as a stable construct and its definitions are constantly undergoing revision. It is shaped over time and space and is subject to constant struggles over claims and distributions by a variety of actors. Oftentimes, a distinction is made between productive and reproductive work, which are respectively assigned to particular spaces and spheres: public/work vs. private/home. Feminist (urban) theory has challenged this dualistic approach, but so too has the increasing digitisation of urban economies and everyday life today. With the emergence of digital technologies, work, as we see it, is increasingly difficult to classify neatly to either the sphere of production or reproduction. Rather, these boundaries, once seen as clear-cut, now seem to blur or at times, even disappear altogether.

When spaces of reproduction and places of work become increasingly interchangeable, new questions emerge. For example: what skills and resources are required to make a living? How, and to what extent, are new forms of work sharpening social and spatial inequalities? Or do they, on the contrary, create access to income and infrastructure to formerly-marginalized citizens?

More so, the moments in which we produce value are not as easily to determine. As opposed to traditional labour structures it is often much harder to identify and distinguish between work and leisure activities under increasing digitisation. Thus, to understand socio-economic inequalities, we also need to be more attentive to where and how value in the city is created.

By thinking the city through work, this special issue seeks to elucidate and discuss the increasing muddying of boundaries between spheres of production and reproduction in contemporary cities. In so doing, the special issue further challenges the conceptual divide that is being put increasingly more into question with the rise of digital capitalism and its resulting work conditions. We aim to critically investigate how these blurring boundaries unfold in the city both on a social and spatial level. In this way, this special issue invites scholars to further challenge and rethink the ways we conceptualise work in urban studies.

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We welcome submissions of abstracts (~500 words) for empirical papers (between 4,000 and 8,000 words) that unveil the social and spatial impact of new organisational forms of digital capitalism on the spheres of production and reproduction. Topics include but are not limited to:

- New forms of value production: How and where is value created in the city when the lines between economies of the domestic and the market are increasingly blurred?
- Struggle over the definition(s), forms of recognition as well as symbolic and emotive meaning(s) of work
- New forms of socio-spatial inequalities that emerge with the blurring boundaries of production and reproduction spheres: Who are the actors? Who is left out and why? And to what extent do we observe (new) gender inequalities?
- The role of digital technologies in shaping the blurring of boundaries of production and reproduction

Deadline for abstract submissions is March 24th 2019. Please send the abstract to workincities@gmail.com. If you have any queries or would like to receive further information please do not hesitate to contact us. Full paper submission is due by July 14th.