



Call for Papers

Special Issue on “Subjectivities in the Digital Economy”

Istanbul University Journal of Sociology

2025 (Volume 45/ Issue 2)

Editors

M. Fatih Karakaya (Assist. Prof., Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey)

Hairou Jin (PhD, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK)

Call for Abstracts

The Editorial Board of *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology* invites submissions for a special issue exploring “Subjectivities in the Digital Economy”. This issue seeks to interrogate the ways in which digital technologies and platforms transform individual and collective identities, labour practices, cultural values, and power dynamics through economic life. The digital mediums’ reconstruction of the boundaries of work, consumption, and interaction, bring new forms of subjectivity to the horizon in responding to topics such as algorithmic governance, platform capitalism, and data-driven decision-making. While these forces shape selfhood in ways that reinforce market logics, they also open up spaces for negotiation, frictions, and resistance, pointing to the possibility of alternative digital futures. Subjectivities in the digital economy are multifaceted and contested. This issue aims to contribute to the sociological investigations of the subjectivities within digital economy, with theoretical and applied studies. In this context, we welcome contributions addressing (but not limited to) the following themes:

- Labour and subjectivity in platform economies (e.g., gig work, creator economies, and digital entrepreneurship).
- Emotional and affective labour in digital economies of care, education, and community
- Power dynamics in the coming of algorithms and artificial intelligence
- Surveillance, automation, artificial intelligence: digital utopias/dystopias
- Intersectionality in digital economies: race, gender, class, and other axes of difference.
- Historical and comparative analyses of subjectivities in economic transformations.

The studies in this issue will question the present and the future of subjectivities in the digital economy to enhance our understanding of the complex relationality of human and non-human agents in society.

If you wish to contribute, please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words to sosyolojidergi@istanbul.edu.tr by 15 April 2025. Decisions will be made by 30 April 2025 and full



article submission is expected by 30 June 2025. There will be two anonymously independent reviewers and a double-blind review process. The issue is expected to publish in December 2025.

Introduction

The digital economy is not just about online transactions or the role of technology in economic activities – it is a broader transformation of how value is created, distributed, and experienced in society. It encompasses the ways digital infrastructures, platforms, data, and algorithmic systems reshape labor, consumption, finance, governance, and eventually social relations. It is also a space deeply intertwined with human subjectivities, shaping and being shaped by our individual experiences, perceptions, and identities. From a sociological perspective, the digital economy is embedded in specific cultural, political, and historical contexts, meaning that it cannot be understood purely in terms of efficiency, productivity, or growth. Instead, digital economies create new forms of labor (e.g., gig work, influencer economies, livestreaming as an economic activity), redefine notions of ownership (e.g., digital goods, NFTs, platform enclosures), and alter power structures (e.g., the role of Big Tech in shaping economic policies and individual agency).

The diverse forms and consequences of digitalization in everyday life across different societies, as highlighted in *Digital Anthropology* (Horst & Miller, 2012) has since developed into a new research branch. It builds on studies of social media and online communities that examine how the internet reshapes social relations, identity formation, and suggests new ways of living (Codagnone et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2016; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). Therefore, it is urgent for us to understand the question of how digital technologies are reshaping human relationships, trust, and exploitation, as part of the data-driven, algorithm-accelerated, tech-giant-led form of capitalism (Guyer, 2016; Knox & Nafus, 2018; Sadowski, 2020; Williams, 2018; Zuboff, 2019).

One of the most significant shifts in the digital economy is the emergence of the “entrepreneurial self” (Bröckling, 2015). Digital platforms, such as Uber, Airbnb, and Etsy, encourage individuals to see themselves as independent entrepreneurs, responsible for their own success (Foucault, 2008). This subjectivity is rooted in the neoliberal ethos of self-reliance and individualism, where workers are expected to market their skills, optimize their productivity, and navigate precarious labor conditions (Harvey, 2005; Standing, 2011). While this model offers flexibility, it often obscures the power dynamics between platform owners and workers, leaving individuals to bear the risks and uncertainties of the gig economy (Smicek, 2016; De Stefano, 2016).

The rise of the gig economy has led to a fragmentation of traditional employment structures, with individuals increasingly relying on short-term contracts and freelance work (Healy, Nicholson, & Pekarek, 2017). This shift can offer flexibility and autonomy, but it also raises concerns about job security, fair wages, and workers’ rights (Wood et al., 2019; De Stefano, 2016). The subjectivities of gig workers are often marked by precarity and uncertainty, as they navigate a landscape characterized by intense competition and algorithmic management (Standing, 2011; Vallas & Schor, 2020;



McDonald & O'Brien, 2021). Work in the digital economy, particularly in gig and platform labor, transforms the experience of employment. Unlike traditional workers with stable roles, gig workers must continuously perform self-branding, seeking visibility in algorithmically controlled markets (van Doorn, 2017). Their subjectivity is shaped by platform rating systems, automated feedback, and precarious employment conditions, often fostering an entrepreneurial self-image that masks structural inequalities (Standing, 2011; De Stefano, 2016). The worker is positioned as an independent agent while remaining subject to platform control, blurring the line between autonomy and algorithmic governance (Srnicek, 2016; Zwick et al., 2018).

Moreover, social media and digital economy further intensified the role of consumption in self-making (Bourdieu, 2006). Social media platforms, for instance, have turned users into “prosumers” – both producers and consumers of content (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Individuals curate their online personas, commodifying their lives and experiences to gain visibility and validation (Fuchs, 2017; Duffy, 2017). This performative aspect of digital subjectivity blurs the line between authenticity and commodification, as personal identities lean towards commercialisation (Couldry, 2012). The pressure to maintain an idealized online presence can lead to anxiety, self-objectification, and a fragmented sense of self (Goffman, 1959; Turkle, 2011; Marwick, 2013).

Social media, in this sense, encourages individuals to present themselves as brands (Goffman, 1959). From influencers to freelancers, success in the digital economy often depends on the ability to construct a marketable persona (Duffy, 2017; Marwick, 2013). This shift erodes traditional boundaries between personal and professional life, making self-expression a commercial asset (Gershon, 2017; Hearn, 2008, Miller et.al, 2016). The subject in the digital economy is not only a consumer but also a product –monetized through data extraction and surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). Datafication further complicates subjectivities in the digital economy. As individuals generate vast amounts of data through their online activities, they are increasingly reduced to data points (Cheney-Lippold, 2017; Tufekci, 2015). This data-driven subjectivity raises concerns about autonomy and agency, as individuals are shaped by opaque systems that prioritize corporate interests over personal well-being (Gillespie, 2014; Pasquale, 2015). The commodification of personal data also challenges notions of privacy and ownership, as individuals lose control over how their information is used (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Andrejevic, 2014).

Despite the tendency to impose market-driven subjectivities in digital economies, individuals and communities also resist and redefine their roles within it. Alternative economies, such as platform cooperatives and decentralized networks, challenge dominant models by emphasizing collective ownership and democratic decision-making (Srnicek, 2016). Additionally, critical digital literacy movements encourage users to reclaim agency over their data and online identities (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Noble, 2018). Furthermore, the digital economy is characterized by algorithmic governance. Platforms and services employ algorithms to personalize experiences, filter information, and even influence decision-making (Gillespie, 2014; Pasquale, 2015). These algorithms, while designed to enhance efficiency and user satisfaction, can also perpetuate biases and create echo chambers,



reinforcing existing social inequalities (Noble, 2018; O'Neil, 2016). Our subjectivities are thus shaped by the invisible hand of algorithms, which can subtly nudge us towards certain choices and limit our exposure to diverse perspectives (Sunstein, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). For example, some argue that credit scoring is a digital market device that reproduces existing inequalities, violates privacy, and legitimizes these effects through claims of objectivity and formality (Leyshon & Thrift, 1999; Poon, 2009; Langley, 2014; McClanahan, 2014; Pasquale, 2015; Kear, 2017).

Beyond consumption and production in the era of digital economy, digitalisation also accelerates the process of financialization that orient individuals and households toward risk management and self-reliance in daily life to promote certain narratives of personal success, financial stability, and autonomy (Langley, 2007; Mulcahy, 2017). Financial subjectivity encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own well-being by adopting an entrepreneurial stance toward risk, leading to the emergence of the so-called “financial subject.” However, financial subjectivity is not limited to laypeople. Just as click-screen trading (Knorr-Cetina & Bruegger, 2000, 2002) transformed trader subjectivity in relation to pit trading (Zaloom, 2006), automated trading similarly reconfigures trader subjectivity (Borch & Lange, 2017). Since traders continuously interact with technological systems, technology, in turn, shapes and redefines trader subjectivity.

In conclusion, subjectivities in the digital economy are deeply entangled with algorithmic governance, platform labor, and the commodification of identity.

About Istanbul University Journal of Sociology

Istanbul University Journal of Sociology is published by the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University, which was founded in 1914, and has made significant contributions to the development of sociology as a scientific discipline in Turkey. *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology*, the first issue of which was published in 1917, is a peer-reviewed academic journal published biannually and indexed in the Web of Science Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) and TÜBİTAK ULAKBİM TR-Dizin (For more information, see <http://iupress.istanbul.edu.tr/en/journal/iusd/home>).

About Article Submission

Submissions will be accepted in Turkish or English via Istanbul University Press editorial portal (<https://editorial.istanbul.edu.tr>) until June 30, 2025. For questions to the editors, please contact M. Fatih Karakaya (muhammed.karakaya@istanbul.edu.tr) and/or Hairuo Jin (hj347@cam.ac.uk). For technical questions, please email sosyolojidergi@istanbul.edu.tr



References

- Andrejevic, M. (2014). Surveillance and alienation in the online economy. *Marketing Theory*, 14(1), 35-49.
- Borch, C. & Lange, A. C. (2017). High-frequency trader subjectivity: emotional attachment and discipline in an era of algorithms. *Socio-Economic Review*, 15(2), 283–306.
- Bourdieu, P. (2006). The forms of capital. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J-A. Dillabough & A. H. Halsey (Eds). *Education, Globalisation and Social Change* (pp. 105-118). Oxford University Press.
- Bröckling, U. (2015). *The Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating a New Type of Subject*. Sage.
- Cheney-Lippold, J. (2017). *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves*. NYU Press.
- Codagnone, C., Matthews, J., & Karatzogianni, A. (2018). *Platform Economics Digital Labour Organization in the Sharing Economy*. Emerald Publishing.
- Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Polity Press.
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). *The Costs of Connection: How Data is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford University Press.
- De Stefano, V. (2016). The rise of the ‘just-in-time’ workforce: on-demand work, crowdwork, and labor protection in the gig economy. *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal*, 37(3), 471-504.
- Duffy, B. E. (2017). *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work*. Yale University Press.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Michel Foucault on Neoliberal Governmentality*. Lecture Series, 1978-79.
- Fuchs, C. (2017). *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. Sage Publications.
- Gershon, I. (2017). *Down and Out in the New Economy: How People Find (or Don't Find) Work Today*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. Boczkowski, & K. Foot (Eds.), *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society* (pp. 167-194). MIT Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books.
- Guyer, J. I. (2016). *Legacies, Logics, Logistics: Essays in the Anthropology of the Platform Economy*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Haggerty, K. & Ericson, R. (2000). The surveillant assemblage. *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(4), 605-622.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.



- Healy, J., Nicholson, D., & Pekarek, A. (2017). The gig economy: a critical introduction. *Labour & Industry: A Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work*, 27(1), 10-28.
- Hearn, A. (2008). "Meat, mask, burden": probing the contours of the branded self. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8(2), 197-217.
- Horst, H. A., & Miller, D. (Eds.). (2012). *Digital anthropology* (Engl. ed). Berg.
- Kear, M. (2017). Playing the credit score game: algorithms, 'positive' data and the personification of financial objects. *Economy and Society*, 46(3-4), 346-368.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. & Bruegger, U. (2000). The market as an object of attachment: exploring postsocial relations in financial markets. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 25, 141-168.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. & Bruegger, U. (2002). Traders' engagement with markets: a post-social relationship. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19, 161-185.
- Knox, H., & Nafus, D. (2018). *Ethnography for a Data-Saturated World*. Manchester University Press.
- Langley, P. (2007). Uncertain subjects of Anglo-American financialization. *Cultural Critique*, 65, 67-91.
- Langley, P. (2014). Equipping entrepreneurs: consuming credit and credit scores. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 17(5), 448-467.
- Leyshon, A. & Thrift, N. (1999). Lists come alive: electronic systems of knowledge and the rise of credit-scoring in retail banking. *Economy and Society*, 28(3), 434-466.
- Marwick, A. E. (2013). *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. Yale University Press.
- McClanahan, A. (2014). Bad credit: the character of credit scoring. *Representations*, 126(1), 31-57.
- McDonald, P., & O'Brien, K. (2021). Gig work, precarity, and subjectivity: workers' rights in the age of digital labor. *Journal of Labor and Society*, 24(2), 163-179.
- Miller, D., Sinanan, Jolynna, Wang, Xinyuan, McDonald, Tom, Haynes, Nell, Costa, Elisabetta, Spyer, Juliano, Venkatraman, Shriram, & Nicolescu, Razvan. (2016). *How the World Changed Social Media*. UCL Press.
- Mulcahy, N. (2017). Entrepreneurial subjectivity and the political economy of daily life in the time of finance. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 20(2), 216-235.
- Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. NYU Press.
- O'Neil, C. (2016). *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. Crown Publishing.
- Pasquale, F. (2015). *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Harvard University Press.



Poon, M. (2009). From New Deal institutions to capital markets: commercial consumer risk scores and the making of subprime mortgage finance. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 34, 654-674.

Ritzer, G., & Jurgenson, N. (2010). Production, consumption, prosumption: the nature of capitalism in the age of the digital economy. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 10(1), 13-36.

Sadowski, J. (2020). *Too Smart: How Digital Capitalism is Extracting Data, Controlling Our Lives, and Taking Over the World*. MIT Press.

Srnicek, N. (2016). *Platform Capitalism*. Polity Press.

Standing, G. (2011). *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Sunstein, C. R. (2017). *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton University Press.

Tufekci, Z. (2015). Algorithmic harms beyond facebook and google: emergent challenges of computational agency. *Weizenbaum Conference*, 1-12.

Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Basic Books.

van Doorn, N. (2017). Platform labour: on the gendered and racialized exploitation of low-paid workers in the gig economy. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(4), 525-539.

Vallas, S. P., & Schor, J. B. (2020). What do we know about the gig economy? *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46, 411-430.

Williams, J. (2018). *Stand Out of Our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Woldoff, R., & Litchfield, R. C. (2021). *Digital Nomads: In Search of Freedom, Community, and Meaningful Work in the New Economy*. Oxford University Press.

Wood, A. J., Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., & Hjorth, I. (2019). Good gig, bad gig: autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy. *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(1), 56-75.

Zaloom, C. (2006). *Out of the Pits: Traders and Technology from Chicago to London*. University of Chicago Press.

Zengler, T. (2014). Personalization and algorithms: the changing landscape of how we do business. *Harvard Business Review*.

Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs.

Zwick, D., Bonsu, S. K., & Darmody, A. (2018). Putting the “sharing” economy to work: a critical examination of the gig economy and its impacts on employment. *Journal of Business Research*, 87, 49-58.