

Special Issue call for Papers

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Full-length Papers deadline: 10.12.2025

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Guest Editors:

1. Dr. Edwin Ambani Ameso, Leipzig University, Germany (edwin.ameso@uni-leipzig.de)
2. Dr. Evans Tindana Awuni, Erfurt University, Germany (evans.awuni@uni-erfurt.de)
3. Dr. Azza Mustafa Ahmed, Cape Town University, South Africa (azza.ahmed@uct.ac.za)
4. Dr. Gift Mwonzora, Erfurt University, Germany (gift.mwonzora@uni-erfurt.de)

Themes:

In an era where digitalization, automation, and artificial intelligence are fundamentally transforming African labour markets. The expansion of digital platforms, mobile applications, and algorithmic management is increasing employment opportunities and creating new income streams throughout the continent. Governments, multilateral organizations, and private sector stakeholders frequently describe this transformation as a catalyst for economic development, positioning digital economies as tools to address structural unemployment, reduce gender disparities, and integrate informal labour markets into more resilient and sustainable systems ([Idowu, 2022](#)). Both governmental and individual perspectives often express optimism about digitalization's potential to overcome systemic economic barriers and persistent job shortages ([Awuni and Kemmerling, 2024](#)).

Although digital platforms are often presented as solutions to employment deficits, they simultaneously create new dependencies on informal and unregulated labour structures ([Anwar and Graham, 2020](#)). This special issue aims to address these complexities by moving beyond simplistic binaries of technological optimism and digital precarity, offering an interdisciplinary analysis of how digital labour markets transform livelihoods, regulatory frameworks, and geopolitical relationships.

This issue is organized around three central themes. The first theme examines how deficits in decent work arise within the digital economy and assesses whether platform labour mitigates or perpetuates informality. The International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda prioritizes fair wages, security, and social protection; however, the majority of African platform workers remain excluded from these protections ([Anker et al., 2003](#)). Although digital labour is often portrayed as a means of escaping informality, this issue critically examines whether platform work restructures informality in ways that reinforce precarious employment or facilitate improved labour conditions. Empirical case studies on wages, working conditions, and access to social protection across digital sectors, such as ride-hailing, content moderation, and digital freelancing, will offer insights into whether Africa's digital workforce is transitioning into formal labour structures or encountering new forms of economic vulnerability ([Blustein et al., 2022](#)).

The **second** theme explores the evolving definitions of occupational citizenship and labour rights within the digital economy. The central argument is that, in Africa, platform-based work undermines traditional protections afforded by contracts, unions, and clearly defined employer responsibilities. Consequently, workers are compelled to develop alternative mechanisms for security and representation, including grassroots organizations and digital unions. This issue critically evaluates whether existing legal and regulatory frameworks adequately protect digital platform workers ([Godwin, 2024](#)).

The **third** theme addresses state imaginaries, the geopolitics of digital labour, and platform capitalism. Africa's digital transformation represents not only a technological change but also a political project shaped by state imaginaries and global economic dynamics ([Jasanoff and Kim, 2013](#)). Governments throughout the continent advocate for digitalization as a means to enhance economic competitiveness and national development, frequently aligning with international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 ([African Union, 2025](#); [United Nations, 2025](#)). This special issue critically analyses how national and regional policies construct digital labour in ways that prioritize economic growth over labour protections. It further examines the impact of foreign technology corporations, venture capital, and development agencies on Africa's digital labour policies, as well as the role of digital platforms in delivering public goods such as education, health, and agriculture ([Ameso, 2024](#); [Jack and Avle, 2021](#)).

This special issue integrates perspectives from political economy, sociology, labour studies, digital anthropology, and development studies to provide a multi-scalar analysis, ranging from worker experiences to policy frameworks and global economic structures. It contends that securing decent work in Africa's digital future constitutes not only a technical challenge but also a political and social imperative. By centering African experiences, institutional responses, and global power relations, this issue aims to make a substantive contribution to reimagining the future of work, justice, and digital labour on the continent. It further seeks to inform academic debates and policy interventions focused on strengthening regulatory frameworks for platform workers, expanding portable social protection models, and developing digital labour policies that strike a balance between innovation and worker protections. Advancing African-led research and advocacy on digital labour is essential for resisting external policy impositions and safeguarding labour rights during Africa's digital transition ([Kreinin and Aigner, 2021](#)).

This special issue builds on discussions from the Point süd workshop in Accra, Ghana held in September 2024 and the 10th European Conference of African Studies (ECAS), held in June 2025 in Prague, Czechia. The panel, titled "*Digitalization and the Future of Decent Work in Africa*," which was co-organized by the guest editors critically examine the evolving landscape of digital labour in Africa. We invite papers that advance the scholarly debates around digitalization offering fresh empirical insights, theoretical advancements, and policy-relevant discussions. As digital platforms restructure work and the meanings of decent work therein.

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How to submit your manuscript

1. Abstracts must be submitted by the 14.11.2025 to the Guest editors
2. Full-length journal papers for should be sent to the Guest editors for internal review afterwards. The Formatting should be in line with Taylor & Francis Journal article requirements.

