

**СЕКЦІЯ 3**  
**СОЦІАЛЬНІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ ТА ІНФОРМАЦІЙНО-ДОКУМЕНТНІ СИСТЕМИ**

*Kateryna Novikova, PhD in Sociology,  
Alcide de Gasperi University of Euroregional Economy*

**PORTFOLIO WORKER IN THE PLATFORM ECONOMY: POSSIBILITIES OF  
SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND THEORIZATON**

The future is here. So far if we take a closer look at the various economists' predictions on the gig economy development in the context of several portfolio types of work as translation, interpreting, copywriting or consultancy let alone professional activities directly connected to the digitalisation of economy and society or IT sector. What we can see is one of the key trends in the global societal and economic development in last several decades. It concerns such phenomenon as a flexible employment. It is crucial not only for job market in its global and local dimensions. This phenomenon is also described within the frames of self-employment, freelance or so-called *portfolio working*. These phenomena have come to the fore as a part of the greater economic development and globalization tendencies. In 2004 the portfolio workers were defined as “independent knowledge workers whose work conditions are inherently inflexible and often mobile” [4].

At this point experts, researchers and practitioners discuss not only that latest Work 4.0 as a new character of labour as well as employment. For the most part, there is Industry 4.0 or ‘economy’ with a bunch of various creative descriptions as ‘platform’, ‘reputation’, ‘gig’, ‘sharing’ or simply ‘new’. The latter has been popular for at least fifteen years already and inspired multiple thorough and critical analyses.

Platform economy do not only lean on some incredible self-organizing capabilities of social – or labour – communities enhanced by advanced technologies, algorithms or even machine learning. Its development goes along with restructuring of capital-labour relations based on the potent tools of advanced information and communication technologies as well as new organizational forms of business enterprises that is network organisation or network enterprise. American sociologist and classical network society theorist Manuel Castells yet in the mid-1990-ties wrote about the transformation of work proposing ‘networkers’, ‘jobless’ and flex-timers’ as main categories to describe labour market in the network or informational society. He then predicted that with no specific agreements on the nature of work and the technological trends fostering various forms of flexibility especially subcontracting and outsourcing the system will generally become multifaceted flexibility for both highly skilled and unskilled workers [1].

It is important that there is a microlevel, which should grab great attention of social scientists and humanities scholars. It concerns a human being and especially his or her professional or work life. This microlevel embraces not only career development but also the meaning of work and career in daily life or so crucial work-life balance. The issues concerning future of work and career trajectories gradually come to the fore of the general social change debates e.g. in the form of ‘jobless future’ predictions or general AI challenges and the danger of future social disruption. Such economic apocalypticism does not though help better understand important characteristics of the mentioned processes that already influence our lives as employees, freelancers or even consumers at this very moment.

In 1999 in the pre-platform times in their analysis of the changes in the British organisational employment that went towards portfolio work Cohen and Mallon presented rather ambiguous picture of bigger professional freedom, needs based flexibility and liberation from organisational constraints, on one hand, and of reconstructing both ideological and structural boundaries with organisations and subsequent insecurity, uncertainty and even lack of social interaction and belonging, on the other [3]. Today thanks to the information and communication technologies ‘portfolio workers’ re-embed

themselves into organisational worlds through platforms creating new mechanisms of cooperation, work ethos, motivation, rules, norms and sanctions.

In addition to technological development working environments and careers alongside also fundamentally changed due to the growing internationalisation of the economy, deregulation of labour markets and appearance of the flatter organisational structures [2]. Contemporary growing platform society enormously draws on our presence online, on our more or less free-will data sharing, reputation building and engagement [5]. Average freelancer will not develop his or her portfolio without the significant presence either in the local geographical or professional community or – that is getting much more frequent – in big online platform ‘communities’. Such communities provide various tools for the reputation check and development of the peer trust. The example of such community is the largest Polish internet community of translators and interpreters of many languages based mainly on facebook.com as well as on the specialized translators’ platform that is proz.com.

The conditions of the platform economy make the meaning of work change a lot. There is a clear tendency of so called creativity pressure and the growth centred on creativity and innovativeness. Platform economy is based not only on ‘creative jobs’. It inspires the need for development of self-entrepreneurial skills or so called “personal success management” even in blue-collar jobs at least those that can be outsourced, ‘gigged’ or ‘platformised’. However, capitalisation on talent or hobbies as well as neoliberal need of ‘pleasure in work’ touched the sector of translators similarly as various other creative professions. Machine translations and automatic translators create additional pressure on translators by lowering rates and making the market even more competitive and tough. At the same time, what is extremely interesting is the way a typical translator works. His or her responses to everyday work challenges, work routine and at the same time need to participate in the community or to self-organize seem to be a good example of possible future responses of most of more or less creative sectors of the global economy. If there is a challenge of the jobless future due to the artificial intelligence, advanced automatization and robotization, society has to develop particular coping strategies concerning employment instability, general insecurity or even social redundancy.

### **The Reference Books:**

1. Castells M. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2000. P. 216 – 297.
2. Clinton M., Totterdell P., Wood S. *A Grounded Theory of Portfolio Working. Experiencing the Smallest of Small Businesses*. *International Small Business Journal*. 2006, Vol. 24 (2). P. 179 – 203.
3. Cohen L., Mallon M. *The Transition from Organizational Employment to Portfolio Working: Perceptions of ‘Boundarylessness’*. In: *Work, Employment and Society*, June 1999, Vol. 13, No. 2, P. 329 – 352.
4. Fenwick T., Mirchandani K. *Race, Gender and Networks in Portfolio Work: Difficult Knowledge*. *Adult Education Research Conference. 2004 Conference Proceedings (Victoria, BC, Canada)*.
5. Gandini A. *The Reputation Economy: Understanding Knowledge Work in Information Society*. London : Springer, 2016.

