
”GENDERING” NEO-CRAFT WORK: FROM MASCULINISED DOMAIN TO FEMINISED PLATFORM LABOR

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Abstract

Research Objective:

The aim of this paper is to frame neo-craft work as ‘feminized’ labor, on the basis of the shift of this activity from *productive* to *re-productive*, also derived by its intertwining with platform logics. Consequently, this paper suggests a gendered reframing of neo-craft work, usually described as subject to ‘masculinized’ practices and imaginaries (Land et al. 2018; Thurnell-Read 2022).

Theoretical Framework:

The tendency of late-capitalism to ”feminize” labor is characterized by repurposing activities originally confined to the private sphere such as domestic, care labor, as productive services. This tendency can also be found in digital work practices - e.g. with regard to flexibility, or to the blurring of professional and private boundaries (Fortunati 2007; Jarrett 2014; Jarrett 2015); it can also take on platform specificities, such as practices concerning visibility and ‘vulnerability’ (Bishop, Duffy 2022). In this sense, contemporary neo-craft work is ascribable to the process of platformization of labor (Casilli, Posada 2019) which, also through the aforementioned process of feminization, transforms social relations into relations of production making affective commitment a monetizable commodity (Gandini et al. 2024).

Methodology and Results:

Deriving from the qualitative analysis of 63 semi-structured interviews with neo-craft workers, and from the content analysis of 20 of their social media accounts (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook), we observed two main dynamics referable to ‘feminized’ labor practices: the increasing trend to providing *services*, in addition to the activity of *producing* goods; the disposition to *romanticize* care and service work, and in particular of strenuous and exhausting activities, through digital discursive practices.

Concerning the first, we observed how many neo-craft workers resort to the creation of *paid activities and services*, such as workshops and ‘lab tours’, not only as a source of supplementary income but also for the purpose of maintaining social (and re-productive) relations with clients and colleagues. On the other hand, the disposition toward *romanticization of service work* can be traced in the use of specific platform grammars (e.g. the use of viral audios) aimed at ‘glamorizing’ often repetitive and wearisome daily activities, such as the labelling

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and stocking of products, or the cleaning of the tools and work surface.

Theoretical Development:

Therefore, this paper suggests the shift of neo-craft work from manual, productive labor to service, re-productive labor, leading to the risk of a professional and status decay of neo-craft work - an impoverishment that often characterizes 'feminized' work (Komarraju et al. 2025).

Keywords: neocraft work, feminized labor, platform labor, digital methods, interviews