

EXTENDED DEADLINE: MAY 5, 2025



Call for papers INDL8

Contesting Digital Labor: Resistance, counteruses, and new directions for research

Bologna, Italy, 10-12 September, 2025

The [International Digital Labor Network \(INDL\)](#) is pleased to announce its eighth annual conference, which will be held at the **University of Bologna, Italy, on September 10-12, 2025**. INDL conferences provide a unique opportunity to share knowledge and new perspectives in research and practice related to digital labor. Broadly understood, the scope of this concept encompasses unpaid work on social media, paid work mediated by digital platforms (both location-based and online), formal employment in technology industries, and even traditional occupations that have undergone processes of digitization, platformization, and intensive use of big data and artificial intelligence. Each year, the organizers of the conference propose an overarching theme on which to particularly encourage submissions, as a way to reflect the rich diversity of views on this multifaceted object, to consolidate existing knowledge, and to highlight new ways forward.

The theme of this year, **Contesting digital labor**, builds on the observation that the recent rise of digital labor parallels an unprecedented surge of forms of individual and collective resistance in multiple geographies and settings. The strikes of delivery riders in Latin America, the unionization of content moderators in Africa, the organization of data workers and social media influencers in Europe, accompany emerging and more informal initiatives of mutualism and solidarity as well as everyday acts of individual resistance. Digital labor is becoming a key site of contestation for the future of work and of technological development.

The conference aims to explore a fundamental contradiction of digital labor. On the one hand, algorithms and digital technologies shape a new labor regime characterized by data extraction, widespread surveillance, and strict control on workers, which result in the fragmentation, individualization and casualization of jobs. On the other hand, digital labor also brings about an unexpected resurgence of labor conflicts. Most protests have been worker-led or initiated by grassroots organizations, while traditional trade unions have taken a leading role in some cases. Informal, sometimes individual actions of resistance have become increasingly common, in addition to formal, collective mobilizations. Some interventions have involved counteruses of digital means in the workplace, for example through the creation of apps, tools, and software with the explicit aim of enabling workers to understand and reformulate their working conditions. In this perspective, digital affordances are open to interpretations, uses and practices that not only escape platforms' surveillance but also establish social relationships other than those of labor exploitation, thereby undermining the efficacy of platforms' power. This evidence suggests that digital platforms may not have an exclusive power to shape the digital age, and that workers, individually and collectively, can radically transform the trajectories of technological development.

Uncovering the richness of collective and individual contestation practices that are emerging at the core of platform capitalism is essential to grasp the recent transformations of labor and the broader tendencies that are reshaping the digital age. This means looking at workers' strug-

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gles not only as an object of research, but also as a crucial moment in which new knowledge is produced. Contestations reveal the reasons of workers' grievances, grounded in their daily experiences, identities, skills, and aspirations. They bring to light aspects of labor organization and power asymmetries that would otherwise remain invisible, thereby potentially challenging the narratives of platforms. They allow comparing and contrasting the viewpoints of workers to those of intermediaries and clients, bringing more voices into the debate. Valuing this knowledge is a key goal of INDL-8 and an essential step to understand the current challenges and future perspectives of digital labor.

This conference seeks to examine how platform workers navigate, challenge, and reshape algorithmic management systems while forging innovative forms of solidarity and collective action. It also aims to reflect on the perspectives that technological developments open for workers in order to escape everyday surveillance, to resist top-down control and to organize to defend their rights.

For this purpose, this year's INDL-8 conference invites submissions along **four "Current topics"** that explore these issues:

- Emerging forms of individual and collective action in digitally mediated work
- Workers' resistance to algorithms
- Technology as a tool for worker organizing and collective action
- Legal frameworks, regulatory initiatives, and institutional responses

Four more **"Legacy topics"** have been introduced, focusing on subjects that previously garnered substantial interest from conference presenters:

- Algorithmic management and labor control
- Platform cooperativism and alternative business models
- Platformisation and precariousness
- Gender and digital labor

We also welcome submissions for a **"Starting Topics"** series, focusing on three emerging and currently under-researched areas that have the potential to drive meaningful progress in the field:

- the psycho-social and health-related risks of platform work
- the environmental challenges appertaining to digital labor
- the experiences, identities, purposes and viewpoints of the other "side" of the platforms, composed by clients and employers

We invite contributions from both confirmed and more junior academic researchers (also including PhD students), and from all professionals involved in the study of these themes, also including labor organizers and other practitioners. All disciplines involved in the study of labor and/or technology are welcome, for example economics, management, political science, law, sociology, psychology, history, geography, science & technology (STS) studies, media studies, design, and computer science.

[Submit your proposal](#)

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Submission Guidelines:

To submit, please click on the button above or visit: <https://indl-8.sciencesconf.org/>
Abstracts should:

- Have a maximum length of 400 words
- Be written in English
- Be submitted through the conference management system [SciencesConf](#)

Please remember to specify:

- Your name and affiliation
- Title
- Abstract (including research objective, methodology, main findings and/or theoretical development, and where relevant, contribution to understanding worker organizing and resistance in digital labor)
- Through a drop-down menu, you will be asked to choose from among one of the 11 topics mentioned above (the four *Current*, the four *Legacy*, and the three *Starting*).
- You have the option to add a comment or a supporting file if needed.

Abstract submission deadline: May 5, 2025

Notification of acceptance: June 4, 2025

This edition of the INDL-8 conference is organized through a collaborative partnership between the University of Bologna, Fondazione Di Vittorio, DiPLab, INCA (Increase Corporate Political Responsibility and Accountability), and the ILO (International Labor Organization).

Information regarding the following will be published soon on the conference website:

- Registration fees and discounts
- Scholarships for Registration
- Scholarships for lodging and meals
- Logistical information

For Inquiries

For more information, please contact:

<https://indl.network>
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