

How can you tell a virtual worker?

Issues in the analysis of the class and
gender relations of virtual work

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‘Virtual work’ is ...

“... labour, whether paid or unpaid, that is carried out using a combination of digital and telecommunications technologies and/or produces content for digital media” (Virtual Work MOU, p. 4).

'Virtual work' is ...



What is virtual work?

Virtual work is also ...

Done everywhere

Precarious

Unboundaried, invasive

What is virtual work?

Virtual work is ...

Performed in the home

Paid teleworking, unpaid consumption work

Mobile and multi-locational

Workplaces are everywhere in private and public spaces,
and differences between workplaces are less apparent

Part of a 'global conveyor belt'

Offshored information and business processing services

Virtual work is done everywhere

Virtual work is ...

Outsourced to freelancers and 'reluctant entrepreneurs'

which are a growing proportion of the workforce

Done by professionals

who are predominantly young, with high levels of education, alongside other activities (other paid work, education, caring)

Without social protection, often low-paid, or unpaid

Traditional employment rights have been removed

Virtual work is precarious

Blurring boundaries and binaries

‘Playbour’: the rendering of value through leisure

The ‘prosumer’ does the work of the corporation

Working time is all the time

The workplace is in the private sphere, in the public sphere

The personal is professional, the commodity is the ‘self’

Virtual work extends into all areas of life

Analytical issues

What is the class position of virtual workers?

How can they be distinguished
from other workers?

How do capital accumulation and
social reproduction intersect in virtual work?

Will collectivism survive?

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What is distinctive about virtual work?

It is feminised

It takes support and affective work
out of the margins and into the mainstream

It unifies and commodifies physiques and
affects, productive and reproductive potential

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