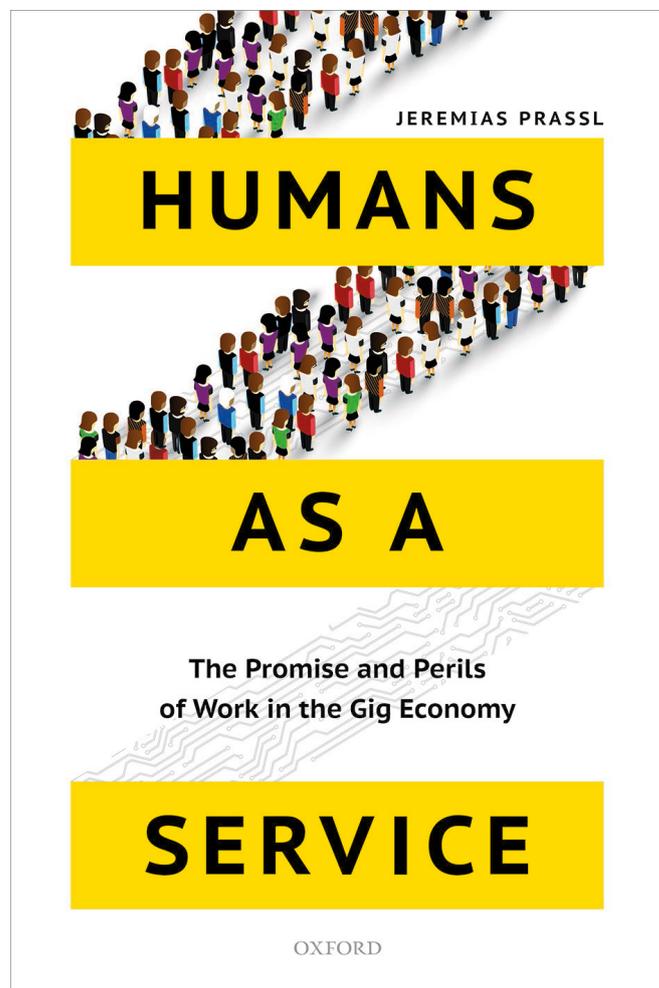


Humans as a Service

The Promise and Perils of Work in the Gig Economy

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The crowdsourcing of work - the 'gig economy' - has been hailed as a 'sharing' revolution, enabling 'micro-entrepreneurs' to enjoy greater autonomy and flexibility in taking on 'gigs', 'rides', or 'tasks', while customers benefit from the ease, convenience, and affordability of 'work on demand'. Is this the future of work? What are the benefits and challenges of crowdsourced work? Is the gig economy fundamentally different to existing models of work and should it be kept outside the scope of employment law, as many platforms claim?

Humans as a Service offers an engaging and critical account of the gig economy. It charts the industry's dramatic growth, explores the diverse platforms that comprise it, and describes how they operate. In scrutinising the competing narratives about 'gig' work, the book demonstrates the importance of language: how claims of 'disruptive innovation' and 'micro-entrepreneurship' often obscure the realities of highly precarious work and the strict algorithmic surveillance and control to which workers are subject.

Yet, far from being radically new, the book shows that the gig economy is but the latest (and perhaps most extreme) example of labour market practices that have existed for centuries. Turning to how the law should respond to the on-demand economy, it argues that regulators can and must bring this work within the scope of employment law, adapting existing norms where necessary, in order to protect both customers and workers. Finally, it explores the wider implications of the gig economy for markets and consumers, assessing opportunities and challenges - if this is the future of work, how can it be made sustainable?

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