

## ABSTRACT

This fieldwork study departs from the argument that the gig economy, through the YouTube platform, reproduces and even exacerbates inequality in rural areas. The study, which took place in “Kampung Youtuber”, Kasegeran Village, Banyumas Regency, demonstrates that instead of providing flexible work and economic autonomy, YouTube creates new forms of precarity for content creators. This thesis identifies three primary dimensions of inequality: (1) the relationship between youtubers and the platform, (2) the relationship between youtubers and the state, and (3) relations among the youtubers itself. In the first dimension, youtubers are subordinated to the platform through flexible labour mechanisms accompanied by alienation and non-transparent monetization systems. In the second dimension, the state fails to serve as a protector due to the absence of informal labour regulations and a tax system that burdens rather than supports. The third dimension shows how competition among creators, driven by crowdwork logic and algorithmic visibility, leads to inequality based on rating and media literacy, reinforcing a new exclusive social structure within the youtuber community in villages. The general findings conclude that the structural configuration between platforms, the state, and the creator community shapes an unequal digital ecosystem. YouTube is not positioned as a neutral provider, but rather as a political-economic actor with their commercial interests.

**Keywords:** gig economy, YouTube, inequality, rural, digital labour

