

Emerging patterns of collective representation and voice in the platform economy

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Digital labour platforms: mostly old wine in new bottles

- A **new** ‘technological fix’ (Silver 2003) based on algorithmic management
- ... but reliant on **old** organisation practices of work
 - Use of intermediaries for organising and managing work
 - Home-work production, on-demand work/day labourers, piece-work compensation...
- Recommodification of labour
 - ‘virtual paupers’ (Dyer-Witheford 2015) as a prerequisite for further existence
 - health and safety issues, lack of social rights and inadequate social protection and so on...

A constrained voice: platform workers and their structural power

| | Crowdwork | | On-demand work | |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | Micro | Macro (freelancers) | General | Transport |
| Workplace bargaining power | Low | Fairly low | Low | Fairly high |
| Labour market power | Low | Fairly low | Low to intermediate | Low |

Collective representation: platform workers' associational power

- Micro-crowdworkers: ILO, GUFs, self-organisation, engaged academics (Fairwork Foundation)...

| Logic | Macro crowd-work | On-demand work (especially in transport) |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Membership | worker-led platform co-operatives | worker-led platform co-operatives; grass-root unions; union-affiliated guilds |
| Influence | longstanding unions; labour market intermediaries as quasi-unions | |

Logic of membership

- Worker-led co-operatives
- Grassroots, small, relatively new unions like FAU or IWGB
- City-based, small union-affiliated guilds
 - ‘Mass self-communication networks’ being the embryonic stage
 - Examples: Collectif des coursier-e-s/KoeriersKollectief; Collectif Livreurs Autonomes de Paris; German Deliverunion AG; Deliverance Milano; Riders Union Bologna; Dutch Riders Union
 - First-ever strike of food couriers over pay by Deliveroo started in London

Logic of influence: longstanding unions – examples

- National level
 - AT, Vienna: works council in Foodera, couriers with the help of Vida
 - BE and SE: attempts to negotiate a collective agreement
 - DE: cross-border works council and employee participation in Supervisory Board in Delivery Hero, with the help of EFFAT
 - DK: world's first-ever ever collective agreement with platform, Hilfr.dk, with the help of 3F
- Cross-border cooperation: 'Fair Crowd Work'-website, an Austrian-German-Swedish union initiative
- European level, ETUC: setting-up a dialogue with the platforms and lobbying the EC

Logic of influence: labour market intermediaries

- Predating the platform economy; smoothing non-standard career paths, e.g. freelancers
- Different types: private actors or result of mutualisation by users or workers
- Membership-based cooperatives = quasi-unions, like Smart (BE) (since 1998)
 - From artists towards project-based creative workers
 - Helping with assignments and providing social protection between assignments
 - Negotiated better employment terms and conditions for food delivery couriers
 - Critique from social partners: legitimising 'grey zones'

Conclusion

- ‘new’ forms of collective representation: platform unionism (+ freelancer unionism)
- Mutual leaning but also possible tensions between
 - Digital activism vs. bureaucratic structures
 - Taking risks vs. being opportunistic
 - Organising in the same membership domain
- No uniform pattern across countries