Platformization of Labor in Context

The urban embeddedness of delivery riders (in Buenos Aires)

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Background

Need to move **beyond platform universalism**: Accounting for actually existing platformization in urban context (van Doorn, Mos & Bosma 2021) and "conjunctural geographies" of platformization (Graham 2020)

Research on **delivery riders**: focus on working conditions, emergence of solidarity, algorithmic tactics (e.g., Tassinari and Maccarone 2020; van Doorn and Chen 2021; Yu, Trere' and Bonini 2022)

We look at the local **embeddedness** of food delivery work in the urban context

Research focus

How does the urban context affect the platformization of labor?

Interaction between **platformization** of food delivery, broader **urban ecologies**, existing **cultural dispositions**, and the **lived experiences** of riders

Main focus on Buenos Aires:

Mega-city **beyond the West**

Widespread **presence** of delivery platforms

Long and rooted **history** of delivery

Importance of **informal economies**

(+ Amsterdam and Milan)

Research setup

Semi-structured interviews with focus on algorithmic imaginaries, tactics and resistance, organized action

Amsterdam (6), Milan (4), Buenos Aires (17)
+ engagement with grassroots organizations

Preliminary Findings

Cross-local

Cases of app/algorithmic **rigidity** and **insensitivity** to local/individual conditions
Importance of issues with **support** / **communication**
Differences / tensions between **migrant** and **local** workers

Context-specific

(Amsterdam) Deep **knowledge of the city** as key-resource
(Milan) Relevance of **mobility** infrastructure and **housing** market
(Buenos Aires) …

Preliminary Findings (Buenos Aires)

Use of cash and payment infrastructure

Falsos pedidos = Fake orders (*PedidosYa*)
Queueing at *Pago46* facilities / Informal ecology of services (*Rappi*)

Support's slow communication linked to insecurity

In front of the costumer's house
To refuse orders in areas that the rider deems dangerous

Centre-periphery cleavage

Mostly motorbikes (conditions of the roads / larger distances)
Traffic police

Implications

Impact of **urban-level elements** on working conditions → how does this affect mobilization?

Local conditions also affect **recruitment process** → methodological issue for comparative work

Influence of the **context visible in riders' own account** → not just an issue for academic debate

Importance of **ethnographic / comparative work on platformization** → also implications for regulatory efforts

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