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Self-Organization Among Delivery Platforms Workers in Neoliberal Latin American Countries. The Cases of Peru and Chile

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Abstract

Recently in Latin America, numerous mobilizations of workers against the precariousness of work in delivery platforms have been developed. In this study, we argue that consolidation into strong organizations for defending platform workers' interests is strongly related to the socio-political and institutional contexts they are involved in. Drawn upon the understanding of solidarity among workers as a phenomenon rooted in the labor process, as well as the relevance of socio-political and institutional context for the organizing processes among precarious workers, this study addresses the cases of self-organization of platforms deliverers in Chile and Peru. Based on ethnographic research, the results show common characteristics of workers' self-organization, which are related to similar labor processes in delivery platforms. In addition, results shed light on the relevance of the socio-political and institutional context in providing resources for the consolidation of grassroots organizations, especially after platform counter-actions.

Keywords

digital platforms – organization – neoliberalism – delivery workers – solidarity – uberisation

1 Introduction

The emergence of digital work platforms is reorganizing the world of work at various levels.¹ Workers connect to mobile applications as independent contractors, with self-employed or freelance status, while platforms act as digital intermediaries to organize and manage the work that will be done for consumer requirements.² These elements imply the non-existence of an employment relationship; hence, those who work in this modality have no labor nor social protection for that activity.³ In other words, one of their hallmarks is the precariousness they impose,⁴ since recourse to self-employment as a way of not paying for “dead time”⁵ emerges as a defining characteristic of platform labor, as does the weakness of workers in defining their working conditions.⁶

Accordingly, the platforms exacerbate long-term trends in productive restructuring, especially the precarization of working and employment conditions⁷ and the increase in power asymmetries between capital and labor,⁸

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- 1 Healy, J., D. Nicholson and A. Pekarek. “Should We Take the Gig Economy Seriously?.” *Labor & Industry: a Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work* 27 (3) (2017), 232–248.
 - 2 Drahokoupil, J. and B. Fabo. *The Platform Economy and the Disruption of the Employment Relationship. Policy Briefs No. 5; European Economic, Employment and Social Policy*. (Brussels: European Trade Union Institute, 2016).
 - 3 Huws, U., N. Spencer and D. Syrdal. “Online, On Call: The Spread of Digitally Organized Just-in-Time Working and its Implications for Standard Employment Models.” *New Technology Work and Employment* 33 (2) (2018), 113–129.
 - 4 Kalleberg A.L. and S. Vallas. “Introduction”. In *Probing Precarious Work: Theory, Research, and Politics*, eds. A.L. Kalleberg and S.P. Vallas (Binkley: Emerald, 2018), pp. 1–30.
 - 5 Moore, S. and K. Newsome. “Paying for Free Delivery: Dependent Self-Employment as a Measure of Precarity in Parcel Delivery.” *Work, Employment and Society* 32 (3) (2018), 475–492.
 - 6 Graham, M., I. Hjorth and V. Lehdonvirta. “Digital Labor and Development: Impacts of global Digital Labor Platforms and the Gig Economy on Worker Livelihoods.” *Transfer: European Review of Labor and Research* 23 (2) (2017), 135–162.
 - 7 Stanford, J. “The Resurgence of Gig Work: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives.” *The Economic and Labor Relations Review* 28 (3) (2017), 382–401.
 - 8 Wood, A.J., M. Graham, V. Lehdonvirta and I. Hjorth. “Good Gig, Bad Big: Autonomy and Algorithmic Control in the Global Gig Economy.” *Work, Employment & Society* 33 (10) (2019), 56–75.

based on algorithmic management.⁹ One of its most important consequences is the weakening of a model of labor relations that recognized the capital–labor asymmetry and therefore guaranteed protection to the weaker party.¹⁰

However, it should be noted that in strongly neoliberal countries, such as Peru and Chile, this model had already been weakened and replaced by and mercantilist logic on labor.¹¹ Therefore, its impacts must be evaluated in specific contexts.

Accordingly, we analyzed the cases of self-organization of app-based deliverers in Chile and Peru, two countries with weak labor protections, to identify the limits and potential of the self-organization process and its relation to the institutional and socio-political context.

The main assumptions of the study are that, due to the lack of institutional support in a model of deregulated labor relations in both countries, most acutely in Peru, and the weakness and practical absence of trade unions, the only possible tool for workers to collectively defend their interests is autonomous self-organization and self-representation. In this respect, we maintain that the labor process itself favors the emergence of solidarity, which is at the basis of mobilizations and self-organization. On the other hand, we affirm that the process of self-organization faces the challenge of overcoming the arbitrary deactivations that mark the conflict in this sector, and that the support and networks of resources available to workers are fundamental if workers' are to achieve lasting gains. Furthermore, the socio-political context may favor or hinder the availability of such networks.

Thus, the text makes several contributions: the first one is that it offers a grounded in the solidarity emerging from the labor process,¹² that allows understanding the similarities in the mobilization and self-organization process

9 Ivanova, M., J. Bronowicka, E. Kocher and A. Degner. "The App as a Boss? Control and Autonomy in Application-Based Management." *Arbeit | Grenze | Fluss—Work in Progress Interdisziplinärer Arbeitsforschung* 2 (2018), 1–28.

10 Morales, K. and P. Abal. "Precarization of platforms: The case of couriers in Spain." *Psicoperspectivas. Individuo y Sociedad* 19 (1) (2020), Article 1, 1–12.

11 Rodríguez, J. and A. Berry. *Desafíos laborales en América Latina Después de Dos Décadas de Reformas Estructurales. Bolivia, Paraguay y Perú 1997–2008* [*Labor Challenges in Latin America After Two Decades of Structural Reforms. Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru 1997–2008*] (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2010); Narbona, K. *Antecedentes del Modelo de Relaciones Laborales Chileno* [*Background of the Chilean Labor Relations Model*] (Santiago de Chile: Observatorio de Derechos Sociales Fundación Sol, 2014).

12 Atzeni, M. "Searching for Injustice and Finding Solidarity? A Contribution to the Mobilisation Theory Debate." *Industrial Relations Journal* 40(1) (2009), 5–16.

among delivery platform workers, especially in its initial stages. Indeed, workers develop forms of embryonic solidarity facilitated by mutual recognition in waiting outside shops and restaurants, characterized by exchanging information and mutual support to solve the challenges posed by algorithmic management. Moreover, this embryonic solidarity is the seed for active solidarity in the face of deteriorating initial working conditions,¹³ which sharpen the contradictions between the formal character of “independent” workers and a work process tightly controlled by the companies.¹⁴

Furthermore, this analysis describes the double influence of institutional deregulation on the characteristics and limits of the self-organization of delivery workers. On the one hand, the widespread lack of protection and precariousness that characterizes local labor markets,¹⁵ as well as models of labor relations marked by fragmented and weak trade unions,¹⁶ favors the self-organization of delivery workers. In this context, self-organization is a vital tool platform workers can use to defend their interests. Conversely, these elements hinder the possibility of consolidating the incipient organizations after the companies’ counterresponses—mainly dismissals—to workers’ protests.

Finally, this paper places the availability of networks and resources to face the counterresponses of the platforms as the main challenge for the consolidation of the emerging organizations, a matter in which the socio-political context of each country may favor or hinder.

The text is structured as follows. First, the key concepts that guide the analysis are presented, and then the method of the study, including the overview of the cases. The third part presents the results, organized in the most relevant categories of the self-organization process in each case and, later, as a comparative balance. Finally, results and their implications are discussed.

13 Tassinari, A. and V. Maccarrone. “Riders on the Storm: Workplace Solidarity among Gig Economy Couriers in Italy and the UK.” *Work, Employment and Society* 34 (1) (2020), 35–54.

14 Gandini, A. “Labor Process Theory and the Gig Economy.” *Human Relations* 72 (6) (2018), 1039–1056.

15 Ramos, J., K. Sehnbruch and J. Weller. “Calidad del Empleo en America Latina. Teoría y Datos Empíricos” [Quality of Employment in Latin America. Theory and Empirical Data]. *Revista Internacional del Trabajo* 134 (2) (2015), 187–212.

16 Programa Laboral de Desarrollo. *Situación de los Derechos Sindicales en el Perú, 2014–2018* [Situation of Trade Union Rights in Peru, 2014–2018] (Lima: Programa Laboral de Desarrollo, 2019).

2 Theoretical Lenses: Labor Process, Self-Organization among Delivery Platform Workers and the Role of Socio-Political and Institutional Context

In recent decades a growing body of research on the collective action of workers has focused on studying “union renewal” forms.¹⁷ after the marked weakening resulting from the global productive restructuring.¹⁸ Much of this body of research focuses on a top-down perspective, starting from institutionalized unions and especially focusing on organizing practices¹⁹ or framing²⁰ that they can promote to organize the growing contingents of atypical workers²¹ who are left out of union representation. On the other hand, given the proven and persistent impossibility of traditional unions to reach growing excluded sectors, such as immigrants, alternatives of empowerment and support for workers based on community networks emerge, such as forms of community unionism²² present in countries with a long tradition of immigration. However, in many cases of mobilization of delivery platforms workers, these union expressions are alien or secondary to the protests organized by the grassroots workers.²³

As these cases show, the key dynamics of workers' self-organization are mainly based on spontaneous and unauthorized forms of resistance,²⁴ which

17 For example, some of the most relevant studies in this subject are Frege, C.M. and J. Kelly. “Union Revitalization Strategies in Comparative Perspective.” *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 9 (1) (2003), 7–24; Levesque, C. and G. Murray. “Understanding Union Power: Resources and Capabilities for Renewing Union Capacity.” *Transfer: European Review of Labor and Research* 16(3) (2010), 333–350.

18 Zapata, F. *Crisis en el sindicalismo en América Latina [Crisis in Latin American Trade Unionism]* (Notre Dame, IN: Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 2003).

19 For example, see Dorre, K., H. Holst and O. Nachtwey. “Organizing—A Strategic Option for Trade Union Renewal?” *International Journal of Action Research* 5 (1) (2009), 33–67; Stroud, D. “Organizing Training for Union Renewal: A Case Study Analysis of the European Union Steel Industry.” *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 33 (2012), 225–244.

20 For example, see Frege and Kelly, *supra* note 17; Gahan, P. and A. Pekarek. “Social Movement Theory, Collective Action Frames and Union Theory: A Critique and Extension.” *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 51 (4) (2013), 754–776.

21 De La Garza, E. *Trabajo, Identidad y Acción Colectiva [Labor, Identity and Collective Action]* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2010).

22 Roca, B. “Socio-Spatial Strategies of Worker Centres: An Ethnography of Alt-Labor in NYC.” *Antipode* 52 (4) (2020), 1196–1215.

23 See Tassinari and Maccarrone, *supra* note 13, and Morales and Abal, *supra* note 10.

24 Atzeni, M. “Beyond Trade Unions Strategy? The Social Construction of Precarious Workers Organizing in the City of Buenos Aires.” *Labor History* 57 (2014), 193–214.

predate more institutionalized structures.²⁵ Therefore, studying the forms of organization and mobilization of gig workers requires a bottom-up approach,²⁶ capable of focusing on the self-activity of non-unionized workers.²⁷ Workers' self-organization refers to the development of solidarity and collective action at the local level by grassroots workers, independently of other previously existing structures. Understanding it in this way allows deepening the social processes that lead to self-organization and collective action, identifying which structural contextual factors, material circumstances and concrete possibilities affect the daily reality of precarious workers.²⁸

2.1 *Labor Process, Solidarity and Workers Self-Organization*

Following Atzeni²⁹ we argue that the organization of workers is closely related to the labor process, since solidarity is based on the contradictions of the capitalist labor process. From this theoretical perspective, a central feature of this labor process is the indetermination of labor, which implies that capital faces the permanent challenge of converting labor-power into labor (actual work effort) under conditions that allow capital accumulation.³⁰

For this very reason, capital must deploy multiple modalities and strategies of managerial control to continuously direct, monitor, evaluate and adjust the labor force (time, work and product) to the imperatives of profitability and extraction of surplus value from the capitalist productive process.³¹ This push towards extracting value from workers through control practices in the labor process generates contradictions "that surface at the point of production as conflicts between workers and management arise."³²

The control strategies designed by the platforms and deployed in mobile applications are at the center of the labor conflicts developed at the international level.

25 Atzeni, M. *Workers and Labor in a Globalised Capitalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

26 Atzeni, *supra* note 24.

27 Cohen, S. (2014). "Workers Organizing Workers: Grass-Roots Struggle as the Past and Future of Trade Union." In *Workers and Labor in a Globalised Capitalism*, ed. M. Atzeni (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 139–160.

28 Atzeni, *supra* note 25.

29 Atzeni, *supra* note 12.

30 Thompson, P. and S. Vincent. "Labor Process Theory and Critical Realism." In *Working life. Renewing Labor Process Analysis*, eds. P. Thompson and C. Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 205–223.

31 Smith, C. "The Double Indeterminacy of Labor Power: Labor Effort and Labor Mobility." *Work, Employment and Society* 20 (2) (2006), 389–402.

32 Cohen (1987), in Tassinari and Maccarrone, *supra* note 13.

As many scholars state³³ platforms use digital technologies to develop sophisticated forms of control³⁴ to solve the fundamental challenge of their business model: maintaining the appearance of workers as self-employed, while controlling and organizing their workforce to maximize their profitability.³⁵ Much of these practices have been studied around the concept of algorithmic control,³⁶ which allows platforms to establish: dynamic incentives and pay rates,³⁷ opaque performance evaluation systems linked to continuous monitoring,³⁸ or information asymmetries that constrain the choices formally attributed to workers,³⁹ among others. This continued evaluation and tracking of workers performance pushes them to work under pressure to reduce their delivery time, leading to several safety risks, accidents, and deaths. Also, continued changes in payment structure and greater flexibility of labor time the deterioration of earnings for the same work, while the information asymmetries like the destination of the delivery ability to “choose” the task. All of these are key aspects of the daily experience of platform work and are at the center of the conflicts between platforms and workers. In addition, the lack of protection against risks, accidents and deaths of workers during delivery is a source of great discomfort. Consequently, workers develop a collective sense of reciprocity and mutual responsibility by recognizing their common interests as distinct from those of the company. This type of *embryonic solidarity* is the basis of *active solidarity*⁴⁰ marked by the development of collective identity

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- 33 For example, see Shapiro, A. “Between Autonomy and Control: Strategies of Arbitrage in the “On-Demand” Economy.” *New Media and Society* 20 (8) (2017) 2954–2971; Rosenblat, A. and L. Stark. “Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries: A Case Study of Uber’s Drivers.” *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016), 3758–3784; or Veen, A., T. Barratt and C. Goods. “Platform-Capital’s ‘Appetite’ for Control: A Labor Process Analysis of Food-Delivery Work in Australia.” *Work, Employment and Society* 34 (3) (2019), 388–406.
- 34 Filgueiras, V. and R. Antunes. “Plataformas Digitais, Uberizacao do Trabalho e Regulacao no Capitalismo Contemporaneo” [Digital Platforms, Uberization of Work and Regulation in Contemporary Capitalism]. *Revista Contracampo* 39 (1) (2020), 27–43.
- 35 Vallas, S. and J.B. Schor. “What Do Platforms Do? Understanding the Gig Economy”. *Annual Review of Sociology* 46 (2020), 273–294.
- 36 Ivanova et al., *supra* note 9.
- 37 For example, for delivery platforms, see Shapiro, A. “Dynamic exploits: Calculative Asymmetries in the On-demand Economy.” *New Technology, Work and Employment* 35 (2) (2020) 162–177; Griesbach, K., A. Reich, L. Elliott-Negri and R. Milkman. “Algorithmic Control in Platform Food Delivery Work.” *Socius* 5 (2019), 1–15.
- 38 For example, see Veen et al., *supra* note 33, and Morales and Abal, *supra* note 10.
- 39 See Rosenblat and Stark. “Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries: A Case Study of Uber’s Drivers.”; Veen et al., *supra* note 33; Shapiro, *supra* note 33.
- 40 Atzeni, *supra* note 24.

and a sense of mutual dependence as opposed to management domination, which can be expressed in the form of mobilization.⁴¹

In this respect, Tassinari and Maccarrone⁴² state that the common sources of antagonism in two of the most visible cases of mobilization of delivery workers in Europe (Italy and England) refer to the restructuring of the payment system, the fall in income derived from the excess labor force, the lack of transparency of the apps (information asymmetries), and the evaluation systems which determine priority in shift selection by workers.

We find the same complaints in the case of the app-based deliverers organized in Spain.⁴³ Thus, we maintain that the experiences of self-organization of app-based deliverers are linked to these conflicts arising from the contradictions in the labor process.

Regarding those experiences of self-organization, several similarities can be attested to. For example, (i) the existence of free spaces where sharing experiences unmonitored by management and developing interpersonal relationships of trust, in which virtual spaces play a preponderant role;⁴⁴ (ii) protest in the form of “proto-strikes”⁴⁵ which allow for the strengthening of a collective identity, and (iii) the development of diverse organizational forms.⁴⁶ Finally, (iv) the establishment of networks with other actors, mainly but not exclusively trade unions, contribute to the consolidation of organizations, especially after platforms’ deliberate managerial counter-action strategies.⁴⁷

At least some of these common characteristics in the self-organization process among deliverers are closely related to the centrality of the technological infrastructure⁴⁸ in the delivery platforms’ labor process.

2.2 *The Role of Socio-Political and Institutional Contexts*

In addition to the labor process, other factors are relevant to understanding the self-organization processes of delivery platform workers. Organizational

41 Atzeni, M. *Workplace Conflict. Mobilization and Solidarity in Argentina* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

42 Tassinari and Maccarrone, *supra* note 13.

43 Morales and Abal, *supra* note 10.

44 Cant, C. *Riding for Deliveroo: Resistance in the New Economy*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).

45 Tassinari, A. and V. Maccarrone. “The Mobilisation of Gig Economy Couriers in Italy: Some Lessons for the Trade Union Movement.” *Transfer: European Review of Labor and Research* 23 (2017), 353–357.

46 Vandaele, K. *Will Trade Unions Survive in the Platform Economy? Emerging Patterns of Platform Workers’ Collective Voice and Representation in Europe* (Brussels: European Trade Union Institute, 2018),

47 For example, see Morales and Abal, *supra* note 10; Tassinari and Maccarrone, *supra* note 13; Vandaele, *supra* note 46.

48 Veen et al., *supra* note 33.

processes are embedded in specific socio-political and institutional contexts, which are essential to consider in order to fully grasp their meaning.⁴⁹

“The socio-political context in which the organizing drive takes place and the legal and institutional rules within which collective actions are framed and conflict is negotiated, by shaping the material reality in which workers are daily enmeshed, pose limits or offer possibilities to the concrete strategies followed by workers.”⁵⁰ For example, in Europe, the massive use of different contractual relations for workers such as independent contractors has provoked a significant change towards the flexibilization of labor and social protection of workers, so the action of platform workers may include alliances with trade unions’ informal sector to stop a problem that could be seen as a threat to the whole labor market and society. That is what Riders for Rights, a workers’ association in Spain, does.⁵¹

Conversely, in the global South high levels of informality and labor insecurity are commonplace.⁵² In these institutional contexts, marked by neoliberal deregulation, trade unions are given a depoliticized role, reduced to the confines of the company in which it operates and with few tools to fight for better working conditions.⁵³ Consequently, most of the working force must undertake their collective struggle without institutional resources or without strong trade unions capable of denouncing this situation as a problem or being able to offer the workers communicational, legal or organizational resources.

Moreover, the socio-political context marked by the preeminence of neoliberalism promotes the idea of individual responsibility in their economic inclusion.⁵⁴ Hence, working for platforms as free and independent individuals who choose when and where to work is seen positively. Accordingly, the capability of platform workers of building alliances to fight for labor rights is directly and negatively affected by that context.

Because of the lack of institutional protection for platform workers and their limited bargaining power insofar as they are precarious and mainly migrant workers, we argue that the possibilities of developing networks with other actors, to consolidate emerging organizations, are entangled with the socio-political and institutional context.

49 Atzeni, *supra* note 24; Atzeni, *supra* note 25.

50 Atzeni, *supra* note 24.

51 Morales and Abal, *supra* note 10.

52 Joyce, S., D. Neumann, V. Trappmann and C. Umney. *A Global Struggle: Worker Protest in the Platform Economy* (Brussels: European Trade Union Institute, 2020).

53 Guzman, C. *Los Trabajadores en el Neoliberalismo. Los Casos de Argentina y Chile [Workers under Neoliberalism. The Cases of Argentina and Chile]* (Buenos Aires: Clacso, 2002).

54 Laval, C. and P. Dardot. *La Nueva Razón del Mundo. Ensayo sobre la Sociedad Neoliberal [The New Reason for the World. Essay on Neoliberal Society]* (Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa, 2013).

To explore these elements, in this article we will focus on the forms of self-organization and mobilization developed by the delivery platforms workers in Peru and Chile within their particular socio-political contexts and institutional frameworks. By doing so, we aim to understand the limits and challenges that stand against the consolidation of emerging self-organization processes.

3 Methods

This study brings together two ongoing independent research projects into delivery platform work and emerging forms of organization among couriers, in Peru and Chile. Both are based on an ethnographic design par excellence,⁵⁵ which we understand to be the methodological design of fieldwork, aimed at comprehending the phenomenon from the perspective of the members, which can be diverse, complex and contradictory.

In the case of Peru, the researcher conducted a participatory research, using her own experience as an app-based deliverer. The entry into the field was based on the contact established through two Instagram and Facebook profiles, “Glovers in Peru” and “Confessions of a Glover”, respectively. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were carried out and audiovisual material was produced, which was then prepared as an informative video on the working conditions of the deliverers. After that, the researcher herself worked as a motorbike deliverer for the Glovo platform in Lima for eight weeks between September and November 2019. During this period, she conducted 30 informal interviews while waiting for the orders, 20 semi-structured interviews, as well as participating in various WhatsApp groups. In this way, she accompanied, from within, the organization process of the city’s app-based deliverers “Glovers in Peru”. Subsequently, the production of data continued through the permanent exchange with the platforms’ couriers by virtual means, as well as through the participating observation in two massive protests and other smaller demonstrations by Glovo deliverers. In addition to this, there was a permanent review of social network forums and the production of media material. The interviews were transcribed for analysis and the data produced was organized accordingly.

In the case of Chile, the research was carried out in two phases. The first one was developed between April and July 2019, through participant observation

55 Rockwell, E. *Reflexiones sobre el Proceso Etnográfico (1982–1985)* [*Reflections on the Ethnographic Process (1982–1985)*] (Mexico: Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados del Instituto Politécnico Nacional, 1987).

of meetings and public presentations of the Agrupación de Repartidores Penquistas, the only visible organization of deliverers at that time, in Barcelona and Chile. Also, 12 semi-structured and several informal interviews were carried out with members of the group, concurrently with a documentary review of contracts, terms and conditions, internal documents of the organization and 3 days of shadowing (following the worker's activities in his/her daily life)⁵⁶ with deliverers during their working days. In the second phase, conducted between August 2019 and August 2020, the production of data was carried out by virtual means.

Publications on social networks were analyzed and six in-depth interviews with spokespersons from emerging organizations (Riders Unidos Ya, Rappi2020 and NiUnRepartidorMenos) were conducted. In addition, two semi-structured interviews with trade union representatives from the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, which is linked to the recent process of organizing the delivery workers into a national expression, were developed. All interviews were transcribed for analysis, and the material produced was organized and categorized accordingly.

The authors, following the comparative method in social research,⁵⁷ carried out the analysis of the data jointly. A thematic analysis of the data was carried out, identifying key phases and factors for the organization, as well as similarities and differences in the processes of self-organization in each case.

3.1 *Overview of the Cases*

3.1.1 Case 1: Glovers in Peru

3.1.1.1 *Socio-Political and Institutional Context*

Neoliberalism in Peru began in a drastic and authoritarian way. After the 1980s, marked by internal armed conflict, Alberto Fujimori's government in the 1990s was characterized by an extreme form of state capture and clientelism⁵⁸ while carrying out a policy of subjugation of existing social and trade union organizations, including forms of state terrorism condemned in numerous trials by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). In addition, a series of reforms were carried out that privatized public services, promoted the primary

56 Czarniawska, B. "Organizing: How to Study it and How to Write About it." *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* 3 (1) (2008), 4–20.

57 Yin, R.K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2013).

58 Durand, F. *El Debate sobre la Captura del Estado Peruano [The Peruvian State Capture Debate]* (Lima: Desco, 2012).

extractive export model opening the country to the global market, deregulating the labor market, and making trade union representation difficult.

The Constitution approved in 1993 following Fujimori's self-coup and still in force, enshrined these aspects, which, despite successive reforms, remain in the fundamental charter. The anomaly of being governed, almost 30 years after its promulgation, by a constitution written in dictatorship and the continuity of the state's clientele apparatus has marked the Peruvian political system until today and has contributed to its instability and illegitimacy, which is reflected in the high level of indifference or rejection towards the institutional system by public opinion (especially in the younger generations) and the judicialization of national political life.

In labor matters, the reforms made employment relations more flexible, and extended temporary and "atypical" forms of employment in the private and public sector, introducing arbitrary dismissal, or giving priority to commercial forms of contract⁵⁹. Deregulation is also expressed in the absence of a unitary regulatory framework that defines workers' rights and protections in a widespread manner, which, together with the high levels of informality, which reaches 72% of the employed population,⁶⁰ contributes to the heterogeneity and fragmentation of the labor market.

Concerning collective rights, the requirements for creating unions became more complex, the scope of collective bargaining was restricted, and the requirements for declaring a legal strike made more onerous.⁶¹ In this context, trade unionism was severely weakened, with the rate of unionization of formal employees in Peru reaching only 8.1%.⁶²

As can be seen, this is a scenario of radical deregulation and lack of protection of labor in both the informal and formal sectors, where the absence of social dialogue mechanisms and organizations in defense of workers' rights is very marked.

59 Rodríguez, J. and A. Berry. *Desafíos Laborales en América Latina Después de Dos Décadas de Reformas Estructurales. Bolivia, Paraguay y Perú 1997–2008* [*Labor Challenges in Latin America After Two Decades of Structural Reforms. Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru 1997–2008*] (Lima: Fondo, 2010).

60 ILO. *Panorama Laboral 2017. América Latina y el Caribe* [*Labor Outlook 2017. Latin America and the Caribbean*] (Perú: International Labor Office, 2017).

61 Fernandez-Maldonado, E. *La Rebelión de los Pulpines. Jóvenes, Trabajo y Política* [*The Pulpine Rebellion. Youth, Labor and Politics*] (Lima: Editorial Otra Mirada, 2015).

62 Programa Laboral de Desarrollo (PLADES). *Situación de los Derechos Sindicales en el Perú, 2014–2018* [*Situation of Trade Union Rights in Peru, 2014–2018*] (Lima: PLADES, 2019).

3.1.1.2 *Platform Work in Peru*

As in all Latin America, in Peru, there is no specific regulation for digital platforms.

There are currently two bills in Congress, one regulating and establishing the “labor” nature of the relationship between workers and digital platforms (Bill no. 4243, 2019) and the other aimed at providing greater protection to “independent associates” of platforms.

Despite these legislative initiatives and the creation of a Working Group to make recommendations to the Ministry of Labor in November 2019, the current situation of political instability makes future regulation unlikely.

Regarding delivery platforms, Glovo and Rappi are those with the greatest presence in the five most important regions of the country.⁶³ There are other local delivery platforms, such as Chazki and Urbaner, but with a lower share of the market in the market. All of them are based in the same work scheme: the platform present itself as merely an intermediary while workers are unregistered—informal—independent “collaborators”. Hence, app-based deliverers have no legal or social protection, similarly to the main part of the occupied working force in the country.

There are no official statistics on the workforce on these platforms. But, as reported by the companies in the newspaper reports, Glovo has 7000 active deliverers and 3500 on the waiting list, 90% of them are Venezuelan immigrants.⁶⁴ This platform concentrates the labor conflicts in this case.

At Glovo, the payment structure is variable, consisting of a base rate for each delivery plus a supplement per distance and waiting time. Each deliverer must choose shifts weekly, according to his preferences, but his priority in the selection is linked to the individual rating. The rating system considers aspects such as customer evaluation, delivery time in peak hours and the percentage of acceptance/cancellation of orders by the deliverer. In this way, the deliverers are forced to comply with the maximum of these criteria to have more shift options to choose from.

Throughout 2019, both the reduction of the base rate and the elimination of bonuses, as well as the consequences of the rating system, generated widespread unrest among the deliverers, who went so far as to demonstrate publicly

63 Dinegro, A. *Delivery y Empleo. Diagnóstico sobre las Condiciones Laborales en las Plataformas digitales. Caso Lima Perú*. [Delivery and Employment. Diagnosis on Labor Conditions in Digital Platforms. The Case of Lima Peru] (Lima: Fundación Fiedrich Ebert-Perú, 2021).

64 TrabajoDigno.pe. “Lima. Que Sucede con los Venezolanos en el Perú. Su Impacto en el Empleo a Partir de Tres Investigaciones” [Lima. What happens with Venezuelans in Peru. Their Impact on Employment Based on Three Researches] *TrabajoDigno.pe*. (2020).

against the company in October and November 2019. Through the Facebook page “*Glovers en Perú*” they made public their demands and actions. We study this case in this article.

However, despite the worsening of working conditions due to the pandemic, where deliverers were authorized to work even on curfew days without any minimum safety considerations or protection for workers (Supreme Decree No. 139–2020), no mobilizations of deliverers were registered in Peru in this context.

3.2.1. Case 2: Organizations Forming *Mancomunal de Repartidores de Socio-Political and Institutional Context*

Chile is a country known for the early and deep development of a process of neoliberalization.⁶⁵ Private property and the subsidiary role of the State are the guiding principles of this model, in which the market plays a central role in the regulation and provision of education, health, welfare and other services.

Regarding labor, the institutional framework maintains the neoliberal principle that regulation and rigidities have adverse effects, allowing multiple forms of temporary employment, flexibility of working hours and arbitrary dismissal (Article 161, Labor Code, 2003). The fundamental objective of weakening the trade union movement,⁶⁶ characterized by the restriction of collective bargaining at the company level, the possibility of replacing striking workers and trade union parallelism, also remains.⁶⁷ The result is weak and fragmented trade unionism.⁶⁸ While there has been an increase in unionization in recent years to 17.1%, less than 20% of the workforce is covered by any collective instrument.⁶⁹ There are some instances of social dialogue in which the main trade union center (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, CUT) takes part.

Furthermore, neoliberal modernization did not eradicate informal work—excluded from labor and social protection—which currently reaches

65 Moulán, T. *Chile Actual: Anatomía de un Mito* [*Chile today: Anatomy of a Myth*] (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2002).

66 Pinera, J. *La Revolución Laboral* [*The Labor Revolution*] (Santiago de Chile: Zig-Zag, 1990).

67 Narbona, K. *Antecedentes del Modelo de Relaciones Laborales Chileno* [*Background of the Chilean Labor Relations Model*] (Santiago: Fundación SOL, 2014).

68 Julian, D. “Bases del Modelo de Valoración Precario del Trabajo en Chile. Acercamientos desde la Política Laboral y la Cultura del Trabajo.” [Bases of the Precarious Labor Valuation Model in Chile. Approaches from Labor Policy and Work Culture] *Sociológica* 81 (2014), 119–160.

69 Pérez, P. “Why Is It So Difficult to Reform Collective Labor Law? Associational Power and Policy Continuity in Chile in Comparative Perspective.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 53 (2020), 81–105.

30% of the employed population⁷⁰ (INE, 2020), thus maintaining the historical structural heterogeneity of Latin American countries.⁷¹

The consensus around this model began to break down in the early 2000s and deepened in the following decades, until the so-called Chilean “social explosion” of October 2019,⁷² when the demand for democratization, equality and dignity that had been expressed previously⁷³ reached its peak. Massive days of protest at the national level challenged the foundations of the neoliberal model, leading to the institutional opening of a constituent process that began in October 2020.

3.2.1.1 *Platform Work in Chile*

In this context, delivery platforms began to operate from the end of 2017 with a wide acceptance, as an attractive alternative to supplement income or against unemployment. Although there is no exact data, it is estimated that more than 50 000 people work for them, mostly immigrants.⁷⁴

Despite the absence of specific regulation of platform work, there is legislation on self-employment, which recently included some mechanisms of compulsory social protection at the expense of the worker (Law 21.133). These include the payment of disability and survivorship insurance, insurance for occupational accidents and diseases, as well as pension and health contributions. However, most platforms operate outside this regulation, so a significant part of the delivery workforce is informal.

The main platforms in Chile are Rappi, Uber Eats and Pedidos Ya. This last one is the only one that works with a commercial contract with the delivery workers, according to law 21.133.

The work process is similar to that described in other delivery platforms around the world.⁷⁵ At Rappi and Uber Eats, the distributors can be connected to the application at any time, within the areas of operation, and are paid a variable rate per order. In contrast, in Pedidos Ya the workers pre-select shifts according

70 INE. *Boletín Estadístico: Informalidad Laboral* [Statistical Bulletin: Labor Informality]. Edición n°9 (Santiago de Chile: INE, 2020).

71 Ramos et al., *supra* note 15.

72 Araujo, K., ed. *Hilos Tensados. Para Leer el Octubre Chileno* [Tensioned Threads. To Read the Chilean October] (Santiago: Editorial USACH, 2019).

73 Araujo, K. and D. Martuccelli. *Desafíos Comunes: Retrato de la Sociedad Chilena y sus Individuos* [Common Challenges: Portrait of the Chilean Society and its Individuals] (Santiago: LOM, 2012).

74 Bonhomme, M., A. Arriagada and F. Ibanez. “La Otra Primera Línea: Covid-19 y Trabajadores de Plataformas Digitales” [The Other Front Line: Covid-19 and Digital Platform Workers]. *CIPER Chile* (2020).

75 For example, see Veen et al., *supra* note 33; Griesbach et al., *supra* note 37.

to their position in the ranking. Until February 2020, the payment per order was fixed and included a guaranteed minimum payment per working hour equivalent to 1.5 bicycle orders. Then, the company removed the minimum guaranteed hourly rate and the fixed rate per order, assimilating itself to the competitors. In addition, all of them include variable incentives by location, high-demand hours or achievement of goals. Moreover, they have made successive unilateral changes in payments, resulting in a decrease in deliverers' income.

They all use rating systems for the performance of the deliverers, although only Pedidos Ya links this to the priority for choosing working hours. Additionally, in Pedidos Ya some human supervisors watch over the routes to ensure that the couriers behave properly and use the company's advertising material (T-shirts, jackets and backpacks, which as in all apps must be paid for themselves). This is a distinctive feature concerning the predominant methods of control at the platforms. Otherwise, the operation of the platforms in Chile is marked by algorithmic control, as at the international level.

Platform workers have been seriously affected by the national crisis context. Firstly, the "social explosion" led to an increase in job insecurity, as street protests and police violence spread, orders fell and unemployment raised. Secondly, the covid 19 pandemic exacerbated these problems, increasing assaults on motorized delivery vehicles and adding the risk of infection. As in many other countries, home delivery service was considered essential, even if the safety of the workers was not guaranteed. The platforms voluntarily offered individual protection kits, including hydro alcoholic gel and masks. However, the outreach to the delivery workers was minimal. Thirdly, the increase in the number of unemployed who registered on the platforms as the only alternative to unemployment, and the decrease in the per-order rates imposed by all the platforms in recent months have led to a significant reduction in workers' income.

In this context, self-defence groups have emerged against assaults, as well as mass demonstrations against the deterioration of working conditions, especially among workers of Pedidos Ya. In addition, three different organizations—Riders Unidos Ya, Agrupación de Repartidores Penquistas y Rappio8—have formed an informal federation to fight for labor rights in delivery platforms.

4 Characterizing Self-Organization Processes of App-Based Deliverers

The results are organized based on the categories describing the processes of organizing and mobilizing platform workers, and the specifics of each case are described. A summary table is then presented.

4.1 *Building Basis for Self-Organization: Free Spaces and Embryonic Solidarity*

In the two cases, platform deliverers meet each other. Backpacks and jackets with company advertising allow them to recognize each other: “there is another one who is in my condition” (interview with Sergio from Riders Unidos Ya).

The predetermined connection areas for receiving orders in Glovo and Pedidos Ya, or the areas around the most popular shops become meeting places, where workers, while waiting, begin to gather and share their experiences. If there is affinity, they join WhatsApp groups, which extend the meeting space to the virtual realm.

This is what happened among young multiplatform deliverers in Concepción (Chile) as soon as the platforms arrived in the city, at the beginning of 2019, also among those of Pedidos Ya and Rappi in Santiago throughout 2019. In this case, the fact that a big part of the workers belong to the Venezuelan immigrant community favors solidarity and mutual support. The same happens in the Peruvian case, in which Glovo deliverers share information about police operations, slums, dangerous routes or areas of high demand.

The use of social network pages also generates free spaces. Mainly on Facebook and Instagram, individual deliverers who begin to notice the systematic problems with the platforms encourage their peers to talk about it. In this way, pages such as “Soy Rappi Chile”, “Riders Unidos Ya” or “Glovers en Perú” allow the recognition of their shared interests, by providing a forum for others to share common problems, concerns or needs.

These free spaces allow workers to listen to each other, give advice on how to operate the app or deal with orders and provide support in the event of accidents or assaults. Embryonic solidarity⁷⁶ is beginning to emerge from the labor process itself.

4.2 *From Embryonic to Active Solidarity: Triggers for Collective Action*

At the end of March 2019, Glovo announced it was leaving Chile on the 31st of that month. The sudden shutdown left the workers with outstanding payments and many doubts. In addition, the lack of protection of a Pedidos Ya courier in case of a serious accident while he was delivering increased the discomfort against the platforms. At that time, a group of deliverers in Concepción decided to form a collective of workers (Agrupación de Repartidores Penquistas), remaining underground, but pushing a collective lawsuit against Glovo for outstanding payments.

⁷⁶ Atzeni, *supra* note 24.

They demand to be recognized as dependent workers of the platform, and, following the European experience, set themselves the goal of creating their own delivery platform cooperative. They also carry out funding activities to support injured delivery workers, as well as holding assemblies and forums in which they demand the labor relationship and call for delivery workers to join their organization.

Among Pedidos Ya couriers in Santiago, the demands were similar. The lack of protection against accidents or theft, the difficulties in taking turns due to the platform's qualification system, or the decrease in income due to the increase in the number of registered distributors are common demands in the communication channels. These problems became more acute during the "social explosion", where repeated episodes of protests, violence and police repression increased job insecurity. The change in the payment structure made in February 2020 reduced the income of deliverers and generated waves of unrest. A clandestine group of delivery workers launched an online communications campaign explaining the wage decline, criticizing the company and encouraging workers to protest.

"We organized ourselves clandestinely. We decided to make anonymous communiqués and circulate them through all the WhatsApp groups (in all the districts of Santiago), explaining to our colleagues what the reduction in wages we had suffered meant. Why, in the middle of a global pandemic where the demand for orders has increased, re they reducing our wages?." (Spokesperson 4 Riders United Now, Chile)

The common interests of the delivery workers opposed to those of the company became evident, and forms of mutual support such as the development of support groups in the face of the assaults expanded.

"As we saw that the police did nothing ((in the face of assaults and robberies)), we organized ourselves to help our colleagues, and in this way we have recovered several motorbikes which are our work tools." (Gilbert, deliveryman, PedidosYa)

But it was not until April 2020 that mobilization took place, as a result of the increase in the number of delivery workers, the sharp deterioration in incomes, the lack of protection against infection and the significant increase in accidents and assaults suffered by delivery workers during the pandemic. Hidden groups of Rappi delivery workers (articulated in WhatsApp groups),

who suffered the same problems of lack of protection and impoverishment, signed the call for protest.

In the Peruvian case, the first demonstration against Glovo was in October 2019, due to the 52% reduction in the base rate per order. This cut was added to other problems that had previously caused unease, such as the arbitrary blocking of accounts, the rating system linked to the greater or lesser number of shifts to be chosen, the decrease in orders to each delivery worker, or the requirement to register with the RUC (single taxpayer registration) and gave the company the keys to process personal taxes. Other complaints emerged later, such as the lack of protection against accidents following the case of a courier who lost one of his legs during delivery in June 2020, or the mistreatment and xenophobic insults received by Venezuelan deliverers from consumers. However, the only mass protest is the one that developed from the reduction of rates.

4.3 *Mobilization*

The protest against Glovo in Peru called for more than 200 motorbike delivery workers in front of the company's offices in Lima. It was so massive that it attracted the interest and coverage of the country's main media. The main objective of the protest was to be received by the company to demand the re-establishment of the previous rates. Groups of spokespersons were received by management, which assured them that it would reconsider the measure in the following days. The protest was dissolved, but the rate cut was maintained.

On 27 November 2019, a second sit-in was held at the Glovo offices, but this time the number of protesters was considerably lower. Again, the demand was to improve the rate as well as to make improvements to the Rating System. This time the company did not meet with the delivery workers and instead requested police action to disperse the demonstration. A group of them chose to organize a caravan to the office of the Ministry of Labor, as a sign of protest. No official received them, but they made public, through the media, a list of demands and points to be discussed with the platform.

In Chile, the couriers grouped in Riders Unidos Ya joined the call for an international strike launched by groups from various countries in Latin America, and staged a protest and strike on 24th April. About 500 motorized delivery workers, mostly Venezuelan immigrants, took part in the strike, demonstrating in the streets of the city to the company's offices to demand better income and insurance. With some press coverage in newspapers and on television, they were able to establish their demands on the public debate and became known publicly as the organization Riders Unidos Ya. They disconnected from the app

while protesting for two consecutive days. Rappi's underground collectives signed up to the protest by calling for disconnection from the app on those days and amplifying the Riders Unidos Ya protest via social networks.

4.4 *Platforms' Counter-Action: Anti-Union Practices*

The platforms systematically respond with anti-union practices instead of improving working conditions as demanded by deliverers.

Indeed, in Peru, after the first protest, spokespersons and other strike supporters were fired by permanently blocking their accounts as Glovers. When demanding the reasons of this company policy, one of the spokespersons was verbally threatened with not finding work ever again on platforms in Peru and decided to emigrate. The rest continued to work on other platforms or in other informal jobs. For its part, after the second protest in November 2019, the company issued a public statement condemning the protest for disturbing public order, and stating that on a global scale the rates are 40% higher than in the rest of the companies in the market. No demands from workers were met.

In the case of the Riders Unidos Ya protests in Chile, the company answered similarly. It issued a press release in which it denied the complaints of precariousness, condemned the protests, and assured the participants conformed only a minority of the working force (BiobioChile.cl 27.04.20). Besides, it deactivated the accounts of more than 50 of the most visible workers in the protest.

“(They dismissed) Those who could be identified. There were about 55, 60 of us, of which 25 remained, because the company, seeing that we were going to go to court, started to return the accounts to many of them. And many left the movement, because there is a very great need in a country that is not ours, being a migrant, it is very difficult for us. So there are 25 of us left in the lawsuit and we are moving this process forward.”
(Spokesperson 1, Riders Unidos Ya)

The collective publicly condemned these anti-union practices and reinforced the solidarity network with international groups of delivery workers, who joined in condemning the dismissals through social media (see Instagram Riders Unidos Ya). Similarly, and although the Agrupación de Repartidores Penquistas did not participate in protests against the companies, in August 2019 four of its members' accounts were blocked.

According to their supervisor, the reason was their membership in the organization, but by email, other reasons for the deactivation of the accounts were indicated.

4.5 Beyond Mobilization: Judicialization, Alliances and Organizing

In Chile, once they were dismissed, the arp members sought legal support and filed a lawsuit against PedidosYa. Thanks to the social network pages, they had established contact with collectives of delivery workers all over the world, participated in an international meeting in Barcelona, and were active in denouncing the precariousness of the platforms and in defense of labor rights. They continued their existence as a group, although with limited influence. Due to their vulnerable situation during the pandemic, some of the ARP members reached pre-judicial agreements with the company, while others are still waiting for the trial. One of them recently won the trial and that gave rise to the first sentence which confirmed the employment relationship between the company and a deliverer.

For their part, after being fired, Riders Unidos Ya in Santiago continued to carry out actions to protest and denounce these anti-union practices. They turned to the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), the country's main trade union confederation, for support.

“Some (Chilean) comrades said we could turn to the cut. We went, and we were very well received; we are grateful for that. In addition, thanks to the cut, we have legal representation; we already have our lawsuit and lawyers representing us. We are working together with the Fundación FIEL and the CUT in search of solutions for our union.” (Spokesperson 2, Riders Unidos Ya)

The CUT, through its study centre FIEL, began to provide legal advice, meeting spaces and networks with other actors. They filed a collective action lawsuit on behalf of 31 workers against Pedidos Ya for the protection of fundamental rights and anti-union practice.

In parallel to this process, with the support of the cut, the two organizations (ARP and Riders Unidos Ya) and a clandestine collective of Rappi delivery workers in Santiago (Rappio8) decided to create an informal federation of platform delivery workers: the Mancomunal de Repartidores de Aplicación, marea. The name recalls the syndicalist tradition of the emerging workers' movement at the beginning of the 20th century.

“marea was born out of the need to strengthen the work carried out independently by the founding organizations. We strongly believe in collective work as the main engine to achieve the challenges we set ourselves

when we started defending and promoting our colleagues in the delivery sector, understanding the lack of protection, the risks they face and the disconnection from the companies who profit from our efforts and our lives." (Founding Declaration, MAREA).

From this point on, they have participated in the social dialogue instances in which the situation of platform workers is discussed. Besides, with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Chile, they began to develop a campaign to affiliate delivery workers and to denounce the precariousness of work, and to gain public support for the ongoing regulatory debate.

In addition, they have strengthened the international network of support and collective action among app-based deliverers. Some of the national activists have joined the Ni Un Repartidor Menos movement, to promote coordination and amplify the collective actions of international collectives through social networks.

On the contrary, in the case of Glovers in Peru, none of these actions was carried out. After the dismissals, deliverers sought other job alternatives either within or outside the platform sector. Those who remained in the platform sector maintain their presence in virtual groups, WhatsApp and Facebook, where they still provide mutual support between deliverers in the face of day-to-day incidents. However, especially the network around the Venezuelan community in Peru persists, which supports individual initiatives of small subsistence businesses, while developing mutual solidarity actions such as the provision of food in the middle of the pandemic.

5 Comparative Synthesis: Similarities and Differences in Self-Organization Processes of App-Based Deliverers in Peru and Chile

The processes of self-organization among deliverers in Chile and Peru show remarkable similarities in their initial stages until the development of the protests (see Table 1). In this respect, they can be assimilated with other international experiences.⁷⁷

Contrary to the fragmentation and individualization operated by the platforms, the daily experience of the labor process involves the recognition of others as equals. The need of understanding the functioning and logic of the applications and finding ways to solve emerging problems contributes to the

⁷⁷ For example, see Joyce et al., *supra* note 52; Tassinari and Maccarrone, *supra* note 13; Morales and Abal, *supra* note 10.

TABLE 1 Characteristics and factors for the self-organisation processes among delivery platforms workers.

Factor	Peru	Chile
Process of self organisation	Incentives and pay rates	Incentives and pay rates
	Lack of insurance against traffic accidents or muggings	Lack of insurance against traffic accidents or muggings
Free spaces	Protocols against xenophobia and bullying	
	Virtual Communication' channels (Whatsapp'groups and social networks profiles/pages)	Virtual Communication' channels (Whatsapp'groups and social networks profiles/pages)
Forms of collective action	Proto strikes	Proto strikes
	Demonstrations	Demonstrations
Responses to redundancies	Disarticulation	Assemblies and forums
	Migrate to another platform	Judicialization
Alliances and external support	Weak communicational support	National level organization
		Communicational campaigns
		International alliances with app-based deliverers' organisations
		Legal support from Trade Union (CUT) and communicational support from FES Chile.

TABLE 1 Characteristics and factors for the self-organisation processes among delivery platforms workers. (cont.)

	Peru	Chile
Forms of organisation	Informal collectives	Informal collectives
Sociopolitical context	Strong community of Venezuelan immigrants	Informal national network (MAREA) Counter-neoliberal socio-political crisis Strong community of Venezuelan immigrants
Barriers	Prevailing neo-liberalism in the socio-political system	
Institutional frame	Lack of protection and institutional weakness of workers	Presence (limited) of spaces for social dialogue. Weak trade unionism, but rebuilding
Barriers	Prevailing informality in the labour market	Limited institutional protection of workers' rights

Own elaboration.

strengthening of the relationships between partners. This is because it is in the meeting with others that each worker can learn to take advantage of the app and solve common problems such as incidents with orders or errors in payments. Similarly, the organization of work around the variable demand for orders means that the restaurants or places of greatest demand have a high presence of deliverers, providing workers with a space where they can recognize each other, share their concerns and experiences and provide mutual support in the face of unforeseen situations. Hence, by sharing their experiences, an embryonic solidarity⁷⁸ emerges on which the potential for the development of a collective identity is built. Participation in WhatsApp groups and the deployment of forms of mutual support to deal with the risks of work are key elements in this process of collectivization. Likewise, the triggers for forms of collective action are the same: in the face of changing rates and their corresponding decrease in income, or in the face of fatal accidents of peers at work characterized by the lack of responsibility of the company, the groups that have already shared their discomfort in their free spaces and developed a collective identity as platforms workers, mobilize in defence of their common interests. Better pay and protection against accidents are the most common demands. In the Peruvian case, there is also a demand for the establishment of a protocol of protection against the harassment of clients, in the framework of the acute xenophobia against Venezuelan immigrants in the country,⁷⁹ who are the majority of the workforce in the delivery platforms in the two case studies.

The forms of mobilization are similar, too: mass disconnections from apps or sabotage tactics such as taking orders and cancelling them at the last minute, affecting the functioning of the service, accompanied by demonstrations. These forms of mobilization are deployed as a measure of force with a double objective: to demand dialogue with the companies as well as the fulfilment of their demands, due to the inexistence of collective bargaining mechanisms that allow workers to formally present their demands before exerting pressure. The platforms' counter-responses are also similar in both cases: selective disconnections of the most visible workers involved in the protests, usually spokespersons and organizers. This is the main obstacle for the organizations: their survival after the dismissal of their main referents. Given ambiguous relationship in which the workers are not recognized as employees of the companies

78 Atzeni, *supra* note 12.

79 Rivero, P. *Si, pero No Aquí. Percepciones de Xenofobia y Discriminación hacia Migrantes de Venezuela en Colombia, Ecuador y Perú* [Yes, but Not Here. Perceptions of Xenophobia and Discrimination Towards Venezuelan Immigrants in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru] [Informe de Investigación de OXFAM]. (Nairobi: OXFAM, 2019).

and the informality of the groups protesting, there are no regulations to protect workers, in principle, from these anti-union practices by companies.

At this point, the two cases studied diverge. In the case of Chile, workers who had been separated from their jobs pursued a strategy of legal prosecution of the enterprises. Both the Chilean workers of Agrupación de Repartidores Penquistas and the majority of the Venezuelan workers of Riders Unidos Ya made use of the general labor regulation, the Labor Code, which defines the characteristics of an employment relationship and the individual and collective rights derived from it, to claim in court the dependent nature of the work carried out for the delivery platforms and, therefore, the unfair dismissal. As a result, the first ruling recognizing the employee status of a Pedidos Ya deliverer was recently established.⁸⁰

For their part, the delivery workers who left Glovo after the protests did not continue with the process of self-organization and sought individually to register in other delivery platforms or other activities to continue working and generate income.

Thus, the institutional framework in each country is a relevant factor for the continuity and eventual consolidation of the processes of self-organization among the app-based delivery workers. In Chile, although protection is scarce, a general regulation of labor could be used as a resource for the legal defense of workers' rights that have not been recognized until now, while the lack of a similar general framework in the case of Peru means that there are no institutional resources to which platform workers can turn to. Similarly, although Chile has a weakened trade union movement, there are regular and established mechanisms for social dialogue between trade unions, employers and the State, to which organized deliverers can resort by establishing alliances with the main trade union organizations that participates in these instances. This is not the case in Peru. Finally, in institutional matters, there are also obstacles arising from the administrative situations of immigrants, which in most cases define their lack of protection due to the transitory or limited nature of their residence or work visas.

On the other hand, the socio-political context of the country is another relevant vector in the processes of self-organization, especially after the dismissals. In the case of Chile, the socio-political context in which the neoliberal model is being challenged creates a public environment that is willing to make visible the struggles of workers against precariousness. It is in this context of Chilean

80 Espinoza, C. Histórico Fallo: Juzgado Reconoce por Primera Vez en Chile que Repartidores de Delivery son Trabajadores, no Socios [Historic Ruling: Court Recognizes for the First Time in Chile that Delivery Drivers are Workers, not Partners]. *The Clinic* (2020).

revolt that the main trade union organization has taken up the call of the delivery workers to support their struggle for labor rights, and various movements have echoed the protests on the social networks. Likewise, the strong sense of belonging of the Venezuelan immigrant community, a relevant part of the labor force in the apps, facilitates forms of solidarity and mobilization even after the disconnections. This context enhances the chances of consolidating the process of self-organization of the workers into stable organizations, capable of projecting the dispute for labor rights. The organizational, legal networks support provided by the trade union and other organizations is undoubtedly a key element in this.

On the contrary, the instability of the political system in Peru, which makes any attempt at legislation unviable, the profound mistrust and distance from political parties, the informality and lack of protection of the vast majority of workers, and the acute xenophobia in the country create a socio-political context that implies particularly hostile conditions for the organization of workers in Peru.⁸¹ Moreover, is the absence of support networks providing legal, communication or organization resources to overcome the vulnerability of the mobilized deliverers further hinders the possibility of workers self-organization. Thus, there is little chance of consolidating organizations after the confrontation with the companies. In this case, the sense of community among Venezuelan immigrants helps maintain networks of mutual support that transcend labor conflict and addresses the struggle for survival, promoting solidarity networks to provide food in the event of a pandemic, and disseminating private initiatives for street vending, among others.

6 Conclusion

This study has addressed the processes of self-organization of app-based deliverers in Chile and Peru, concerning the labor process and the socio-political and institutional context in which they are framed.

The findings suggest that the common characteristics of worker self-organization are related to similar labor processes in delivery platforms. The experience of subordination and dependence on the platform, which characterizes the daily work, contrasts with the definition of independent or entrepreneurial workers that the platform attributes to the delivery workers. The forms of

81 Durand, A. "Movimientos Sociales y Política en el Perú de Hoy" [Social Movements and Politics in Today's Peru]. *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 58 (2014), 59–84.

embryonic and active solidarity are rooted in the conflicts derived from these contradictions. The unilateral nature of the change in rates, their variability, or the imposition of criteria and rankings to access areas or working hours, as part of an algorithmic control, are the main sources of antagonism. In addition, there is a lack of protection against accidents, especially in the face of the constant deaths of delivery personnel at work. The centrality of the technological infrastructure and the need of learning how to manage it and solve eventual problems favors the meeting and mutual support between workers, who recognize each other and together in the places of greatest demand for orders. From this meeting, they create virtual free spaces, where they can share experiences and develop forms of embryonic solidarity, which act in the face of possible triggers, mainly the reduction of income and lack of protection against accidents.

The findings show a dual role for institutional frameworks of labor deregulation in the processes of self-organization of platform deliverers. On the one hand, the institutional context of labor deregulation promotes forms of self-organization of workers in defense of their interests in both cases: the absence of labor regulation mechanisms through collective agreements that provide coverage for the working conditions of the deliverers, as well as the labor model in which unionization and negotiation are reduced to the company, imply the impossibility for workers to resort to unions or previously structured instances capable of providing organizational support to deploy their demands. Thus, the only resource for defending their collective interests is their capacity for organization and mobilization.

On the other hand, this scenario of lack of institutional protection is an obstacle to the continuity and possibility of consolidation of the processes of self-organization of the delivery workers once the companies block the accounts—fire—the workers who are the spokespersons or organizers of the protests. However, there are also differences in this regard. In Chile, despite the weakness of labor regulations, the existence of a general normative framework for labor provides the possibility of demanding the recognition of labor rights through the courts. Hence, the institutional context offers at least one avenue for continuing the process of self-organization. On the contrary, the lack of a general protective framework for workers in Peru further reduces the resources available to delivery workers.

Similarly, the socio-political context plays a vital role in consolidating the organizations following the platform's actions. In countries such as Peru, where high levels of xenophobia and institutional instability prevail, the struggle of delivery workers faces enormous obstacles in finding support networks that provide the resources necessary to establish stable organizations. On the

other hand, the Chilean context opens an opportunity for the projection of their struggle due to the ongoing process of social politicization. The critical role of support networks capable of providing legal, communicative or organizational resources to mitigate workers' vulnerability and amplify the scope of the dispute emerges. International experience shows the importance of communication power⁸² and union support,⁸³ which, in this socio-political context, were more accessible to the delivery workers.

These results should be considered in light of the limitations of the study. Firstly, they refer to recent and highly dynamic ongoing processes, such as the experience of mobilization against platforms at a global level. Therefore, it is not unlikely that changes will occur in the future that could qualify some of the conclusions. Another aspect to be studied in depth, and which would deserve another monographic study, would be the differential characteristics of the immigration that makes up the majority of the labor force in both cases.

Consequently, this study makes three contributions to research on the organization of platform workers. Firstly, it links the similarities in the processes of self-organization with the ones in the labor process in the platforms, where the central role of the technological infrastructure as well as the contradictions derived from the algorithmic control and the supposed autonomy of the workers become relevant. In fact, workers develop forms of embryonic solidarity (facilitated by mutual recognition in waiting outside shops and restaurants), characterized by exchanging information and mutual support to solve the challenges posed by algorithmic management. Moreover, this embryonic solidarity is the seed for active solidarity in the face of deteriorating initial working conditions, which sharpen the contradictions between the formal character of "independent" workers and a work process tightly controlled by the companies. Therefore, this study extends the integration of discussions about modalities of control in platform work⁸⁴ with forms of collective worker response.

In this regard, these results suggest the importance of the rating systems linked to access to shifts, a common element to the platforms addressed (Glovo in Peru and Pedidos Ya in Chile), as triggers for collective action. Together with the arbitrary lowering of income rates and corporate de-responsibilization in the face of the risks of the activity, the restrictions derived from the qualification system exacerbate the contradictions between a work process in which the worker is formally autonomous and the strong submission to the company's

82 Morales and Abal, *supra* note 10.

83 Tassinari and Maccarrone, *supra* note 13.

84 Gandini, *supra* note 14.

guidelines and control. Further studies are needed to corroborate this relationship by examining the work process in different delivery companies.

Secondly, it shows that national contexts signed by institutional deregulation of labor display a double influence on the self-organization of app-based delivery workers. On the one hand, the widespread lack of protection and precariousness that characterizes local labor markets, as well as models of labor relations marked by fragmented and weak trade unions, favors the self-organization of delivery workers. In this context, it is the only tool they can use to defend their interests. Conversely, these elements hinder the possibility of consolidating the incipient organizations after the companies' counterresponses—mainly dismissals—to workers' protests. Furthermore, the results place the availability of networks and resources to face the counter-responses of the platforms as the main challenge for the consolidation of the emerging organizations, a matter in which the socio-political context of each country may favor or hinder the process.

Finally, several ways to deepen our understanding of self-organization processes and the capital-labor conflict expressed around the platforms are raised based on the study. In this respect, it seems relevant to characterize the conflict that has arisen around platform work in the recent wave of mobilizations in the Latin American region, as well as to link it to its socio-political and institutional contexts, to make a regional balance. Likewise, and retrieving the political commitment of Latin American research,⁸⁵ we claim that the emerging academic interest in platform work from a critical perspective can support workers' self-organization processes. By addressing the need for support networks, and despite the irreplaceable role of working-class solidarity, critical academia can contribute to the public debate on platforms, support regulatory processes in defense of labor rights, and connect mobilized workers with networks that can provide legal, communicational or organizational resources.

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85 Fals Borda, O. and C. Rodríguez Brandao. *Investigación Participativa [Participative Research]* (Montevideo: La Banda Oriental, 1987).