



**platform labour in
urban spaces**

WP5

Reports of SOPO Lab Session 2 - Local level:

**"Labour Rights and organization in Platform
Economy"**

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1. INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Executive Summary

This report summarizes main outcomes from the first round of PLUS local social policy laboratories. Several stakeholders engaged with platform economy have been recruited to discuss about issues related to labour organization and workers' rights. The goal of labs is to trigger a debate on problems and challenges related to platforms' expansion in urban areas that could at the same time: a) disseminate PLUS results; b) endure beyond the project c) favour the production of shared policies and best practices.

The labs took place in 7 cities in October and November 2020 with the participation of unionists, workers, policymakers, managers, experts. PLUS researchers stimulated the discussion around specific topics as the legal status of platform workers, the forms of collective organization, the prerogatives of municipalities in terms of regulation, Covid-19 impact and alternative business models. The labs did not aim to frame a systematic discourse but more to map the positions of stakeholders, the good practices and the boiling points in the public debate.

The report is composed by an introduction to the methodology and topics, the summaries of the 7 labs and a final section comparing main issues.

The legal status of platform workers has been point of hard debate in all labs where clearly emerged that it is quite difficult to furnish a clear definition in terms of employed or employer condition. This dilemma consequently influences the policy recommendations. Nevertheless, a set of claims (i.e. minimum wage, social protections, transparency) emerged universally. At the same time, the difficulties experienced by municipalities in regulating the phenomenon emerged. More data transparency, innovative agreements and platform cooperativism have been targeted as potential and different strategies. Finally, Covid-19 undoubtedly impacted on the sector with multiple effects. Platforms had to adapt to the new conditions that created difficulties to some of them (i.e. Airbnb) and opportunities for other (i.e. Deliveroo). The attention placed in social campaigns did not correspond to an attention to workers' protection. Indeed, they had to deal with the lack of adequate social protections and the load of entrepreneurial costs to stay on the platform.

1.2 Social Policy Lab Methodology

Social Policy Labs (SOPO Labs) are a key mechanism to produce and disseminate outputs of PLUS project as well as generating engagement and impact into the different publics that the consortium wants to involve in the European landscape. SOPO Labs are currently dispersed into several Work Packages (WPs), namely WP3, WP5, WP6 and WP7 and they also comprise local and EU level. This is due to their systemic, social and experimental approach characteristics. As it has been described in Deliverable 7.3, SOPO Labs will provide a socially

based, experimental and systematic approach (Hassan, 2014; Tabarés Gutiérrez & Bierwirth, 2019; Timmermans, Blok, Braun, Wesselink, & Nielsen, 2020) to solve some of the problems and challenges that the platform economy is imposing over several European cities. In this sense, socially based means that not only technocrats have been invited to the lab, but also other actors coming from several organizations have been also encouraged to participate. The experimental element stresses that trial and error is allowed during these sessions and SOPO Labs will be places where experimentation will be stimulated. The systematic approach also stresses the holistic vision of problems that SOPO Labs aim to gather.

The approach that guide the development of the SOPO Lab is oriented to involve several actors with different expertises, skills, experiences, motivations and limitations to be engaged in a collective and shared process that can allow to test different scale solutions informed by research outputs. SOPO Labs aim to establish and develop communities of stakeholders that can be affected and interested in the outputs of research that the PLUS project is producing. During the development of the SOPO Labs, relations of trust, empathy and support will be cultivated with the different participants with the objective of extending the reach of the project and maximizing the impact. In this sense, establishing connections and initiatives that can go further the lifespan of the project can guarantee a long-lasting impact to the different outputs of the research.

The main objectives that are rooted in the establishment and development of SOPO Labs at local level are:

- To set up a team of participants that represents the constellation of stakeholders affected, concerned and interested by the rise of the platform economy in the 7 cities where the PLUS project is acting.
- To deliver a SOPO Lab process in each of the 7 cities.
- To create spaces where the selected participants are engaged and empowered to design pilot actions upon the outputs of the PLUS project.
- To diagnose barriers and obstacles for pilot actions implementation in each of the 7 cities.
- To help to design and to develop “social experiments” during the lifespan of the SOPO Lab that can promote sustainable changes in the 7 urban ecosystems analysed.
- To reflect on the process of the SOPO Lab at local level and their workshops (what went well? what went wrong? what can/should be modified?)
- To recap and capture storylines about the pilot actions, successes, failures and experiences held during the SOPO Lab at local level.

For achieving these objectives, several coordinated actions have taken place in the 7 cities where the PLUS project is acting: Barcelona, Berlin, Bologna, Lisbon, London, Paris and Tallinn. In this first round of SOPO Labs at local level, different participants were invited to take part in this first series of workshops. These actors were also identified during the initial stage of the project, and mainly through qualitative research methods employed such as interviews or focus groups. Indeed, a first list of stakeholders had been appointed during

starting months of the project (D7.3 *Mapping of stakeholders*) and then improved through field work activities (especially for D2.3 *Final Report on impact on technologies on workers and labour process in the platform economy*). These deliverables allowed to identify several stakeholders that are affected and interested in the platform economy and in the findings of PLUS project. The kind of stakeholders that were invited to this first workshop are: platform workers, platform managers, public administration representatives, technology experts, legal experts, regional policy makers, trade union representatives, researchers, company representatives, civil society organizations and platforms users, among others.

Accordingly, to this diversity of stakeholders, measures were also put in place for guaranteeing inclusivity and gender balance, specifically, in the recruitment of participants, the composition of groups, elaboration of workshop contents and communication strategies associated (when possible). All city partners involved in the preparation of this series of workshops committed to create a space that recognized the identity and ability of all participants for:

- Creating safe and convenient learning spaces
- Providing inclusive environments for all participants
- Handling controversial topics that might arise during interactions with participants
- Designing and planning actions for optimal participation

The workshops were initially designed to be held physically but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial methodology needed to be revamped completely and adapted to the digital landscape. Travel restrictions that were imposed across Europe during 2020 obliged to the consortium to conduct the virtualization of all planned events. In this sense, TECNALIA provided several guidelines to the city partners involved for developing virtual workshops with recruited participants of SOPO Labs in each of the cities involved. The design of these virtual events also paid attention to the different particularities that digital platforms and telematic channels can infer on participants (non-verbal communication, screen fatigue, etc.) as well as the different technical challenges that can occur at any time.

To this aim, the guidelines included a generic recommendation of duration for the event of a maximum of 3 hours regarding the screen fatigue and lack of attention that can emerge in these events. This document (see annex 1) also comprised a justification of the SOPO Lab philosophy into the PLUS project and its main objectives. In addition, the document also considered several aspects regarding the virtualization of the events such as recommendations regarding the involvement of participants (how many and which kind), the roles of the facilitation team (rapporteur, facilitator and speakers), examples of digital platforms that can be used during the session (boards, charts, lists, streaming, brainstorming, etc.) as well as a specific mention to support the use of the Virtual SOPO Lab platform for facilitating communication and interactions between participants¹.

¹ See <https://project-plus.eu/sopo-labs/registration/>

Aside from these formal aspects, tips and tricks for facilitating the virtual workshops were also included in the guidelines based on several references that were previously screened and consulted for facilitating the virtualization of the events (Chautard & Hann, 2019; National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2020; Woodley et al., 2020). Several major thematic axes were also provided for triggering the debate between participants. These were aligned with the temporary outputs of research conducted by the consortium regarding the platform economy in the EU landscape, especially in the WP2 *The impact of technologies on workers and labour process in the platform economy*. These were mainly gathered into: workers status, post-covid economy, trade unions role, effective unionization, skills and unpaid work. A specific emphasis in sharing conclusions at the end of the event with participants was also stressed.

Virtual workshops were conducted during the months of October and November mainly, comprising a number of 5-12 participants in each of the events. Most of them were held through Zoom, MS Teams or other digital platforms and the sessions was recorded for research purposes. Selective resumes of the events were also carried out by the researchers involved and a city report of the SOPO Labs at each city was produced and shared with all participants. Then, all reports were put together in this document for collectively presenting the information of all virtual activities conducted. Later on, UNIBO and TECNALIA analysed these materials throughout a comparative analysis. This analysis paid special attention to socio-economic and geo-cultural particularities that were common in each of the workshops as well as other that were significantly different in each of the events.

CITY	DATE	PARTICIPANTS	MODALITY
Barcelona	9 October 2020	9	Online
Berlin	21 October 2020	8	Online
Bologna	21 October 2020	5	Online
Lisbon	27 November 2020	11	Online
London	27 October 2020	12	Online
Paris	12 November 2020	9	Online
Tallinn	6 November 2020	6	Online

For conducting this analysis, we employed an inductive approach for analysing the findings of the workshops that allowed us to gather significant similarities as well as dissimilarities in each of the cities regarding the technical, legal, social, economic and ethical implications that the platform economy is rising in the European landscape. We also employed a

narrative approach to illustrate these findings and describe them in the last section of this deliverable.

All participants received relevant information prior the workshop such as the agenda, guidelines and tips for facilitating conversation during the event and the project Information Sheet and Consent Form that reflected the kind of data that was collected during the event and how it will be stored and analysed following General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines. Even if in many cases we received the consent to disseminate participants' identity, we preferred to report only the institution they belong to in order both to homogenize the typology of references in the report and to guarantee their privacy from external interferences.

1.3 Labour Rights and Organization in the Platform Economy

The development of PLUS research already highlighted some main features of platform economy at urban level. Not only we investigated in the WP1 the legal and historical background behind this phenomenon, but the field research of WP2 allowed us to explore in depth the specificities of platform labour process. Moreover, in the WP5 we deal with the formulation of policies and alternative business models for a fairer growth.

To stimulate the discussion we appointed some potential topics as they emerged from our research as well as we tried to frame the discussion around the boiling points that create conflicts between stakeholders so to favour the mapping and production of potential solutions.

In D1.1 *Report on legislations at European, national and urban level and on general terms and conditions of the selected platforms* clearly emerged that platforms challenge the very foundation of conventional labour categories. Moreover, it is relevant for our conceptualisation and investigation that platforms not simply escape regulation, but they seem particularly able to combine local, national and continental norms for their exclusive best, transferring risks and consequences of their operations to workers.

In D1.3 *Report on socio-historical impact of technology in the labour market* we targeted urban areas as illustrative of technological revolution. Nevertheless, far from assuming them as simply resembling national transformations isolated from other European cities, the trans-urbanism concept developed in D1.3 also implies that cities constantly influence each other making impossible to understand socio-economic transformations without considering how they relate to each other.

The literature review of D2.1 analysed how the platform business model is a widely used and differently defined concept in the academic debate, which reflects both the peculiar dynamicity of platform economy and also that platform itself implies a contested terrain for workers. Digital platforms need to constantly change and adapt to challenges in order of economic survival, this means that main characteristics may also rapidly change as now they are doing in times of Covid-19.

The research presented in D2.3 *Final Report on impact on technologies on workers and labour process in the platform economy* showcases a detailed analysis of ‘algorithmic management’ tools, which each platform employs to steer the labour process of workers. The extent of digital control and automated management of the labour process varies between two platforms where it is high (Uber and Deliveroo) and two platforms where other, indirect forms of control play a more important role (Airbnb and Helping). On the second key issue of social protection, the report finds that the commission based piece wage system combined with self-employment on most platforms lead to precarious working situations characterised by instability often combined with low pay and very long working hours. Even where local regulations force platforms to classify their workers as employees, which was the case at Uber in several cities, many of these issues prevail. For the third key issue on skills, this report can show that although platforms generally have low entry barriers and ask for little formal skills and qualifications, a wide array of explicit and tacit skills are necessary to continuously earn income on the platforms. Platforms generally use internal skill-based certification and status systems, which are tied to rating systems and not transferrable to other working arrangements which is one reason why workers generally consider platform labour not a career path with advancement and development options.

Finally D5.1 *Charter on Digital Workers’ Rights* proposes a set of rights organised in concentric circles. The first larger circle comprehends several fundamental human rights connected to the fact that someone carries out a labour activity, irrespective of the possibility to consider these activities such as work, in the form of self-employment or employment. The narrower circle comprehends other rights linked to the performance of work activities.

To summarize, we targeted some main topics emerging from our research and tried to develop them as main points for a shared policy production: the blurring borders between labour categories in platform economy, the influence between cities in platforms transformations and regulation, the role of algorithmic control, the few social and labour protections, the potentialities of adaptable-to-the-context rights.

2. BARCELONA

Authors: Melissa Renau, Ricard Espelt

2.1 Organization

The participants of the lab cannot be named in this report because the firm consent form ensured full anonymity. The report took place online on the 9th of October of 2020. A total of 9 people participated in the activity that had a total duration of 3. Participants were researchers, union representatives, policy-makers. Next, we name the respective organisation they aimed to represent.

- Union General de Trabajadores (UGT) - union representative [BA1]
- Barcelona Activa - Barcelona City Council [BA2]
- Suara cooperative - main care and home-services cooperative of Barcelona [BA3]
- Col·lectiu Ronda - labour lawyer [BA4]
- UOC - Researcher specialized in Tourism and Airbnb [BA5]
- Fairbnb [BA6]
- Ouishare - specialized in Tourism [BA7]
- UOC - Economy and Business. Urban logistics. [BA8]
- Riders por Derechos (RxD & UGT) - ex courier and PhD student [BA9]

2.2 Main issues

The lab was mostly conformed by experts, for this reason, most of the discussion was focused on quite specific issues and not on discussion for instance about the platform workers' working conditions. The debate departed from the assumption that platform workers do not enjoy decent working conditions.

The debate mainly focused on three topics, the possibility of introducing a new contractual form, the role of platform cooperatives and public policy regulation.

Most participants were experts in the field of labour law and not platform workers. For this reason, most of them had a pretty good knowledge of labour rights. However, they expressed that sometimes among platform workers this is not the case, and that a paid-employee recognition should, in general, be preferred to a self-employment one. In this regard, unions are playing a key role in transmitting this knowledge to platform workers:

"The worker is not aware of their labour rights. Those labour rights are learned on a trial-and-error basis, we only wonder about rights when we have a problem. The rights of the self-employed vs. paid-employees are very different. In the platform economy is very easy to perceive. In the platform economy (and for the self-employed in general) individualization and dispersion make labour organization difficult. However, sooner or later they engage collective action. We created "your union response now" to help them." [BA1]

In this regard, another participant reflected on the idea that platforms take advantage of the vulnerable position in which migrant workers found themselves to prevent workers from engaging in collective action:

“After a year of being a rider, it is no longer profitable. They are looking for immigrants, because as they have an immediate need, they are not interested in knowing their rights or improving working conditions.” [BA9]

Another important concern among participants was the idea of attributing the figure of false self-employed as a new creation by platforms. Explaining that precarious work is not exclusive from platform work, and that the deregulation of labour laws and the creation of “grey” figures have enabled that. In this sense, participants mentioned two factors that incentivise the use of self-employment figures. First, the important tax discount that the government gives to recent self-employed --they pay about the 16.5% during the first year, 50€ per month-- and the “TRADE” figure which enables self-employed who receive more than 75% of their income through one client to be recognised as such. In this sense, they appealed to the need to identify the roots of the problem - high unemployment rates, working-poor, flexibilization of employment laws, creation of juridical insecurity- and not only to tackle the consequences.

For all the aforementioned reasons, participants were reluctant to introduce new contractual forms citing the Article 1.1. of the statute of workers as only needing minor adaptations to platforms not a complete modification.

Another interesting topic was how working conditions differ among sectors, domestic workers are founded in a much more vulnerable position than platform couriers, and the platform economy was seen as a player that was replicating structural inequalities. Although they were mostly interested in the role of platform cooperatives in showing an alternative economic model the challenges, they currently face was also a hot topic:

“Household employee agreement. What is that? Employed or self-employed? It is very different from one sector to another. Care platforms are replicating a black economy model. They are residential domestic workers shown nicely on a platform. The conditions of the workers have not been improved. It does not add value and does not improve on anything. Decidim we use it, but for us the answer would be to create a cooperative place where there is a platform structure and support services for these people (service cooperative), who may be the co-owners of this platform. What happens is that this drawing is very beautiful, but the problem of work remains. How much are you willing to pay for a person's care? How to combine the rights of the worker with the possibilities of the platforms?” [BA3]

According to the participants, other challenges that difficult the emergence of platform workers co-ops is that it is much harder to set them up with vulnerable people while calling for better funding policies to help platform cooperatives succeed. For this reason, they believe the right to bargaining and engage in collective action should be enforced while paid employment is promoted.

During Covid-19 first wave, platform couriers were considered as an essential service and thus allowed to work but due to inconsistencies with the norm, the police stopped them and even fined some. This meant that they just not were exposed to an enormous health risk but also, they faced the risk of being fined by the local authorities. Moreover, in the middle of the first wave, the city council -- although one year ago having shown support to the Sharing

Cities Declaration-- did not realise that some of the companies they had subcontracted to deliver meals to the elderly were using Stuart and Glovo.

The participants focused on discussing the future avenues of the platform economy. For instance [P8] considered that VTC platforms may increase their market share further thanks to COVID-19 because people get used to avoiding public transport. According to the participant, in the midterm this could lead to a removal of certain public transport routes not sustainable. Regarding tourism, one of the most affected sectors by Covid-19 the participant [P7] believed that there is a general trend of rethinking tourism towards more socially responsible models, probably because of a change in customer preferences. Finally, domestic services platforms and in general the whole sector was perceived as one of the most promising sectors for the next years.

Although some participants mentioned that platform work does not involve any special skills at all, other participants considered digital skills and more general soft skills.

Regarding digital skills were mentioned as a key aspect for care workers in which there is not only a huge percentage of women involved but almost 80% of them a migrant. In this later case, some of them do not have the necessary skills to easily manage APP systems, for this reason the participant [BA3] considered as key the introduction of a basic training, with the main aim of helping them to devote most of their time to paid activities.

Soft skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, active listening, empathy and the ability to renounce one's own ideas when the majority ones another think were mentioned as skills that needed further development to strengthen the cooperatives movement.

Participants were in general supporters of UBI. The main pitfalls about introducing a UBI scheme were about the way it could be financed considering Spain as a relatively poor country with a poor industrial sector and tax collection system. However, they also mentioned the importance of differentiating between universal and minimum incomes.

“If a universal basic income is born to facilitate the social benefit of the self-employed and who guarantees them is the public system, it is not sustainable. A basic income has to be financed with taxes. regarding minimum incomes, citizenship, etc. That's another totally different movie. This is social protection that is given on issues of vulnerability but should not be the ultimate goal. It is necessary to think about how we set it up to include them in the labour market. There has to be a system that works better than it does now.” [BA1]

2.3 Remarks

During the SOPO Lab, it became clear that although it is using digital technologies, the platform economy was not completely engaging in new forms of precarisation but that it helped to make them more visible. This links, with the TRADE and tax discounts that platform companies take advantage of. These aspects have created a grey area in which neither labour rights nor tax collection are strengthened. Difficulty introducing a Universal Basic Income (UBI) scheme. Another important topic was the idea that each sector has its own regulations and particular working conditions, and that therefore a generalisation of platform workers working conditions cannot be made. It is paramount to not just introduce modifications, in terms of new regulations and overturning the labour reforms - that promote the triangulation of labour relationships. But to make sure the enforcement of current labour laws.

Finally, another important aspect debated are the current challenges and opportunities platform cooperatives are facing. Although they become an important player showing that an alternative platform economy is possible, they struggle to find a way of funding themselves and in this sense public policies could play a key role.

3. BERLIN

Authors: Manuela Bojadzijev, Valentin Niebler, Moritz Altenried

3.1 Organization

On the side of workers, our participants involved one worker we had interviewed already during our worker interview field research period, as well as two newly recruited individuals. The remaining participants were comprised of both local stakeholders from the city's senate, one of Germany's main unions ver.di, social movements and research. The event was organized as a videoconference. As anonymity was assured towards workers, their names are not mentioned.

- Uber driver (fulltime worker) [BE1]
- Helping cleaner (fulltime worker) [BE2]
- Airbnb host (occasional use of Airbnb) [BE3]
- Member of Berlin Senate [BE4]
- Researcher on Helping at TU Berlin [BE5]
- Ver.di unionist (Germany's main service union) [BE6]
- Berlin Tech Workers Coalition (TWC) [BE7]
- Expert on platform cooperativism [BE8]

Besides our participants, the panel was moderated, and research was presented by the PLUS team (Prof. Manuela Bojadzijev, Valentin Niebler, Moritz Altenried) as well as technical support (Roxana Weger). The event took place on October 21st, the same day as the WP2 focus groups and the WP4 training session. The three workers as well as the researcher on Helping had participated in those earlier events as well. This made it possible to build on discussions and knowledge that was generated in these sessions already. The length of the SOPO Lab was 2 hours.

3.2 Main issues

The Berlin lab debated two main issues: the impacts and problems of platform labour in Berlin and possible solutions and alternatives to these problems. A large part of the latter issue focused on the model of platform cooperatives. The discussion turned out to be very lively, it could build on the research and findings presented by the PLUS team at the beginning and also forge relations between participants beyond the event. Two participants had technical problems during the session, but those could be solved with the help of our technical support. The Uber driver, who had technical issues in the beginning, could only join again for the second half. While all participants understood German, some spoke in English – this was agreed on with the participants during the session, and summaries of English statements were summed up by the moderation.

The event started with a quick introduction of the project and the preliminary findings of the PLUS research in Berlin at this point, mainly referring to the research in WP2. All participants were then able to introduce themselves with statements on their involvement with the issue in Berlin. On the issue of the impact and problems of platform work in Berlin, each worker presented their perspective on the activity. Each of them was asked to present a positive and a negative aspect of the work. Most workers emphasized the easy access to the platform and to its payments as an advantage, but stressed several negative issues: false self-employment, an overload of workers competing for too little orders and high commission by the platform. Participant BE2, who works for Helping, emphasized a contradictory sense of flexibility on the platform:

“It’s flexible just for the customers, but not for the cleaners. It’s flexible in the worst meaning of the word for the cleaners. Once someone cancels on you, you don’t get anything in return and you always have to keep a very friendly relation with the customers, even if that’s too much for them to ask.” [BE2]

The participant also emphasized the issue of information asymmetry through the platform’s interface governance: to his impression, the platform did not seem to show all orders available on the app, especially not orders that were close by his apartment. He stated that “in that way they make it seem as if you’re lucky that you get something that is six or seven kilometres away” (ibid.). Participant BE1, a Uber driver who had been driving with Uber since almost five years, said that he had stopped due to the deterioration of working conditions since Corona: “since the Corona pandemic started I have completely stopped [with Uber], because you have to work double the amount to earn what you have earned before” [BE1]. Out third platform work participant, an occasional host at Airbnb, explained how she and her family used the platform to finance their vacation. While some insurance issues appeared difficult, she described the use of the platform as an easy way to finance the such extra expenses for the family “without having to work” [BE3]. It was also talked about the complicated issue of workers’ rights by the representative of ver.di and TWC (echoing the workers’ statements), as well as about the transformation of the city by the city senate member. The ver.di representative took up the issues of Helping and said that the company had cooperated with union in their early years to connect workers through the app. This approach failed, however, and working conditions at the platform appeared to have deteriorated generally.

In a second part, it was aimed to discuss the possible solutions and alternative approaches to the way’s platform works at the moment. Three issues were touched: self-organising and unions, regulation and the opportunities of platform cooperatives. On the issues of organising and unions, the group discussed both self-organizing approaches and coalitions with other parts of the workforce. The representative of the Tech Workers Coalition in Berlin, explained how the group had been active in the first year after their foundation in 2019 in Berlin: organizing protests at Berlin-based tech companies (also in support of abroad-based gig workers), supporting the foundation of worker councils in companies and offering advice and support at common meetings. BE2, who works at Helping, emphasized that it was extremely difficult to organize as workers cannot see or meet each other usually. Asked if he was open to team up for organising with software engineers at Helping, as the idea of the TWC suggest, he reacted with sympathy: “ [...] for the single person, it seems difficult to gather all the people who are working for Helping. If there was like a network of

people who are investing their time in it, then yes. I could see a lot of Helping workers joining and I think it could work” [BE2]. The issue of platform and labour regulation was discussed with reference to self-employment and regular employment; while it was generally agreed that working conditions were bad at platforms, solving the problem through employment status was not deemed the best solution. The ver.di representative stated most clearly that the working conditions as such were the problem and had to be improved. This would not necessarily have to be tied to the employment status, but could also deal with other regulatory interventions, most importantly concerning welfare policies, which is an issue for self-employed workers in Germany generally.

In the last part of the event, BE8 introduced the concept of platform cooperativism as a concrete approach and alternative to the existing platform model. Platform cooperativism describes an approach that combines the concept of the cooperative movement with that of digital platforms. Platform cooperatives diverge from both the ownership and decision-making process of corporate digital platforms. BE8 pointed to about 500 platform cooperatives in 39 countries that have been founded since 2014, with some of them in the fields that were discussed in the Lab: the cleaning cooperative Up&Go in New York, the initiative coop cycle in Paris and the project FairBnB, a non-profit version of Airbnb. BE8 described how coops have historically usually filled gaps when services were not offered but said that such a situation might not be too far away when considering the unprofitable and venture-capital fuelled business models of Uber and similar companies. He stated that “it is entirely imaginable that something like Uber would collapse”. The group discussed the proposal together and it was considered positive. The ver.di representative pointed to the common history of coops and unions and saw potential to combine efforts. The Berlin Senate member said it was important to promote such concepts also within municipal politics, as the concept appears largely unknown there yet.

3.3 Remarks

Altogether, the event was able to sufficiently cover both the impact and problem of working conditions as well as concrete solutions and policy proposals. The workers’ statements made obvious that a re-assessment of labour law is necessary to grasp these new work relations. Strategies for organizing and cooperation with unions could be discussed between workers, a grassroots organiser, a union representative and researchers. The model of a platform cooperative was added as broader, but nevertheless concrete imaginary for platform work. One outcome of the event was that in the aftermath of the lab, contacts between workers, scholars and organizers were exchanged as well as between the senate representative and platform cooperativism expert. It was agreed to stay in touch about the results of the PLUS and research and for further discussion on platform-labour related policy solutions.

4. BOLOGNA

Author: Maurilio Pirone

4.1 Organization

The local SOPO Lab took place in Bologna Wednesday the 21st of October 2020 from 5 pm to 6:30 pm. Due to Covid19 restrictions, the organizers have been forced to move it online and to reduce the number of participants to facilitate the discussion between participants.

The Unibo team tried to cover all platforms investigated inviting at least one person active within Airbnb, Airbnb and Deliveroo. We preferred to invite managers or union members to ensure engagement with a policy perspective. Furthermore, we invited local administration members engaged with platform and labour regulation so to facilitate not only a theoretical discussion but an effective debate between stakeholders who can profit from these activities.

Here the list of participants:

- Urban Innovation Foundation Member [BO1]
- Helping Country Manager [BO2]
- Airbnb Estate Agent [BO3]
- Bologna city council assessor [BO4]
- member of Riders Union Bologna and Deliveroo rider [BO5]

4.2 Main issues

Participants focused mainly on three topics: the differences existing between food delivery riders, cleaning workers and hosts; the experimental local agreement called Charter of Fundamental Rights of Digital Workers in the Urban Context; the attempt prompted by local administration to experiment alternative platforms. Some interesting issues came out regarding potential policies for platform regulation and alternative use but, at the same time, some effective problems in terms of workers' organization and specificities.

Participants in the SOPO Lab pointed out that the services offered by the platforms relate to sectors that before their arrival were characterised by a high rate of informal and black labour. A possible positive effect of the platformisation of services is that it has led to the emergence of these jobs. However, BO4 and BO5 pointed out that it is difficult to speak of an improvement in working conditions if, at the same time, the minimum wages laid down in collective agreements are not respected. In this sense, the food delivery sector plays an emblematic role as it is strategic within metropolitan logistics but poorly protected. Archaic forms of work such as piecework and illegal recruitment are denounced by riders. In some cases, at European level, labour judges have ruled that this type of work is not autonomous.

However, Bologna represents a place of innovation from the point of view of regulation processes in the sector. In general, the intervention tools available to municipal administrations are very limited and mainly go in the direction of taxation.

Airbnb hosts, on the other hand, see themselves more as independent entrepreneurs than as workers. "The platforms have created a very significant volume of work, which together with the role of income probably makes this service difficult to classify as exploitative" [BO3]. According to BO3, however, this is likely to change over the next few years. Since hosting platforms, other workers are involved: there are property management structures that outsource certain services (cleaning, concierge) to third parties, often to companies that tend to use casual contracts.

Unlike riders, platform cleaners in Italy have never created a network. The worker perceives himself as isolated from the others, he does not create a community. According to BO2, companies are more concerned about labour regulation than the workers themselves. In the case of Helping, we are dealing with 'second act' workers, i.e. they have had other work experience and find themselves doing this work at a given age. Many of them have had experience of more protected jobs but are not interested in their rights now, according to BO2: "the worker does not have a clear perception. The company urges them to inform themselves. Only 10% do so. There is a very big disparity between types of workers. In our case we are talking about people who have already had jobs and at some point in their life they approached a job through a platform. These are not very young people who may have had more regulated work experience and one would expect more attention from them". The system, she concludes, should be reviewed from the point of view of both the client and the worker.

In 2018, however, the "Charter of Fundamental Rights of Digital Workers in the Urban Context" was signed, born from the initiative of the municipal administration and the claims of the self-organised Riders Union Bologna. The territorial agreement was also signed by the confederal trade unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL) and some companies in the food delivery sector. The genesis of the Charter is also a sign that industrial relations in this sector are evolving from established ones. The Charter represents an attempt to set up an atypical regulatory structure in order to find a formula that would for the first time succeed in empowering workers and guarantee basic protections. The Charter was not presented as the legal solution to the issue of platform labour rights but as a starting point for a broader process at national level and was inspired by a 2014 proposal for a directive by the European Parliament. However, in September 2020 a national contract was signed by Assodelivery and UGL that goes in the opposite direction to the Charter. Its effective implementation by local food delivery companies shows, says BO4, that the problem of protecting platform work cannot be reduced to a mere question of costs but must be placed at the level of corporate governance. The aim of this agreement is to promote digital work but at the same time to defend the rights of platform workers from the escape from the employee condition: "In these digital jobs, behind the mythology of self-employment, lies the escape from subordination. The aim is to avoid following a model of innovation that is actually a return to the past." [BO4].

The Charter also concerns not only riders but potentially all platform workers and enhances the urban context in which platforms are most rooted: couriers from food delivery platforms are more visible, they can be recognised from their back packages, the streets are their workplace; platform workers who have their workplace in the domestic space have fewer opportunities to be visible and this perhaps partly explains both the difficulty these workers have in organising themselves and the fact that only food delivery platforms were involved in the charter. “The territorial presence of the companies”, BO1 pointed out, “increases the possibility of regulation; without this anchoring, there is no acknowledgement of the local dimension, which is seen as a feud to be conquered from a more international dimension of business strategies”.

From the point of view of organising alternative platforms, a particular situation has been created in Bologna that has allowed both local politics to take steps in this direction as well as mutualism practices to think proactively within the platforms. The experimentation of the Consegne Etiche (Ethical Deliveries) project put in place by the Urban Innovation Foundation rethinks the Silicon Valley model of governance but assembles it in a completely different way, renewing the cooperative approach typical of the Emilian territory. New cooperatives were not created, but existing firms were brought together around a digital organisation of the service. This option, according to BO1, also requires changes on the consumer/citizen side: if deliveries continue to be unpaid, this lost revenue is offloaded onto the riders. Moreover, an alternative food delivery model will never have an order density like that of international platforms. The alternative is not enough, but the model of consumption and organisation itself must be rethought. Finally, there is the problem of technology and the difficulty for alternative and local experiences to equip themselves with adequate infrastructure.

4.3 Remarks

First important remark we may highlight from the lab it is the need to consider both commonalities and differences among platform workers. Put it differently, platform labour seems to be an umbrella term that collects workers under platforms, but they could differ for claims, problems, places of labour and self-perception. In particular, Deliveroo riders seem to feel as employee asking for more rights, while Airbnb hosts describe themselves as self-entrepreneurs and Helping cleaners have been presented as more disenfranchised workers. This background influences undoubtedly the production of policies that has to deal with such variety.

A second interesting point is the role of platform labour in relation to informal labour. On one side, platforms are addressed to make visible black labour or informal activities. This inclusion inside more formal business organization does not immediately convey an acknowledgment in terms of labour rights and protections. At the same time, platforms seem to produce new forms of labour invisibility, i.e. in terms of account outsourcing (Deliveroo) or informal labour recruitment (Airbnb). So, platform regulation is an affair more general than exclusively platform workers.

The possibility of local administrations to regulate the phenomenon seems to be really narrow. Apart from taxation, municipalities cannot intervene directly on working conditions. The Charter experimented in Bologna is interesting for the role of local administration in facilitating industrial relations, as well as demonstrate the possibility to define forms of collective agreement. Nevertheless, it is relevant that only local platforms signed the Charter, and it includes actually only food delivery workers because of the lack of forms of organization and visibility in the urban spaces of other platform workers. Furthermore, participants highlighted the existence of a gap between the international dimension of platforms and the local dimension of city administrations and workers' organizations.

Finally, it is interesting to remark the role of facilitator played by the Urban Innovation Foundation and the local administration in favouring forms of platform cooperativism. The cooperative tradition is highly rooted in the Bologna territory and it returns nowadays as a heritage to renew within digital technologies. It must be considered if this role of facilitator is fundamental or optional for the development of alternative platforms business models. Moreover, this local attempt could be understood as an attempt to territorialize platforms in front of the un-anchoring of international players. Nevertheless, this model does not require only a different organization of labour but also of circulation and consumption. This means that the transformative action has to be shared with a large social base of customers.

5. LISBON

Authors: Franco Tomassoni, Michelangelo Secchi, Giovanni Allegretti, Nuno Rdrigues

5.1 Organization

On 27/11/2020 took place the SOPO Lab on Labour Rights and organization in the Platform Economy. The event was held on-line and lasted about 2 hours. The invited participants cover the spectrum of actors involved in the platform economy, although there is an increasing difficulty in directly involving the representatives of the platform companies. This aspect deserves to be assigned, because it can be read as an expression of the culture of corporate deterritorialization that forms the ethos of managers and representatives of these large groups.

- Uber worker, member of river union [LIS1]
- Uber worker, member of river union [LIS2]
- Airbnb host [LIS3]
- Academic expert in housing issues and urban policy planning [LIS4]
- Academic expert in housing issues and urban policy planning [LIS5]
- Academic expert in housing issues and urban policy planning [LIS6]
- Academic expert in labour issues, membr of the national laboratory COLABOR (Collaborative Laboratory for Labour, Employment and Social Protection) [LIS7]
- Oficial of the city government of CML (Camara Municipal de Lisboa)'s planning on mobility and housing [LIS8]
- Representative of the municipal council engaged with CML (Camara Municipal de Lisboa)'s planning on mobility and housing [LIS9]
- Activist engaged in the right to housing [LIS10]
- Activist engaged in the right to housing [LIS11]

The discussion opened after the introductory speech of the scientific coordinator of the PLUS team in Portugal. There was then a first round of interventions around the questions posed in the introduction: What are the main problems in relation to the platform and to its algorithmic logics? How did the situation change with the pandemic explosion? What are the pillars for the improvement of working conditions? How can the action of local authorities improve working conditions and ensure social protection, increasing their role as a central actor in negotiations with other levels of the state? How can the monitoring of the mobility and local housing sectors be improved?

After the first round of interventions, the discussion focused on concrete proposals

5.2 Main issues

Over the two hours of discussion several themes were addressed:

- The relational problem with digital platforms and its algorithms governing logic. In the case of Uber, the return of this theme was also expressed anxieties regarding the mechanisms that regulate the tariffs.
- Problems regarding legislation and law enforcement were highlighted. The lack of enforcement was particularly highlighted, which is accompanied by a lack of clarity of the law itself, both in relation to what regulates passenger transport and in relation to municipal legislation that seeks to focus on housing policies.
- However, the problem highlighted by many was that of socio-professional typologies, the labour fragmentation and the absence of labour rights. Of course, this problem declined in a very different way between the uber drivers and the Airbnb hosts.
- Always in this first round of analysis, the urban dimension of the digital economy was discussed, especially its impact on urban mobility and environmental sustainability, as well as the impact on public space management.

The themes analysed gave rise to convergent views on some aspects, while in other cases divergences emerged among the participants. Several interventions mentioned the relevance of macro data produced by digital platforms. As this data are produced, processed and managed by private companies, with few transparency, all the actors highlighted the difficulty of understanding the platform economy and its effects at various levels. As reported by the municipal government official “Lisbon administration encounter difficulties to access the platform's data, monitors platform companies and establish policies based on that knowledges”. Other interventions focused more on Platform Labour Contradictions and its socio-professional status. The COLABOR (Collaborative Laboratory for Labour, Employment and Social Protection) representative’s intervention, identified the 3 major contradictions between the official narratives supported by the companies and the real situation in the Platform sector. The main problem, COLABOR’s representative underline, “is defining the socio-professional status of the workers. If we look directly at the key-words of these narratives – flexibility, autonomy and entrepreneurship - we recognise three contradictions”: contradiction of "flexibility" - there is a "flexibility" forced/imposed by the platform and market conditions themselves; contradiction of "autonomy" - an "autonomy" that is subordinate, even by the inability to decide how one works; contradiction of the "labour typology" - "self-employed workers", but who are economically and labour-dependent on the platform. Such contradictions refer to the "socio-professional" status of the platform worker - with emphasis on the asymmetry in the relationship between capital and labour, and its lack of regulation (first and foremost at the legal level, particularly in Portuguese labour law).

Debating on how these problems are reflected in the urban space, some interventions highlighted the relationship between the vision of the city and the multidimensionality of its

problems (mobility, work, housing, etc.), underlining the different modalities of crossing between the city and the platform. The theme of an organic vision of the city is also present in the discussions on tourist or short rental housing. Always in this regard, the intervention of Airbnb's host LIS3 defended "the need to understand the urban problem as a whole, based on an option that may privilege housing by local inhabitants. The problem lies in the fact that tourist accommodation is often in the hands of large funds, and managed by companies with little, if any, connection with the local area. These large groups represent the majority, thus creating a tendency towards homogenisation of supply, but above all, an expulsion of small owners".

A more oriented discussion about Uber, instead, highlighted the following problems of the asymmetry of power in the platform economy a) in relation to the fares (established below the cost value of the service, as well as the platform being the only entity of the ecosystem to establish the prices), b) in relation to the supervision of the daily hourly load (most drivers work more than the legally established hours). A representative of the Uber drivers' union reported that "despite the existence of a series of laws that protect workers and the market, but above all, that give to national and local authorities a series of powers to supervise working conditions, such as those relating to the hourly charge, there is almost not supervision. This not only strongly influences the labour market, but also guarantees an environment of freedom for companies to apply unilateral policies on fares setting". The representatives of the Uber drivers denounced the absence of inspection by the competent institutions, such as IMT and AMT. Another problem highlighted is the constant fares reduction, while the costs of the operation continue to increase (unsustainability for workers and partners).

Regarding the problems of sustainability and mobility participants mentioned the existence of competition between the TVDE sector and public transport (the sustainability of public transport is at stake when the TVDE fares/cost ends up being cheaper than public transport in many cases). In the same way, an excessive and unregulated bet in the platform mobility sector could translate into other sustainability problems (environmental, urban, economic, etc). The intervention of the representative of the Lisbon city Government that deals with mobility, highlighted several aspects. CML promotes a mobility ecosystem with multiple agents, seeking to integrate public and private actors for the offer of mobility. CML sees itself as an agent that should regulate the various mobility agents, as well as the management of the use of public space. In this sense, the CML does not seek to create a single mobility supply, but to regulate the ecosystem. There is the possible emergence of "mobility-as-service" platforms, aggregators of the different mobility platforms and services, forcing readjustments of the platform and the ecosystem. The data issue is a dimension where the CML could be decisive for the emergence of such a platform. At this moment, the Navegante pass already integrates some of these functionalities (with the joining of the public transport offer with some private mobility services). In order to ensure greater possibility of control of the municipal councils over the activity of the sector, they need to hold more information about it. The need to know the number of hours performed by each driver, number of cars in circulation, etc. was stressed. Something that implies a change in the TVDE sector law itself, currently under revision, and for which the CML is pushing to include this provision of information to municipalities

The discussion highlighted similar problems in relation to the housing sector and the impact of platforms of short rental, namely Airbnb. Regarding housing, a conflict between housing promotion and the real estate/tourism market was recognized in a context of real estate and tourism pressure, resulting in a reduction of housing supply for the local population. An activist engaged in the right to housing points out that "the trend of expulsion of inhabitants from the central districts is spreading to other areas of the city. Short rental It was highlighted how local housing moved is moving from the Lisbon downtown, to reach a metropolitan dimension, with possibilities of gentrification and other social impacts at that scale". Regarding the process of professionalization and concentration in the touristic short rental market: the trend towards professionalization and concentration of capital in the Airbnb sector was pointed out and also the way in which the Airbnb sector in Lisbon is increasingly concentrated in large owners of foreign origin and in investment funds. The role played by these platforms contributes to a trend towards neo-liberalisation of housing.

The discussion then, moved its focus on the relationship between pandemic, economic development model and housing. The pandemic has called into question models of economic development that are excessively dependent on one sector, where some activities (such as tourism) have suffered an abrupt fall and have called that same model into question with the explosion of the pandemic. The bet on the tourism sector, milled some interventions, was an economic strategy in response to the economic crisis experienced in 2012, which, however, accelerated the unequal distribution of wealth and diversifying little the national economy, made it dependent on sectors strongly affected by the pandemic. The differences in trajectory between Uber and Airbnb were highlighted, with a possibility of a more significant change in Airbnb. The hypothesis was formulated that the strategy for the real estate sector will be to move from a strong investment in local accommodation, to a "mid-term rental" market (in line with a bet on other profiles, such as international students/workers, digital nomads or start-up professionals). In any case, it is not an effective bet on long-term rental. Regarding the municipal management of the real estate and tourism sectors, the difficulties in operating in the market were highlighted, in a context of successive changes in the municipal regulation, as well as several problems in its supervision (which introduces instability in business management). This is the perspective defended by the host present in the discussion [LIS3]. In his view, these successive changes in the law on the part of the public administration are due more to a relapsing logic in the wake of media pressure, rather than to a well-founded vision and a clear policy for the sector. In the field of movements for the right to housing, it was stressed that the impact of the high price of housing on the lives of workers is another factor that constitutes a relationship between platform and work. Moreover, this is a sector that tends to be based on precarious work. It was also mentioned how the municipal assembly and the local administration have been responding to the evolution of local housing in Lisbon, highlighting the creation of containment areas to new local accommodation (both absolute and relative containment areas).

5.3 Remarks

As already highlighted in other PLUS project reports, the Lisbon context presents a strong intermediary structure for the platform economy. Within the framework of this

intermediation, the actors involved multiply. This gives rise to proposals for solutions that are based on precarious balances and do not always succeed in moving in a clear direction, since the number of players and interests involved creates a geometry of alliances that transfigures the opposition between labour and business interests. This also makes the role of institutions, both local and national, less clear on the surface.

Although there were some disagreements on the proposed resolutions, there was also a strong consensus on other points.

On the labour rights, there is a difficulty of "municipalizing" labour legislation as this area refers to an essentially national scale. In this case, the platforms should be obliged to be regulated by the national frameworks, starting with labour law. Moreover, there is the need for labour legislation to begin to integrate (such as platform work or teleworking) that constitute new labour realities. We are talking about labour realities that are no longer spatially and temporally contained, running the risk of blurring work spaces and times and not work, something that requires new regulation in order to avoid a progressive deregulation and precariousness of the labour market, with important consequences in the daily lives of workers and in the very organization of the city.

Regarding taxes and public policies, several interventions stressed the importance of knowing better how taxes collected from these sectors are used, in particular in terms of supervision. Moreover, it has been reported the need to think about housing, mobility and tourism in a more integrated perspective, at the level of urbanism/city, not segmenting the various axes of action, was defended. The problem of the platforms is related to a political issue, of substance, and not so much of circumscribed and localized solutions for each sector. Addressing the example of Uber, it refers to a tension between an urban, sustainability and mobility problem (the existence of cars in the city) and the challenge that the withdrawal of them does not translate into a labour and social problem for those who currently have their source of income in the TVDE sector. Basically, it was defended the need for the State to have again a more fundamental vision, an economic and social plan that could fulfil certain objectives (labour, sustainability, etc.).

In relation to data, several interventions have highlighted the importance of data access for more informed public policies, with a more easily accessible and up-to-date database.

6. LONDON

Authors: Eleni Kampouri, Tracy Walsh

6.1 Organization

The participants of the lab cannot be named in this report because the consent form that participants have signed ensures full anonymity. The following list presents the participants' professions and affiliations.

- Uber driver, Leading Member of Labour Union-App Drivers and Couriers Union (ADCU) [LON1]
- Uber Driver, Member of Labour Union-ADCU [LON2]
- Uber Driver, Member of Labour Union-ADCU [LON3]
- Deliveroo rider [LON4]
- Regional Organizer, Labour Union GMB [LON5]
- Employment Rights Policy Officer, Labour Union Trade Union Congress (TUC) [LON6]
- Airbnb Host [LON7]
- Airbnb Host [LON8]
- Academic expert on the gig economy-King's College [LON9]
- Researcher expert on the gig economy, Fair Work Foundation [LON10]
- Researcher on the gig economy, Xyntheo Think Tank [LON11]
- Researcher on the gig economy, Xntheo Think Tank [LON12]

6.2 Main issues

The discussion focused primarily on the period of the pandemic and the lack of employment that platform workers face during this period. Participants were highly engaged and talked a lot about the impact of the pandemic on platform workers. Another issue that was discussed was the unwillingness of platforms to take responsibility for the protection of workers, since they started operating in London but especially during the past months of the lockdowns. All participants agreed that platforms took very few initiatives for the protection of the health and safety, and financial support of workers, and only introduced protective measures when these were imposed by governments, for example, Uber made masks and partitions obligatory only when these were made obligatory by the Mayor of London. On the contrary, participants argued that customer safety was prioritized and public responsibility campaigns were launched to promote a benign image of platforms that appealed to customers, for example the contactless delivery option was given to customers but no contactless collection option was given to Deliveroo riders or free rides and free hosting for medical staff were offered by Uber and Airbnb at the same time as workers were left without financial support for long periods of time during the lockdowns. As the participant from Fairwork Foundation

[LON10] argued, “platforms have sort of kept the tone that they have very little responsibility to protecting workers during this time. And we've noticed a big skew towards users, right? So even the most, I think, popular or most common – I guess – measure that we found in our research is to do contactless delivery when possible. So, whether that’s sort of frame is something that's protecting workers, it is also, very obviously, protecting users as well and giving them a sense that platforms are safe to use”.

For the platform workers who participated in the discussion, it was clear that they had to carry most of the heavy burden of the pandemic, while platforms remained relatively untouched. For example, although Uber drivers’ income dropped, they continued to pay the running costs (car maintenance, car rent, car insurance, petrol, mobile phones, bills, etc), without support from platforms. This made them feel that they were dispensable. Although Deliveroo riders continued working, they faced similar problems. “Mainly I was working in the week in the City of London, like the financial district, so when all the offices closed, you know, we were earning like *nothing*. I mean, my income went down to like 10% of what it was for like the first month. So, it's been pretty serious, and it definitely hasn't recovered put *all*; I’m kind of like still trying to figure out the best way to rearrange my working patterns, if I'm honest” [LON4]. Although Airbnb hosts agreed that the platform provided no extra support during the pandemic, they did not experience the same pressures, as they did not have the same running expenses and also had access to more social protections through their main employment. As one Airbnb host put it, “And I suppose my main irritation of Airbnb is the fact that they claim they had a disaster fund for hosts and nothing materialised. So, I suspect that was basically about PR for the forthcoming IPO” [LON7].

For both Airbnb hosts and Uber drivers, the pandemic resulted into a significant decrease in their activities or even forced them to be completely inactive. For Deliveroo riders, it was mostly a period of inactivity at first and then of rising competition that made it difficult for them to make a living through one platform. Moreover, Uber drivers discussed at length how the local authority, Transport for London (TfL) made unreasonable demands with regards to protections imposing very expensive partings that Uber drivers could not afford. All participants who were affiliated to Labour Unions emphasized the lack of concrete health and safety rules and guidance by local authorities during the pandemic. Also, it was mentioned by several participants that many platform workers had no access to government allowances and support that were made available for the self-employed during the pandemic because they were misclassified: “Uber would turn around say, “You're running your own business,” the government would turn around, say, “Yes, you're self-employed. If you don't feel safe, don't go to work.” But people need to provide for their families, yes? People *need* to and they’re forced to go out and work, yes? But what is the protection being put into place to protect these drivers, you know?” [LON2]. The general feeling was that once things return to normal, platforms who have pushed the burden of the pandemic on workers will continue their “business as usual”.

In general, Labour Union representatives emphasized the need to organize in more effective ways especially in the period of the pandemic and seek alliances with other sectors. The platform trade union movement is already digitalized in the UK, as a lot of activities are

organized through Watts up and Facebook groups. The Airbnb hosts did not consider unionization as they did not see themselves as platform workers.

Another issue that was discussed extensively was that of the employment status of platform workers that seems to have become much more pressing for a group of platform workers, who are working full-time for platforms. Depending on working hours (full-or part-time) and other sources of income, there were disagreements between Uber drivers and Airbnb hosts over this issue that made it clear that platform workers have different needs. Group participants agreed that the term “platform worker” may not be appropriate for all and in fact there are no one-size-fit-all-solutions in the platform economy. Overall, what became clear during the discussion is that Airbnb hosts differ significantly from both Uber drivers and Deliveroo workers. As one Airbnb host put it, “I am in a lucky position because, because of my age and stage and my own personal circumstances, I don't *depend* on the platform. I enjoy what I actually do, but I think that if you *did* depend on the platform, you would be seriously, seriously in trouble (*laughter*). *Seriously* in trouble, your life would be very, very poor” [LON7]. The participants had varying degrees of understandings of employment status in platforms. Uber and Deliveroo workers, who were labour union members were very much aware of the need to put pressure on platforms to recognize the “worker” status, which in the UK is a status in between employee and self-employed. As a leading member of ADCU argued [LON1], “Well, I mean we had one of our main active guys who was on our committee, who passed away because he contracted the virus and then we had a lot of drivers calling us because they were sick with the virus there was no work there. And we also had a *massive* problem where, as a driver, we're licensed by Transport for London and it's like one minute we're classified as a key worker; next minute, they're saying that, “Look, you know, there's no safety procedures or PPE in place”. So, it was a bit confusing for drivers, because we're out there, we're more exposed to the to the virus – especially drivers working around the poor areas, yes? But the problem we've found is, a lot of it came down to misclassification. Because we're classified as self-employed, drivers were really thrown into the deep end in terms of like the lack of government support, you know, like no sick pay, for example” [LON1]. For Airbnb hosts, the employment status was not an important issue because they did not identify as full-time platform workers and had social protections and labour rights from other sources. ADCU was awaiting the court decision on the recognition of the worker status for two Uber drivers when the discussion took place. ADCU won the case and the right to recognise worker status for platform workers at Uber. Because of this well-known case, Uber drivers had a very clear understanding of labour rights and welfare entitlements of the worker and self-employment statuses, whereas the other categories of workers did not. As many of the participants played an active role in Labour Unions, they also had access to legal advice and information on legal issues.

Another issue that was discussed was how platforms, like Uber, “terminated” platform workers without clear explanations and without giving opportunities to defend themselves. This also brought to the forefront the question of algorithmic control and the ways in which the personal data on drivers that platforms hold is used against them. They also raised the question of algorithmic control through customer ratings and the negative psychological impact it has on platform workers.

6.3 Remarks

During the pandemic, the lack of responsibility of platforms in relation to workers' safety and protection was exposed in a very clear way. Platforms presented an image of social responsibility that targeted customers only. This clearly shows that platforms will not protect and support workers, unless they are being forced by national or local governments. More broadly, the question of the complete deregulation of the platform economy is an urgent one that participants addressed at two different policy levels: first, they emphasised that awareness strategies should be deployed to make customers realise labour conditions in platforms and discredit the misleading social responsibility campaigns that platforms advertise; second, national and local authorities they agreed that governments should impose regulations on major platform economy sectors such as ride-hailing or delivery based on consultations with labour unions. Moreover, most participants believed that platform workers who are employed full time in platforms should be recognised as workers and get access to social protections and labour rights of this employment status.

Nevertheless, it was also very clear in the discussion that there are different categories of platform workers, with different needs and expectations from their job. This diversity should be considered in policy recommendations and guidelines. Especially amongst people who do platform work occasionally, part-time and only to complement their main sources of income, there is not much interest in securing a worker employment status. On the contrary, for full-time platform workers, to be recognised as "workers" is of paramount importance not only because it will give them more rights but also access to social protections that they are now deprived of.

Uber drivers and labour union representatives stressed their conflict with local authorities especially the Transport for London. They also emphasised that a lot of these tensions derive from the fact that they are not consulted regularly and when they are taking part in consultation processes their proposals are ignored. The hostility between platform workers and labour unions, on the one hand, and the local authorities in London has created an impasse that is difficult to address at the policy level. Many actions that the Transport for London has taken, such as the congestion charge or revoking Uber's license were motivated by concerns over customer safety and competition with black cab drivers rather than with the deregulation of the sector. Labour unions, however, are the only spaces of solidarity. Common struggles empower those platform workers who participate in their activities.

7. PARIS

Author: Carlotta Benvegnù

7.1 Organization

Nine stakeholders took part in the Paris laboratory: two trade unionists close to the Deliveroo riders' movements, two Airbnb hosts, one Uber driver, four guest researchers whose research focuses on the economy and labour relations of platforms, and four researchers organising the event. The participants of the lab cannot be named in this report because the consent form that participants have signed ensures full anonymity.

- An Airbnb host: Airbnb is a secondary activity to compensate for the precariousness of her employment status (self-employed, artisan) [PA1]
- An Airbnb host: Airbnb is a secondary activity to compensate for the precariousness of her status as a PhD in political science, which is no longer funded [PA2]
- One former food delivery rider who worked first with the platform Tik-toc-toc, then with Take-it-easy and then with Deliveroo in 2016. He is today a very active trade union representative in Paris within the platforms' riders. He also created the CLAP, a collective of Parisian riders in 2017 [PA3]
- A UGICT-CGT union leader. Among other things, his trade union has conducted a broad survey on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the world of work - with a focus on platforms [PA4]
- An economist who has been working for trade union organisations for about ten years. She has initiated a network of stakeholders of platforms called "Don't Gig Up" (<https://www.dontgigup.eu>) [PA5]
- Two sociologists working at the Institut de psychodynamique du travail. They are working on a project founded by the DARES on new work organisations, in particular platforms, with a focus on the subjective relationships of workers (pleasure at work, health and safety) [PA6 and PA7]
- A trade union leader of the Fédération Sud Commerce et Service, which has been working on platforms since 2017 and intervenes alongside food delivery riders, particularly during the strike movements that took place during the rate changes [PA8]
- An Uber driver working full time with the platform in the last two years and who is engaged in the Parisian drivers trade unions movement (and member of the INV). She had access to the exceptional State benefits linked to the Covid-19 crisis [PA9]

7.2 Main issues

The discussion focused on social protections and labour rights, as well as on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on platform labour. Our objective was to map platforms workers' working conditions and employment situation before and after the Covid-19 crisis with a focus on three sectors: ride-hailing, food delivery and short-term rental (Uber, Deliveroo and Airbnb). The discussion also aimed to stress with stakeholders and workers possible measures aiming to enhance and publicise the employment and working conditions of platform workers. The issue of Covid-19 pandemic, that served as a dynamic introduction to the discussion, naturally raised the question of social rights and labour protections. Everyone agreed that the pandemic worked as a magnifying lens of many of the problematic aspects of platform labour - in particular the absence of vocational training, the non-recognition of skills and the lack of social protections and labour rights for self-employed platforms workers. Although participants' points of view differed on some specific topics, in particular on the question of whether or not to demand the employee status for platform workers (mainly because of the heterogeneity of the situations experienced by platform workers depending on the sector, the category and the social profile of workers), all the participants agreed that platforms did not take sufficient measures in order to protect the health and safety and to financially support workers during the Covid-19 crisis. They also shared the opinion that there is general need for an enhancement of platforms regulation (at a national as well as a local level) and collective bargaining.

We introduced the discussion by presenting our project and the aim of the laboratory, then we gave the floor the actors on the ground: the former Deliveroo rider and labour activist, the two Airbnb hosts and the Uber driver. Their reflections were followed by an exchange with the stakeholders (researchers and trade unionists). This allowed for a cross-sectoral discussion and a comparison between the specificities of the three platforms represented – Airbnb, Uber and Deliveroo. The participants, for instance, discussed on the opportunity to consider or not the activity of renting on Airbnb as an “actual work”, comparable to food delivery and ride-hailing, with which labour rights and social protections should be associated.

Uber drivers and Deliveroo drivers, who were also labour union members and activists, underlined the implications of the independent status (lack of social protections and labour rights). Even if they recognised that the demand for an employee status is not unanimous among workers, especially among Uber drivers who are often “attached to the independent status” [PA9] and the autonomy at work it is supposed to enable, they underlined the necessity for a better regulation of digital platforms in general, for the introduction of an actual collective bargaining at the sectoral level and for the enhancement of social protections and rights. On the contrary, for the Airbnb hosts, the employment status was not an important issue because they did not identify as Airbnb workers at all and had social protections and labour rights from another job. They both consider that the issue of finding alternative accommodation while renting on Airbnb is the most constraining aspect they have encountered. However, as one host said, “this activity was probably much less constraining than finding another complementary income source” [PA2]. This created a disagreement with the CGT union leader who argued that: “Airbnb hosts should realise that

they are working for a platform that is making a profit without providing any protection for the people who enable them to release it” [PA4].

Concerning the heterogeneity of the situations faced by the three different categories of platform workers under consideration, the UGICT-CGT union leader insisted on the need to differentiate the platforms: “A rider is not comparable to an Uber driver, mostly because of the level of investment the job demands (in terms costs for the VTC licence and the means of production). He underlined that “not everyone wants to be an employee, but we (trade unions) can't tackle many issues as long as there are no actual collective agreements. It is important to have the status of platform workers recognised in the terms of the Labour code and to obtain social protections. A European agreement on digital technology was signed in 2020, which must be implemented in all States within three years: the issue of platforms is addressed in this agreement. The demands of the CGT include minimum wage (to be negotiated on a sectoral level and not on a case-by-case unilateral and on voluntary basis as is proposed by the LOM law), social security, workers' representation, and, for those who wish, an employment contract that recognises their status as employees” [PA4].

For many Parisian Airbnb hosts the Covid-19 pandemic, and the consequent sanitary measures, resulted into a complete stop of their renting activity. After a few (unsuccessful) attempts to rent out their respective flats during the summer of 2020, both hosts who attended the laboratory have stopped their short-term rental activity.

Uber drivers saw a significant decrease in their activity, which is forcing many workers, especially those who are in a situation of indebtedness (and who do not meet the criteria for exceptional State benefits), to work longer hours (the waiting time between one race and another is generally longer while the prices of the races have decreased, according to the workers). Even if the State has introduced emergency measures for the self-employed, access to this aid is subject to a number of criteria (see below) that exclude a large portion of the drivers working with ride-hailing platforms. The Covid-19 crisis also seems to have increased the turnover in the sector: while some of the drivers decided to stop working with Uber or with other platforms during the Covid-19 crisis (the activity was no longer profitable due to the decrease in rides and fares and in view of the fixed costs of leasing, petrol and insurance that the drivers face), at the same time new drivers - having lost their job in another sector of activity - have entered the market of passenger transport platforms.

Deliveroo riders continued to work during the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns, in a context where the only sanitary protection measure took by the platform is the “contactless delivery” (barely impossible to apply according the riders). The situation worsened during the second lockdown, when on the one side many restaurants closed down (preferring to use short-time work than working only with deliveries), and on the other many new riders entered the market having lost their job in another sector of activity. In terms of social protections, as the Deliveroo rider and labour activist who participated to the laboratory underlined, “the platforms have set up a compensation in the event of sick leave, but there are too many conditions for access to it, including a minimum quota of hours” [PA3]. Moreover, he emphasized that “the equation undocumented migrants + Covid-19 pandemic + lockdown signified for many workers no benefits. Self-employees are entitled to

emergency benefits, but on the streets, there are more and more riders who rent illegally an account. Many riders are refugees or undocumented, and the renting of Uber, Stuart or Deliveroo accounts is increasing at the same time that fares are decreasing. The problem is the platforms are left to manage social protections as they wish" [PA3].

7.3 Remarks

There was a general agreement among participants on the need for strengthened social protections and labour rights for platforms workers: national and local authorities should impose regulations to large platforms operating in sectors such as passenger transport, food delivery, tourism or cleaning in order to protect the workers. These regulations should be based on consultations with labour unions and not on a case-by-case and voluntary basis as proposed by the LOM law (need for actual collective bargaining and the introduction of sectoral collective agreements).

The crisis linked to the Covid-19 pandemic has made even more evident the problems already existing in terms of social protections. The platforms refuse to put in place relevant measures in order to protect the health and safety of the workers and to financially support them during the crisis (according to workers and stakeholders, the fares even seem to have decreased since the beginning of the crisis). The State has partly compensated with exceptional benefits but has introduced too many barriers that leave many self-employed workers (especially drivers who face significant fixed costs and a decrease of their activity) out of the system.

The most controverted issue remains the one of the employment statuses, because of the existence of different categories of platform workers, with different needs and demands. On the one hand there is a specificity of Airbnb, as the hosts do not recognize themselves as workers. On the other, also among other platforms workers (especially Uber drivers), many do not wish to obtain the employee status and prefer to remain independent workers. Drivers' unions generally claim a minimum price for the race, detaxation and stronger entry barriers (*numerus clausus*). The solution recently proposed by the so-called "Frouin mission" (i.e. to affiliate workers with a third party freely chosen between "activity and employment cooperatives", holding companies or other forms) do not satisfy workers' demands.

8. TALLINN

Authors: Marge Unt, Kairit Kall, Liis Ojamäe and Triin Roosalu

8.1 Organization

The participants of the lab cannot be named in this report because the consent form that participants have signed ensures confidentiality. Moreover, we are not able to name a concrete position of the person in the organisation. SOPO Lab took place at 6.11.2020 via Zoom. Moderator was PLUS project member Kairit Kall, and notes were taken by PLUS project member Liis Ojamäe. Participants included:

- Representative of the professional taxi driver's association (with an experience of driving platform taxi) [TA1]
- Representative of the professional taxi driver's association (with an experience of driving platform taxi) [TA2]
- Representative of the Tax and Customs Board [TA3]
- Representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs [TA4]
- Researcher – Cities and Transportation - Research Centre specializing on the Gig Economy, Tallinn University [TA5]
- Researcher – specializing on the Gig Economy, Tallinn University [TA6]
- Researcher – specializing on the Gig Economy, TalTech [TA7]

8.2 Main issues

Current situation is that the status of platform workers depends on platform and the service offered. A person can choose to be employee or employer in case of labour rent companies. In most cases, it is not possible to be an employee as platform does not offer such opportunity. Estonia has an innovative entrepreneur account which enables to be an entrepreneur and to do platform work without registering a company/ official self-employment status, and without having accounting obligation. In addition, calculation of taxes and payment to the Tax and Customs Board is automatic and at lower rate than in case of self-employed and conclusion of the agreement and the account are both free of charge. The innovativeness and flexibility of Estonia in this regard was highlighted by the representative of the Tax and Customs Board: “while a lot of countries have chosen the direction of pushing the old rules on new solutions [like platform work], to ban if they do not fit those old rules, then we have taken a bit different direction: rather to find new taxation regimes that would fit the new business models” [TA3]. The biggest drawback of the entrepreneur account is that costs cannot be deducted which does not make it very appealing for taxi drivers who have high costs like fuel, insurance, taxi leasing etc.

However, the viewpoint which got strongly represented in the SOPO Lab is that some platforms (like Uber) act like employers as they set the prize and other rules for providing service. It is not employer status if you do not have control about your work conditions, it is an employment relation. It is very different in case of Airbnb, where hosts have much more freedom to set the prices etc. Furthermore, it was also highlighted that it is hard to regulate the status as it is a grey zone (e.g. workers might not know their rights related to their contractual situation) and also the platform workers' interest differ by their workload at the platform. It is an open question in Estonia and needs definitely more discussion. It was also highlighted that the relationship between platform and worker is out of power balance but treated by law as two enterprises interacting with each other. Platforms should have more obligations also to inform the workers about their rights, and there needs to be more control on how they support the tax compliance of taxi drivers or other service providers. According to TA1 there have been cases where platforms have given tax advice to their workers on how to open foreign accounts in tax havens to lessen their tax burden.

It was clear that some SOPO Lab participants linked to the idea of alternative platforms which make close cooperation with municipality and take higher responsibility for locality and for employees. For example, the representative of the professional taxi driver's association elaborated [TA1]: "we had the idea of making, for example, together with Tallinn's city council, to make a taxi platform for the city of Tallinn. This might be maybe more reasonable than those private platforms because nowadays platforms are in competition with each other and have decreased the service price below the one that existed 12 years ago". However, the discussion was more on a general level and several problems related to that were also raised.

As platform workers do not qualify as employees, they have not received any compensations for the decreased workload during the pandemic although there were large scale compensation mechanisms available for employees working in different companies: "Platform workers are not real employees nor real employers and they are pushed in the grey zone" [TA1]. Furthermore, "related to the pandemic we are trying to lessen human contacts, but doing this kind of work it is necessary to be in contact with different people, for example if you offer transport service; and this crosses to the aspect that they [platform workers] do not have social security, but their risk level, risk factors are amplified considering health, wellbeing" [TA6].

As platform workers are not employees, it is not possible to create trade union. Next to it, it is clear problem of finances. Similarly, to party system, it was highlighted that also trade unions might need a central support in order to be able to operate. The role of collective representation is often assumed from state, not seen as something a person can contribute personally. It was emphasized that we need more social dialogues at municipality level: seminars, what are our rights, development of negotiations culture etc. It needs to be discussed how to channel ideas and involve voices from bottom-up. "We are lacking the culture that would advance social dialogue. We could advance it, so somebody has to start the process. So why not the local government; they could organize some kind of seminars

where platform workers can participate, where they can get information, where their rights are highlighted” [TA7]

It is important to give training to platform workers to ensure safety. So far there have been no big accidents, but regulations should be before, not after. Currently, Wolt bikers often do not wear helmet, Uber drivers’ city orientations skills minimal and no one controls if they remember traffic regulations. In Tallinn, there are fixed maximum rates for traditional taxi service. An idea was raised that the minimum rate for both traditional and platform taxis should be established to avoid services under certain level. The participants of the Lab were rather doubtful about the idea of universal basic income (which is still very marginal idea in Estonia).

8.3 Remarks

In sum, the status of the platform workers was heavily discussed during the focus group. There was no consensus whether platform workers should be considered as employees or should there be some in-between category between employee and self-employed person or maybe platform workers should be provided the possibility to choose between different contractual options, as it is a rather diverse group of persons (with different aims and motivations).

However, in general it seemed that SOPO Lab participants agreed that platforms should take more responsibility for their workers and possibly be regulated more; the role of the state and municipality in regulating platforms (and providing alternatives to platforms) was also highlighted. Also, it was highlighted that cooperation culture in Estonia needs to develop so platform workers and their representatives could voice their concerns more systematically. There are certainly problems related to platform work, but to find solutions to them, more discussions and elaboration is needed.

9. ANALYSIS AND COMPARATIVE ASSESMENT

Authors: Maurilio Pirone and Raúl Tabarés Gutiérrez

After exposing the different storylines and topics that were discussed during this round of SOPO Labs at local level, we would like to provide a comparative assessment of the main themes observed. To this aim, we propose a set of categorizations that can gather the discussion and that can reflect the main values, concerns and attitudes that the participants expressed about the platform economy impact on their cities. In the following, we enounce and discuss these themes.

9.1 Future of work

One of the great topics that emerge after the ending of this round of SOPO Labs is the many challenges that digital platforms are illustrating towards the “future of work” paradigm. These challenges are mainly related with the kind of skills needed for incorporating citizens with a low education level (as these are the most common ones in digital platforms) to the new employment opportunities facilitated by digitalization and digital economy. In this sense, many of the participants in SOPO Labs refer to terms such as digital skills, digital literacy or soft skills, to alluring to the kind of abilities and capabilities needed to be developed for working with and through digital platforms. These findings are also aligned with other outputs of the PLUS project (see D2.3 *Final Report on impact on technologies on workers and labour process in the platform economy* and the forthcoming D4.3 *Report on new skills for platform economy and about the emerging scenarios fostered by the training program*) as well as the abundant literature on digital divides that frame this problem not only as a matter of skills to be developed (Brake, 2014; DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001; Ferrari, 2013; Minghetti & Buhalis, 2009).

In addition, the role of soft skills such as resilience and self-confident seem to be also important in the mastery of digital tools and competences to be acquired. Here, we encounter with new dynamics that need to be taken care of, if workers want to be engaged with digital platforms. At the same time, it seems that there is a diverse array of “future of work” modes that digital platforms enable to. Several participants working with Uber stressed that they do not considered themselves such as platform workers and they were mainly interested in being freelancers (despite the work only for one employer: the platform). On the contrary, some others in Deliveroo report they claim to be acknowledged as employee. So, platform labour opens up a general debate on the working status. Moreover, other participants working with Airbnb considered themselves as entrepreneurs enabled by digital platforms. In general, we must consider the high heterogeneity of platform workers’ experiences that can differ not only from platform to platform, but also inside the same platform. In D2.3 we tried to explain such differences in relation to the engagement that every worker has with the platform, in terms of income and hours. Nevertheless, beyond the employed/independent/self-employed dilemma, we may report

several contradictions (see Lisbon for a good explanation) experienced around supposed platform conditions as flexibility, autonomy and entrepreneurship with a clear power asymmetry between the platform and the worker. This situation is much more complicated when outsourcing and third-parties are engaged by platforms in the labour process.

Moreover, the role of real estate emerges as potential factors of distinction between platform workers. Again, in D2.3 we reported as many Airbnb hosts do not consider their activity as labour as they rent an apartment. At the same time, we underlined how a load of invisible labour is connected with the hosting activity and not always acknowledged. Here the digital platforms, with their role of intermediaries and the different set of values that they try to promote in the digital landscape (such as autonomy or flexibility) and confer to their users for attracting them (Gillespie, 2010) create different new meanings to labour practices mediated by digital platforms. This kind of new socio-technical configurations around digital labour were underlined by participants from SOPO Labs held at Barcelona, Lisbon, Paris and Tallinn.

9.2 Rights, laws and forms of labour organization

Another important issue that has been commonly argued by different participants of the SOPO Labs has been the kind of “digital rights” that are needed to be developed in the digital economy. These digital rights are also entangled with other legal labour rights that seem to be not enabled by digital platforms due to the new meanings and socio-technical configurations that digital platforms confer to platform workers. Even if the discussion is highly influenced by the employed/independent/self-employed dilemma, all the labs reported the need to improve social protections and labour rights. Welfare measures and minimum wage seem to be key points.

Here, the role of associationism and trade unions for empowering and fighting back this loss of right through digital labour seems to be quite relevant in all cities. Nevertheless, unions’ actions has to challenge the “volatility” of workers in terms of precarious working conditions and turnover as well as the the lack of unions’ rights as platforms workers are not enrolled as employed (see Berlin and Tallinn). It is clear that, as reported in London, do not exist a one-size-fit-alla solution, but some commonalities in terms of claims could be highlighted: a minimum wage, social protections, transparent rules. One potential option could be to define a set of rights to be adapted with different levels according to the needs of the sector and to workers’ claims. In this sense, the PLUS *D5.1 Chart on Digital Workers Rights* gives form to this option and could be an interesting policy to be further discussed in next labs.

What it seems not so clear is the approach as many of the participants differ in the solutions proposed in each of the events. Moreover, the different national legislations and the lack of city prerogatives to promote specific legislations aggravate this situation. These points regarding rights, laws and forms of labour organization were commonly stressed by the majority of SOPO Labs and it clearly demand new EU directives and legislations that can help cities, workers and associations to struggle in equal terms with digital platforms.

There is also a clear need of conferring to cities with new legal instruments to support platform workers and to contest technical externalities created by digital platforms in urban areas. Indeed, urban impact of platforms has to be framed in organic terms (not only labor, but also mobility, environment, housing). Municipalities complain about few prerogatives in terms of regulation. Their role seems to be bordered to the facilitation of stakeholder's dialogue, tax regulation and alternative business models implementation. Nevertheless, we may report some interesting practices of local regulation. Bologna Chart represents an attempt to find new legal and atypical formula that highlight at the same time the difficulty to target all platform workers as well as to involve transnational players. Barcelona Declaration is another interesting practice but in this case the problem is how to make effective its principles.

Indeed, organizational innovations and alternative business models such as platform cooperatives (Scholz, 2017) were commonly raised in some of the labs as tools to promote fairer platform labour. Digital platforms can enable new forms of organization by digital technologies that are not managed by rigid top-down hierarchies. While some cities reported to have already projects in place in this direction (see Bologna and Barcelona, as the first municipality supports the digitalization of a local cooperatives alliance while the second has seen the birth of a food delivery self-managed platform), other demonstrated much interest in this option (Berlin, Tallinn) as potential tool to put pressure on big players and indirectly regulate the sector.

9.3 Public values at stake

Another of the most recurrent themes that have been identified in the SOPO Labs has been the different public values that are placed in society and that platforms contest with their practices. Values such as transparency, accountability, responsibility, sustainability or privacy are commonly represented in European societies and they are usually promoted at economic, societal and institutional levels. However, participants in the labs commonly alluded to these values being at stake when speaking about how platforms operate and interact with platform users. Algorithmic transparency, automated decision making, perceived and promoted inequality were commonly argued by many platform workers as well as other stakeholders taking part in these virtual forums. Data transparency seems to be quite important particularly for workers and municipalities. The first complain about the uncertainty on fares, shifts and preferences behind the algorithmic organization of labour; without a clear knowledge of its rationality it is more difficult to set up a critique and counterproposals. The latter evidence difficulties in framing policies without a clear picture of the platform expansion in the city.

For sure, and as it has been also spotted in the literature (van Dijck, Poell, & Waal, 2018), platforms confront many public values that are promoted in European societies. This is a very important point as the EU tries to promote some core values throughout their regulations and directives across the EU (see D1.1 *Report on legislations at European, national and urban level and on general terms and conditions of the selected platforms*) and digital platforms represent a serious threat to this strategy. We can also find precarity, temporality and vulnerability in working conditions enabled by these platforms (see again

D2.3) and as important consequences of the contestation of these public values in the digital landscape. This kind of public values that platforms put at stake were specifically underlined by participants from SOPO Labs held at Barcelona, Berlin, Lisbon and London.

Moreover, many workers reported how during COVID-19 pandemic the platforms have been more interested to support their public image with campaigns of social responsibility (free rides for medical assistance, free hosting for doctors) but much less engagement with safe working conditions.

9.4 COVID-19 as a two-edged sword for digital platforms

The implications of the COVID-19 crisis in many sectors of the EU economy have been enormous and we may highlight its impact also on platform economy (for a first PLUS outlook see Chicchi et al., 2020). The coronavirus outbreak was a tipping point in the ongoing processes of digitalization across the EU, but it was also a period of inflection for some services offered by digital platforms. During the last year we have observed how many transportation and tourism services similar to Uber or Airbnb have been heavily hit by the economic crisis. Tourism and mobility sectors were among the main wounded sectors of the economy and they were almost paralyzed due to lockdowns and travel restrictions imposed across the EU. Some cities (i.e. Lisbon) reported that Airbnb is adapting to the new conditions moving towards mid-term rentals.

In contrast, food delivery services such as Deliveroo or e-tailers such as Amazon have been largely benefited thanks to the “new normality” where the last mile has raised a space of utmost importance for digital businesses during the pandemic (Chicchi et al., 2020). Due to this situation, many platform workers have stressed how digital platforms have largely benefited from this situation but not their workers. For sure, this situation resembles to the financial crisis of 2008, when benefits were privatized and risks socialized (Mazzucato, 2013; Posner, 2009). Even though, this time is even worse as the majority of platform workers of have also put their health at risk when conducting their tasks, with no specific dedicated measures enabled by platforms, nor Personal Protective Equipment’s (PPEs), nor social benefits provided. Deliveroo expressed more concerns for customers that workers, limiting its support only to contactless delivery in a first phase (see London).

The formal working status as self-employed or independent workers did not allow riders, hosts, drivers and cleaners on platforms to access to government allowances too (i.e. see London and Tallinn). These combination of few platform support and scarce welfare state contributed to generate a high turnover rate in many platforms as well as a migration between platforms searching for better opportunities (see Paris). Moreover, some bad practices as illegal accounts or debts to sustain working costs seem to have been strengthened.

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11. ANNEX 1: SOPO LABS GUIDELINES

Social Policy Lab Session 1 – **Labour Rights and organization in the Platform Economy-**

Introduction:

The philosophy that lies behind the SOPO Lab is based on the ability to **involve diverse actors with different expertise’s, skills, experiences, motivations and limitations to be engaged** in a collective and shared process that will allow to test multiple small-scale solutions that can lead to **solve complex problems**. The methodology that will be used in the lab will also facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices. During the lifespan of the SOPO Lab, **relations of trust, empathy and support will be cultivated** with the aim to extend the reach of the project and **establishing connections** that can survive to the administrative limits of the funding.

Social labs are an evolutionary step towards the transference of the scientific spirit (inductive, deductive and abductive approaches) that occurs into the lab to the societal domain for **facilitating tinkering, experimentation and prototyping around social-complex problems**.

A laboratory is a place where experiments are being held, and this SOPO Lab will provide a field where **different solutions can be tested for future implementation**.

Objective/Aim of the Session:

The Social Policy Lab is an open debate that supports the exploration of open-ended questions related to, in this case, workers’ rights in Platform Labour.

The objectives to be achieved during the sessions are:

- To set up a team of participants that represents the constellation of stakeholders affected, concerned and interested by the rise of the platform economy in the European landscape.
- To create spaces where the selected participants are engaged and empowered to discuss and design pilot actions upon the outputs of the PLUS project.
- To help to design and to develop “social experiments” during the lifespan of the SOPO Lab that can promote sustainable changes in diverse Platform Labour ecosystems.
- To recap and capture storylines about the pilot actions, successes, failures

and experiences held during the session.

Duration:

Due to current COVID-19 situation is expected this first session to be held online, on a virtual basis. Considering this is not the ideal scenario we have to adapt the expectations, outputs and duration of the session to this new situation. With this new approach in mind we expect the session to last no more than **3 hours**.

Needs:

- Involve, at least, 8 people/participant representing all different stakeholders (unions, workers, platforms, city administrators, business and researchers) in the Platform Economy. **15/20 people are the ideal number of participants.**
- 2 people from the project have to moderate/manage the Session. Two different roles:
 - o **Facilitator:** Is the catalyst of the discussion/debate. Boosts the discussion among the participants.
 - o **Rapporteur:** Collects the names/profiles of the participants. During the session takes notes and impressions of the discussion and participation of the stakeholders.
- **Virtual SOPO Lab:** A virtual space with a forum and a cloud service to provide material for participants and follow-up the debate after the session. The results and conclusions of the session should be uploaded here too.
<https://project-plus.eu/sopo-labs/registration/>

Provide you participants the link to the registration form and the instructions to access the thread/folder of each of the session/city.

- **Tools** for conducting the Session:
 - o Streaming and Videocasting/Webinars:
 - Zoom <https://zoom.us/>
 - Google Meet <https://gsuite.google.com/intl/es-419/products/meet/>
 - Skype www.skype.com
 - o Brainstorming:
 - MindMeister <https://www.mindmeister.com/>
 - Mural.co <https://www.mural.co/>
 - o Team collaboration and Planning:
 - Slack <https://slack.com/>
 - Miro <https://miro.com/>
 - o Boards, Charts and lists:
 - o Trello <https://trello.com>
 - InVision <https://www.invisionapp.com/studio>

Tips/Advices:

- Facilitate the session in the **mother tongue** of the participants.
- **Informed consents** form must be collected among participants.
- Try to meet a **gender balance** approach when inviting participants.
- Multimedia materials such as pictures and videos should be taken, on an online basis, a **recording of the session** must be set up.
- Facilitate **breaks** into the events for maximizing energy of participants (organize pauses every 40-50 minutes to let participants have some relax and recover energy, attention and interest on the topic)
- A quick **survey** will be disseminated between the participants at the end of the workshop for measuring their satisfaction about the dynamics delivered and how can it be improved or corrected. This quick questionnaire will have also a white box that will gather testimonies from participants about their views of the topics presented and the relevance of the contents exposed. The survey will be facilitated by Tecnalia.

Questions to be addressed during the discussion:

Workers status: Does the worker have a clear idea of his/her rights in their countries? Should the clarity on status and rights be increased? Self-employed, employed by the platform, false self-employed... what's their current situation and are they aware of the implications it may have? Do they know the future consequences of non-payment of social security contributions? (No pension, unemployment, sickness or other insurance contributions) Do they have information or legal advice on these issues?

Establishment of co-operatives to arrange payments of taxes and social security contributions, and to manage financial statements and other business aspects... Could be considered as an alternative?

Post-Covid Economy. How will this affect to the workers' rights? Have they experienced an increase of job during the pandemic? Will this situation continue when returning to the "new normal"? Delivery services vs. person transport or household services?

The role of trade unions: A "digital trade union movement" operating mainly online should be established? Or an entirely new trade union for self-employed and platform workers should be established?

Effective unionisation: Is there a lack of solidarity and collaboration among workers? Is the "self-employed" feeling a factor that affects the unionisation?

Skills: No special skills at all, meaning that the workers can be readily replaced. Could the introduction of a minimum internal training be a good solution? or the establishment of a quality seal regarding the work to be

done? Could that slow down the high turnover?

Unremunerated work: Platform workers are also still doing unremunerated work, as they are not paid for the time between gigs or for the time spent searching for jobs.

Universal basic income (UBI) could be considered as one solution?

Conclusions:

The results of the discussion should be summarized in a brief statements/highlights format. The role of the rapporteur is critical in this sense taking notes of the most relevant comments and synergies generated during the discussion/session.

What challenges and further actions or follow ups have raised?