
Work mediated by digital platforms: ways and possibilities of resistance

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Abstract

Not by chance, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the multifaceted scenario of labor precarization, making the phenomenon of "uberization of work" more evident. It has been observed that approaches in the fields of economics, law, sociology, and political science incorporate cross-cutting analyses of current trends in the world of work and the "new" social labor relations. These approaches point to various processes that highlight the need to monitor and reflect on the changes in forms of work organization mediated by digital platforms. In the era of platform capitalism, the phenomenon of uberization must be understood in a broad sense, as a current trend in the world of work that involves flexible accumulation and, consequently, new forms of work organization and management. Corroborating Abílio (2017), to grasp the central elements of uberization, it is necessary to move away from the notion of entrepreneurship and understand it beyond digital platforms, insofar as this phenomenon is shaped by the "informalization of labor control," "subordinated self-management," and the "consolidation of the just-in-time worker."

In other words, from an economic, sociological, and political perspective, the central elements of uberization are mainly associated with the processes of labor flexibilization, deregulation, the intensification of social inequalities, and collective actions of resistance, which extend from the periphery countries to the center countries of globalized capitalism.

This article presents a qualitative analysis of the uberization of work based on a bibliographic review and critical studies within the thematic field of new forms of work organization. It brings some empirical evidence of collective resistance actions by platform workers, through direct observation of the "Movimento dos Estafetas em Luta" in Portugal. The purpose of this analysis is to understand to what extent collective resistance actions in platform-mediated work may give rise to new forms of political organization of the working class in the context of platform capitalism.

Grounded in a critique of Political Economy and the historical-dialectical materialist method, it is concluded that the new forms of work organization and control mediated by digital platforms expose the underlying contradiction between capital and labor, as well as new strategies of resistance. Because of the degradation of labor, the collective resistance actions of food delivery workers in Portugal reveal concrete mediations to consider new possibilities for the political organization of the working class, as proposed by platform cooperativism.

Keywords: work on digital platforms, uberization, deregulation, forms of resistance, political organization.

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