
Algorithmic Tactics: Empowering Platform Workers through Collaborative Data Visualizations

Oscar Javier Maldonado* and Derly Sánchez Vargas¹

¹Universidad del Rosario [Bogota] (UR) – Bogota, Colombia

Abstract

This paper presents the results of Algorithmic Tactics, a Data Sprint (Munk and Risam, 2020; Gray and Bounegru, 2021) and action-research developed in Bogotá, Colombia, convening platform workers and researchers. The initiative is part of the Fairwork project and aims to make algorithmic systems contestable through the co-production of data visualizations that represent platform workers' embodied experiences, organizational strategies, and resistances.

The central objective of the project is to understand how platform workers, particularly those engaged in food delivery and ride-hailing services, experience, interpret, and resist algorithmic management. Specifically, it examines how digital interfaces structure labor conditions and how workers mobilize both individual tactics and collective imaginaries to counter precariousness, invisibility, and surveillance.

The Data Sprint adopts a mixed-method and participatory methodology grounded in feminist data studies and critical digital labor scholarship. It combines digital ethnography, qualitative interviews, and data extraction from workers' smartphones, GPS logs, and application interfaces. Collaborative sessions facilitated the transformation of this data into visual narratives through participatory data design workshops. The Sprint is thus both a research and pedagogical event, foregrounding the voices of workers as co-analysts and co-creators of the visual outputs.

Findings reveal a complex ecology of algorithmic control, where performance metrics, pricing systems, and routing algorithms not only govern workers' movements but also reproduce hierarchies of risk, exclusion, and bodily wear (Sanchez et al., 2022). Yet, workers also develop situated algorithmic literacies and tactical knowledge to circumvent control mechanisms—rerouting delivery paths, timing log-ins to optimize pay, or sharing app "hacks" through social media. These insights extend the concept of vernacular data practices (Milan & Tréré, 2019) and engage with STS debates on infrastructural resistance and datafication from below.

This paper documents how data itself becomes a field of struggle and articulation for worker organizing. The Sprint generated visuals that serve both as diagnostic representations and as organizing artifacts, capable of traveling into union meetings, activist campaigns, and policy debates. It positions data visualizations not as neutral outputs but as interfaces of resistance—capable of communicating complex lived realities while galvanizing collective identification and mobilization.

*Speaker

By embedding the visual language of quantification into participatory, Algorithmic Tactics challenges extractive data regimes and opens new forms of knowledge production that are affective, political, and grounded in workers' experiential authority. The exhibition aligns with a broader concern for interrogating digital interfaces and making visible the narratives and bodies often excluded from dominant data imaginaries.

Keywords: data sprint, data literacy, algorithms, data, labour process