Duality of Work in Sharing Economy Platforms

Completed Research Paper

Abayomi Baiyere
Copenhagen Business School
aba.digi@cbs.dk

A.K.M. Najmul Islam
University of Turku
najmul.islam@utu.fi

Matti Mäntymäki
University of Turku
matti.mantymaki@utu.fi

Abstract

Digitalization is enabling new and novel forms of work. One such emerging form of work manifests itself in the rise of sharing economy. In this study, we explore the duality, i.e. the positive and negative outcomes, of work enabled by a sharing economy platform, Uber. We identify a set of positive and negative outcomes the workers attribute to their work for the sharing economy platform as well as characteristics of the digital platform enabling these outcomes. Furthermore, by drawing on theory of work relations, we theorize how the dimensions (temporal, physical, and administrative) of work relations manifest themselves in work done for a sharing economy platform. We found that freedom that consists of control of time, source of income, and self-employment represents the positive side of work. Price reduction, one-sided termination of contract, and lack of control reflect the power disparity between workers and the platform. We further identified three mechanisms in the digital platform that enable the duality, namely resource connecting, data control, and work distribution. Our findings imply that the data control mechanism is a key contributor to power disparity experienced by Uber drivers.

Keywords


Introduction

Digitalization is enabling new and novel forms of work (Ashford et al. 2007) such as micro-work done via digital crowdsourcing platforms like Amazon's Mechanical Turk and sharing economy services such as Uber and AirBnB. An increasing number of people obtain their primary or supplementary income from these platforms. This has been made possible by advances in digital technology that have reduced transaction costs and thus increased the relative competitiveness of the market-based approach of organizing work compared to hierarchies employed by traditional organizations. Sharing economy is a broad term, which today encompasses several digital technologies and collaborative consumption principles, to facilitate the sharing and consumption of goods and services through digital platforms (Hamari et al. 2015). From workers' perspective, sharing economy provides a means of employment and a source of income for many people otherwise unable to participate the job market. At the same time, the working conditions and sustainability of work provided by digital platforms have become a controversial issue (Malhotra & Van Alstyne 2014). For example, while Uber offers work for a large number of drivers, many drivers struggle to reach even a minimum income from their work.

While different forms of nonstandard employment relations including self-employment as well as part-time and remote work have become increasingly pervasive, (Ashford et al. 2007), research focusing on the nature of work relations with regards to digital platforms from worker’s perspective is scant (Forman, King & Lyytinen 2014). In particular, there is a gap in the current understanding of mechanisms and characteristics of digital platform in shaping work relations such as in the sharing economy (Hamari et al. 2015). Against this contextual and theoretical backdrop, we investigate the positive and negative outcomes of work enabled by a ride sharing economy platform, Uber. We draw on theory on work
relations (e.g. Pfeffer & Baron 1998; Edwards & Rothbard 2000) to investigate - i) what are the mechanisms in the ride sharing economy platform that contribute to the positive and negative outcomes from a worker’s perspective? ii) how do the different dimensions of work attachment (Preffer & Baron 1998) manifest themselves in work done for a sharing economy platform?

As a result, our study extends the currently nascent research on work done for digital platforms (Hamari, Sjøklint & Ukkonen 2015). More specifically, we advance the research on the nature of ride sharing economy work by illustrating how the positive and negative outcomes connected by a set of key underlying mechanisms of the platform create a duality (cf. Farjoun 2010). Considering that the concept of work relation is quite fundamental in organizational life, our study has relevance for organizations considering how to utilize digital platforms and elements of sharing economy in their business operations. Furthermore, by offering a workers’ perspective on the positive and negative sides of work enabled by sharing economy and digital platforms, our study can help governmental decision-makers and authorities to better understand the societal implications of this new form of work.

**Theoretical Background**

**Sharing Economy**

Sharing economy in its current usage is a term that represents the collaborative utility of excess capacity in goods and services whose distribution, sharing and reuse is enabled by an underlying digital infrastructure (Hamari et al. 2015). In other words, sharing economy can be considered a digitally enabled shared access, which provides a required resource to someone while simultaneously creating value for the owner. Examples of well-known sharing economy services include Uber and Lyft (transportation services akin to taxis) as well as AirBnB (apartment and room renting and sharing akin to hotels). Sharing economy is reshaping our conception of work. Existing theories about work have typically revolved around companies with full time employments to self-employed and remote work setups, among many others (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). However, work within sharing economy is enabling form of works that are characterized by different dynamics than typical work structures (Matzler, Veiden, & Kathan 2015). Underlying this is the emergent use of digital technology to shape and redefine conceptions about work (Dillahunt & Malone 2015). Yet, prior literature has examined the influence of digital technology on work with a focus that has largely looked at the role of technology as tools and collaboration platforms or enablers of remote work. Today, technology is opening up new forms of work and enabling different form of work relationships than we have traditionally known (Kalleberg 2009). For example, ride sharing economy sevices like Uber and Airbnb are facilitated by a digital platform, which introduce a new form of work that is highly mediated by technology. The centrality of digital technology in sharing economy work structures opens up new affordances that are not typical in other forms of work.

Ride sharing economy services such as Uber and AirBnB can be further classified as what Yoo et al. (2010) and Tiwana et al. (2010) refer to as digital platform innovations. Digital innovation describes IT innovations that are characterized by the utility of new combinations of digital and physical elements to produce novel outputs (de Reuver, Sørensen & Basole 2016, Yoo et al. 2010). The pace of development in the creation and emergence of digital platforms in businesses has been accelerating (Tilson, Lyttinen & Sørensen 2010). This accelerated increase has different implications on work. Typically, digital platforms are seen as an enabler of increased level of work performance, efficiency or value (Yoo et al. 2010). Many prior research around digital platforms tend to highlight the novel and interesting contributions they bring for the work from both individual and organizational perspectives (Fichman et al. 2014; Henfridsson et al. 2009). The potential value due to digitalization has further pushed for the creation of more digital platform innovations (de Reuver, Sørensen & Basole 2016, Yoo et al. 2010).

Despite the self-evident benefits that digital platforms bring to sharing economy, there are also challenges and complexities such as ethical and regulatory issues (Morgan & Kuch, 2015, Sundarajan 2014). For instance, while taxis are registered, painted and regulated to work within a particular geographical zone, Uber drivers are able to easily evade this regulation and work without this geographical restriction. Similarly, the ethical conundrum remains in the case of home owners that are enabled by Airbnb’s digital platform to operate their house as micro hotels rather than rent it out to a regular tenant, thereby driving up the cost of housing for the location’s inhabitants (Lee 2016). Furthermore, according to Avital et. al. (2015), some of the sharing economy businesses have leveraged the digital nature of platforms to pursue
unfair pricing and worker-related litigation. This is particularly difficult as these services are challenging the foundations of legislations established for a non-digital world. Also, digital sharing economy platforms have enabled the gradual disruption of existing professions and even industries (Cramer & Krueger 2016).

**Work relations**

Various forms of nonstandard employment relations have become increasingly prominent ways of organizing work (Kalleberg 2000). Nonstandard employment relations include alternative work arrangements (Polivka 1996), market-mediated arrangements (Abraham 1990), nontraditional employment relations (Ferber & Waldfogel 1998), flexible working practices (Brewster et al 1997), atypical employment (Córdova 1986, De Grijp et al 1997), vagrant or peripheral employment, vulnerable work, precarious employment, disposable work (Gordon 1996), new forms of employment (Bronstein 1991), and contingent work (see Polivka & Nardone 1989).

The notion of nonstandard employment departs from standard work arrangements in which work had generally been by default full-time, would continue indefinitely, and was performed at the employer’s physical premises under the employer’s control (Kalleberg 2000). Standard work arrangements were the norm in many industrial nations for much of the twentieth century and were the basis of the framework within which labour law, collective bargaining, and social security systems developed. (Kalleberg 2000.) Due to the proliferation of nonstandard forms of employment, the research has moved towards self-employment, contract work relationship, part-time work and remote work, among many others (Edwards & Rothbard 2000). Hence, researchers have called for more scholarly focus on non-standard work (Ashford et al. 2007). Due to advances in technology, structure of work is changing which in turn has significant implications on the conceptualization of work as well as the individual, managerial, and organizational outcomes attributed to work (Ashford et al. 2007; Grant & Parker 2009).

Pfeffer and Baron (1988) categorized nonstandard workers into three broad groups based on the nature of relationship they had with the organizations they work for. Pfeffer and Baron (1988) distinguished between temporal, administrative, and physical attachment. They proposed that these three dimensions of work relationship differentiates nonstandard workers from standard workers who have fixed hours of work, work on indefinite contracts, at a fixed location of work, and under the direct administrative control of their employer. First, workers who have limited temporal attachment include e.g. temporary and part-time workers. Second, spatial attachment in turn refers to e.g. teleworkers and those who work from home. Third, administrative attachment refers the extent to which workers are under organization’s direct administrative control. For example, workers who work via intermediaries or as self-employment contractors have limited administrative attachment to the organization they work for.

Asford et al. (2007) built on Pfeffer and Baron (1988) in their study on nonstandard work. They concluded that when duration of employment is limited, the organization has limited administrative control over the employee, and/or workers are not physically proximate to the organization, work is more nonstandard. Polivka & Nardone (1989) in turn focused on the temporal dimension and defined “contingent work” as any work arrangement that does not contain an explicit or implicit commitment between employee and employer for long-term employment. Prior research also used these three dimensions to predict the outcomes for different kinds of work relations. These outcomes include development of shared cognition (Levesque et al. 2001), organizational identification (George & Chattopadhyay 2005), organizational citizenship behaviour (Pearce 1993), and social relationships at work (Broschak & Davis-Blake 2006). In this paper, we investigate how these three dimensions manifest themselves in relation to the positive and negative outcomes workers attribute to their work for a ride sharing economy (henceforth - sharing economy) platform, particularly Uber.

**Research approach**

Uber is a transportation service that builds on GPS and smartphone technology to connect people who need transportation with drivers willing to provide the transportation. In other words, Uber is an alternative to the conventional taxi services. Uber provides a means to fulfill people’s mobility needs while allowing those with the necessary resources, e.g., cars and time to utilize their potential excess resources to earn money by fulfilling providing mobility to others. Customers and drivers have their own user interfaces to the service that they can access via the Uber app.
Uber has proliferated rapidly (number of customers & drivers & countries) into the transportation industry. Today, the term Uberization, refers to services that enable the utility of idle or surplus resources to be shared/utilized by others, thereby maximizing the utility of the resources. Besides its traditional purpose of transporting people, Uber has been gradually evolving into a platform with the flexible capability that enables its use case to be extended in new ways. For instance, some users have extended the service into a goods delivery platform (e.g. food/good delivery) and the company — Uber - is experimenting with campaigns and business models such as “#UberEATS” and “Uber for Business” among others. In addition, Uber has an “Uber for developers”, enabling other developers to extend the digital platform. As an example, the provided Uber API has been leveraged in extending applications such as Google maps, HotelTonight, Starbucks, and TripAdvisor, to mention a few.

This paper has been conducted using Uber as the target sharing economy platform. We hold that Uber is a relevant example of a sharing economy platform because of its widespread adoption globally, and the controversies surrounding it. Our data for the study consists of forty-two (42) interviews collected in three different locations – Boston, Los Angeles and San Diego. The choice of the three locations was informed by the high concentration of Uber activities and drivers in these locations. According to recent studies based on documents from Uber, these three cities rank among the top 10 in terms of Uber driver populations and Uber traffic in the US (Hall & Krueger 2015).

---

**Figure 1: Duality of sharing economy work in ride sharing services**

The participants that were interviewed for our study were Uber drivers. Since the premise of the study is about work relations, we consider the drivers to be an appropriate respondent for our enquiry, following the logic of purposive sampling. For the actual interview process, we adopted a semi-structured interview approach. This approach enabled us to have defined themes to guide the interviews. Additionally, the semi-structured interview also provided us the freedom to adapt the interview questions as new knowledge emerges from the interview (Gillham 2005). The interviews lasted from ca. eight minutes to one hour 15 minutes. We recorded and transcribed all interviews. Notes were taken during the interviews.
All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. We embarked on analyzing the collected data by adopting principles of thematic analysis, which is a analysis approach that follows an interpretive process of systematically searching for patterns providing an illuminative description of the studied phenomenon (Tesch 1990). In the analysis process, we placed the interview excerpts into an event-based perspective, framed by temporal bracketing (Gioia et al. 2012).

We started the data analysis by reading the data and identifying the desirable and undesirable outcomes of working for Uber as described by the respondents. Under each of these two preliminary themes, we proceeded to identify patterns from the data by further coding the data into specific descriptions of the desirable and undesirable outcomes. We then reread and grouped codes containing similar content into categories. With respect to the positive outcomes, the analysis led to the emergence of three categories, self-employed status, control of time, and source of income. The categories describing the negative consequences were in turn lack of control, price reduction, and one-sided termination of contract. Based on the categories we identified one key theme illustrating the desirable side and one key theme depicting the undesirable side of working for Uber. The resulting theme structure is represented in Figure 1. In the final stage of the analysis, we focused on identifying the underlying mechanisms contributing to the desirable and undesirable outcomes (Boyatzis 1998). As a result, we conceptualized three mechanisms:

### Understanding the duality of Uber

#### The Positive side – Freedom

A common theme in drivers’ descriptions of the positive sides of working for Uber was freedom. Most of the drivers we interviewed emphasized that they particularly appreciate the freedom to work without constant supervision. This was considered positive and desirable. Particularly drivers who were retired, single parents, or taking care of a family member with severe illness, gave various rich descriptions of how they valued the freedom associated with driving Uber. One respondent expressed his thoughts as follow: “When I was doing delivery [as a job], I had to get up way too early 6:30[am], [and by] 7 o’clock in the morning, I had to be at work. Now I can go to work at six o’clock at night!” Furthermore, the platform allows drivers to reserve the right to decide whether to accept or decline a ride was considered an important positive aspect. Some drivers stated that they specifically credit the liberty to decide to stay home to take care of a sick family member rather than be obligated to go to work under a rigid time schedule. In the light of these experiences, it is of no surprise that most respondents appreciated the freedom related to being an Uber driver. In fact, this observation aligns with prior research conducted in other contexts of non-standard work (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Storey et al. 2005). For example, several studies have shown that nonstandard work is associated with freedom, autonomy, and liberation from corporate control (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Storey et al. 2005). Furthermore, autonomy has been regarded as one of the reasons for non-standard workers to be more satisfied than standard workers (Katz 1993). Thus, we deduce that all three dimensions of work-relations (i.e. temporal, physical and administrative) along with two properties of digital platform (i.e. work mediation and resource connector) enable freedom.

**Self-employed status:** Interestingly, we found that being legally considered self-employed was regarded as an advantage of Uber type of work. Some of the drivers we interviewed explicitly referred to the lawsuit against Uber in California aiming to stipulate that Uber classifies the drivers as workers instead of independent contractors. While acknowledging the benefits that come with such classifications, the drivers frowned at the prospect of losing the freedom associated with self-employment. Some even viewed the work arrangement enabled by the platform as a means of carrying out part-time work and considered that being classified as a worker would potentially nullify their prospects of continuing to work for Uber. For some of the drivers, the value of being self-employed has even been a motivator to quit a full time job and to start driving for Uber. A respondent describes his feeling as follow: “Yeah exactly! I’m my own boss basically. And people like that feeling. People love that feeling. To be able to work whenever you want there’s no beating that. Who wants to wake up at five in the morning or six in the morning...?”

**Control of Time:** One of the most frequently and clearly highlighted desirable outcomes of the Uber work was the control they have over when to work. The driver interface, i.e. the smartphone app, has been designed such that workers need only turn it on when they are available and interested in working. This temporal flexibility enables workers to adjust their work schedules to fit into their personal life activities. Some of the interviewed drivers specifically credited this flexibility for the option to drive at nights while others leverage the temporal flexibility by driving when their children are at school. Taken together, the
on-off nature of Uber work was viewed to enable different configurations of work and free time. In response to how much control driving for Uber affords, one of the interviewees describes his experience in the following way: “[I drive] like 30 hours [or] so [per week], not really full-time. Not really part-time either. ...I pick whenever I want. It’s nice.”

Source of income: As a final desirable dimension of freedom, most workers have embarked on working for Uber because of the possibilities of income. While Uber has been a means of employment for many who would have remained unemployed, it also enables people with full-time jobs to generate additional income whenever they choose to. One of the respondents made an analogy of driving for Uber as equivalent to “turning on the income tap”. The respondent mentioned that whenever he needs extra funds, he just schedules a driving plan for Uber in his free time. A response from an interviewee captures this sense as illustrated by this quote: “I am a business owner. I have a business that I run during the day, and this is just extra income. I just [do it] at night for a few hours usually. And the reason why I’m doing it is because I have a German shepherd dog - puppy, and I have to send him to a specialty school one of the best in the world that is in Massachusetts. And it costs about 7,000 dollars for a month. So I’m trying to just supplement my income specifically for that.”

The Negative side – Power disparity

An overarching theme that was related to responses describing the negative sides of driving Uber was that the drivers did not consider themselves equal partners with Uber. We thus labelled this inequality as power disparity. This sentiment is captured by the following quote from one of the drivers: “They have, their own policies, and sometimes they change their policies. Like last year it was very good. The money that I was making last year was much more than what I’m [making] this year because last year the rate was high, but this year, they rode down the rates and, they raised some other expenses. And, it kind of sucks. But it is what it is... No matter what, they get their own percentage. And, if there are more people to use Uber they get more percentage and more percentage.” Most of the drivers acknowledged that they do not have control over many of the terms of the work relationship. In fact, some state that the terms seem to be a one-way channel, where one party makes the terms and the other party has the option of agreeing or simply quitting. The formulation of the terms is not subject to negotiations which makes the workers feel vulnerable to the choices and decisions made by the company. For example, the company decides that its insurance cover holds if there is an accident only when there is a passenger in the car. If the driver is on his way to pick up a passenger that requested for a ride via the platform and an accident occurs, Uber excludes itself from any liability in such cases.

Lack of control: The main contact point of the work relationship is the Uber app that connects passengers with drivers. The digital platform underlying the app is owned and controlled by Uber and the drivers have no control of the information the platform provides, or how the data is being used. For many drivers, a more transparent view of certain aspects of the work-related information would be valuable in helping them make better decision regarding their work options. For example, Uber has designed the platform such that it withholding the destination of the passenger until the driver has picked up the passenger. Some of the respondents stated that having an idea about the direction a passenger is heading would help them decide if it is in their direction. This is particularly important in cases when they are considering closing for the day and would appreciate taking a passenger going in the same direction as they are. For example, one of the drivers described his frustration in the following way: “Probably the only thing I don’t like is I can’t see where the person is going until I start the trip. Sometimes you are taking like ten minutes, to pick someone up. [You] drive ten minutes to wherever they are, and then they only go like two blocks. So I did like 15 minutes of work, and they’re only gonna pay like 5 dollars.”

Price reduction: Price reduction is perhaps one of the most visibly striking undesirable outcomes highlighted by the drivers as almost all interviewees lamented the unilateral reduction in prices. The implication of this reduction means more driving hours in order to make equivalent income. For example, a driver who decides to quit his/her old job based on the positive economic comparison of the possible income accruable from Uber may realize that the calculations on which the decision was made no longer holds due to the price reduction over time. This means drivers who make a certain amount upon joining the platform (say X$) would realize after each phase of price reduction that obtaining an equivalent amount of same X$ would require allocating more (free) time to drive. Since the platform holds the right to determine the price of the transaction and the allocated share of the driver, the drivers are under the
mercy of the platform’s decision concerning the fare at any given point in time. This leads to a “red queen race” situation where the drivers work harder in order to earn the same thing. One of the respondents, who was a taxi driver that was experimenting with Uber with his private car, puts it this way: “I tried Uber, because back then, …you can easily in a weekend make 300-400$. They have a surge basically every time…. So it’s quick it’s good. But later, …because a lot of drivers get into it, then you don’t do that anymore [because] It’s not [worth it] anymore. … Now it’s up and down it’s not something you can trust. … If you wanna make money with UberX, …you have to work [a lot]. let’s say I do 40 hours, you have to make 80 hours working UberX [and yet] you make barely same as taxi. It’s too much.”

One-sided termination of contract: The digital platform is structured not only to facilitate the work process but also to serve the purpose of collecting feedback in the form of ratings on each transaction. The platform enables both the driver and the passenger to rate each other after a trip. The rating is structured from 1-5 stars, with 5 stars being the best rating possible. The undesirability element of this comes from the utility of this data by Uber. Uber has set a threshold of 4.5 as the minimum rating a driver can have before being terminated from the platform. Considering that every human (or specifically passenger) gives rating differently and weigh his/her rating criteria in variety of ways, the drivers have little control on the rating that the passenger gives to them. For example, some passengers find giving anyone a perfect score of 5 out of 5 being too generous. However, with a large rating of 4, the impact can be significant on the overall rating of a driver. This is demonstrated by an example given by one of the respondents: “They have this, rating thing, some people, might misunderstand, so they get low rating a couple of times and that person buys a new car just to use it for Uber. It never happened to me but I’ve seen a lot of people that have very new cars, stuck in the middle. …if their rating goes down, they might get suspended for a little bit… [Imagine] you deactivate his account but he has a new car that he has to pay for!”

Discussion

Sharing economy platform mechanisms

We investigated the mechanisms of digital platform that have enabled Uber to implement a certain type of work relations with its drivers and discuss how these mechanisms contribute to the duality. To this end, we identified three mechanisms, namely resource connecting, data control, and work distribution that jointly contribute to the positive and negative outcomes of platform-based work in the case of Uber (See Figure 2). The mechanisms play differential roles in enabling the positive and negative outcomes. For example, the resource connecting and working distribution mechanisms are very critical for the positive outcomes whereas the influence of the data control mechanism for the drivers manifests itself mostly in the negative outcomes. We elaborate the three mechanisms further in the following subsections.

![Figure 2. Overview of nature work in the context of Uber](image-url)
characteristics. The drivers simply switch off the Uber app when they do not have the excess resources (e.g., available car), or when they simply do not want to work. On the other hand, the payment drivers receive from Uber is solely based on the rides they take as Uber does not compensate the drivers from being available and waiting for passengers.

Data control mechanism: The role of Uber as the platform owner and operator stems from collecting, processing, and selectively distributing all data generated by the passengers and drivers. For drivers, the platform offers the necessary information to do the work efficiently. By collecting and controlling all the information flow within the platform and determining how and to what extent this information is being made available for the drivers, Uber exercises considerable power in the work relationship. The stark information asymmetry is the main source of power disparity described by the drivers.

Work distributing mechanism: A key dimension of Uber as a marketspace for transportation relates to distributing work between drivers. For drivers, the Uber app is basically the main material touch point to the company. Hence, distribution of work, e.g., rides as well as all interaction between Uber and drivers takes place via the app. The digital distribution of work enables very flexible work arrangements in a temporal and spatial sense and contributes to the loose and detached connection described by drivers.

For Uber, the digital work distributing mechanism allows dynamic changes in how the rides are being offered to the drivers. For example, Uber can offer information about passengers who need a ride selectively to certain drivers. Moreover, currently the app does not inform drivers to which direction the passenger is interested to go even when the passenger has provided this information to Uber. Hence, the drivers often end up driving extra miles to pick up the passengers, which to them is a source of additional costs and thus dissatisfaction.

Understanding work relations in digital platforms

From temporal dimension to digital temporality: The results of our interviews suggest that driving Uber is seldom a result of a long-term career planning process. Instead, the flexibility of Uber work allows adjusting the work in such a way that it fits driver’s life situation. Only few of the drivers we interviewed stated that they drive Uber as a full-time job or that Uber is their primary source of income. Thus, while the temporal dimension of work relationship depicts the expectation that the relationship lasts over extended periods of time, in the case of Uber work the temporal dimension reflects the proportion of his/her time the worker intends to allocate to the work.

In fact, due to this temporal nature of works, many workers decide to try the service for the first time. Among them, some may prefer to discontinue using it after a period of time while others may continue for long time. As described by Hall & Krueger (2015), after trying Uber, many drivers may find that it is not a good match for their life situation or they may only work for Uber when they are between jobs; others may find that it provides them with the flexible work schedule and source of income that they have been looking for and continue working for the platform for extended periods of time. We therefore extend the notion of temporal dimension of work relation (Pfeffer & Baron 1988) from long term vs short term focus to digital temporality highlighting specifically when the work takes place and high degree of fluidity between work and free time. This fluidity stems from the properties of the digital platform to enable very fast changes between on and off status of work.

From administrative dimension to digital administrativity: The results from our interviews demonstrate that Uber exercises significant administrative control on the drivers. However, it should be noted that the mechanism of exercising control is different from that of the traditional organizations, where administrative control is exercised through management and organizational hierarchies (Pfeffer & Baron 1988). We identified two mechanisms through which Uber exercises administrative control.

First, Uber uses the market mechanism i.e. increasing the price of rides during peak hours and busy areas to ensure sufficient capacity. In doing so, Uber makes sure that there is sufficient number of cars available when there is demand. However, this also means that the income of the drivers depends not only on the amount of work they do, but also on Uber’s dynamic pricing algorithm. Second, customer ratings in turn is a mechanism to ensure service quality but also to exercise power on drivers as customer feedback may even lead to deactivating a driver from the system. We shift the notion of administrative dimension from management and organizational hierarchies to digital administrative dimension, which identifies the use
of the digital properties of the mediating platform to exercise administrative control over the workers. Consequently, we call this dimension for work relationship digital administrativity.

**From physical dimension to spatiality:** Self-evidently, Uber work is not characterized by physical proximity of the organization. In fact, we suggest physical proximity to be replaced by virtual proximity in the context of Uber work. Uber monitors cars’ locations with the mobile app and collects information about the used routes and duration of the rides. Recently, Uber has started tracking unsafe driving behaviours such as speeding, harsh braking, and even using phones while driving. In addition, Uber app sends reminders to take breaks from driving, messages that prompt drivers to mount their phones on the dashboard, and reports that show how a driver’s behaviour compares to that of other drivers in the same city. This will not only contribute to safe driving patterns but also help many drivers to receive better customer feedback. However, such kind of digital surveillance on every turn a driver takes may raise huge privacy concerns of drivers. We reconceptualise the notion of physical dimension to spatiality, which includes both the physical and the virtual proximity of the work relationship as facilitated by the digital nature of the work platform.

In overview, our study advances the understanding of work done in digital platforms (van Doorn 2017), particularly in the context of sharing economy in three ways. First, our results show that temporal, physical and administrative dimensions of attachment in work relations (Pfeffer & Baron 1988) with respect to the work for Uber manifest themselves somewhat differently than in ‘traditional’ forms of nonstandard work. In particular, the temporal dimension of work attachment refers to specific point of time when the worker is willing to allocate his time and resources (car) to work. This is essentially due to the attributes of the digital platform that enables very fast and flexible changes between work and free time (digital temporality). The distinct of attributes of the physical dimension of work attachment in turn manifest themselves via the Uber app that transmit information about drive’s availability, location, and even driving habits to Uber and thus enables certain virtual proximity between driver and Uber (spatiality). Lastly, Uber exercises administrative control and power by determining prices for the rides in a demand-driven manner and by using customer ratings to evaluate drivers consequently exerting administrative control via the app (digital administrativity). Second, our study identified three mechanisms in the platform that are attributed to the positive and negative outcomes, namely resource connecting, data control, and work distribution. Third, our study shows that as the positive and negative outcomes can be attributed to a set of key mechanisms, they are not mutually exclusive. Instead, we see outcomes as a duality, i.e. conceptually distinct without strict antagonism or separation (Farjoun 2010).

**References**


