9. Collective resistance and organizational creativity amongst Europe's platform workers: a new power in the labour movement?

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores and discusses labour agency in the platform economy in Europe.¹ The main research question is what this economy implies for the collective resistance and representation of platform workers, as well as for the relationship between them and established trade unions. The platform economy has induced pessimistic accounts of future labour agency, and it undoubtedly poses major challenges to unions. This chapter, however, develops a more positive appraisal. Emerging forms of collective resistance and representation are conceived here as a countervailing power *in the making* – at least in several European countries. A non-exhaustive mapping of this resistance and representation will be provided by utilizing ‘grey literature’² and the burgeoning wealth of empirical studies on this subject. The argument is advanced that the distinctively disordered nature of the platform economy holds the promise of an epoch of organizational creativity and experimentation for labour (Murray et al. 2020), with possible cooperation between ‘new’ (informal) types of collective representation and existing unions. A threefold conceptual framework is used (depicted in Figure 9.1) to develop and elaborate on this argument, with concepts corresponding to different analytical levels.

A world-historical analysis of the labour movement places labour agency in the platform economy (in relation to capital mobility) within a historical perspective via the concept of spatio-temporal ‘fixes’ (Silver 2003). Fixes are various strategies of capital aiming to lessen labour costs and to maximize labour control. To understand the current restructuring of capitalism by digital labour platforms (henceforth ‘platforms’), three fixes are studied here. The product fix relates to the shift of investments from old industries subject to strong competition to new ones. The technological/organizational fix is

Figure 9.1 *Heuristic concepts for studying labour agency in the platform economy*

understood as the introduction of new forms of management and methods of work arrangements. The spatial fix, rooted in labour geography, refers to the geographical relocation of capital to new areas in order to maximize profit and labour control. This concept of recurrent fixes helps to deconstruct the platforms' self-portrayal as mere technological start-ups. Fixes are only stable until the next regulation or crisis within capital accumulation, however, as a result of labour-capital dynamics within industries and countries. To analyse these dynamics, reference is made to the structural, associational and coalitional power of the platform workers (Vandaele 2018). The latter power resource is an element of societal power, as is discursive power, which has the potential to compensate for weaknesses in other power resources. Although some platforms might be likely sensitive to their public reputation, discursive power is not the major analytical focus in this chapter, as this would require another research design. Equally, although it is acknowledged that expressions of collective resistance and representation are also contingent on *prevailing* regulatory arrangements, institutional power is less studied here, mainly due to length considerations. Most platforms have also demonstrated an unwillingness or even refusal to accept existing or new regulation, while there has so far been little regulatory action by the state so far. Platform workers thus suffer from a lack of regulatory arrangements specifically tailored to their needs, implying that existing arrangements will have to suffice to fill the regulatory-institutional void – varying according to the context, particularly in the case of locally based platform work. Since the platform workers' associational and coalitional power reveals, respectively, organizational experimentation and diversity, it is worthwhile to demarcate two *ideal* representation approaches. While the workers' immediate needs and interests are central to the logic-of-membership approach, it is the relationship between the representative organization and its interlocutors that is key in the logic-of-influence approach (Offe and Wiesenthal 1980).

Three caveats should be made. First, the platform economy is here understood to be – or is narrowed down to – digital labour platforms, which are exchanging labour and exercising high levels of labour control compared to other platform types (Maffie 2020b). They are *typically* characterized by a triangular relationship between the parties involved (Duggan et al. 2020). Platforms are economic agents facilitating matching between providers of labour and customers via online technologies based on algorithmic management which exerts disciplinary control over task allocation and performance. Platforms reduce idle time at work by offering one-off ‘jobs’³ to workers who are compensated on a task-by-task basis and who supply some of their own means of production. A major bifurcation is the distinction between locally based and online platform work. Second, it is acknowledged that workers’ collective resistance is only one of the expressions of labour agency, and probably not the most prevalent one for platform workers. Similar to the conventional economy, other worker strategies for coping with working conditions are in all probability more widespread than outright worker resistance in the platform economy, though more hidden due to their often-individualized nature (see, for instance, Heiland 2021). Third, little is currently known about the distinctiveness of platform workers and employment dynamics within the platform economy in European countries. Measuring its size and scope is difficult due to the unclear taxonomy and measurement bias, inadequate data cleaning, and self-selecting samples, which all impede accurate estimates. It is clear though that there is a high turnover in platform work, making it a sizable workforce in absolute terms, and that it provides an additional income for a growing number of workers to top up their regular income. A marginal percentage of workers regularly engage in platform work, earning at least 50 per cent of their total income from it. Using this criterium of 50 per cent then, based on 16 countries, the European simple average is estimated to have been at 1.4 per cent in 2018 (Urzi Brancati et al. 2020). Still, despite this low percentage, the product, technological/organizational and spatial fixes make clear that platforms warrant specific study as they are relatively distinctive from other transformations within capitalist development.

1 UNDERSTANDING THE SINGULARITY OF PLATFORMS VIA THREE FIXES

A shift in financial strategies has facilitated the emergence and rise of platforms (Srnicsek 2017). Their proliferation coincided with the crisis of the finance-led accumulation regime in 2007–2008, with most platforms being established in Europe after 2010 (Fabo et al. 2017).⁴ The movement of capital to new and promising profitable product lines and industries is labelled the ‘product fix’. Applying this fix to platforms is puzzling, however. First, the platforms’

return on investments have mostly only been high on paper so far. Yet their monopolistic tendencies, due to network effects fostered by large marketing budgets, hold the promise that they are less subject to intense competition in the long term (Langley and Leyshon 2017). Second, most platforms do not appear to create new products as they tap into existing services, although a technical formalization of previously informal labour is also common. Key to understanding the product fix is the use and potential valorization of the data-derived assets owned by the platforms, however (Badger and van Doorn 2020). 'Datafication' is built upon the extraction of data generated by the platform workers themselves. Therefore, apart from providing services (though not in a conventional way), their interaction with the platforms also makes them data workers.

The gathering, processing and analyzing of data is possible via another 'fix' that typifies platforms: their technological/organizational fix. This fix refers to new labour-saving technologies which enable labour control and enhance profitability by transforming the organization of production and labour processes. Management-by-algorithms meets this qualification: it facilitates and contributes to data accumulation while adjusting the algorithms via feedback loops. Algorithmic management can itself be traced back to various long-term changes in the management of work, culminating in digital Taylorism (Altenried 2020). Platforms act as a 'shadow employer' (Gandini 2019, p. 1049), as direct supervision is unwarranted: individual online ranking and reputation systems in particular, which often echo or even strengthen various types of discrimination, impel self-disciplining behaviour among workers, whereby they suffer from information asymmetries in favour of the platforms or clients. Reflecting findings on the labour process in the conventional economy, the sections below will demonstrate, however, that labour control via algorithmic management is never complete, which means that it can be subverted, opening up room for workers' resistance.

Motives for resistance are not only rooted in the technological fix of platform work but also in its organizational fix. This fix is especially associated with the instalment by platforms of a contractor relationship instead of an employment relationship. The contractor relationship should be understood in its spatio-temporal context; its application is largely influenced by existing country-specific classification schemes and institutional-regulatory contexts. Many of the organizational work practices in the platform economy are not new, and not necessarily limited to it alone (Finkin 2016; Stanford 2017). This also accounts for the contractor relationship and its regulatory ambiguity: it is reminiscent of other informal and triangular work arrangements during earlier capitalist development, such as 'piecework', meaning the production of goods at home. Operating with so-called 'independent contractors' can be understood as an 'emerging but incomplete' process of the subsumption of labour by

capital (Joyce 2020). It installs a labour-capital relationship and hence a ‘cash nexus’ between the platforms and platform workers. More concretely, the contractor relationship implies that the regulations and securities that come with a genuine employment relationship do not apply to the platforms. There is general agreement that shortcomings in working conditions and social protection cannot be addressed by current anti-trust and competition regulation as they generally exclude or hinder the setting of minimum standards and collective bargaining for platform workers, the solo-self-employed and freelancers. Therefore, working conditions and social protection – normally provided by guaranteed minimum wages, regulations on working time, health and safety standards and anti-discrimination rules – are mostly meagre for platform workers. Employment benefits, training and career development opportunities are also largely evaded by the platforms. Aimed at pursuing profitability (Roy-Mukherjee and Harrison 2020), this shift of employment-related risks to workers holds particularly true if platform work is the main income. Although the anonymity of platform work can make it more inclusive, young people, migrants and women can still be exposed to health and safety risks or even discrimination. Only a few European countries, notably, France, Spain and Italy and to a certain extent Portugal, have enacted specific regulations aiming to improve platform workers’ employment terms and conditions (Kilhoffer et al. 2020).

Finally, the spatial fix concerns the geographical mobility of production for facilitating profitability and controlling labour. To understand the platforms’ spatial configurations, it is key to make a basic distinction regarding the geographical location of platform work (Johnson 2020). This can primarily either be performed online or locally.⁵ Online platform work can be considered an individualized mode of service offshoring via ‘one-person microproviders’ instead of companies (Lehdonvirta et al. 2019). The platforms thereby act as active intermediaries between supply and demand, taking advantage of local differences in labour costs or skill availability. Relocation strategies are thus built in to the technological/organizational fix by default, triggering ‘a new wave of international division of labour’ (Anwar and Graham 2021). In practice, however, the work is clustered in certain zones, and is influenced by such factors as Internet access, labour costs, available skills, contextual knowledge, and cultural and linguistic proximity (Ettlinger 2017). Turning to locally based platforms, with their physical, time- and place-dependent tasks, these are impervious to successive relocations as they are ‘geographically tethered’ (Woodcock and Graham 2020, pp. 50–52). Such platforms are predominantly contingent on local consumers who can afford the platform-based personal services. Although the support facilities for couriers in locally based platforms (such as helpdesks) are prone to geographical mobility, this is not an option for their main services.⁶ Locally based platforms are thus either temporally

embedded and interrelated with specific regulatory frameworks – or not. If competitive pressures are too high or the technological/organizational fix comes under pressure via regulatory changes, or both, then such platforms tend to simply cease activities (or at least threaten to do so) in given localities. This distinction in the spatial fix between online and locally based platforms informs workers' structural power and, consequently, their disruptive capacity.

2 SOME VARIATION IN PLATFORM WORKERS' STRUCTURAL POWER

The structural power of platform workers relates to their workplace and marketplace bargaining power. Both are generally defined by external circumstances. Workplace bargaining power stems from a worker's specific position in distribution or production systems, whereas marketplace bargaining power is influenced by the desirability of a worker's skills to individual clients or companies, the degree of unemployment in general, or to what extent a worker can live from other non-market income sources (Silver 2003). In general, the platforms' recruitment policies, with their low-entry barriers to the tasks, guarantee a continuous influx of new workers. This structural over-supply and lack of tasks not only undermines marketplace bargaining power but also workplace bargaining power, as few platform workers are willing to threaten the withdrawal of their work in this case (Anwar and Graham 2021). Simultaneously, platform workers demonstrate different levels of attachment to the platforms, which also influences their incentives to engage in collective resistance and representation. Workers' structural power also varies according to the type of platform work. This is because the degree of labour control due to the technological/organizational fix is closely linked to the platform type (Pesole et al. 2018).⁷ To elucidate this, it is helpful to simplify and classify platform work, which is heterogenous. Apart from the classification based on the spatial fix, different kinds of platform work can be further grouped, for instance, by skill level, task allocation or type of remuneration (Vallas and Schor 2020). Although overlaps cannot be excluded, looking through the lens of power resources approach, the most relevant defining factor for online platform work is who the actor initiating the transaction is (Howcroft and Bergvall-Kåreborn 2019), i.e. whether it is requester- or worker-initiated, whereas the contrast between private and public settings, i.e. where the tasks are performed, is more important for locally based platform work (Huws et al. 2017).

Table 9.1 *Structural power of platform workers by platform types*

Structural power	Online platform work		Locally based platform work	
	Requester-initiated	Worker-initiated	Private setting	Public setting
Workplace bargaining power	Weak	Weak/Intermediate	Weak	Strong
Marketplace bargaining power	Weak	Intermediate	Weak/Intermediate	Weak

Source: Own typology (inspired by Silver 2003).

Table 9.1 provides an appraisal of structural power in each type of platform work compared to the other types identified here, i.e. *not* in comparison with industries in the conventional economy. In requester-initiated platform work, workers agree (or not) with the price set by individual clients or private companies. They typically perform ‘ghost work’: specific, fragmented microtasks that are posted online, and which are often ‘deskilled’ in nature (Gray and Suri 2019). The disruptive capacity of such microworkers is almost non-existent: a work stoppage will have little impact on the flow of production. Their marketplace bargaining power is also weak: platforms based on requester-initiated work simply draw from a pool of cheap, flexible and geographically dispersed workers performing low-skilled tasks. Turning to worker-initiated platform work, this type shares many characteristics of profession-based freelance work, with the technological/organizational fix being more lenient compared to other platform types (Wood and Lehdonvirta 2021; Wood et al. 2018b). Online freelancers initiate the transaction by setting the price level, while the platform deducts a percentage upon transaction. A negotiated agreement is reached between the worker and the client through bidding for and winning the project-based task. Online freelancers may thus possess greater agency to shape their employment terms and conditions and in selecting platform tasks – especially in the Global South, as the spatial fix here allows for skill arbitrage, i.e. the workers are able to set a higher price via the platforms than what they would earn locally (Lehdonvirta et al. 2019; Sutherland et al. 2020). Since they often possess specialized skills, this theoretically provides them with some individual marketplace bargaining power, lowering the incentive for collective resistance and representation. Finally, their workplace bargaining power is a priori less clear-cut: it will largely depend on whether the specialist projects are part of vulnerable ‘just-in-time’ production systems or not.

Locally based platform work is particularly characterized by a prevalence of migrant domestic labour, which risks creating segmentation in labour markets along the lines of citizenship or ethnicity. Lower entry barriers in particular

incentivize migrants to favour platforms over the conventional economy as the latter is regulated by immigration policies concerning employment and welfare (van Doorn et al. 2020). Platform work in private settings comprises manual labour like home repair work or (female-dominated) home-based services such as cleaning and child- or eldercare. Although platforms are instigating a formalization of often largely informal industries, the workplace bargaining power of platform workers providing personal services is weak due to difficulties in coordinating resistance across dispersed, small workplaces (Silver 2003, p. 120). Equally, marketplace bargaining power is generally weak given the large pool of workers with the necessary skills – although some skills might be scarce, meaning that marketplace bargaining could range from low to intermediate. Moving on to platform work in public settings, transportation is prominent here.⁸ The workplace bargaining power of transportation workers in the conventional economy is relatively strong as they hold a strategic position in distribution networks, allowing for a considerable disruptive capacity (Silver 2003, pp. 97–103). The same applies, in all likelihood, to platform workers in transportation like delivery couriers or ride-hailing drivers. Although there is no empirical relationship between workplace bargaining power and the level of collective resistance, it can be expected that they are able to use their disruptive capacity given the ‘spatial proximity and temporal synchronicity’ (Woodcock and Graham 2020, p. 51) of their work. Unsurprisingly then, as a compromise, most collective bargaining agreements in the platform economy are in locally based platform work, especially in transportation (Kilhoffer et al. 2020, p. 119). Workplace bargaining power is, however, offset by marketplace bargaining power, which is generally muted, as demonstrated by their high turnover rate compared to other platform types (Urzi Brancati et al. 2020). Accounting for differences in platform workers’ structural power is a starting point for analysing their disruptive capacity and the transcending of workplace or marketplace bargaining into associational power. The organizational morphology of this latter type of power, and whether this fits together with coalitional power, will be analysed in the next sections.

3 REQUESTER- AND WORKER-INITIATED ONLINE PLATFORM WORK

The spatial fix of online platform work implies that geographical mobility is entrenched from the very outset. Building collective resistance on local, regional or national levels is less effective since this organizationally and socially dispersed mode of work is strongly disembedded from local institutional-regulatory frameworks (Johnson 2020). Labour internationalism and regulatory provisions beyond these local levels are thus needed if online platforms are to be effectively challenged. Union strategies and other initiatives

are thus primarily directed towards encouraging self-regulation by online platforms, counting on the importance of the platforms' public reputation to use it as leverage. The action-research project Fairwork Foundation, established in 2018 and based at the University of Oxford, thus produces a yearly report about fairness in the platform economy based upon evidence collected from platform workers across the globe (Graham et al. 2020). Similarly, IG Metall, the largest German union, launched the 'Fair Crowd Work' initiative in 2015.⁹ A website, jointly run with the Austrian Chamber of Labour, the Austrian union confederation and the Swedish union, Unionen, informs platform workers about their rights and union membership, and introduces a rating system of the platforms' employment terms and conditions. Furthermore, three German-based platforms voluntarily signed a 'Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct' in 2015, and five other platform companies joined later. The signatory platforms, together with the German Crowdsourcing Association (Deutscher Crowdsourcing Verband) and IG Metall, have installed an ombudsman for a period of two years to enforce the Code and settle issues by consensus between workers and the platforms. These initiatives of IG Metall, based on a logic-of-influence approach, have strengthened its credibility among platform workers: in 2019, for example, the YouTubers Union, a self-organized group of professional content creators, set up a joint public campaign labelled 'FairTube' with IG Metall to make YouTube's algorithmic management and cash nexus fairer and more transparent (Niebler 2020).

The platforms themselves also provide a means for platform workers to share information and experiences amongst themselves via discussion forums and other types of online interaction. In practice, they control this digital architecture for community-building: community management is simply delegated to experienced platform workers who tend to orient themselves towards 'improving and optimising organizational performance' (Gegenhuber et al. 2021, p. 1495; Gerber 2021). This feeds into the view that online platform workers predominantly have an 'entrepreneurial orientation' (Vallas and Schor 2020, p. 5). Yet a significant proportion of platform workers in Europe (about 40 per cent) earning more than 50 per cent of their income from platform work report that they see themselves primarily as an employee – with minor variation between worker- or requester-initiated platform work (Urzi Brancati et al. 2019). This might be related to their dependency on the platform and hence their relative loss of autonomy compared to what they would experience in the conventional economy, especially regarding workers engaged in requester-initiated platform work (Wood et al. 2018b). Algorithmic management could also produce more uncertainty and precarity, although online workers might cope with this via 'creative strategies and new digital literacies to work with and around the platform' (Sutherland et al. 2020, p. 472).

Nevertheless, product and technological/organizational fixes are fuelling grievances and feelings of 'algorithmic injustice' among platform workers as well as generating a sense of shared identities and unified interests, all prerequisites for collectivism (Gerber and Krzywdzinski 2019; Panteli et al. 2020; Wood and Lehdonvirta 2021; Wood et al. 2018a). For workers doing requester-initiated platform work, or in particular the solo self-employed, it is an empirical question as to whether they will opt for mutual aid or collective representation. 'Bread funds' in the Netherlands and (introduced at a later date) in the United Kingdom (UK) illustrate the importance of mutual aid. Resembling mutual insurance associations of the nineteenth century, these bottom-up small-scale funds, in which premiums are paid into risk-sharing pools, provide income protection in case of illness or injury, signifying that current social protection by the state is inadequate or that private initiatives are too expensive for the solo self-employed (Vriens and De Moor 2020). Beyond mutual aid and labour market intermediaries smoothing out the bumps in their non-standard career paths, options for collective representation could be either professional, business or employers' associations or unions. The solo self-employed in the conventional economy generally show no aversion towards collective representation, especially if it can help to mitigate insecurities and the lack of social protection that comes with their labour market status (Murgia and Pulignano 2019). For instance, to look at the Netherlands again, precarious freelancers have a higher probability of unionizing than other types of solo self-employed workers (Jansen and Sluiter 2019), which seems to be driven by individual service needs, collective demands for better social protection and left-wing political orientations (Jansen 2020).

Organizing freelancers and the solo self-employed is certainly not new to most mainstream unions in Europe. Some union branches or unions have a long history of organizing them in particular industries where such contractor relationships are prevalent (Fulton 2018). There are nevertheless unions who have still not opened their doors to the solo self-employed, either because of existing legal barriers (which holds especially true for countries in Central and Eastern Europe), or due to internal rules or union attitudes. Apart from specialist unions with a certain tradition in representing the solo self-employed, there are three other more recent union models that have been developed as unions have stepped up their efforts for this growing and heterogenous group. First, the dominant model in Italy is of separate unions organizing precarious non-standard workers, which are also, in theory, open to solo self-employed workers. This kind of model is also present in Slovenia, while grassroots unions in the UK and elsewhere are, in practice, also oriented towards these workers. Second, unions in Italy, the Netherlands and Spain have been specially established for organizing the solo self-employed as a response to recent labour market developments in certain industries. Third, most mainstream

unions have simply opened membership up to the solo self-employed, including platform workers; unions such as Ver.di in Germany and Unionen already did this prior to the rise of the platform economy, while others have begun to do likewise more recently. Examples of the latter include unions in France (who have welcomed, in particular, ride-hailing platform workers), IG Metall, the GMB in the UK, and union confederations in Norway and Spain.

Unions in Europe today generally lean towards a logic-of-influence approach, which prioritizes concluding collective agreements – and in several countries, unions are trying to include platform workers in these agreements. Agreements typically incorporate the solo self-employed, although they are restricted to specific professions or industries, or to those who are in bogus self-employment, or both (Fulton 2018). Some platforms are signing up to existing collective agreements in a few countries. New agreements at the company level have been concluded between the unions and platforms in Denmark (Ilsøe et al. 2020), while some platforms in Sweden have agreed to adhere to existing collective agreements for temporary agency workers in order to avoid reputational damage (Söderqvist and Bernhardt 2019). Above all, however, unions are promoting tailored individual benefits and services to the solo self-employed and platform workers (Mori and Koene 2019), also because it is largely uncertain to what extent collective bargaining goes together with such an employment status. Examples include additional insurances, tax compliance, legal and other advice and professional support related to providing model contracts, reviewing contracts, and training. Some of these might become obsolete as ‘selective incentives’ for unionization if for-profit companies were to offer these benefits and services at a lower price, or states were to strengthen social protection via more coordination and harmonization with employee arrangements. Interestingly, the journalists’ union in Finland, Suomen Journalistiliitto, set up the cooperative Mediakunta in 2017, which officially employs union members who work on journalism and media projects, invoicing clients on their behalf and handling their payroll (Fulton 2018). Furthermore, several unions and confederations have set up online platforms offering counselling and providing services for the solo self-employed. Ver.di has been operating such a platform for union members and the non-unionized solo self-employed – the latter being charged for the services – since the early 2000s (Haake 2017). Several similar initiatives have been launched in more recent years: in 2011 by a union organizing in the private services, affiliated to the Italian Labour Union (Unione Italiana del Lavoro) (Veronese et al. 2019); in 2016 by the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (Confédération française démocratique du travail), and reinforced three years later; in 2017 by the Workers’ Commissions (Comisiones Obreras) and General Union of Workers (Unión General de Trabajadores) in Spain (Hermoso 2019); and in 2019 by the two main confederations in Belgium. All of them offer online

tools for informing and advising the solo self-employed, including platform workers, about their rights in an attempt to help them overcome their geographical dispersion.

4 LOCALLY BASED PLATFORM WORK IN PRIVATE SETTINGS

Locally based platform work in private settings typically commodifies various forms of reproductive labour, which previously have been carried out at home or have been part of informal work in the conventional economy. The promise of platforms is that they can bring formalization and more transparency to this area. In practice, they reinforce existing risks and vulnerabilities for workers, as formalization is only partial, while the technological/organizational fix maintains or reinforces employment terms and conditions typical of the informal economy (Flanagan 2019; Ticona and Mateescu 2018). This same fix allows for clients easily to switch to platforms that provide services at lower costs or which are not affected by collective resistance. Such resistance seems unlikely, however, as professional loyalty towards individual clients and the direct, face-to-face contact between workers and clients make it harder to use their disruptive capacity (Silver 2003, pp. 119–122). Nevertheless, attracting client empathy to the workers' cause is also an important factor, as “process transparency” matters: customers are more appreciative of workers when they can observe their labour’ (Healy and Pekarek 2020, p. 164). Therefore, a key question is whether platforms will continue to favour one-off services or if locally based platform work in private settings will progress into worker-initiated platform work (Trojansky 2020). The latter would foster long-term interpersonal relationships between platform workers and clients and somewhat increase the structural power of workers. Furthermore, the prevalence of women and workers with a migrant background, sometimes undocumented, in care work and cleaning does not necessarily imply that union organizing efforts would be futile, quite the contrary (Tapia 2019).

Unions could also enhance trust between platform workers and clients in this type of platform work by setting higher standards. In the Netherlands, for example, a Dutch-owned platform which was active in the hospitality sector signed an agreement in 2018 of joint cooperation with the hospitality union, affiliated to the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions (FNV, *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging*). This agreement, which aimed to strengthen the employment terms and conditions of the platform workers, was not signed without some internal tension within the FNV as it has been considered as legitimizing the technological/organizational fix. Also, Syndicom, the Swiss media and communications union, signed a code of conduct with a platform providing repair and tech services in 2019. A possible alternative way to

uphold professional standards is self-organizing via a platform cooperative, as demonstrated by the Equal Care Co-op in the UK. Established as a pilot project in 2018 and inspired by the Dutch ‘Neighbourhood care’ (Buurtzorg), this co-op is active in social care work and self-governed by the care providers and receivers themselves; the collaborative platform aims to offer a standard employment contract in the future. So far, however, collective representation by (mainstream) unions in locally based platform work in private settings seems to be almost non-existent in Europe, and the same holds true for collective agreements. To the author’s knowledge, the only real exception, reflecting a logic-of-influence approach, is the agreement concluded in 2018 between the Danish-owned platform Hilfr, which provides cleaning services in private households, and the United Federation of Danish Workers (3F, Fagligt Fælles Forbund), the largest union in Denmark.

Hilfr considers this agreement as part of its business strategy – i.e. to distinguish itself from its competitors, although a bigger market share has not been captured so far – and as a way of being socially responsible (Ilsøe 2020). The platform also joined the relevant employers’ association. A government-led social dialogue body facilitated the negotiations, while the absence of any competing collective agreement in household cleaning made it easier for 3F to engage with the conclusion of an agreement at the company level. The agreement has been claimed to be the first one with a platform in the world, although similar collective agreements were concluded earlier on, such as one in Sweden in 2015 (Söderqvist and Bernhardt 2019). Started as a one-year pilot project, the Danish agreement introduces a new category of workers, labelled ‘Super Hilfr’, besides the default ‘Freelancehilfr’. Regarding the latter, the Danish Competition and Consumer Authority has concluded in 2020 that the minimum fee for ‘Freelancehilfr’ is at odds with competition law, however. Even so, workers with a ‘Super Hilfr’ status are entitled to a minimum hourly fee, a ‘welfare supplement’, holiday pay, sick leave pay and pension contributions paid by Hilfr. Just like freelance workers, ‘Super Hilfr’ workers can set their hourly fee themselves, although it has to be above a certain minimum. The agreement also touches upon the product fix by granting workers the right to request the removal of violating language or pictures from their online ranking and reputation profiles.

The status of ‘Super Hilfr’ is optional although almost automatically obtained: if a minimum of 100 hours of services are performed, then the collective agreement applies unless workers opt to retain their default status as ‘Freelancehilfr’. Only about 17 per cent of the platform workers had obtained the special status of ‘Super Hilfr’ at the beginning of 2020, but they account for more than one-third of all cleaning tasks.¹⁰ Workers can even apply to have this status before they have met the criterium, although the platform could reject this. In other words, if the collective agreement applies, obtaining this status

is entirely up to the platform worker (although it should be noted that such a free choice of application is in fact not allowed by Danish labour law). There are also notable differences from similar collective agreements in the conventional economy: for instance, while disputes regarding the interpretation and infringement of an agreement are normally subject to labour court decisions, arbitration is the chosen procedure in the 'Hilfr agreement'. Also, the notice period is shorter compared to equivalent agreements at the industry level in the conventional economy. Furthermore, the minimum fee and social benefits are set at lower levels than the employment terms and conditions stipulated by agreements outside the platform economy. Nevertheless, negotiations for a new agreement for a three-year period are still ongoing at the time of writing, while an agreement at the industry level is being considered.

5 LOCALLY BASED PLATFORM WORK IN PUBLIC SETTINGS: THE CASE OF FOOD DELIVERY

A strike wave of platform-based food delivery couriers kicked off in London in the summer of 2016 (Cant 2019). Their strategic location in the distribution system meant that app-ordered food was prevented from being delivered from the ('ghost') restaurants to customers at the foreseen time. Ensuing local small-scale stoppages targeted other food delivery platforms in the UK, demonstrating the workplace bargaining power of the couriers. Strike action by food delivery couriers and low-paid hospitality workers connected precarious workers in the platform and conventional economies through the 2018 'Fast Food Shutdown' (Cant and Woodcock 2020), and resistance also spread transnationally to cities on the European continent. Motives for mobilization were very similar across cities and countries, being related to the cash nexus, meaning the shift from a genuine dependent employment relationship to a contractor status, together with a switch from hourly wages to a riskier payment-by-delivery system. Grievances and feelings of social injustice were perhaps not shared among all couriers: they experienced the work of food delivery differently depending on their individual circumstances, such as their life stage, need for income, and expectations of the work (Goods et al. 2019). Although struggles in platform-based food delivery have been variable across cities and rather ephemeral in most countries, resistance in the platform economy across the globe has nonetheless predominantly occurred in this industry, especially in Western Europe (Trappmann et al. 2020). Therefore, this section analyses the associational and coalitional power of food delivery couriers, the sector which the author is most familiar with; ride-hailing and local microtasking are not covered here.

Table 9.2 *The associational and coalitional power of platform-based food delivery couriers in Western Europe*

Activist groups and mainstream unions			
		Conflictual relationship	Collaborative relationship
Grassroots unions	Absent	France, Italy, Spain	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, (France), Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland
	Present	(France), Germany, (Italy), (Sweden), UK	(Finland)

Note: Countries in parentheses indicate that the feature is present but not dominant.
Source: Vandaele et al. (2019).

A critical mass of couriers is involved in online digital communities for discussing shared employment terms and conditions (Cant 2019; Tassinari and Maccarrone 2020).¹¹ Like in platform-based ride-hailing (Maffie 2020a), these hidden communities are virtually overcoming their spatial dispersion via real-time engagement and interaction facilitated by the Internet infrastructure. The spatial fix of food delivery work entails that couriers active in communities could also meet up offline in shared urban spaces. Easily recognizable by their platform-branded uniforms and equipment, they meet in waiting locations where there are clusters of restaurants, which stand in for a physical workspace. This facilitates social identification processes enabling the shaping of collective identities and offline organizing. While their digital communities and activist groups are initial indicators of associational power, the couriers could further increase their power via alliance-building with established organizations like unions. This coalitional power is variable, however, as it is influenced by the prevalence of grassroots unions and the couriers’ subjective attitudes towards mainstream unions (or the inaccessibility of the latter due to these workers’ legal status). Table 9.2 maps the *initial* or dominant patterns in the relationship between activist groups and grassroots or mainstream unions for most countries in Western Europe. The subsections below explain those relationships in more detail, and their connection with representation ‘logics’.

A logic-of-membership approach: activist groups, cooperatives and grassroots unions

Activist groups of couriers have *initially* been the main drivers of resistance in France, Italy and Spain – countries which all have industrial relations systems characterized by a high degree of polarization between labour and capital. The relationship between these groups and mainstream unions can at least initially be considered a tense one. The couriers’ attitudes towards unions were at first rather agnostic: young people (who represent the majority of couriers)

in the above-mentioned countries have demonstrated low levels of trust in mainstream unions since the financial crisis of 2007–2008 (Hyman 2015). It is no coincidence that, for instance, the couriers' resistance in Italy has been closer to 'some of the practices adopted by the Italian precarious workers' movements in the early 2000s' (Tassinari and Maccarrone 2017, p. 354) than to unions' 'repertoires of contention'. Although couriers have sought support from grassroots unions in Bologna and Milan, these attempts have largely failed due to disagreements about tactics and strategies, with Italian grassroots unions leaning more towards a logic-of-influence approach (Tassinari and Maccarrone 2018).

Apart from activist groups, which are active in the Paris region and Nantes, the grassroots union SUD (Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques) and the General Confederation of Labour (Confédération Générale du Travail) are also organizing couriers, the latter especially in Bordeaux, Dijon and Lyon. Another element of this complex landscape in France is 'Coopcycle', which promotes, coordinates and federates local cooperative models across Europe as an alternative to food or other kinds of delivery platforms (Chagny 2019). By sharing knowledge about its model and providing support, Coopcycle assists companies whose delivery services are operated according to ecological and socially responsible principles, or couriers forming a platform-based cooperative in their locality. Its software is currently used by ten cooperatives in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, although it is still very limited in terms of actual users: about 60 couriers in total were involved in spring 2019. To give one example of how it has been used, Deliveroo's retreat in Germany sparked ideas for a worker-led platform co-op among food delivery couriers in Berlin, which Coopcycle helped to turn into a reality in 2019.¹² Similar developments can be observed in Spain. Many smaller unions have been buttressing the activist group Riders for Rights (RidersXDerechos), although mainstream unions have also assisted in couriers' strikes as well as undertaken litigation actions (Fernández and Soliña Barreiro 2020). Riders for Rights explored the idea of a platform co-op funded by a crowdfunding campaign in 2018: *Mensakas* was set up in cooperation with Coopcycle a year later.

Small, independent grassroots unions have equally stepped up their organizing efforts towards food delivery platform workers in countries where such unions are prominent. A focus on organizing precarious workers, frequently with a migrant background, whether in the platform economy or not, is simply part of their union identity. Like the activist groups and platform co-ops, they lean towards a logic-of-membership approach, meaning that they foster an organizing approach centred around 'communities of struggle' for transformative change (Però 2020). Besides SUD, the Free Workers' Union (FAU, Freie Arbeiterinnen- und Arbeiter-Union) in Germany (although limited to Berlin),

Örestad LS in Sweden and, notably, the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) and, later on, the International Workers of the World, in the UK are all organizing food delivery couriers.¹³ Resistance has not excluded litigation actions by some of these unions: changing the contractor set-up could reduce employment instability so that the couriers' marketplace bargaining power is strengthened and organizing efforts pay off. Supported by the transnational networks for union revitalization Alter Summit and ReAct, activist groups, with some of them backed by mainstream unions, and grassroots unions from 12 European countries, established the Transnational Couriers Federation in Brussels in 2018.¹⁴ In contrast to traditional labour internationalism, the Federation has no elected leadership nor staff due to 'a combination of necessity and political desire' (Cant and Mogno 2020, p. 407). Mainly aiming to strengthen the transnational coordination of resistance in platform-based food delivery, the Federation may be considered a formalization of existing informal networks among couriers and their collective organizations.

A logic-of-influence approach: mainstream unions and labour market intermediaries

Lacking financial resources and infrastructures, activist groups have turned to mainstream unions in several countries. Although the latter also bring their organizational knowledge about mobilizing, they are mainly prioritizing regulatory solutions in the institutional realm. Unions have been typically choosing to start litigation actions to alter the contractor relationship, as an employee contract is a prerequisite for establishing works councils or collective bargaining. This logic-of-influence approach thus relies on the institutional logics of national systems of industrial relations, especially in countries with strong corporatist traditions. Simultaneously, from the unions' viewpoint, the activist groups can be considered pre-existing structures for organizing the couriers. Moreover, overlapping memberships are conceivable. Union activists can anonymously engage in the digital communities to identify the couriers' issues and needs, while unionized couriers can establish links between their groups and unions.

Foodora couriers in Vienna, for instance, have turned to Vida, the Austrian union organizing in transport and services, for help in electing a works council, which was set up in 2017. And for the first time in the country, bicycle couriers in a genuine employment relationship, either in the conventional or platform economy, have been covered by a collective agreement since 2020. Similarly, while FAU has been active in Berlin, couriers in the west of Germany have turned to the Food, Beverages and Catering Union (NGG, Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten) to help them set up a works council (Greef et al. 2020). Their *Liefern am Limit* campaign, focusing on improving employment terms and conditions, formally became an NGG project in 2018. The first

works council in this industry was established in Foodora in Cologne in 2017, followed by a works council in Deliveroo in the same city a year later and other councils in various cities across Germany, although it is uncertain how active they actually are.¹⁵ Couriers have also contacted the unions in Switzerland. Syndicom concluded a collective agreement in 2019, setting minimum wages and other employment standards for couriers, although food delivery platforms were not covered (Dunand and Mahon 2019). A proceeding initiated by Unia, the union organizing in the private service sector, has resulted in a court ruling obliging food-delivery platforms to reclassify its couriers as employees in the canton of Geneva in 2020, however.

Similarly, the autonomous Couriers Collective (Koerierscollectief/Collectif des Courier-e-s), established in Brussels in 2015, was able to depend on the unions' support in negotiating a collective agreement to improve the employment terms and conditions of couriers employed by the labour market intermediary and member-owned and -governed cooperative SMart (Société mutuelle des artistes) in 2017 (Charles et al. 2020). Notably, the couriers in Belgium, most of them students at the time that the collective was established, did not markedly differ in their attitudes towards unions from their counterparts in the conventional economy: the fact that most of them are not unionized reflected a lack of awareness and knowledge rather than outspoken feelings of antipathy towards unions (Vandaele et al. 2019). Negotiations on a collective agreement suddenly came to a halt when Deliveroo unilaterally decided to only work with ad hoc contracts and thus to end the 'SMart arrangement'. This arrangement put the couriers in a genuine employment relationship, providing them with an extra guarantee that legal minimum employment rights would be respected by Deliveroo. The unions considered the SMart arrangement as a second-best option in anticipation of the regulatory employment classification of the couriers. Unions are still awaiting a ruling about this, although a union litigation action has resulted in the overturning of a special tax regime encouraging platform work by the Constitutional Court in 2020 (Vandaele 2020). Likewise, a test case against Deliveroo looks promising for the FNV: a ruling stated that couriers should be considered employees instead of independent contractors in 2019 but the case is still ongoing; an organizing drive has therefore been helpful to identify evocative testimonies regarding the experience of couriers with management-by-algorithms (ibid.). The FNV is powering the now only virtually existing Riders Unions since mid-2018, which was previously an activist group established in 2017.

Turning to the Nordic countries, in Finland couriers launched a campaign called 'Justice4Couriers' in 2018, together with two grassroots unions, to improve their employment terms and conditions. The food couriers were later organized by Service Union United (Palvelualojen ammattiliitto) (Cant and Nicolson 2018). There has been little significant improvement so far, although

the couriers are engaging with one of the platforms with which they have ‘a constructive discussion relationship’.¹⁶ Although opinions of the Finnish Labour Court are non-binding, the Court decided that couriers should be considered employees instead of freelancers in 2020. Meanwhile, negotiations for a collective agreement are ongoing between 3F and the Danish Chamber of Commerce, which is acting on behalf of Uber Eats, at the time of writing (Ilsøe 2020). The Transport Workers’ Federation (NTF, Transportarbejderforbund), affiliated to the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, is organizing the couriers in Norway.¹⁷ These couriers are in a genuine employment relationship, although on non-standard contracts (Ilsøe and Jesnes 2020). Negotiations for a collective agreement with Foodora first failed in 2019. After a five-week strike, however, an agreement was concluded, introducing, amongst other things, a minimum wage and reimbursement for equipment. Finally, platforms in Sweden are either the direct employer or use a so-called ‘umbrella company’, which means that couriers are employees and existing collective agreements can be applied to them (Söderqvist and Bernhardt 2019).

Even in countries where the relationship between activist groups and mainstream unions is more tense, the latter are also catching up with the ‘trend’ of organizing food delivery and other couriers. Italian unions signed a local ‘Charter of Fundamental Digital Workers’ Rights in the Urban Context’ in 2018, which introduces minimum employment terms and conditions for ‘digital workers’ in Bologna. Two local food delivery platforms signed up to it and a multinational pizza restaurant chain added their name later on (Veronese et al. 2019). Although international food platforms have so far refused to sign the Charter, it has inspired similar initiatives in other Italian regions, including legislation setting minimum terms and conditions for platform-based delivery couriers (Borelli 2019). There are also other examples of unions trying to compel food delivery platforms to respect the prevailing employment terms and conditions in Italy. A specific provision in a collective agreement in logistics, concluded in 2017, made couriers, irrespective of their employment status, part of the job classification system for the first time in Italy (Veronese et al. 2019); a new collective agreement guarantees that platform-based couriers are entitled to the same level of social protection as employees in 2020. Although the provision targets the platforms, not one of them has applied it, however, as the agreement is only binding for the signatory parties. Some progress has nevertheless been made when the food delivery platform Laconsegna established a work council and also signed a collective agreement introducing a dependent employment relationship for couriers in 2019. A number of Italian food delivery platforms also set up their own ‘employers’ association’ annex lobby group, labelled ‘Assodelivery’, in 2018, and some of them signed a ‘Food Delivery Values Charter’ that same year, although they have only paid lip service to it. In a similar vein, thwarting bargaining

strategies of the mainstream union confederations, Assodelivery concluded a collective agreement at the industrial level with the conservative, corporatist General Labour Union (Unione Generale Del Lavoro) in 2020: the agreement provides some social protection, but the technological/organizational fix is not addressed. Importantly, however, the court of Bologna ruled in 2020 that management-by-algorithm has been discriminating workers in case of absence including for taking industrial action. Furthermore, the scope of the collective agreement in catering and hospitality has been expanded in Spain: while food delivery platforms are in principle included, in practice the extension only concerns employees, meaning that platforms are not affected (Hermoso 2019). Lastly, while food delivery couriers are mainly organized by grassroots unions in the UK, the GMB concluded a collective agreement with the parcel courier company Hermes in 2019. The agreement enables couriers to opt for a new 'self-employed plus' status offering minimum wage guarantees, holiday pay and union representation, although it is noteworthy that they are in fact entitled to employment rights, as, according to an earlier tribunal case, they have been wrongly classified as self-employed (*Financial Times*, 26 February 2019).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has been underpinned by three key propositions about labour agency in the platform economy in Europe. First, platform work should be put in a historical perspective, in order to demystify its novelty. Platform work is simply one element of the increasingly fissured workplaces and precarious work arrangements that are becoming typical of the contemporary world. Such arrangements are rooted in the recommodification of labour in the Global North that took place from the 1970s onwards, and they imply a return to the default position of labour in capitalism, i.e. characterized by precarious work arrangements (Breman and van der Linden 2014). The crisis of the finance-led accumulation regime in 2007–2008 and subsequent austerity policies reinforced this recommodification in Europe, although standard employment is still dominant and persistent (Crouch 2019). At the same time, particular 'fixes' make platforms distinctive from other types of contingent and 'non-standard work'. The product fix is an indicator of how the promises of future revenue growth and market dominance lure investors to continue to financially support the platform business model. Insofar as the continuous circulation and accumulation of data becomes an arena for profit-making, then the product fix can also develop into financial expansion, or a 'financial fix'. In other words, the line between pure finance and speculation and venture-backed investments is a thin one in the case of platforms. At the time of writing, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still uncertain whether the economic downturn will catalyse the growth of (certain) platforms; food-delivery platforms seem

to be in a good position here. Unemployment can feed a fresh reservoir of on-demand labour, and platforms might also benefit from shifting consumer preferences, new business strategies and the acceleration in remote work or facilitating state responses like the promotion of home-care provision.

The technological/organizational fix explains how platforms couple a relatively new type of labour management with old forms of work organization that frequently feature a contractor relationship. This fix is double-edged. On the one hand, platforms control the labour process by shifting a range of managerial responsibilities from humans to machines, thereby encouraging competition between platform workers via work allocation and performance rating systems. The algorithmic management thus also acts as a disincentive for collective resistance by platform workers as it encourages entrepreneurial interpretations of employment terms and conditions, thereby sustaining and reinforcing the existing work arrangements (Barratt et al. 2020). On the other hand, algorithmic management is simultaneously a source of frustration for workers as unilateral modifications of the algorithmic process affect employment terms and conditions and the ‘cash nexus’ (i.e. workers’ pay). Although various governments across Europe have introduced special measures to cushion the loss of income for the solo self-employed since the pandemic, such measures have mainly been lacking for platform workers. Nevertheless, the coronavirus outbreak has transformed food delivery, personal care work and domestic work like cleaning, from low-status (invisible) work to so-called ‘essential work’. Their non-entitlement to sick pay and other social benefits has undoubtedly put some of them in financial difficulties. The launch of health insurance schemes and support funds by some platforms, in a self-regulatory effort, is little more than a sticking-plaster solution, as the illness-related benefits they provide are generally inadequate (Fairwork 2020).

An analysis of platforms’ spatial fixes makes the differences in geographical mobility clear between online and locally based platforms, with major consequences for labour agency. Relocation strategies as a response to collective resistance are nearly impossible for the (gendered) time- and place-bound work associated with locally based platforms. Compared to international operating platforms, locally based platforms might be more sensitive to pressure from political authorities to be transparent about their technological/organizational fix. The urban context could also unlock opportunities for forging coalitional power via alliance-building between platform workers, unions and other progressive communities or movements. Alliance-building between workers and consumers could also help to downgrade the importance of individual online ranking and reputation systems in locally based platform work. In contrast to online platform work, workers and consumers live in the same urban areas – this holds true especially for platform work in private settings, which could create more enduring human interactions. So far though, at least

to the author's knowledge, not much more is known about self-organizing in this type of platform work. The development of online digital communities, for overcoming atomization and initiating social identification processes (along ethnic or citizenship lines or not), is similarly imaginable here like in platform-based transportation. Women will in all likelihood be the majority in such communities, reflecting the gender balance in cleaning and care which stands in contrast to the generally male-dominated transportation work in the platform economy. While platform workers in both private and public settings share the particular spatial fix of locally based platform work, however, it can be assumed that it is difficult for platform workers in private settings to gather physically during working time.

Second, based on a power resources theory approach, and in conjunction with the spatial fix, (visible) workers' resistance is typically expected to develop in locally based platform work in public settings, such as transportation in urban contexts, and less so in other types of platform work. Timed collective log-outs by couriers in the twenty-first century are mirroring the stopping of machines in the twentieth century. In fact, the seeds of cross-border cooperation and solidarity in the platform economy were first sown in transportation. A full understanding of emerging forms of collective resistance and representation requires also taking into account the platform workers' subjective situations in conjunction with their position in the labour market, the established organizational landscape of worker representation, the strategies of the platforms themselves and the institutional-regulatory context, especially regarding the employment relationship. It is apparent that unions in the Nordic countries, for instance, have managed to compel platforms to adhere to their prevailing institutional frameworks – although not without some difficulty, and the employment relationship is largely based on (precarious) non-standard contracts. Locally based platforms in other countries are moving heaven and earth to evade existing regulation on employment relations, but court decisions, also, in for instance Italy and Spain, seem increasingly not to their advantage as 'independent contractors' are reclassified as genuine employees.

Finally, the platform economy has ignited a (modest) spurt in collective organization-building. As in earlier examples, the new organizations show the imprint of their time in which they were created (Stinchcombe 1965). Today's organizations thus typically use the Internet infrastructure to engage with their members, revealing their foundation in the platform economy. Apart from this novelty, some imminent types of organization in the platform economy are quite reminiscent of older types of mutual aid and worker organization. With the exception of requester-initiated work in the online platform economy, it is apparent that cooperative models appear in all other types of platform work, although mostly in an embryonic stage. These models lack the disciplinary control and contractor relationship that are classical features of the technolog-

ical/organizational fix. Union-led cooperatives have had a more supportive function, especially if the union action is only a half-hearted attempt to address the grey zones of the employment status of freelancers. Likewise, a more accommodative approach is also present in labour market intermediaries like SMart or co-op types of mutual aid such as Bread Funds. The worker-led co-op model has a greater transformative potential in locally based platforms where workers are owners (Scholz 2016). Since the current worker-led platform co-ops in food delivery seem to address the higher-end market, it remains to be seen whether they could be sustainable without the support of political authorities at the local level or beyond.

Figure 9.2 *Aligning old and 'new' forms of collective representation to representation logics*

These kinds of organizational experimentation hint at the possible coexistence of several models of unionism and new forms of collective representation – indeed, the latter requires widening the research lens beyond mainstream unions (Atzeni 2020). The degree of organizational fragmentation and cooperation between the old and 'new' will be subject to dynamics within industrial and national regulatory contexts (Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick 2017). Figure 9.2 depicts the various models and forms and aligns them to the logic-of-membership and logic-of-influence approaches. So, the relationship between an organization and its members is considered central for self-organizing in digital communities and worker-led platform co-ops in both the locally based and online platform work and for grassroots unions in online platform work, although the latter are also involved in test cases and litigation actions. In fact, the number of European countries where grassroots unions are organizing platform workers is fairly limited (which might be in contrast to conventional wisdom). If no relevant grassroots unions are present in

a country, then platform workers have either continued to organize themselves via their own groups of activists or they have approached mainstream unions. Mainstream unions, union-led co-ops and labour market intermediaries are all present in online platform work. They tend to focus on relationships with employers' associations and the state, which in the case of labour market intermediaries is a way to seek legitimacy for their model. Intermediaries seem absent in locally based platform work, with the exception of the short-lived SMart arrangement in Belgium. Only mainstream unions are present in this type of platform work if it concerns the logic-of-influence approach. Here, in locally based platform work, an emerging cooperation between activist groups and unions in platform-based food delivery can be detected in most but not all countries, whereby unions could be helpful in overcoming the 'liability of newness' (Stinchcombe 1965, p. 148) of these groups so that they continue to exist. While the effectiveness of the struggles to alter the platforms' technological/organizational fix is challenging, they have put pressure on states (and the European Union, see Countouris and De Stefano (2021)) to regulate the platform economy. Moreover, the cooperation between activist groups and unions, along with other types of organizations, could also point to a broader transition of unionism and its possible revitalization. Unions analysing their own 'big data', engaging with online digital communities and addressing issues of data transparency (and ownership) will therefore be key in the platform economy and beyond, as these developments will in all likelihood have a significant impact on the future of the labour movement in general.

NOTES

1. The chapter provides no systematic country-by-country analysis, and it is limited to selected European countries; countries in Central and Eastern Europe are mostly excluded. The European policymaking level is omitted from the analysis solely due to word limit constraints. However, that the European Commission is currently consulting how European competition law could be reconciled with collective bargaining rights for the self-employed, i.e. within and beyond the platform economy.
2. See <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/hu/data/platform-economy/initiatives>
3. Such one-off jobs are being jargonized and popularized as 'gigs' – a slang term rejected here as it is originally associated with musical performance outside the platform economy. Such a positive connotation is not necessarily valid for platform work. The term 'gig economy' is particularly used in English-speaking countries, commonly just in reference to locally based platform work, whereas 'crowdwork' is dominant in German-speaking countries but only comprises online platform work.
4. Platforms based in the United States, which are among the largest ones, are exceptions as they have been active since an earlier time.
5. Although the proportion of online platform work might be overstated, due to the online survey methods, it looks like this type of work is more prevalent than locally

based platform work in Europe (Urzi Brancati et al. 2020). This stands in contrast to the academic and media attention being paid to the latter type of platform work, although the United Kingdom seems to be an exception as transportation services are dominant.

6. Alternatively, ride-hailing platforms could opt for a strategy of labour-saving automation via self-driving vehicles, or food delivery platforms could try to gain greater control over production via, for instance, 'dark kitchens' or 'ghost' restaurants, which are businesses in inexpensive areas set up for delivery only.
7. Labour control might also differ within the same platform type.
8. It could involve offline microwork that has far less visibility, such as taking photos of objects.
9. In addition, the Frankfurt Declaration on Platform-Based Work of 2016 was signed by unions in Europe and the USA.
10. No data are available on the number of unionized workers, although it is speculated to be very low.
11. The platforms themselves initially also set up digital communities for passing on and clarifying information for the couriers.
12. See <https://kolyma2.coopcycle.org>. 'FoodFairies' is another food delivery platform aiming to be a post-Deliveroo co-op in Berlin; see <https://foodfairies.de>
13. The International Transport Workers' Federation, in a move towards 'glocalism', set up a project funding two full-time London-based organizers in 2019.
14. Similarly, in ride-hailing, a first convening of the International Alliance of App-Based Transport Workers took place in London in early 2020, with participants from 23 countries across the globe.
15. The works council in Cologne had already become obsolete before Deliveroo stopped its business in Germany in 2019 as the platform reduced the number of permanent staff so that legal requirements were no longer met for a works council.
16. See <https://www.justice4couriers.fi/2020/02/24/our-second-meeting-with-wolt/>
17. NTF merged with the United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet) in 2020.

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