THE PLATFORMIZATION OF SKILLED LABOUR: YOUNG ARCHITECTS ON DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS IN TURKEY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

NAZ ÇETİN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

SEPTEMBER 2025

Approval of the thesis:

THE PLATFORMIZATION OF SKILLED LABOUR: YOUNG ARCHITECTS ON DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

THE PLATFORMIZATION OF SKILLED LABOUR: YOUNG ARCHITECTS ON DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS IN TURKEY

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September 2025, 154 pages

This thesis aims to examine how the transition of young architects in Turkey from traditional office-based employment to online digital labour platforms reshapes their work practices and labour conditions. To capture this transition, the study focuses on young architects, a professional group that has started to engage with platform-based work relatively recently in Turkey. While most platform studies focus on low-skilled gig work, this thesis highlights the dynamics and conditions of skilled labour with an emphasis on the architects. By situating the research in Turkey, it further contributes to understanding how young professionals in a developing country experience the transition to platform-based work. This thesis draws on multiple literatures to provide conceptual background while answering the research question. In addition to platform studies, creative labour literature was also examined due to the classification of architecture as a creative profession. The study shows that platformization, when viewed in the broader trajectory of capitalism, represents a new phase in the restructuring of work and labour processes in a way that deepens precariousness for the conditions of skilled and creative work. To understand the effects of the transition, 21 semi-structured interviews with young architects were

conducted in July 2025. Through the empirical findings based on interviews, this study aims to show different dimensions of the transformations/transitions of the work experiences of the young architects in Turkey, namely on the basis of employment status, informality, freelancing as a mode of working and creative work under platforms. Overall, the study demonstrates that platformization deepens existing precarious conditions, commodifies and fragments architectural practice, and contributes to the erosion of professional skills.

Keywords: Digital Labour Platforms, Skilled Labour, Platformization, Architectural Labour

ÖZ

NİTELİKLİ EMEĞİN PLATFORMLAŞMASI: TÜRKİYE'DE DİJİTAL EMEK PLATFORMLARINDAKİ GENÇ MİMARLAR

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Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Asuman GÖKSEL

Eylül 2025, 154 sayfa

Tez, Türkiye'deki genç mimarların geleneksel ofis temelli istihdamdan çevrimiçi dijital emek platformlarına geçişinin, çalışma pratiklerini ve emek koşullarını nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu geçişi yakalayabilmek için çalışma, Türkiye'de görece yakın zamanda platform temelli çalışmaya yönelmeye başlayan bir meslek grubu olarak genç mimarlara odaklanmaktadır. Çoğu platform çalışması düşük vasıflı "gig" işlerine odaklanırken, bu tez nitelikli emeğin, özellikle de mimarların, dinamiklerini ve koşullarını ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Araştırmayı Türkiye bağlamına yerleştirerek, gelişmekte olan bir ülkede genç profesyonellerin platform temelli çalışmaya geçişi nasıl deneyimlediğini anlamaya da katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu tez, araştırma sorusunu yanıtlarken kavramsal bir arka plan sunmak amacıyla birden fazla literatürü incelemektedir. Platform çalışmaları literatürünün yanı sıra, mimarlığın yaratıcı bir meslek olarak sınıflandırılması nedeniyle yaratıcı emek literatürü de değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma, platformlaşmanın kapitalizmin daha geniş seyrinde, nitelikli ve yaratıcı işin koşullarında güvencesizliği derinleştiren bir şekilde, emek ve çalışma süreçlerinin yeniden yapılandırılmasında yeni bir aşamayı temsil ettiğini göstermektedir. Geçişin etkilerini anlamak için,

Temmuz 2025’te genç mimarlarla 21 yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmelere dayanan ampirik bulgular aracılığıyla bu çalışma, Türkiye’deki genç mimarların iş deneyimlerinde yaşanan dönüşümlerin/geçişlerin farklı boyutlarını—istihdam statüsü, enformellik, serbest çalışmanın bir çalışma biçimi olarak benimsenmesi ve platformlar altında yaratıcı emek—ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Genel olarak çalışma, platformlaşmanın mevcut güvencesiz koşulları derinleştirdiğini, mimarlık pratiğini metalaştırıp parçalayarak profesyonel becerilerin kaybına yol açtığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Emek Platformları, Nitelikli Emek, Platformlaşma, Mimarlık Emeği

To all workers who, with unbowed hearts, fight for the right to work and live with dignity

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Doç. Dr. Asuman Göksel, for opening the door to a field that was completely unfamiliar to me, for her invaluable guidance throughout this long journey, for her patience with me, and for the tremendous effort she devoted to this thesis. Without her supervision, this thesis would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my thesis jury members, Doç. Dr. Erdem Çolak and Doç. Dr. Melih Yeşilbağ, for their time, insightful feedback, and their comforting smiles that eased my nerves. I am also grateful to TÜBİTAK BİDEB for supporting this thesis through the scholarship.

I would like to thank the architects I had the privilege of meeting, who devoted their time to this thesis and generously opened their worlds to me.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my father, Ercan Çetin, and my mother, Gülay Önder, for raising me with values that shaped who I am today,and for giving me the freedom to follow my own path throughout my life. I would also like to thank my beloved cat, Nejla, for every gentle meow and for curling up beside me each night over the past ten years.

I would also like to thank my colleagues from METU International Cooperation Office for their understanding and support throughout this process. My dear friends from our little office—Tolga, Cansu, and Ayşenur—deserve a special thank you for enduring countless conversations about this thesis and for the comfort they have always given me. I would also like to thank Murat Abi for the countless “hallederiz gülüm.”

When it comes to chosen family, I am without doubt the luckiest. No words can truly express how much Canberk and Ada mean to me. So much has happened to me over

the years, but many thanks to them, I never felt alone. I cannot wait for all the laughter we will create together in the years to come.

This thesis was made possible thanks to my dearest friends, whose presence made me feel constantly surrounded by love. I would like to thank Sinem, the architect, for inspiring this thesis and for our deep conversations. Nergiz and Yağmur, your kindness and compassion has meant so much to me—thank you. I am also deeply grateful to Ömer for his incredible support and valuable contributions to this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my dear friend Yaren, with whom I have shared a world since high school. It has always been an honour to make sense of life alongside you. Your unwavering support and belief in me have carried me through this journey, and without you, neither this thesis nor I would be what we are today.

Last but not least, my heartfelt gratitude goes to everyone at ODTÜ—every student, worker, cat, dog, and tree—whose steadfast, defiant spirit turned this place into a true home and made me feel I would always belong here.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM iii
ABSTRACT iv
ÖZ vi
DEDICATION viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS xi
LIST OF TABLES xiii
LIST OF FIGURES xiv
CHAPTERS
1. INTRODUCTION 1
2. THE PLATFORM ECONOMY AND SKILLED LABOUR: LITERATURE AND DEBATES 6
2.1. Conceptual Frameworks in The Platform Studies 7
2.1.1. Platform Economy/Platform Capitalism 8
2.1.2. Digital Platforms as New Business Models 10
2.1.3. Work Types on Digital Platforms 14
2.2. Creative Labour 17
2.2.1. Architects as Creative Workers 26
2.3. Digital Skilled Labour 28
2.3.1. Employment Status of Digital Skilled Workers 29
2.3.2. Freelancing on Platforms 41
3. CONTEXT: TURKEY 46
3.1. Labour Regime in Turkey since 1980 46
3.2. Freelancing in Turkey 49
3.3. Platforms in Turkey 51
3.4. Architects in Turkey 56
4. CASE SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION 60
4.1. Why Young Architects? 60

4.2. Data Analysis 69
5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: THE CASE OF YOUNG ARCHITECTS ON DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS IN TURKEY 71
5.1. Intersecting Dimensions of Work: Employment Status, Modes of Working, and Informality 72
5.1.1. Employment Status 76
5.1.2. Informality 80
5.2. From Traditional Work to Platform-Based Freelancing: Transitions in Modes of Working 87
5.3. Creative Work under Platform Logic: Productization, Task Fragmentation, and Skill Devaluation 103
6. CONCLUSION 114
REFERENCES 124
APPENDICES
A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE 139
B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 140
C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET 143
D. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU 154

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Industries covered in different cultural and creative economy concepts by international and regional organisations (UNCTAD, 2024, p.7) 20
Table 2. Regulation of Platform Work in Different Countries..... 35
Table 3. Recent Court Decisions on the Employment Status of Platform Workers.. 38
Table 4. Leading Platforms in Turkey..... 52
Table 5. Distribution of Employment Types Among Architects Registered with the Chamber of Architects (TMMOB, 2016). 56
Table 6. Participant Information Table 62
Table 7. Freelancing Practices of Participants 64
Table 8. Overview of Freelance Platforms Mentioned by Interviewees 68
Table 9. Code System..... 69
Table 10. Distribution of Participants by Legal Employment Status, Mode of Working, and Formality of Economic Activity 75

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Three-Sided Structure Of The Platforms by Schmidt (2017) 12
Figure 2. Relationship between Freelancing and Self-employment..... 74

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a global phenomenon, the number of digital labour platforms is rapidly increasing in Turkey, and workers with different professional backgrounds are finding their place on these platforms. Architecture, as a profession, has not been able to resist the penetration of digital labour platforms into every area of work. However, most of the studies in the literature focus on platform work types that are primarily based on relatively low-skilled gig work, mostly location-based, such as delivery services, home repair, and cleaning. Most of the platform studies do not focus on occupational groups that require specific technical knowledge or creative expertise. In this context, how digital platforms affect labour processes and conditions of work in sectors that require technical knowledge, educational background, and creative skills is an area that has not yet been sufficiently researched in the literature. However, among the work performed through digital platforms in Turkey, workers that can be classified under creative labour have an essential place.

To better capture the transformations that skilled labour is undergoing on digital platforms, this study focuses on a case that traditionally had an established office-based work practice but has only recently begun to carve out a new position within platform work. In other words, the focus was placed on a group that is in the process of transition from conventional office-based employment to online labour platforms, where it is possible to observe the practices of both work regimes simultaneously. Within the Turkish context, architects emergd as the most appropriate group through which the transformations of skilled labour on digital platforms can be observed and examined. Additionally, freelance work, as a mode of working, is now increasingly conducted through digital labour platforms in architecture. However, architects also take freelance work through their own networks. Freelance working practices in architecture existed well before the introduction of online platforms. However, it is

possible to observe that the practice of freelancing has also increasingly shifted towards platforms. Given this background, the thesis focuses on the architectural profession as a case study to explore how digital platforms influence skilled labour and their working conditions. Accordingly, it seeks to answer the following main research question: *How does the transition of young architects in Turkey from traditional office-based work to platform-mediated work reshape the practices and conditions of skilled labour?*

The path to platform capitalism is long and multi-layered, as well as being embedded in the development of capitalism; and accordingly, different historical stages of capitalism have produced significant transformations that have shaped today's platform economy. Huws (2014) divides this process into four periods: the Fordist era or Keynesian Welfare State from 1945 to 1973; the neoliberal restructuring from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s; the rise of digital capitalism from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s; and the period now called platform capitalism, which gained momentum after the 2008 crisis. According to the classification of Huws (2014), the period between 1945 and 1973 was defined by the Keynesian welfare state and the Fordist production model. It was a 'golden age' characterised by decisive state intervention, full employment, and the institutionalisation of social rights. However, with the oil crisis of the 1970s, the Keynesian model collapsed, the neoliberal model emerged, and the role of the state was reduced to serving the market (Lapavitsas, 2005; Huws, 2014). During this process, multinational corporations gained power while labour organisations weakened, wages were suppressed on a global scale with the shift of production to the South, unionisation rates declined, and informal work became widespread. Starting from the 1990s, the rise of digital capitalism has accelerated with the technological strengthening of the neoliberal accumulation regime. Internet investments, the dot-com bubble, and the post-2008 crisis have led to capital's shift towards technology, giving rise to new forms of labour (Srnicek, 2017). During this period, flexible and precarious practices such as part-time work, freelancing, zero-hour contracts, and platform-mediated employment have become standard. As Srnicek (2017) emphasises, the new raw material of 21st-century capitalism has become 'data,' and platforms have come to the fore with their function of collecting, processing, and circulating this data.

Online platforms are much more than just simple intermediaries. Steinberg (2022) emphasises that platform capitalism has been seen as a new regime since the mid-2010s and marks a period in which digitally mediated transactions have transformed the economy, society, and culture. Moreover, an important aspect of this conceptualisation of the platform economy/capitalism is the claim that platforms are not merely a new business model but they also reshape labour relations, forms of value production, and social structures, thereby leading to profound economic and social transformations. As Liang et al. (2022) argue, platform capitalism is not only a product of developments in information technologies but also of changing consumer preferences, evolving perceptions of labour, and broader political and economic structural changes. Therefore, the fact that a job is carried out through platforms not only signifies its transformation into a digital form, but also brings many restructurings in the labour relations, execution, and perception of the work.

The members of many professional groups have found their place on platforms, but it is also noteworthy that most of the skilled ones can be classified as creative professions. As one of these professions, architecture also offers a complex structure by combining both creative and technical aspects. Currently, discussions on architectural labour focus on where architecture stands in terms of the definition of creative labour and how this works in practice. However, this issue has not been discussed in the context of platforms. As Braverman (1974) argues, capitalism is currently redistributing work by dividing work processes into small pieces, thereby reducing the quality of labour and strengthening capitalist control mechanisms. Platforms intensify this process by reorganising the distribution of work, incorporating even process-oriented occupations like architecture into a logic of productization, in which tasks are fragmented and transformed into discrete, commodifiable units.

Moreover, researchers consider freelancers, contract workers, and self-employed workers in cultural industries, including architects, to be one of the most characteristic examples of 21st-century capitalism. This assessment is made within the context of a political-economic system that encourages risk-taking, prioritises flexible working hours, values immaterial labour, promotes entrepreneurial subjectivities, and shifts many responsibilities from the state and employers onto individuals (Neff et al.).

All these transformations have made freelance work increasingly common in creative fields, and the rise of digital labour platforms has further reinforced this trend. In this process, skilled workers who are already being pushed out of the traditional employment system are moving towards freelance work through platforms. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, relevant debates within the scope of platform studies and creative labour literature are discussed in detail.

It is not surprising that unemployment and precariousness, which have started to increase with the implementation of the neoliberal economic model in Turkey in the 1980s and have deepened during the AKP era in the 2000s, 2010s and 2020s, have affected all workers, including young architects. The steadily increasing number of architects has further intensified this situation. Moreover, as in the rest of the world, online platforms in Turkey have experienced significant growth, particularly in the areas of e-commerce and food delivery. Turkey is among the top 20 global e-commerce markets with the highest compound annual growth rate by 2029 (Statista, 2024). According to data from the Ministry of Trade, 559,412 businesses engaged in e-commerce activities across Turkey in 2023; compared to the previous year, the total value rose to 3 trillion TL with 5.91 billion transactions (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Turkey, 2025). Trendyol continues to maintain its clear market dominance in the sector with a net sales rate of 50.7% as of the end of 2020 (Yeşilbağ, 2022). In addition, platforms such as Bionluk, Fiverr, Upwork, and Freelancers are also becoming increasingly popular in Turkey. These platforms are actively used by many people, particularly those working in the creative industries. According to Similarweb (2025) data, Bionluk.com had approximately 488,500 monthly visitors as of April 2025. According to Bionluk (2025)[1] data, the most common freelance fields are voice-over, translation, design, and software. The impacts of the neoliberal employment and labour market regime in Turkey on architects, as well as the current situation of platforms in the country, are examined in detail in Chapter 3.

All these developments and ongoing debates have made it meaningful to examine skilled labour on platforms in the context of Turkey as well. While the literature

[1] See *Bionluk* https://bionluk.com (Accessed: 22 August 2025)

provides important insights into the transformation of labour under platform capitalism, reaching more concrete conclusions requires grounding these discussions in empirical research. For this reason, the thesis incorporates a qualitative research approach through a field study based on 21 semi-structured interviews with young architects, conducted in July 2025. These interviews provide first-hand accounts of how the transition from office-based employment to platform-mediated labour is experienced and allow an in-depth examination of how platforms reshape the practices and conditions of skilled work in the Turkish context.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on platform studies, creative labour, and digital skilled labour, with particular emphasis on the employment status of workers. Chapter 3 sets the context of the thesis by examining the neoliberal transformation of labour regime in Turkey, the emergence and expansion of digital platforms within this political-economic framework, and the specific dynamics of freelancing and architectural labour. Chapter 4 presents the case selection and data collection in the context of 21 semi-structured interviews with young architects, as well as the labour platforms that emerge from the field study. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the findings about the broader debates on digital skilled labour exploring how the young architects transition from office-based employment to platform-mediated labour reshapes the practices and conditions of skilled work in the Turkish case.

CHAPTER 2

THE PLATFORM ECONOMY AND SKILLED LABOUR: LITERATURE AND DEBATES

This chapter looks at the main debates and ideas that guide the examination of digital skilled labour in online digital platforms. Over the past two decades, research on digitalisation and labour has grown significantly. It has produced various views on how platform economies, creative industries, and digitally mediated work change employment practice. As mentioned earlier, discussions about labour on online labour platforms generally revolve around low-skilled jobs. For this reason, it is not possible to find a single body of literature that provides a conceptual background for this thesis. Thus, to frame the findings of this thesis, it is important to outline the main paths in three connected areas of study. Therefore, this chapter brings together the literature review and theoretical debates from three distinct strands to provide the necessary background.

The first part of this chapter engages with the literature on platform studies, which is characterised by conceptual complexity and various interpretations. To clarify this field, the discussion is organised on three analytical levels. At the broadest level, platforms are seen as intermediaries that reshape certain aspects of capitalism. A second level focuses on platforms as business models, emphasising how platforms reshape market dynamics, labour relations, and organisational strategies. Finally, the third level examines forms of work on platforms, exploring how different labour processes, from crowdwork to skilled freelancing, are structured and transformed in practice.

The second section examines debates on creative labour. It highlights the transformation of the creative labour literature over time and the diversity of

occupations included in creative work. In addition, the drawbacks that the definition of creative labour will bring about are also discussed on a theoretical basis. Finally, the position of architects in this debate on creative labour is questioned. As an important aspect of the fieldwork section of the thesis, the complex structure that brings together the creative and technical aspects of architecture is emphasised.

The final section focuses on the issue of digital skilled labour, which indeed lacks one coherent literature that goes by this label. For this reason, the discussions in this section are somewhat fragmented. First, it addresses the definitional debates on digital labour and its transformation in the literature. Second, it focuses on the contested employment status of skilled workers, with particular attention to platform workers, freelancers, and the intermediary status of self-employment. Finally, it examines how digital labour platforms reshape the practices of skilled labour, including working conditions, algorithmic management, and relational dynamics.

2.1. Conceptual Frameworks in The Platform Studies

Platform studies is a rapidly expanding body of literature, and each scholar indicates the online labour platforms from a distinct conceptual perspective. Due to the overlapping nature of these concepts, the literature can sometimes appear fragmented and confusing. Therefore, this section classifies the existing scholarship into three main strands: studies on the platform economy, studies that conceptualise platforms as business models, and studies focusing on work conducted through digital labour platforms.

The strands of literature are organised into groups according to their level of focus, ranging from the broadest to the most specialised. Platforms are positioned within the broader transformation of political economy and capitalism in the first strand. In the second, platforms are conceptualized as business models and addressed at the organizational level. The third strand examines the various forms of work that occur through digital platforms. In other words, the literature on platform work can be grouped into three main strands: first, studies on the broader environment in which platforms operate, often referred to as the “platform economy” or “platform

capitalism"; second, studies on the business models adopted by platform companies; and third, studies focusing on different aspects of platform work itself.

2.1.1. Platform Economy/Platform Capitalism

As Huws (2014) states, all periods of capitalism demonstrate how capitalism overcomes crises by adapting to new systems. In this regard, this period in which platforms exert a dominant influence over the economy is argued to represent a novel phase of capitalism. In this regard, scholars in platform studies, which adopt a more comprehensive perspective, highlight the ways in which platforms are influencing labour relations, as well as the broader transformative shifts occurring at the social and economic levels. In addition to this, some scholars use the term platform economy to specify a period. Huws (2014) highlights that the platform economy marks a transformative period within capitalism, not by standing outside of it but by intensifying its inherent dynamics. This transformation lies in how platforms extend traditional forms of exploitation through new mechanisms of labour control, the outsourcing of responsibilities, and the globalisation of work processes. One of the key debates in this context is to what extent this period shapes the contemporary discourse on capitalism. Does the transformation in the economic system resulting from the advent of these platforms represent a fundamental rupture with traditional capitalist structures, or is it merely an evolution of existing economic practices?

The terms "platform capitalism" and "platform economy" are frequently used as if they were interchangeable. Several authors, like Lyn Hoang et al. (2020), have indicated that they prefer the term "platform economics" in this context, on the grounds that it is comprehensive compared to platform capitalism. In addition, they mention that the European Commission, DG GROW (2016) supports the more inclusive term "platform economy," defining it as encompassing all business models and revenue-generating activities enabled by collaborative websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms. According to Vallas and Schor (2020), the platform economy constitutes a significant segment of global capitalism. Similarly, Azzellini et al. (2022) mention that the concept of the "platform economy metanarrative" frames the platform economy as a significant and transformative trend within contemporary capitalism. On

the other hand, some authors adopt a more expansive definition of platform economics/capitalism, proposing that it represents a novel phase rather than a specific branch of global capitalism. Steinberg (2022) highlights that platform capitalism and the platform economy have been seen as a new regime since the mid-2010s, signalling a period in which digitally mediated transactions transform the economy, society, and culture. Furthermore, a significant aspect of numerous conceptualisations of the platform economy/capitalism is the assertion that this novel model not only alters labour relations and business models but also engenders profound economic and social transformation. Liang et al. (2022) mention that platform capitalism refers to a range of platform-mediated work practices shaped not only by advancements in Information and Communication Technologies, shifts in consumer preferences, and changing perceptions of work, but also by broader societal, political, and economic transformations. In light of the considerable economic and political transformations precipitated by the advent of the platform economy, it is unsurprising that some scholars view this as a novel epoch. Steinberg (2022) states that the term "platform economy," often used alongside platform capitalism, describes a period marked by the dominance of American and Chinese platform-owning tech companies in stock market valuations, the global prevalence of data-collecting intermediaries, and the transformative impact of digitally mediated transactions on the economy, society, and culture. He adds that since the mid-2010s, the increasingly ubiquitous term 'platform' has been linked to a period-defining narrative (Steinberg, 2022).

Nevertheless, the existing literature has also adopted a more critical stance towards platform capitalism, emphasising that it should not be viewed as a radical departure from traditional economic models. For instance, Azzellini et al. (2022) highlight scenarios where platforms are unlikely to dominate labour markets, emphasizing the challenges involved in organizing transactions and arguing that platform capitalism is not the future of work. Moreover, Fleming et al. (2019) agree on that the future of working is no longer tied to the platforms, and they contend that platform capitalism draws the lines of the peak employment trend, which has been witnessed in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia from the 1980s, with gig economy adding to an extreme and most ideal form of capitalism in labour markets. Fleming et al. (2019) also add that by pushing neoliberal principles to unsustainable limits for states,

workers, and employers, this model has hindered the broader proliferation of digital labour platforms. In support of these arguments, Thompson and Briken (2017) claim that predictions of widespread job displacement due to digitalization are often speculative and lacking evidence, highlighting that while specific routine jobs are at risk, many roles, particularly in human services and knowledge-intensive sectors, are resilient to such changes, with digitalization in developing economies more likely to complement human labour than replace it.

To sum up, works in the literature that intentionally or unintentionally draw their conceptual frameworks from the platform economy or platform capitalism, while analysing platforms, actually have a more holistic approach. Although the main points of the arguments and the conclusions reached are different, we can identify two emphases that can be seen as common to all works: one is a transformation that may or may not lead to a complete rupture with the past, and the other is the impact of digital labour platforms on this transformation. Situating these strands within the broader political economy is particularly relevant for this thesis. The Turkish labour market has undergone significant neoliberal restructuring, with deregulation, outsourcing, and flexible employment practices reshaping professional trajectories. Positioning digital labour platforms within this context reveals that platformization is not an isolated development but a continuation and intensification of capitalism's ongoing transformation. By framing young architects' experiences through this lens, the analysis connects individual labour practices on platforms to larger structural shifts in economic organization and labour relations.

2.1.2. Digital Platforms as New Business Models

A large part of the literature considers digital platforms as new business models. Scholars who draw their works within this conceptual framework generally focus on the way platforms change the way business is organised within the existing order, rather than talking about a new economic era. Collier et al. (2017) highlight that although labour platforms are frequently regarded as disruptive, they largely extend previous patterns, particularly the reorganization of capital to establish new employment dynamics, including innovative forms of "intermediated" employment

relationships. Fleming et al. (2017) add that labour platforms should be seen as part of an ongoing trend of sectoral or organizational restructuring and the persistent division within the labour market. It would not be wrong to say that this view is at a different point from the scholars mentioned in the previous section, who consider platforms within a new economic epoch. Scholars who consider platforms as a new business model are mainly focused on the role of platforms as intermediaries and organizers in the current economic system. According to Gawer (2014), Lenaerts and Waeyaert (2020), and Kenney and Zysman (2019), platforms are defined as digital intermediaries that organise the social and economic life in terms of how work is performed. Gawer (2014) mentions that digital platforms can be understood as evolving organisations or metaorganizations that put together and organise creative and competitive constitutive agents. Similarly, Woodcock (2017) states that platforms represent a new type of organisational structure, leveraging digital technology to place the platform as an intermediary between workers and consumers, thereby managing their interactions. However, it is important not to view the advent of digital technology as a complete departure from the past, as work has historically incorporated both technological tools and mediated relationships. It is accurate to assert that the focal point of scholars who formulate the conceptual framework in this manner is the organisational transformation engendered by digital platforms. These platforms are analysed from this perspective, examining how they modify established business relations through technological integration, thereby introducing novel forms of business models. All these scholars agreed that platforms are “intermediaries”. This is also important because it changes the understanding of how firms or corporations work traditionally. According to Srnicek (2024), in platform capitalism, unlike traditional companies, platforms do not have to produce something new and sell it. Platforms can also profit and grow just by being an intermediary, that is, by bringing people together and connecting sellers and customers. If digital platforms have led to a change in the organisation of work, it is inevitable that this is one of the main contributors to literature. This transformation of traditional business relations into a multi-sided structure is of particular significance. Gawer (2014) mentions that since the early 2000s, scholars have started formulating theories on platforms, commonly labelled as “multi-sided markets,” or “multi-sided platforms.” Similarly, Lenaerts and Waeyaert

(2020) state that platforms are characterized as triangular or multi-angular relationships. In addition, Collier et al. (2017) highlight that this tripartite relationship.

It is distinct from the bilateral relationship that was previously established solely between worker and employer. Moreover, the focus of the works of Schmidt (2017) is on the distinct three-sided structure of the platforms (Figure 1). In addition to other scholars, he portrayed a detailed picture of this structure. Schmidt's three-sided platform architecture (2017) reflects the interaction of three main agents involved in platform economies: the provider of the platform, the supply (independent contractors), and the demand (clients who use the platform).

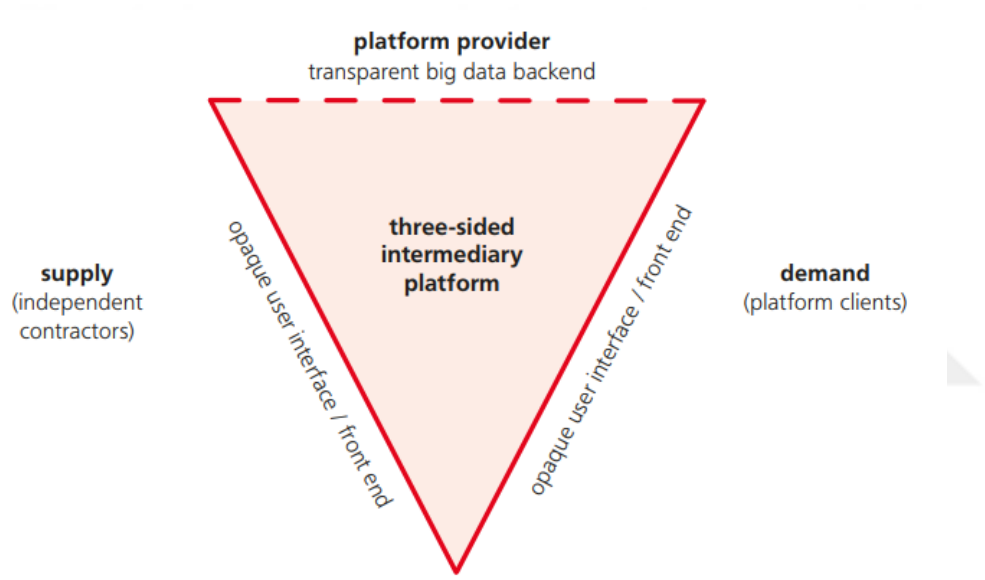

Figure 1. Three-Sided Structure Of The Platforms by Schmidt (2017)

Another point of contention regarding platforms is whether they are a continuation of the previous form or a completely transformative new structure. One of the arguments in this direction is that platforms do not lead to a disruption but rather deepen existing capitalist relations and open the way for new forms of exploitation. Howson et al. (2022) mention that digital labour platforms do not disrupt capitalist exploitation but instead create new opportunities for it by enabling the concentration of economic coordination and power within expanding global networks. Woodcock (2017) also argues that platforms are not a clean break from the past, by agreeing that platforms are intermediaries since there were both technology and mediation before. Moreover,

Chesalina (2020) supports the idea that the platform work was not created out of nothing. Like Woodcock, Chesalina (2020) highlights the parallels between certain characteristics of the analogue labour market and platform work, such as control mechanisms of economic partners via telecommunication tools, fragmentation, and precariousness of work. Collier et al. (2017) side with the same argument by mentioning that platform work is the continuation of earlier trends; however, they stress that platforms have changed employment relations. From this point of view, it is particularly important to demonstrate how historical labour relations are greatly affected by platforms. For example, although there was flexibility and atomisation in earlier times, platforms have effectively spread these phenomena by incorporating them as intrinsic components of work.

To sum up, platforms are mostly seen as intermediaries in this literature. Scholars who have considered platforms as a new business model mainly focused on how platforms transformed business relations as new intermediaries. Although many of them highlight how those platforms changed the organization of work, they also argue that a significant part of today's employment system is the continuation of the past.

As mentioned above, although some components do not break from the past, the novelty that the platforms brought should not be underestimated. Examining the freelance work of young architects on platforms such as Upwork or Fiverr demonstrates how platform-level organizational change results in changed work dynamics, exposing both the persistence of capitalist employment relations and the unique forms of intermediation made possible by digital technologies. This framing is extremely pertinent to the current study. The way platform-mediated projects replicate well-known patterns of precarity and flexibility while also introducing new mechanisms of coordination, visibility, and competition is highlighted by placing these observations within the context of Turkey's architectural labor market. By doing this, the analysis shows that platformization in architecture represents a substantial reconfiguration of professional work rather than just a continuation of historical practices.

2.1.3. Work Types on Digital Platforms

As mentioned above, this chapter includes a variety of terms, including platform work. A considerable proportion of the terminology with which we are familiar from the literature has its origins in the classification of jobs according to various categories. Lenaerts and Waeyaert (2020) define platform work as a part of the wider platform economy, and it refers to accessing services, expertise, and knowledge offered by individuals in exchange for payment, facilitated through or via an online platform. Similarly, Eurofound (2018) defines platform work as a form of employment by highlighting the utilization of an online platform to enable organizations or individuals to access other organizations or individuals. At this point, while this may present a certain challenge, the distinction between digital work and digital labour can be contemplated in order to facilitate conceptual clarity. Fuchs and Sevignani (2013) include Marx's updated distinction between labour and work:

> "Labour is a necessarily alienated form of work, in which humans do not control and own the means and results of production. It is a historic form of the organisation of work in class societies. Work, in contrast, is a much more general concept common to all societies. It is a process in which humans in social relations make use of technologies in order to transform nature, culture, and society in such a way that goods and services are created that satisfy human needs (Fuchs and Sevignani, 2014, p. 240)."

In light of this explanation, the term "platform work" will be used in this chapter. The section will offer a concise exposition of the general terms that are used to describe forms of works mediated through platforms, without reference to the specific consequences and alienations of platform works in society. The following section will provide a comprehensive explanation of how platforms shape digital labour.

The classification of platforms works according to divergent criteria has given rise to a proliferation of concepts within the extant literature. Since these definitions and concepts usually overlap with each other, it is not possible to draw exact frames of each type of work. It is quite common for the same form of work to be defined differently according to various criteria. Generally, types of platform work are grouped according to locations, required skills, task organization and scale, or function.

Depending on the focus of the scholar's work or their own conceptual framework, they may use one or more of these categories.

From one perspective, some scholars categorized platform workers based on the services they provide. Srnicek (2017) categorized platforms as advertising platforms, product platforms, lean platforms, and cloud platforms. Similarly, Kenney and Zysman (2019, p. 2) use a similar categorization; however, in addition to Srnicek, they also include work platforms, which are intermediaries for in-person service provision.

On the other hand, by 2017, Eurofound (2018) had classified ten types of platform work in Europe, categorized by task scale (ranging from micro-tasks to large projects), mode of service delivery (on-location or online), required skill level (from routine, low-skill tasks to specialized, expert-level work), the entity assigning work (client, worker, or platform), and the method of task matching (offer-based or contest-based). Categorization based on mode of service delivery is one of the most used categories when classifying platform work. Digital platforms can generally be categorized into two main types: location-based and web-based (as cited in Graham and Woodcock, 2018). However, although many scholars classify them on the basis of locations, they can still show differences within themselves. For instance, while both Schmidt (2017) and Cruz and Gameiro (2023) focus on the location where the work will be performed, Cruz and Gameiro (2023) use more general terms such as location-based and web-based platforms. According to Cruz and Gameiro (2023), location-based platforms are centred on tasks that necessitate minimal skills and the worker's physical presence to complete, whereas web-based platforms enable remote work performed by individuals spread across different locations. On the other hand, Schmidt (2017) proceeds to a more detailed categorisation and he divides platform work into three based on locations as cloud-work, crowd-work, gig work. Accordingly, cloud work defines the tasks which are not location based and can be done remotely; crowd-work identifies the tasks which are not given to a specific individual but to an undefined group of people online; and gig work is used for the tasks has to be done at a specific location and time, by a specific person that is responsible for tasks (Schmidt, 2017). It appears that the sub-heading known as “gig-works” has attracted a high level of interest within the relevant literature. Similarly, De Stefano (2016) divided the gig work into two

categories based on the location: crowdwork and work-on-demand via app. According to his definition, the former refers to the forms of work that operate online and link clients and workers from across the globe; the latter refers to work that is facilitated online but carried out in the physical world and within local settings (De Stefano, 2016).

A significant proportion of the extant literature pertains to studies on gig work. These jobs can be broadly defined as roles that are both small in scale and require less expertise. Although many studies today define gig work solely in terms of platforms, the gig work debate is older than platform studies. Historically, the term "gig" referred to short-term, task-based, or project-based jobs, ranging from artistic performances to casual forms of employment (Friedman, 2014). Also, some scholars, such as Tassinari and Maccarone (2020), prefer to use "gig economy" in their works. According to their definition gig economy can be defined as the term "gig economy" describes a system in which individuals are hired to complete small, discrete tasks or jobs, known as "gigs", by companies, often platforms, that operate under this service-based model. Also, Wood et al. (2019, p.57) define the gig economy as modern employment practices. As Prassl and Risak have stated (2016), "work in the gig-economy should not be understood as a single unified phenomenon".

In this sense, gig work has long existed outside the platform context, encompassing various forms of contingent and freelance labour. What platforms have done is to digitalise, scale up, and institutionalise these types of arrangements, thereby globalising the gig economy (De Stefano, 2016; Wood et al., 2019). Therefore, in many contexts, gig work is similar to platform work. However, gig work and platform-mediated work can be seen as two distinct yet extensively overlapping categories. One of the important points in the context of this study is that gig work was associated with freelance work even before the emergence of platforms (Friedman, 2014). Similarly, Giustini (2024, p.443) includes all types of work "work commissioned through platforms, interfaces, and apps functioning." In other words, gig work does not only refer to the work in location-based platforms but also covers skilled services that may be implemented through web-based platforms such as Fiverr, Upwork, and Freelancer.com. Nevertheless, in much of the contemporary debate, gig work tends to

be associated primarily with low-skilled tasks mediated through platforms, particularly location-based services such as ride-hailing or food delivery. This association, however, should not obscure the fact that gig work is fundamentally a form of employment arrangement that encompasses both skilled and less-skilled activities. The tendency to equate gig work with low-skilled platform labour is largely the result of the rapid expansion and visibility of location-based platforms, which have come to dominate public and academic discussions of the gig economy. However, the experiences of young architects in Turkey exemplify a segment of platform-mediated gig work that is both specialised and knowledge-intensive.

2.2. Creative Labour

In the previous section, the focus was on digital labour platforms and broader transformations that they introduced in labour regimes and much of the existing literature in platform studies emphasises low-skilled and task-based work in platforms. However, digital platforms have increasingly become spaces where skilled and creative work is also being redefined. In order to assess the extent to which platforms transform creative work; it is essential to begin with the existing debates in the literature on how creative labour has been defined and understood. Therefore, this section aims to clarify the definitions and scope of creative labour and to engage with key theoretical debates that have gained prominence in the literature. Moreover, in this chapter, as the main subjects of this thesis, architects deserve particular attention within the debates on creative labour. Architecture combines technical expertise with creative imagination, making it a complex and distinctive case through which to examine how platforms reshape skilled work.

Although the term creative labour usually refers to the artists specifically, it is a much more in-depth and comprehensive term, as elaborated in the creative work literature. In fact, this debate extends to the question of whether all human work is creative. In the first volume of Das Kapital, Karl Marx explains this about human labour with the example of an architect:

> "We presuppose labour in a form in which it is an exclusively human characteristic. A spider conducts operations which resemble those of a weaver, and a bee would put

> many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which has already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only affects a change of form in the materials of nature, but also realises his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of; it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it." (Marx 1976[1867], pp. 283–284)

In this paragraph, Marx compares a bee with a creative worker, an architect. However, his emphasis on immaterial labour is not specific to the "creative" workers. He specifies that human labour is creative by its very nature. According to Anderson (2019), to alter their environment and fulfil a human need, the worker plans and executes a series of actions to create a useful object, but under the conditions of a capitalist economy, the task is stripped of its creative essence.

Nevertheless, the term creative labour mostly refers to some specific work types under specific occupations. The definition of creative work varies across different countries and organisations, which is indicative of a lack of consensus on the matter. However, before addressing this issue, it is imperative to examine the manner in which the boundaries of creative work are delineated in the extant literature.

Hearn (2020, p.1) claims that the challenge of defining the creative work landscape arises from the fact that culture is no longer confined to standalone cultural artifacts but is embedded in every product, service, and experience. According to Gill and Pratt (2008), creative labour, often regarded as immaterial labour, involves producing intangible goods like services, cultural products, knowledge, or communication, while also shaping artistic and cultural standards, consumer norms, and public opinion, despite not always being recognised as traditional work. Similarly, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) emphasise that although all labour can be creative, creative labour specifically refers to symbol-making jobs that are prevalent in the cultural industries, where, unlike in other sectors, businesses primarily seek profit from such activities, creating significant tensions and contradictions between economics and culture, as well as creativity and commerce.

Others argue that the term creative industry is overly broad, as emphasising "creative" makes it challenging to distinguish between scientific or technical creativity and

artistic creativity (Haunschild, 2008; Pratt, 2005). While there are those in the literature who see cultural labour only as labour that produces cultural or informational goods in the cultural industries (Anderson, 2019), the vast majority of the literature provides a more inclusive definition. It is noteworthy that the most ground-breaking contributions in this domain are attributable to Richard Florida. Florida (2002) considers people working in occupations that produce creative labour as "a new class" and defines the core of the creative class to include people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas. Florida (2005) takes creativity as a form of capital, which the creative class is defined by its possession. He responds to criticisms that this definition is too restrictive by saying that classical Marxism and the structure of work are creative. In this case, in fact, according to Florida (2002), "the creative class derives its identity from its members' roles as purveyors of creativity". Creative labour is defined as the production, acquisition, and consumption of intangible value through the use of creative, technological, and innovative knowledge by Hearn (2020). Moreover, Hearn and McCutcheon (2020) suggest that work or skills are considered creative when they involve either replicative or innovative aesthetic and expressive knowledge, independently or in combination with other forms of knowledge. Similarly, Florida (2005) mentions that knowledge and information are tools for creativity, which makes today's economy is creative economy.

On the other hand, there is a significant literature that brings criticism to the creative industry. Although this is not the focus of this thesis, it is significant that these criticisms are acknowledged. Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) define the culture industry as a centralized and totalizing system under the complete control of monopolized capital. According to them, this system standardizes cultural production, thereby undermining creativity and critical potential, commodifies culture by reducing it to an object of consumption, and ultimately combines economic profit with ideological control. These critiques, grounded in the Frankfurt School, have also been further elaborated by contemporary scholars today. We can mention numerous works that subject the Frankfurt School's concept of the 'Culture Industry' to a renewed critical assessment within the context of the neoliberal era's discourse on 'Creative Industries'. In particular, Isabell Lorey's critique of self-precarisation and Maurizio

Lazzarato's thesis of the entrepreneur of oneself are invaluable for understanding current debates.

Similar to scholars, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and countries use some criteria to draw the frameworks of creative labour. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2024), the creative economy involves the creation, production, and distribution of goods and services that primarily rely on creativity and intellectual capital. It spans a wide range of industries, including advertising, architecture, arts, design, music, film production, publishing, and video game development. Moreover, UNCTAD (2024) provides a list of industries covered in different cultural and creative economy concepts proposed by international and regional organisations (Table 1). This table illustrates the diversity of classifications adopted by international and regional organisations, showing that there is no single consensus on the scope of cultural and creative industries. This diversity underlines the importance of situating architecture within the broader debates on creative labour, as it is consistently recognised as part of the creative economy.

Table 1. Industries covered in different cultural and creative economy concepts by international and regional organisations (UNCTAD, 2024, p.7)

Concept	Classification	Coverage	Industries covered
European Union cultural and creative sectors (2022 proposal)	NACE	25 industries (cultural and creative sectors) at the NACE 4-digit level	• Core cultural: cultural education; museum and heritage sites; library and archives; visual arts and writing; performing arts • Cultural industries: radio and TV; recorded music; audio-visual; book and press; culture manufacturing (artistic craft); printing • Creative sectors: advertising; design; architecture; videogames

Table 1. (continued)

IDB orange economy	ISIC Rev. 4	45 industries ("orange economy activities") at the ISIC 4-digit level	• Traditional and artistic activities: visual arts; performing arts • Creative industries: crafts; publishing; audiovisual; phonographic; interior design; graphic arts; illustration; jewellery; video games; advertising; fashion • Activities of creative support: product design; packaging design; marketing
UNCTAD creative economy	ISIC Rev. 5	54 industries at the ISIC 4-digit level, 21 additional industries contributing to the manufacturing of some creative goods	• Creative industries: advertising and marketing; architecture; audiovisual, multimedia and photography; books and publishing; cultural and natural heritage; design: product, graphic and fashion design; manufacturing of crafts and design goods; music, performing and visual arts; software, video games, computer and web services; research and development
UNESCO cultural industries	ISIC Rev. 4 and CPC Rev. 2	37 industries ("cultural productive activities") at the ISIC 4-digit level	• Main cultural domains: A. cultural and natural heritage; B. performance and celebration; C. visual arts and crafts; D. books and press; E. audiovisual and interactive media; F. design and creative services • Related domains: G. tourism; H. sports and recreation

Table 1. (continued)

WIPO copyright industries	ISIC Rev. 4	40 industries ("core copyright industries") at ISIC-4 digit level, 28 "partial copyright industries", 21 "interdependent copyright industries"	• Core copyright industries: press and literature; music, theatrical productions, operas; motion picture and video; radio and television; photography; software, databases, and computer games; visual and graphic arts; advertising services; and copyright collective management societies • Partial copyright industries: apparel, textiles, footwear; jewellery and coins; other crafts; furniture; household goods, china, and glass; wall coverings and carpets; toys and games; architecture, engineering, surveying; interior design; and museums • Interdependent copyright industries: manufacture, wholesale, and retail of: TV sets, radios, CD-DVD Blu-Ray players, electronic game equipment, and other similar equipment; computers and equipment; tablets and smartphones; and musical instruments

Likewise, OECD (2022) mentions that there is no universally accepted definition of cultural and creative sectors. Each country interprets these sectors differently and compiles various types of statistics on cultural participation, employment in creative industries, and other related aspects. Commonly recognised sectors of the creative economy include advertising, visual arts, performing arts, film and media, publishing, music, cultural heritage, and digital content creation. For instance, however, the definition of creative work varies across countries, with some including architecture (e.g., Australia, Austria, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Poland, and the UK), while others exclude it (e.g., Chile, Costa Rica, Finland, Mexico, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the US) (OECD, 2022). UNESCO (2021) presents a report about cultural and creative industries in the face of

the COVID-19 pandemic. In this report UNESCO classifies creative work into six main categories: Cultural and Natural Heritage, which includes museums, historical sites, and landscapes; Performance and Celebration, covering performing arts, live music, dance, and festivals; Visual Arts and Crafts, encompassing fine arts, photography, and crafts; Books and Press, involving books, newspapers, magazines, libraries, and book fairs; Audio-Visual and Interactive Media, which includes film, TV, streaming, podcasts, and video games; and Design and Creative Services, covering architecture, fashion design, graphic design, interior design, and advertising. This broad classification highlights the diverse nature of creative industries. Lastly, ILO (2021; 2024) refers to creative industries as the Cultural and Creative Sector. In both reports, ILO includes five categories: Performance and celebration, Visual arts and crafts, Books and press, Audiovisual and interactive media, and Design and creative services.

As the definition of creative labour expands, the number of workers included in this category also increases, and it is even possible to talk about the creative economy. Irrespective of the definition of creative labour, one of the most significant debates is about the distinction between creative labour and other forms of labour. According to Pang (2009), it is crucial to reintroduce labour into the analysis of the creative economy, both to show that creativity involves not only aesthetics but also social practice, and to explore how the so-called new creative economy still sustains exploitative dynamics while promoting idealised views of creativity. This idealised and romanticised view of "creativity" may be dangerous since it can mask the fact that this is also a labour process and involves various practices of exploitation. Pang (2009) emphasises that the talent-driven narrative of creative labour falsely elevates workers as a privileged class while masking the fact that the commodification of creativity has deeply alienated the meaning of artistic production. Similarly, Aykaç and Sert (2018) mention that "the creative labour" discourse produces an artificial class division between workers. However, workers in creative spaces are exposed to precarious work just like all other workers, and this discourse and the romanticisation of creative work prevent attention from being drawn to it. Pang (2009) adds that the evolving job structures in the creative economy allow employers to conceal exploitative practices

behind notions of flexibility and freelancing, ultimately threatening workers' long-term stability, career growth, and employment benefits.

Creative labour is also referred to as immaterial labour by some scholars (Gill and Pratt, 2008). Sayers (2007) mentions that the concept of "immaterial labour" was first introduced by Lazzarato (1996) and later expanded upon by Hardt and Negri (2002), who positioned it as a key element in their analysis of post-industrial society. Hardt and Negri (2002) define it as follows: "since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labour involved in this production as immaterial labour—that is, labour that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication." Hardt and Negri (2002) indicate three types of immaterial labour in their work:

> "In short, we can distinguish three types of immaterial labour that drive the service sector at the top of the informational economy. The first is involved in an industrial production that has been informationalized and has incorporated communication technologies in a way that transforms the production process itself. Manufacturing is regarded as a service, and the material labour of the production of durable goods mixes with and tends toward immaterial labour. Second is the immaterial labour of analytical and symbolic tasks, which itself breaks down into creative and intelligent manipulation on the one hand and routine symbolic tasks on the other. Finally, a third type of immaterial labour involves the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labour in the bodily mode." (Hardt and Negri, 2002)

Deamer (2020) mentions that contemporary immaterial labour includes professions such as researchers, designers, advertisers, consultants, artists, media experts, IT developers, and gamers. Their work is typically defined by collaboration, knowledge exchange, flexible schedules and workspaces, a focus on personal fulfilment, entrepreneurial approaches, and control over their own production tools. According to Sean Sayers (2007), immaterial work does not primarily focus on production itself but rather on generating value through distribution, exchange, marketing, and similar activities. However, it is crucial to recognise that these functions are integral to the production process in an advanced industrial economy. Commercial and administrative tasks play a vital role in establishing, sustaining, and facilitating the economic and social relationships essential for production. In parallel to this approach, there is an ongoing discussion about immaterial labour which involves a series of

activities that are not normally recognised as “work”, such as defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms and, more strategically, public opinion (Gill and Pratt, 2008).

According to Holt and Lapante (2010), creative labour can be just as exploitative as any other form of work and is often characterised by greater instability and fewer regulations compared to other types of employment. Moreover, they add that the creative labour market is characterised by a high degree of temporary and part-time employment (Holt and Lapante, 2010). Especially due to the labour market conditions in the creative occupations, freelancing is highly frequent. According to McDowell and Christopherson (2009), a key aspect of the transformation in cultural work is the shift from stable, full-time positions to part-time, freelance, and portfolio-based employment, often lacking consistent access to benefits such as health insurance, unemployment support, and pensions (cited in Murray and Gollmitzer, 2012).

Mould et al. (2014) define a freelancer as “an individual who works on a contractual or temporary basis offering their skills, knowledge and/or expertise to others (people, firms or governments) looking to outsource (and/or add value to) a particular labour cost”. Freelance work is generally characterized by temporary employment for a limited time. Moreover, Kitching and Smallbone (2008 cited in Merkel, 2019) define freelancers as “professional worker who are neither employers nor employees”. Moreover, Merkel (2019) mentions that freelancers must engage in various forms of invisible labour (Crain et al., 2016) to maintain their position in the highly competitive job market, in addition to their cultural labour such as self-branding (Ardvisson et al., 2019) or informal networking as a soft skill (Musgrave, 2023). Therefore, individual relations beyond the work are significant for the consistency of their job (Musgrave, 2023; Alacovska et al., 2024; Mould et al., 2014). Pang (2009) defines these skills as “entrepreneurial abilities”; according to her, creative workers often work as freelancers or in precarious, short-term positions, requiring them to manage their own careers by taking risks, building networks, and staying flexible in response to shifting market conditions.

2.2.1. Architects as Creative Workers

Although not included in all definitions, many of the definitions of creative labour given above also include architecture. The reason why architecture is not included in all the definitions is that it has a more complex structure. It differs in many ways from the work of artists, who first come to mind when it comes to creative labour. Jones (2011) explains that while certain art forms like painting, sculpture, and etching depend on individual creativity and personal execution, more complex artistic outputs—such as films and architectural projects—require collaborative efforts involving numerous skilled professionals. Architecture firms exemplify creative enterprises where experienced professionals transform innovative ideas into structured methods, ultimately generating economic value (Caves, 2000; Christophers, 2007; Flew, 2002; Jeffcutt and Pratt, 2002; O'Farrell, 2000). This makes it difficult both to define the work from the outside and for the architect, as a worker, to put themselves in a certain place. According to Peggy Deamer (2020), who is both an architect and professor, architects do not even believe that they do work in the first place. Deamer (2020) mentions that architects recognise that they create tangible outcomes, often large-scale, but resist viewing these as "commodities." They liken themselves to professionals like doctors or lawyers yet see their work as too creative and culturally meaningful to be categorised as part of the service industry, which prevents them from fully understanding their labour as labour. Similarly, Smith (2013) mentions that in discussions of architecture, labour can refer both to hands-on physical tasks, like those performed by construction workers on-site, and to intellectual efforts, such as conceptualising and designing building forms away from the construction process. Aykaç and Sert (2018) state that this debate is not new in the history of architecture. Drawing on Frampton's work, Aykaç and Sert (2018) state that the modern architectural discourse reflects a fundamental division between material and immaterial labour, a split rooted in the historical separation of architecture and engineering in the 17th century. Frampton argues that this division marks a shift in architectural focus, from questions of *how* (associated with engineering) to questions of *what*, thereby positioning architecture within the realm of creative and intellectual production (Frampton, 1979, p. 110; Aykaç and Sert, 2018). Tombesi (2001) makes a contribution to the discussion through "abstract and concrete labour". According to

Tombesi (2001), architectural practice, when seen as an economic activity supporting the building industry, can be viewed as “abstract labour” that creates value through services priced above production costs. Yet, because it involves both the conceptual design of space and the physical creation of buildings within specific production and consumption frameworks, it also embodies “concrete labour,” linking intangible ideas to tangible outcomes.

Moreover, another common discussion point is the distinction between architects and constructors. According to Deamer (2020), architects have a pathetic notion of design that isolates it from work. Architects design, constructors build; by assuming that “we do art, they do work.” Smith (2013) states that this debate also dates to the Middle Ages. She mentions that technological progress in drawing during the late Middle Ages allowed skilled draftsmen to plan complete buildings before their physical construction by separate labourers (Smith, 2013). Also, Smith (2013) refers to Edward Robbins (1994), who argues that this shift played a key role in creating a social division of labour within architecture. As a result, architecture evolved into a specialised, intellectual field centred in design studios and separated from the physical, hands-on labour of construction. Aykaç and Sert (2018) exemplify that by referring to the “starchitects” by giving place to the public statements made in 2013 and 2014 by two internationally renowned star architects, Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid, regarding the labour conditions of construction workers involved in their projects. Both architects claimed that their own creative labour was unrelated to the manual labour performed on construction sites and therefore denied responsibility for poor working conditions or worker fatalities associated with their buildings (Aykaç and Sert, 2018). Additionally, Aykaç and Sert (2018) mention that the discourse of “creative labour” produces such an artificial class division. It is essential to recognise that the exploitation and precarity experienced by architects are produced in ways similar to those affecting other labour groups within architecture. Aykaç and Sert (2018) mention on the one hand, the discourse of creative labour distinguishes architect-workers from other workers; on the other, it obscures their position as labourers in relation to architect-employers. This dual dynamic contributes to the growing insecurity faced particularly by young architect-workers in their professional lives. Similarly, Deamer (2020) mentions that architectural employees often lack protective frameworks—such

as unions, professional guilds, or formal labour regulations—that would safeguard them from unjust dismissal, unpaid labour, or excessively long working hours. Fisher (2015) adds that while architects' creative expertise often places them within the category of "talent," capital tends to regard most of the design profession as interchangeable labour. This perception contributes to low pay, unstable employment, and financial insecurity. In a similar way, Sert et al. (2021) refer to temporary contracts, intense project timelines, extended working hours, the breakdown and automation of tasks, and a diminished sense of control over the architectural production process by defining the conditions of the architect as a worker.

2.3. Digital Skilled Labour

Digital labour has a very broad definition, which may refer to different types of non/paid work. However, the literature on digital labour has mainly focused on low-paid crowd and gig economy work. The development of the literature on digital labour over the years may be the reason of main focus is relatively low-skilled gig work. As Dorschel (2022) states in the first wave of digital labour research, digital labour taken as unpaid social media work, stated by Terranova (2000) in the 2000s; afterwards, Fuchs developed the term with a Marxist framework to diagnose both new and old forms of exploitation through the use of modern social media (Fuchs, 2013b; Fuchs and Dyer-Witheford, 2012). Fuchs (2013) defines digital labour as "a specific form of cultural labour that has to do with the production and productive consumption of digital media". Moreover, Fuchs (2014) draws attention to the difference between digital work and digital labour through Marxian framework; Fuchs (2013) argues digital labour is alienated form of digital work which is "a specific form of work that makes use of the body, mind or machines or a combination of all or some of these elements as an instrument of work in order to organize nature, resources extracted from nature, or culture and human experiences, in such a way that digital media are produced and used." In other words, Fuchs (2014) uses digital labour in a more general sense for the entire system of digital production, which encompasses interconnected forms of agricultural, industrial, and informational labour that collectively support the creation and operation of digital media. On the other hand, according to Dorschel (2022), the concept of digital labour should not be limited to the social media industry.

Therefore, Dorschel (2022) argues that the third generation of digital labour researchers, of which he can be considered a part, sees digital labour as all work within the dynamic and fluid digital economy. Therefore, the current literature of digital labour does not only encompass specific types of work, but all labour practices, which have emerged or been fundamentally reshaped by digital technologies based on the Internet. Therefore, although it is difficult to find a precise definition for qualified or skilled digital labour, it is possible to include all work that is done through digital intermediation and requires a certain education, diploma, status and skills for pursuing the work in this framework.

In the literature, debates on digital labour have increasingly moved beyond definitional concerns to examine how skilled work has been reshaped within digital practices. As highlighted above, although digital labour is a multifaceted concept, the most recent and central point of debate concerns the position of skilled labour within digital labour platforms. These platforms not only transform the nature of skilled labour but also profoundly affect the status and conditions of skilled workers. In line with these discussions, the main focus of this thesis will be on two interrelated themes: the employment status of skilled digital workers and the ways in which creative work is reshaped in multiple dimensions within platforms.

2.3.1. Employment Status of Digital Skilled Workers

Employment status constitutes one of the central discussion points of this study. While the literature provides important insights into how digital platforms complicate the classification of workers, this theme is further deepened through the field research, which highlights the specific ways in which skilled professionals experience and negotiate their employment status. Within this debate, three interrelated dimensions can be identified: the status of platform workers, the status of freelancers, and self-employment as an intersecting legal category that links and blurs the boundaries between the two.

When we look at the digital transformation of creative work, it is possible to say that prominent forms of employment are freelancing and self-employment. Demirel et al.

(2020) state that freelancers engage in a wide array of sectors, including design, marketing, legal services, and creative fields, with the creative and multimedia domain representing one of the most prominent categories in the online labour market. On the other hand, forms of work such as freelancing, self-employment, project-based work, and subcontracting, which are relatively new for many other professions, are not new forms that have come with digital platforms for those working in creative jobs. According to Gandini (2016), throughout the 1990s and 2000s, project-based organizational arrangements, which are frequently cited in managerial and sociological literature as one of the many non-standard employment types, rose to prominence as the new standard form of employment in a knowledge industry that was changing due to the combination of technological specialization and creativity. Many scholars mention the concepts of freelance, contract, self-employed, workers in the cultural industries as prime examples of 21st century capitalism, specifically of a political-economic system that encourages risk-taking, flexible work schedules, the value of immaterial labour, entrepreneurial forms of subjectivity, and a mode of governmentality that expects people to perform tasks that a state or an employer would otherwise perform (Neff et al. 2005). Cristopherson (2008) adds that employers have traditionally used hiring freelancers as a way to reduce costs in the creative sectors. Employing freelancers effectively lowers fixed expenses for employment over the long term, even though the total cost of recruiting temporary workers is typically higher in the short term. However, the digital transformation has also made freelancing increasingly widespread, even mandatory, and freelancing has started to operate through digital platforms. It is not easy to distinguish between freelancing and freelancing without an intermediary platform; as they have a lot in common, especially in terms of working conditions. For both sides, freelancer workers are not eligible for health insurance, paid time off, or retirement benefits that are provided to regular employees (Munoz et al., 2022); they must conduct relational work and build longer-lasting client relations (Alacovska, 2024); high work intensity reflects extended working hours with limited access to standard forms of employment security like regular wages or pensions (Peticca-Harris et al., 2015). In other words, exploitative labour conditions are widespread, with numerous workers subjected to sub-minimum wages, uncompensated tasks, and excessive working hours under strict deadlines, all

while lacking employment security, access to pensions, or representation through labour unions, and career prospects are uncertain (Demirel et al., 2020).

Gandini (2016) mentions that in recent years, a considerable segment of the workforce has been pushed into freelance work not out of personal preference or opportunity, but due to economic downturns and the contraction of an already fragmented labour market. This phenomenon has become so widespread that such individuals have come to be referred to as "necessity entrepreneurs" (Gandini, 2016). Several scholars have examined how the shift from full-time and permanent employment to freelance and contract-based arrangements has led to increased precarity in these sectors, with work becoming more irregular, insecure, and poorly compensated (Banks, 2007; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Gold and Fraser, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Kong, 2011; Platman, 2004; Ursell, 2000). Munos et al. (2022) state that since 2005, the number of independent contractors, or freelancers, has grown substantially, reflecting a broader shift toward project-based employment and flexible work arrangements. This shift has paved the way for a new work ecosystem driven by digital platforms, which have rapidly expanded over the past decade to facilitate more efficient matching between employers and freelance workers. Besides that, in addition, while there have already been freelancers in creative labour for some time, certain groups, such as architects, designers or journalists, have also started to switch to digital work in the wake of these developments. Soriano (2019) mentions that freelancers' work through digital platforms, also referred to as "online freelancers", engages in digitally mediated work through online labour platforms and microwork intermediaries such as Sama-source, CrowdFlower, Freelancer.com and Upwork. Shevchuk and Strebkov (2017) add that major global platforms such as Freelancer.com and Upwork host millions of users worldwide, serving as intermediaries through which individuals, non-profit organisations, government agencies, small businesses, and large corporations outsource a wide range of skilled tasks. They also highlight that freelancers on these platforms typically specialize in areas such as information technology, graphic design, creative and multimedia work, translation, writing and editing, as well as various business and technical services, including marketing, consulting, accounting, law, engineering, product design, and architecture (Shevchuk and Strebkov, 2017). Among all these occupations, what distinguishes architecture from others is the fact that it has

not been experiencing the freelance way of working for as long as other creative jobs. As discussed before, architecture remains a more “in-between occupation” due to its nature. For this reason, a very common part of it is actually performed within the scope of the office-based employer-employee relationship, which we can also refer to as standard employment.

The significant shift from full-time, permanent staff work to freelance and contract work has already been mentioned. This is generally referred to as the transition from standard to non-standard types of employment. In the case of freelancers, there is also a debate on what exactly to call this work and what its status should be. ILO also highlights that the exact legal status of freelancers is a complex issue and may vary from country to country (Pulignano et al., 2021).

Although it is defined as a type of employment, the legal status and categorization of the employees are a complex issue for platform workers. Since employment relations in the platforms do not usually fit the existing legal status of “employee” and “independent contract” (Harris and Krueger, 2015), it is not easy to categorize them. The legal status of platform workers is pretty delicate since it brings together the issues of social and legal rights, social protection, security, and pension rights. Greon et al. (2018) mention that the classification of a worker's employment status is often complex, as platform-based labour tends to blur the boundaries between conventional categories of employment, especially between being an employee and being self-employed, in the Eurofound report 2018. Considering this complexity, Harris and Krueger (2015) argue that, given the variety of legal protections and benefits employees receive, workers and intermediaries with whom they work in these developing relationships are subject to unnecessary and excessive uncertainty under the current legal framework. Eurofound (2017) mentions that at present, there are no clearly defined regulations in any of the EU Member States regarding the employment status of platform workers. On the other hand, in 2024, this has changed with the Directive (EU) 2024/2831 of the European Parliament and the Council. The European Parliament and Council adopted Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on October 23, 2024, with the goal of enhancing platform work conditions throughout the EU. Twenty days after publication, it came into effect, and within two years, Member States must incorporate

it into their national laws. Regardless of where they are based, all digital labour platforms that operate within the EU are subject to the directive.

Important topics covered by the directive include the classification of employment status, algorithmic management transparency, and the defence of platform workers' rights. It introduces a legal presumption of employment under certain conditions and shifts the burden of proof onto platforms in case of legal disputes. The directive covers the following areas: presumption of employment relationship, burden of proof on platforms, algorithmic management transparency, right to human oversight, protection of fundamental rights, enforcement and remedies (European Parliament and Council, 2024). Rainone and Aloisi (2024) present a comprehensive evaluation of this new EU directive. Firstly, they state that the directive introduces several concrete improvements, strengthening both EU-level and national labour law frameworks (Rainone and Aloisi, 2024). By granting algorithmic management and collective rights to genuinely self-employed platform workers, the Directive is stated to significantly expand the personal scope of application of labour rights. It also facilitates the reclassification of platform workers and introduces a comprehensive chapter on algorithmic management and data rights, most of which apply even to self-employed workers, along with relatively strong enforcement safeguards and a robust collective rights dimension (Rainone and Aloisi, 2024). Moreover, it implemented employment-specific measures to renew the data protection framework. According to Rainone and Aloisi (2024), the Directive's partial relaxation of the rigid employee/self-employed distinction is one of its most noteworthy innovations, especially when it comes to algorithmic management and collective rights. This change is in line with the 2022 Guidelines of the European Commission, which permit individual self-employed workers to participate in collective bargaining. However, this expansion should serve to reinforce and extend current employment protections rather than creating new ambiguous worker categories (Raione and Aloisi, 2024). In terms of missing parts, Raione and Aloisi highlight (2024) the need of the need for a stronger EU-wide umbrella framework that limits the discretion left to national governments, ensuring more consistent and effective protections for all platform workers. In addition to that, Raione and Aloisi (2024) draw attention to directives that fall short of providing complete coverage for self-employed platform workers, especially in areas like

collective representation and occupational safety and health, which could further fragment labour protections. In other words, the Directive is a significant step because it offers a unified regulatory framework that explicitly addresses the working conditions of platform workers throughout the EU for the first time, despite its limitations and the discretion granted to national governments. An important development in the regulation of platform labour is the creation of a presumption of employment and its focus on algorithmic transparency.

Since the issue of the employment status of workers is complex, scholars who research the issue have differing perspectives. According to Maxim et al. (2022), there are three main camps regarding the problem; some scholars argue that there is a need of adjustment in current legal regulations to meet modern conditions; others, like De Stefano and Aloisi (2018), maintain that in order to preserve the actual legal nature of labour relations, the framework of traditional regulation must be maintained; lastly, some scholars such as Graham et al. (2017) insist that the regulation of platforms has significantly lagged behind their rapid expansion, resulting in the widespread practice of unilaterally assigning employment status to digital platform workers as a *fait accompli*. Moreover, in response to this regulatory gap, some scholars have proposed new legal categories that reflect the hybrid characteristics of platform-based labour. Harris and Krueger (2015) propose a new legal category called "independent workers", who fall somewhere between independent contractors and regular employees. According to their new model, contractors are not considered employees because they do not end up financially dependent on a single employer, they do not have a permanent relationship with any employer, and they do not give up control over their working hours or the chance to make or lose money. Since the intermediary controls some aspects of the methods and means of work, including the cost of their services, and because they are essential to the intermediary's operations, independent workers are not considered independent contractors (Harris and Krueger, 2015).

Maxim et al. (2022) highlight that in the first attempt to legally define the status of a digital platform worker was made by the European Commission in 2016, which mentions that for a person to be classified as an employee, several conditions must be met: they must receive remuneration for their work rather than acting as a volunteer;

they must hold a subordinate position; and the employer must determine the working conditions, the remuneration, and the type of activity performed. On the other hand, in a few countries, there are one or more supplementary categories or subcategories of these statuses. For example, France has the "auto-entrepreneur" status, Austria has the "employee-like" status, Italy has the "quasi-subordinate worker" status, Belgium or Slovenia has the "student work" status, and Croatia has the "contract for services" status (Eurofound, 2018). The introduction of a third status for platform workers is a topic of continuous discussion in other nations. In the current situation, many platform workers are considered self-employed. In addition, Eurofound (2018) mention that although there are instances where platforms provide employment contracts to workers, such arrangements are not uniformly applied to all platform-associated labourers. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) recognised Uber drivers as "workers" entitled to certain statutory employment rights. This decision was upheld by the Court of Appeals, despite Uber's intention to bring the case before the Supreme Court. In contrast, in Italy, the Labour Tribunal of Turin dismissed a case filed by six Foodora couriers seeking employee status, citing the workers' autonomy in choosing their shifts and working hours (Eurofound, 2017).

De Stefano et al. (2021) mention that it is evident that the courts are crucial in differentiating between employees and self-employed workers when it comes to the framework and terms that determine employment status. They must apply nebulous legal standards to the current cases. Below, Table 2 shows the summary of platform work regulations across European Member States is based on data compiled in 2023 by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES, 2023):

Table 2. Regulation of Platform Work in Different Countries

Country	*Existing Regulations on Platform Work*	*Recent or Planned Regulations*
Armenia	No specific regulation; workers under Civil Code service contracts; not registered in the tax system.	No policy-level attention to platform work. No collective agreements. No court cases.

Table 2. (continued)

Austria	'Freier Dienstvertrag' status; collective agreement for bike workers since 2020.	Ongoing court case about the works council at Lieferando. Trade unions are active in legal support.
Belgium	Royal Decree 2017; Programme Law 2016: favourable tax regime.	Since January 2023, legal presumption of employment for platform workers. Online platforms are considered to be employers.
Bulgaria	Platform workers are not covered by labour law; amendments to the Road Transport Act in 2016.	CITUB proposed Labour Code amendments. No political debate on platform work.
Croatia	The 2018 Road Transport Act regulates taxi platforms.	New Labour Act provisions on platform work to take effect in January 2024.
Czechia	Digital platforms may be classified as employment agencies.	No major reforms; fragmented legal rulings on Uber. No collective organisation. Digital labour platforms involved in such activities are to be classified as employment agencies.
Denmark	Collective agreement with Hilfr.dk (2018); sectoral agreement signed by Just Eat (2021).	Labour law analysis underway on the presumption rule. Few court cases. Wage and working conditions are not subject to law in Denmark.
Estonia	The 2021 amendment to the Information Society Services Act enables platform oversight.	Bolt driver protest in 2019. Low organisation among workers.
Finland	Proposal to revise the Employment Contracts Act (2019–2023).	Legal cases (2020–2021) classify some couriers as employees. In 2023, the Employment Contracts Act was updated to clarify the distinction between employees and self-employed. In 2025, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled that Wolt couriers should be considered employees. A tripartite working group was established to implement the EU Directive by 2026.
France	2016 Finance Act & 2018 Tax Fraud Law: platforms must report data; vocational training rights (2016).	Multiple court rulings (e.g., Uber & Deliveroo reclassification). Public investigations are ongoing. A legally binding definition of online platforms exists, alongside a specific register and dedicated regulations applicable to such platforms. However, whether online platforms are to be considered employers remains subject to ongoing legal and political debate.
Georgia	Labour Code reform in 2020, but no mention of platform work.	The Labour Inspectorate ruled that platform couriers are employees.

Table 2. (continued)

Germany	The Competition Act and Network Enforcement Act include platform-related provisions.	The 2020 ruling recognised a crowdworker as an employee. No collective agreement. The Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) applies primarily to social media platforms, classifying them as telemedia service providers that operate profit-oriented platforms on the internet.
Greece	Labour Law 4808/2021 defines digital platforms and a protective framework.	The 2021 eFood strike led to contract upgrades for workers. Greek legislation also provides a legal definition for digital platforms, clarifying their role and obligations under labour law.
Italy	Legislative Decree 2015 (amended 2019) defines platform-mediated work.	Growing use of platform work; high court cases pending. Online platforms are considered to be employers, subject to obligations under Italian labour law.
Turkey	No specific regulation for platform work. Workers are classified as self-employed or informal.	Legal ambiguity continues. No collective bargaining or recognition.
Poland	No specific regulation for platform work.	The government has expressed interest in aligning national law with the EU Directive, but no concrete steps have been taken yet.
Portugal	Platform work is generally regulated under standard labour law.	Court rulings have classified some platform workers as employees; legislative developments are ongoing. A specific law regulates platform work, including a presumption of employment for individual platform workers.
Romania	No comprehensive regulation for platform work.	Tax reforms have included platform income reporting; the legal framework for employment status is unclear.
Slovakia	No platform-specific legal definition exists. Under the Income Tax Act (595/2003), digital platforms are defined.	Planned legislation may include definitions and worker protections, pending EU Directive implementation.
Slovenia	Initial classification and tax guidance for platform workers is available.	Further regulation is expected as part of the EU Directive alignment.
Spain	Riders Law (2021) classifies delivery workers as employees.	Ongoing legal challenges and adjustments in enforcement are observed.
Sweden	Standard employment law applies to platform workers by default.	Regulators are monitoring the platform economy closely; discussions on formal adaptation to the EU Directive are underway.

Source: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. (2023). Mapping platform economy: Country factsheets on online platforms and platform work. Brussels: FES Future of Work. Retrieved from https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bruessel/20444.pdf

In addition to that, court decisions provide further clarification on the employment status of platform workers, as reflected in Annex 10 of SWD(2021) 396 final (Table 3).

Table 3. Recent Court Decisions on the Employment Status of Platform Workers

Country	Platform	Court / Body	Year	Classification / Outcome
Belgium	Deliveroo	Labour Court	2020	Self-employed; court confirmed riders are not employees
France	Uber	Court of Cassation	2020	Employee; reclassification from self-employment
Germany	Crowdworker.de	Federal Labour Court	2020	Employee: key decision based on control
Netherlands	Deliveroo	Amsterdam District Court	2019	Employee, recognised as a worker
Spain	Glovo	Supreme Court	2020	Employee; platform contract overruled
UK	Uber	Supreme Court	2021	Worker; affirmed minimum wage and other rights

Source: European Commission. (2021). Commission Staff Working Document: Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Directive on improving working conditions in platform work (SWD(2021) 396 final). Brussels. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52021SC0396(01)

As can be seen above, much of the discussion of legal employment status revolves around delivery and transportation services. This may be due to the fact that, they are the most widespread and visible forms of platform work and services, but it may also stem from the different types of platforms' operations. Massi and Longo (2025) argue that these types of platforms provide offline or location-based services, which require workers to be physically present at a specific location to perform tasks, which often compels these platforms to comply with local legal and regulatory frameworks due to the territorial nature of the service. On the other hand, freelancers working with online platforms have the chance to perform their work from anywhere in the world, which is "not necessary given the delocalisation and virtualization of tasks and payments" (Massi and Longoi, 2024).

De Stefano et al. (2021) mention that platform operators unilaterally define the terms of engagement with both clients and workers, typically categorising workers as "self-employed" or "independent contractors" within these arrangements. On the other hand, De Stefano et al. (2021: p.15) state that some platforms describe users as employees:

> "Freelancer (if accepted for employment as described below) will become an employee of the Staffing Provider. The Staffing Provider will assign the Freelancer to work for the Client, and the Client will be responsible for supervising the Freelancer. When, and only if, a Freelancer has been accepted for employment by the Staffing Provider and assigned to Client, Freelancer becomes a "Payroll Employee" for purposes of this Agreement, but also remains a Freelancer under the Terms of Service".

Regardless of the description as workers or independent contractors, the important point is that these are just terms and conditions which is presented by the platform during the entry, rather than being contracts as bilateral agreements. Ceylan (2022) states that as the final stage in this historical process, contracts have evolved into terms and conditions, reflecting the continued effects of flexibilization and now shaping the relationship between the platform and the independent contractor. Moreover, regarding the terms and conditions, as mentioned in the Eurofound report (2018), Lomas and Dillet (2015) state that terms and conditions "may be brief and vague, which is a strategy that gives the term-setting party much space to manoeuvre, for example on what data it stores and what they are used for". Additionally, Eurofound (2018) mention that the platform, which establishes the terms of engagement, has a significant advantage in the power dynamic. This asymmetrical and not clear contractual structure prevents workers from establishing a clear legal relationship with the platform as equal trade partners, which in turn undermines their access to basic employment protections such as employment insurance, health benefits, and pension benefits.

Regardless of the ongoing debates, even though there have been minor improvements in some countries, the status of most platform workers cannot be classified as traditional employer-employee relationships. As a result, many workers are unable to obtain legal protection and the rights that come with it, such as unemployment

insurance (Eurofound, 2017). In the work of Eurofound (2018), all platform work interviewees stated that their primary activity gives them access to social security; however, many are unsure if their platform work entitles them to social protection. While this may be the case for some platform workers, it is not possible for a significant portion who view platform-based work as their main job and earn their livelihood from it. Massi and Longo (2024) state that platforms are often portrayed as tools that allow workers to flexibly supplement their existing jobs and generate additional income, thereby framing the worker-platform relationship as non-dependent and exempt from formal employment obligations. Nonetheless, a central debate in the literature revolves around whether platform work serves merely as a secondary income stream or constitutes a primary source of employment (Berg et al., 2019; Robles et al., 2023).

Pulignano et al. (2021) mention that while the terms “freelancer” and “self-employed” should not be used interchangeably, many freelancers do hold self-employed status in many countries and are therefore essentially operating their own microbusiness. Moreover, while there may be significant practical overlap, there is no legal middle ground between being employed and self-employed (ILO 2013; Williams and Lapeyre 2017). For instance, Munoz et al. (2022) state that in the United States, online platform workers are legally classified as independent contractors, which excludes them from essential employment benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement plans. This classification also denies them the right to unionise or access organisational support, contributing to heightened levels of insecurity and precarity in their working conditions. Also, some scholars define freelance media contributors as self-employed workers with whom media companies contract to do short-term assignments or piece work (Bibby, 2014: p.11–12; Cohen, 2016; Salamon, 2018a). On the other hand, there are some distinctions between freelancers and self-employed workers, although they do share many things in common. Main distinction is that while self-employed people may hire others, freelancers often work alone (Hancock et al., Shevcuk, 2017). Nevertheless, Shevcuk (2017) mentions that workers frequently move between these different employment statuses, including shifts into and out of self-employment. Fraser and Gold (2022) underline that there is also a difference between the self-employed who run small businesses and the self-employed without employees. In

addition to all these, with Florida (2002) including entrepreneurs in the creative class, this debate has also found its place in the literature. Pongratz and Voβ (2003) contend that these modifications have helped bring about a fundamental shift in the nature of work, which they define in terms of the "entreployee" or independent contractor (Bergvall-Kåreborn et al., 2013). Bergvall-Kåreborn et al. (2013) state that this idea explains how highly flexible forms of capitalism have led to a growing blurring of the lines between employer and employee as the former redefine their roles within the company and the labour market at large. Moreover, they define this as quasi-entrepreneurial, which promotes employee responsibility as they are tasked with transforming their labour power into concrete performance (Bergvall-Kåreborn et al., 2013). In other words, although there is no definitive decision on how to define the status of freelance workers, we can say that, however they are classified, they are precarious, short-term, unstable, do not have certain rights granted to workers in standard forms of employment, and bear the responsibilities of both employer and employee on their own.

2.3.2. Freelancing on Platforms

As highlighted before, freelancing in creative industries is not specific to platforms. Creative workers were taking on freelance work in various forms even before the spread of platforms. However, although there are similarities between the two different freelancing methods, the platforms have changed certain aspects. Although it is said that the working conditions of freelancers who work through online platforms and those who do not are similar, the involvement of platforms changes, deepens, or complicates some conditions. In this respect, three key dynamics stand out: platforms' outsourcing of skilled work in the global division of labour, their role in establishing new mechanisms of control, and their capacity to generate novel types of professional networking.

First of all, freelance work is already creating a new global division of labour, and platforms have made it much more structured and profound. Demirel et al. (2020) state that global divisions of labour are further developed by the online labour platforms by eliminating institutional market frictions. Millions of people worldwide

use the biggest online marketplaces, such as Upwork.com and Freelancer.com. Soriano (2019) highlights that clients or buyers of work, primarily found in high-income countries, post jobs on these platforms, while potential workers, primarily from low-income countries, bid on them directly. Therefore, as mentioned in the Demirel et al., 2020 mention that there is polarisation between the top and bottom of the digital labour platforms because freelancers from the South typically hold lower positions and command lower rates in platform hierarchies (Demirel et al., 2020).

The second point is the algorithm of platforms. Demirel et al.(2020) mention that also the structures designed into the digital labour platforms also differentiate the experiences of workers in the online market. For example, positive and numerous ratings enhance freelancers' visibility and increase their chances of securing better-paid tasks (Strebkov et al., 2019). Conversely, negative feedback operates as a mechanism of discipline, potentially resulting in reduced future employment prospects (Schörpf et al., 2017). In other words, the platforms' own algorithms directly affect the jobs that freelancers working on the platform will receive. Algorithms play a central role in shaping visibility on online labour platforms by determining which worker profiles are shown to clients during searches (Wood et al., 2019). Beyond this basic function, they also influence aspects of worker profiles that are beyond individual control. For instance, Hancock and Tyler (2025) mention badges like "Rising Star" can increase a profile's prominence, yet workers have no agency over when or why such labels are assigned. In doing so, the algorithm alters the worker's digital identity without consent. Moreover, real-time updates of ratings and performance metrics further reinforce this algorithmic control over how workers are represented and perceived, embedding such mechanisms deeply into platform-based labour systems (Hancock and Tyler, 2025). In addition, Schörpf et al. (2017) states that in order to secure positive reviews, creative workers often adapt to client-specific demands by aligning their personal lives with the rhythms of platform labour, which entails unpaid tasks, constant availability, and extended working hours under various forms of control and managerial pressure.

Networking is a common theme for all freelancers, the idea that securing the next job hinges on building personal relationships, and this is becoming increasingly important

in light of the control mechanisms imposed by platforms. To overcome the control mechanism of platforms, freelancers need personal connections more than before. Alacovska (2024) explains that from a relational work perspective, by arguing that gig work requires the management of "good relational matches" because it is ingrained in the relational infrastructures between clients and employees. Moreover, Alacovska (2024) mentions that relational work, networking, allows creative workers to mitigate the effects of precarity and the commodification of their labour, which emerge in environments where platform owners prioritize their own business interests by reducing client-worker interactions to algorithmically-managed, anonymous, impersonal, short-term, and fragmented exchanges, treating labour as a uniform and interchangeable commodity that can be bought or discarded at will. Munoz et al. (2022) refer to it as “strategic relational work”, which freelance workers perform to cultivate close client relationships and gain advantageous positions within relational infrastructures, often using digital platforms as a primary medium for these interactions. Gandini (2016) states that that while networking is crucial and often beneficial for securing employment, it can also reinforce exclusionary dynamics by privileging those with greater social capital, thereby marginalising others. On the other hand, having to secure the next job through personal relationships can be an important source of pressure for workers. Peticca-Harris (2015) mention this causes a shift in the organisation’s expectations of loyalty and accountability toward individual accountability for one’s own career and job security. It is the responsibility of the worker to ensure that the work is produced or maintained. Consequently, a significant investment of time and effort is required. Moreover, Peticca-Harris (2015) states that according to Neff (2012), growing job insecurity in project-based creative and knowledge sectors drives workers to make venture labour investments, committing their own time, skills, and personal resources, which leads them to adopt entrepreneurial behaviours despite remaining dependent wage earners. Salamon (2019) also mentions that freelance workers see their labour as “investment” with a “future payoff”; however, this may turn to self-exploitation, which is an outcome of venture capital or “hope labour” (Kuehn and Corrigan, 2013). This goes beyond just maintaining good personal relationships, but also leads to freelancers taking on unpaid work in order to secure their next job. Moreover, in a situation where human relations are so important, the human interaction of freelancers working online is very limited.

Demirel et al. (2020) mention that although online platforms often hinder workers from forming mutual connections, fostering horizontal solidarity, or developing a collective identity, some still manage to build informal local subcontracting networks or use social media to create online communities for collective organisation. Besides, many freelancers still have to use various online platforms for networking and self-branding.

In conclusion, the literature on digital labour demonstrates a gradual shift from an initial focus on unpaid cultural production, particularly social media use, towards an expanded understanding of diverse paid and unpaid forms of work that are shaped by digital technologies. While the first and second waves of research largely concentrated on crowd work and low-skilled gig work, recent contributions have increasingly turned attention to the implications of digital platforms for skilled labour. In this enlarged framework, skilled digital work becomes a separate area of study, not only because it calls for specialized training, credentials, and experience, but also because platforms play a significant role in its organization and standing.

Debates around the employment status of digital skilled workers remain central, particularly concerning the precarious boundaries between employment, freelancing, and self-employment. As the literature and regulatory developments illustrate, the ambiguity of legal classification continues to be one of the most pressing challenges of platform work. Despite recent attempts at consolidation, it remains difficult to generalise the employment status of platform workers. While a considerable share is classified as self-employed, this categorisation has fuelled ongoing debates in the literature.

Building on this, three key dynamics can be highlighted regarding the ways platforms transform skilled labour: first, they restructure the global division of labour by mediating skilled freelance work across borders; second, they introduce novel control mechanisms through algorithms and rating systems, which govern visibility, access to tasks, and ultimately shape working conditions; and third, they reshape the relational dimension of freelance work, compelling workers to engage in intensified networking

and relational labour, which both mitigates precarity and simultaneously generates new pressures of self-exploitation.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT: TURKEY

As discussed in detail in the empirical findings section, one of the most important reasons for this transition is the driving factors of the traditional neoliberal labour regime in Turkey. For this reason, the first section provides a brief historical background of the neoliberal labour regime that has been deeply entrenched in Turkey since the 1980s. In addition, freelance work in Turkey is examined in the second section in order to understand the employment status debate in the Turkish context. The third section deals with platforms in Turkey. Platforms in Turkey are growing rapidly, similar to developments around the world. The situation of platforms in Turkey is also examined in this section. Finally, the situation of architects in Turkey is examined. The aim is to provide a brief overview based on studies conducted on the current state of architectural education and the working conditions of architects. This section aims to provide basic information on these four topics.

3.1. Labour Regime in Turkey since 1980

As in many countries, the spread of non-standard forms of employment and digital labour platforms in Turkey cannot be considered independently of macroeconomic changes. As Uysal (2024) mention, platform-based employment in Turkey developed within a labour market shaped by 40 years of neoliberal policy influence. Since the 1980s, neoliberal policies in Turkey have exerted a direct influence on labour policies, as they have on other aspects of society. Following the 1980 coup d'état, Turkey experienced a policy change from import substitution industrialisation to export-oriented policies. The state pursued deregulation in order to integrate with the global economy, which made way for a flexible, precarious, and unstable labour

regime. 24 January Stabilisation programme and the 1980 coup have dramatically changed the environment of Turkey. The words of Halit Narin, then head of TİSK, clearly demonstrate the change coming in labour relations with the 1980 coup: “for years on end the workers laughed and the employers cried, now the time has come for the employers to laugh”. Bedirhanoğlu and Yalman (2010) mention that the 1980 coup defined the neoliberal hegemony in two keyways: first, it involved a fundamental shift in the balance of class forces within society, which the state was instrumental in creating, and second, it involved an ongoing process of restructuring regarding the state's role in the economy. Aziz Çelik (2015) highlights that the coup’s most enduring legacy appears to be its profound impact on collective labour relations, sustained not only by the military’s preferences but also by the economic interests of dominant Turkish business groups.

During the 1980s, Turkey also experienced the organisational disciplining of labour. With the 1980 couo, all trade union activities were banned. Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DISK) leaders were arrested and put on trial. The legal framework governing union organising was restructured in 1983, with the enactment of the Trade Unions Act no. 2821 and the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Strike and Lockout Act no 2822, which severely restricted the freedom to organise. Law 2364 suspended the rights to strike and to collective bargaining. Moreover, the political authorities were granted the ability to delay authorised strikes on grounds of "national security," a loosely defined concept that encompassed national economic interests, including the preservation of export revenues. Additionally, “threshold requirement” is important. Through this collective bargaining rights of a union are made conditional upon its ability to organise at least 10 per cent of all workers in the relevant sector and 50 per cent of those in any given enterprise. In 2001, while public sector employees were allowed to unionise by a legal change, strike activity by these unions was still legally prohibited.

Another pretty significant term of Turkey is the era of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in power in modern Turkey for the longest uninterrupted period of time. According to Çelik (2015) authoritarian labour regime was established in Turkey with the Constitution of 1982, which was completed during the AKP years

by institutionalising the practices of the 1980s in the early years of the twenty-first century. Bağımsız Sosyal Bilimciler (2015) points to two important pillars of labour policy in Turkey in the 2000s: precariousness and commodification. Çelik (2015) states that the AKP's programme documents underline key objectives such as promoting labour market flexibility, strengthening the market economy, and constructing a society organised around market-oriented principles. The labour law, which was instituted during the AKP period, reflects the clear implications of the AKP's programme. Turkey's third labour law, introduced in 2003, marked a significant departure from the Fordist-oriented framework that had shaped previous legislation. Rather than merely updating existing provisions, this law embodied a new regulatory paradigm aligned with the neoliberal transformations that had gained momentum globally since the mid-1970s. As noted by Kalleberg (2000), the international shift toward labour market flexibilization significantly influenced Turkey's legislative direction. The 2003 Labour Law not only incorporate neoliberal principles into the country's legal structure but also fundamentally altered the nature of labour-capital relations. Özdemir and Yücesan-Özdemir (2011) argue that this law efficiency lenses. Within this framework, "flexibility" emerged as a central concept, legitimising various non-standard employment arrangements including temporary, part-time, on-call, subcontracted, and compensatory forms of work. Çelik (2003) analyses this as the concept of labour law being tried to be turned upside down and transformed into business law. In addition, Özdemir and Yücesan-Özdemir (2011) argue that contemporarily, ensuring the protection of labourers is seen as linked with the protection of the existence of the enterprise. In addition, Çelik (2015) highlights another way the government has promoted flexibility is by encouraging the use of outsourcing practices, particularly through sub-employers and subcontracted labour. Moreover, Bozkurt-Güngen (2018) adds that a further controversial aspect of the post-2001 labour reform agenda has been the formal recognition of temporary agency work, which has expanded the already widespread use of subcontracted labour under AKP governance across both public and private sectors. Uysal (2024) summarises how the adoption of new labour legislation permitting unstable and precarious working conditions—alongside insufficient workplace inspections—has contributed to the widespread expansion of non-standard employment forms such as subcontracting, part-time, temporary, seasonal, and flexible work arrangements. In addition, Bağımsız

Sosyal Bilimciler (2015) mention that the AKP has continued to make constant additions to the labour law it drafted. They state that these numerous interventions are based on reasons such as responding to the demands of big capital and addressing current events, and the ways in which labour is commercialised are increasing.

Since coming to power, the AKP has continued to pursue pro-capital, labour policies centred on flexibility. Çelik (2015) mention in line with its labour market reform agenda, Turkey's 2012 Programme of Government explicitly stated that "the strictness in the labour market shall be eliminated and flexible working conditions shall be facilitated". To support this objective, the programme identified a range of practices, including working at home, telecommuting, work sharing, and flexible time, as key strategies to implement. Moreover, Bozkurt-Günen (2018) highlights that AKP governments implemented an extensive subsidy scheme designed to stimulate employment by lowering the non-wage labour expenses faced by employers. In parallel with this, various non-standard types of employment that reduce the employer's costs have also begun to be promoted and become more widespread. Overall, it would not be wrong to say that since the AKP came to power, it has consistently pursued policies aimed at making the labour regime more flexible. As the employers' union has often pointed out, the Turkish labour market, which is "very rigid," has been subject to policies aimed at making it more flexible through the cooperation of the AKP and major capital holders. For this reason, it is not surprising that non-standard forms of employment and informal employment are on the rise in Turkey.

3.2. Freelancing in Turkey

Similar to global trends, freelancing is one of the most common non-standard forms of employment in Turkey. Again, as mentioned earlier in the literature, when we look at the fields of work of freelancers, we see that the dominant occupational groups are creative jobs. However, İlyas (2022) mentions unlike some countries, in Turkey, the question of who can be defined as a freelancer or the characteristics of this form of employment is still a matter of debate. Although the Labour Law paves the way for all these various non-traditional forms of work, it refrains from defining them precisely.

While the conditions of freelance work may remain consistent across different geographical locations, their legal status is often contingent on the specific labour laws of the respective countries. Consequently, the fundamental question of status change becomes a significant concern in geographical contexts.

İlyas states (2022) that there are various types of contracts available for freelance workers under labour law, but in most cases, no written contract is drawn up. In the work of Karataban and Ekiz-Gökmen (2022), a majority of the interviewees reported that they entered into business agreements through verbal commitments. Although the Labour Law defines working arrangements such as part-time, on-call and remote work, freelancers do not fully fall within this scope. In her 2019 speech, lawyer Aydan Düzgünkaya mentions that many freelancers are actually covered by the 'home service contract' that came into effect in 2012 (İlyas, 2022). Freelance workers covered by the home service contract also acquire worker status, thereby becoming eligible for rights such as payment guarantees, social security, and severance pay under the Labour Law.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, many freelancers work solely based on verbal agreements (i.e., informally), which means that these contracts are not enforced and cannot even be requested by the freelancer. In addition, Karataban and Ekiz-Gökmen (2022) highlight that in Turkey, freelancers are not entitled to health insurance or social security benefits associated with their employment. In Turkey, freelancers can access social security through two main routes. The first applies to those who run their own businesses or are registered taxpayers; they are covered under Article 4/B of Law No. 5510. By paying monthly premiums, they can receive healthcare and retirement benefits. However, this route is less advantageous due to low pension payments and longer required contribution periods compared to standard employees (4/A). The second option is voluntary insurance, available to those who are not formally registered as taxpayers, business partners, or tradespeople. In this case, freelancers can choose their own premium level and still gain access to healthcare and pension rights through regular contributions (Karataban and Ekiz-Gökmen, 2022).

Apart from their legal status, the working conditions of many freelancers in Turkey are similar to those in other parts of the world. One of the fundamental issues is that freelance workers are unable to discuss their problems and solutions because they are

not together. As an alternative to this, the organisation ‘Ofissizler (office-less)’ established in Turkey in 2015 is a good example of getting organised.

The creators describe the organisation and themselves as follows (2018): “Loneliness is one of the biggest problems for freelancers. This situation can be socially debilitating as well as professionally challenging. It can slow down the professional development of those who are just starting out in their careers or make it difficult to find work from different sources. Ofissizler was founded with the hope of overcoming this kind of loneliness.”

The main questions that “Ofissizler” brought up are as follows: What are working conditions like? What are the needs of freelancers? What do they need to do to work in a more secure manner? They claim that they do not know their rights, most of them work without contracts, and they consider themselves lucky when they get paid at the end of the job. Therefore, they create “Ofissizler” to seek answers to these questions, they communicate with each other, raise awareness among each other, and seek solutions to their problems when necessary.

3.3. Platforms in Turkey

As in the rest of the world, platforms have risen sharply in Turkey and continue to grow in number. The most widely used platforms in Turkey are e-commerce and delivery platforms. Turkey has the highest compound annual growth rate among the top 20 global e-commerce markets through 2029, per recent industry calculations (Statista, 2024). Ceylan (2022) mentions that e-commerce was first introduced in Turkey in 1997 when the Supreme Council for Science and Technology made the decision to create a network for electronic commerce. According to the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye (2024), in 2023, 559,412 businesses across Turkey were engaged in e-commerce. Moreover, the e-commerce volume increased by 115.15% compared to the previous year, reaching 1.85 trillion TL (77.89 billion US dollars) in 2023, and the number of transactions increased by 22.25%, reaching 5.87 billion. Additionally, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of e-commerce volume between 2019 and 2023 was 92.17% (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of

Türkiye, 2024). According to Yeşilbağ (2022), Trendyol held an incomparable market dominance as of the end of 2020, with a staggering 50.7% of net sales. Moreover, Uysal (2024) states that an overview of Turkey's platforms is provided by a recent conceptual analysis, which distinguishes between for-profit and non-profit platforms and states that 106 national or international platforms are currently active in the nation. In addition to the e-commerce platforms, in Turley, delivery work platforms are pretty prevalent. At the forefront of the industry are the largest local delivery platforms, like Kapgel Getir, YemekSepeti. Uysal (2024) mentions that in 2016, Kapgel had 50,000 users and made 40,000 deliveries, while in 2017, Getir delivered 3 million orders to 560,000 users in Istanbul. Moreover, as Uysal (2024) states that platforms offering home-related services have recently gained significant popularity in Turkey, with Armut standing out as a leading platform that covers diverse categories such as cleaning, repairs, relocation, furniture assembly, tutoring, healthcare, and wedding services. Below is a categorisation of the most prominent digital platforms currently active in Turkey, grouped by their main functions and service areas:

Table 4. Leading Platforms in Turkey

Category	**Leading Platforms in Turkey**
Labour and Freelance Platforms	Bionluk, Armut, Upwork, Freelancer.com, Fiverr, Toptal, SadeceOn, UzmanKirala, R10.net, Toptalent.co, KolayİK Freelance
E-Commerce and Marketplace Platforms	Trendyol, Hepsiburada, n11, Amazon Türkiye, ÇiçekSepeti, PttAVM, Morhipo, Modanisa, Shopier, Etsy
Food and Grocery Delivery Platforms	Yemeksepeti, GetirYemek / GetirMarket, Trendyol Go / Trendyol Yemek, HepsiExpress, Migros Sanal Market / Migros Hemen, İsteGelsin, Banabi, A101 Kapıda, Şok Market, Carrefour Online
Mobility and Transportation Platforms	BiTaksi, Martı, BinBin, TaksiyleGel, Moov, TikTak, Uber
Accommodation and Tourism Platforms	Airbnb, Booking.com, Enuygun.com, Tatilbudur, Etstur, Jolly Tur, Setur, Otelz, Neredekal.com

Table 4. (continued)

Media, Content and Entertainment Platforms	BluTV, Exxen, PuhuTV, Netflix, Disney+, Prime Video, GAİN, Spotify, Fizy, Deezer
Education and Online Learning Platforms	Udemy, Kariyer.net Akademi, BTK Akademi, Coursera, edX, LinkedIn Learning, Geleceği Yazanlar
Listing and Brokerage Platforms	Sahibinden.com, Letgo, Zingat, Emlakjet, Hürriyet Emlak, Araba.com, VavaCars, Otoshops, Carvak
Healt h and Care Platforms	E-Nabız, DoktorTakvimi, Uzmantv, Medihis, EvdekiBakıcım, TibbiMarket, OnlineEczane
Finance and Fintech Platforms	Papara, Paycell, Tosla, Moneye, Figopara, KrediKayıtBürosu, Investing.com TR, Paribu, BtcTurk

On the other hand, Aydoğan (2024) states that the two most popular job categories and tasks among Turkish online platform workers are writing-translation and creative work. According to research by Çiğdem (2022) that almost all of her participants use digital labour platforms to find gig jobs, Bionluk.com is the most preferred platform among digital labour platforms. Besides Bionluk.com, there are many platforms for freelancers such as SadeceOn, Armut, Prolancer, and UzmanKirala. In addition to local platforms, globally popular platforms such as Upwork, Freelancer.com, and Fiverr are also active in Turkey.

Bionluk, which is the most used one amongst local platforms, was established by Utku Subakan and Onur Şahin in 2014. On Bionluk, users primarily take on the roles of service providers (freelancers) and service recipients (employers). On the platform, freelancers post service packages related to their areas of expertise, and employers can look for and acquire services that meet their needs. During this process, Bionluk also manages the payment flow; once the job is finished, payment is released. In addition to collecting a set service fee from employers, the platform charges a commission of about 20% on every transaction. Moreover, employers can comment on the freelancers they hire and give them ratings. The platform highlights freelancers with the most comments and high ratings. According to Similarweb (2025), Bionluk.com's total

monthly visits as of April 2025 are approximately 488,500. According to Bionluk[2] (2025), the most common areas for freelance work are voice-over, translation, design, and software.

Arslantaş (2024) mentions as with many flexible working models, platform work involves uncertainty and insecurity, with a large part of the job risk being transferred to workers; potential costs such as unemployment insurance and compensation are avoided, and there is no minimum wage policy. Similar to freelance workers, platform workers in Turkey are not protected by the law, and the minimal protections acknowledged for specific types of platform workers are not applied. Uysal (2024) mentions that although platform workers in Turkey are not yet covered by a specific legal framework and are excluded from the protections of Labour Law No. 4857, certain legislative changes have indirectly impacted some categories of such workers. Notably, platforms that mediate domestic services—like cleaning, caregiving, cooking, and gardening—have seen limited regulation through the 2014 amendments to Law No. 5510, which extended social security coverage to domestic workers. According to Boyacı (2020), the biggest legal issue that may arise from the working model for workers on digital labour platforms is the uncertainty surrounding the legal status of workers in this model and the legal nature of the tripartite relationship. Arslantaş (2024) states that the acceptance that "platform workers are not workers but independent contractors" results in the externalisation of most of the social protection costs to platform workers. Kaya (2021) highlights that classifying workers as self-employed, independent contractors or freelancers, on the one hand, exempts employers from social security payments and various taxes; on the other hand, it prevents workers from accessing certain rights that come with being an employee, such as minimum wage, weekend holidays, annual leave or sick leave, health insurance, unemployment benefits and pensions. Moreover, Kaya (2021) adds that, on the other hand, workers are unable to receive wages for idle time spent waiting for orders while on the job due to this misclassification. Workers' collective bargaining rights are also being violated by this classification. Companies can terminate their agreements with "independent contractors" at any time. Arslantaş (2024) mentions that even if it does not exist in

[2] See *Bionluk* https://bionluk.com (Accessed: 22 August 2025)

Turkey, some European countries and Canada have created intermediate categories between employees and self-employed workers. Although there is no current discussion about including platform workers in the labour law, this is mentioned as a target in the Turkish Presidency's 2025-2027 medium-term programme in 2024. According to the report, legislative reforms will be implemented in line with developments in new-generation working models such as remote, part-time and temporary work and platform work, taking into account the needs of the business world and work-life balance. The higlight of "needs of the business world" in this goal questions that even if regulations are implemented, raises doubts as to whether they will be in favour of workers.

As mentioned above, the number of platform workers is increasing constantly. Especially after COVID-19, with the increasing prevalence of all platforms and the growing popularity of remote working, this growth has accelerated significantly. In addition, Aydoğan (2024) states that according to the study by Tuna and Karadaş (2023), there is a positive correlation between Turkey's unemployment rate and the participation of digital labour platforms. One reason for the growing participation may be the constant marketing of the life promised through the work on the platforms. This is particularly prevalent for freelancing platforms, especially since freelancing is praised as a way of working. Freelancing platforms they do not only match freelancers and employees, but also market freelancing as a lifestyle. The platform defines freelancing as "the future model of work". Moreover, on their website, they explain why everyone should be a freelancer as follows:

> "We are not willing to lock ourselves in a small cabin resembling a cell and spend our lives minute by minute, hour by hour, reliving the same day over and over again. Instead, we want the freedom to decide when, where, and with whom we will do the work we want and love. The way to achieve this is to preserve our freedom.

This is precisely where the concept of 'freelancing' comes into play. The only concept that can bring together effort, passion for work, discipline, and freedom under one roof: the Freelancer Work System. Freelance Work. Independent Labour. Free Labour. We can say that we are pioneers of a group that holds the freedom to decide with whom, when, where, how, through which channels, and for what compensation to

work.” İlyas (2022: p.41) states that in neoliberal discourse, freelance workers are imagined as responsible for their working conditions and dominant over them. Neoliberal rhetoric, such as the above claims, suggests that freelancing or these new forms of work will bring emancipation. However, as İlyas (2022: p.41) highlights that this liberty is not of the kind that will enable us to breathe freely; it is necessary to remain constantly on guard to create the conditions that will make it possible. All these statements and the freelancing work model actually place all the responsibility and the burden of being ‘employable’ on the worker, putting them under a much heavier load. By placing workers in a completely precarious situation, they are forced to keep themselves safe in this precarious environment. İlyas (2022: p.50) mentions that in neoliberal freelance working conditions, freedom is both a prerequisite and a desirable object promised in exchange for the guarantees that were expected to be waived in the period following the 2008 crisis.

3.4. Architects in Turkey

Architects in Turkey are one of the professional groups that have been greatly affected by neoliberal transformation. Their university education is quite challenging and detailed, but unfortunately, they do not have good working conditions. According to the latest data from TMMOB, there are 86,417 architects registered with the association in Turkey. Meanwhile, according to data from YÖK, 131 departments at 119 universities in Turkey offer bachelor's degrees in architecture. According to TMMOB data from 2016, the distribution of 47,862 working architects, according to their employment type, is shown in Table 5 (Onur, 2018):

Table 5. Distribution of Employment Types Among Architects Registered with the Chamber of Architects (TMMOB, 2016).

Employment Type	**Number of Members**
Office Registration Certificate – Self-employed	9,268
Building Inspection	3,264
Site Supervisor (without office certificate)	3,022
Other	32,308

Architecture has been directly affected by the neoliberal change in Turkey starting from the 2000s. According to Işıkoğlu (2018), after the 2000s, Turkey's economic policy took a different direction with the AKP, and cities underwent a different kind of transformation. The AKP's view of the construction sector as one of its main sources of income and its policy of transforming the country through megaprojects have also affected the architects and their working practices. Yılmaz (2024) states that the GDP contribution of the construction industry increased to 18% between 2000 and 2018, while the GDP contribution of manufacturing and agriculture declined. Sert et al. (2021) explain how architect-workers were affected by the transformation:

> "new series of interdependent factors substantially changing working conditions of young architect-workers began in the 2000s in Turkey: increase in short-term and project-based employment (similar to seasonal workers), proliferation of government subsidized iconic mega-scale urban projects, market-driven degradation in ethical professional standards, disbelief and dissatisfaction underlying the ethical positioning of projects, lengthening of working hours, aggressive project schedules, and declining living standards and conditions of architects (Sert et al., 2021)"

Architectural education has also been affected by all these developments. In addition to increasing the quota in existing architecture departments, architecture departments have begun to be opened at every university. Sert et al. (2021) mention that the increasing number of architecture departments and student admissions, driven by the growth of the construction sector, has intensified the multifaceted crisis within architectural education and the profession, particularly since 2009. After the 2000s, becoming non-standard employment types widespread has impacted the construction sector and architects. Specifically, subcontracting, which is guaranteed by law through the distinction between "main employer and subcontractor" in Article 2 of the Labour Law No. 4857 of 2003, is very important for the construction sector. Işıkoğlu (2018) mentions that with this assurance, subcontracting agreements have become widespread, leading to an increase in small businesses. Another change in architecture is the decline in the skills required for the architectural profession due to changes in production relations during the neoliberal period. Yılmaz (2024), in his thesis, refers to Onur (2018), who highlights that the increase in architectural production in private firms has transformed the role of the architect from an independent professional to a salaried employee hired by another architect, a shift that directly impacts the quality

of architectural work. In other words, the position and employment status of an architect directly influenced the work they produce.

In 2011, an architect, Sedat Bayrak, opened a website named Mimarazzi to talk about the problems of young architects in Turkey. Sedat (2015) explain Mimarazzi as follows:

> "In the architecture sector, what are the working conditions that are never discussed in public forums but are complained about by employees when they meet face to face? What are the working conditions that lead people to constantly complain and feel unhappy in a profession they have chosen with such enthusiasm? To highlight a few of the most fundamental issues: low starting salaries, salaries not being paid on time, insurance contributions based on the minimum wage, excessive working hours, unpaid overtime, part of the salary (the portion corresponding to the minimum wage) being deposited into the bank while the remainder is paid in cash, no meal or transportation allowances for interns, and ethical issues within the office."

Aykaç and Sert (2018) highlight that the site had the potential to give a voice to silenced architect-workers, to show solidarity, and to open up discussion on the issue of labour exploitation. However, they mention that after only two months, the website was shut down following pressure from the boss architects and a lawsuit filed by a lawyer representing an architecture firm (Aykaç and Sert, 2018).

To sum up, the construction sector, driven by mega-projects, general precariousness in the Turkish labour market, increasing number of young architects, negatively affects to working conditions of architects. Moreover, similar to the rest of the world, architects in Turkey may also experience identity confusion due to the loaded education they receive and the creative work they produce. Aykaç and Sert (2018) state that architect-workers can adopt and use the discourse of 'creative labour' to defend their own labour, but this discourse also confronts them as a discourse that generally makes their living and working conditions more difficult and exposes them to greater labour exploitation. They suggest that rather than defending their labour with a discourse of 'creativity' against architect-employers or subcontracting firms that seek to commodify and sell their labour, the architect-worker could undermine the

discourse of creative labour by understanding that their labour is worker labour, thereby creating a basis for criticism and struggle (Aykaç and Sert, 201

CHAPTER 4

CASE SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION

This chapter of the thesis presents the case selection and data collection through the field study to collect qualitative empirical data for the analysis to be presented in Chapter 5. This chapter is divided into three. The first part elaborates the reasons to select young architects as the case for this thesis and presents the research sample, more specifically, the interviewees of the field work. The second part presents the platforms on which the interviewees work with. The third part explains how the data analysis is conducted.

4.1. Why Young Architects?

As mentioned earlier, the main focus of platform work in the literature remains on relatively low-skilled jobs. Considering this as a gap in the literature, a more skilled professional group was chosen for the field research of this thesis. When we examine skilled workers who work through platforms, we find various professional groups, including designers, software developers, translators, journalists, and content creators. However, what sets architects apart from these other professions is that working digitally is a relatively new practice for architects. Unlike the other professions listed, architects have a long-established traditional work regime, which was a striking point here. In other words, architects appear to be a suitable professional group for observing a transition from the traditional working methods towards the platform work and the similarities and changes that this transition brought about. Additionally, many of the listed professions have a creative component. However, architecture work stands out from the rest as a more hybrid type of profession due to its creative and technical aspects. At the same time, I had some personal reasons to choose the architects as in the case in this study. One of my

closest friends studied architecture at one of the best universities in Turkey and is now compelled to work on a platform without receiving the compensation, rights, and professional satisfaction she deserves, which also influenced my decision for case selection in this study.

In this context, the scope of this thesis is to analyze the transition of young architects in Turkey from traditional work practices to platform-based work. To collect empirical evidence, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 young architects. When searching for the architects to interview, I started by asking architects whom I know or who are easily reachable to me. Later, in line with the snowball sampling method, I asked the architects I interviewed to direct me to other architects they knew. However, in the end, I was unable to reach a sufficient number and diversity of interviewees. For this reason, I opened accounts on the platforms that I observed to be most popular among young architects and sent messages to architects who were accepting work through those platforms to convey my request. Moreover, I announced my request for participants on various social media platforms and reached a few more participants, reaching up to 21 interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted using a set of questions shaped in line with my research question and the literature review. The interviews were conducted online or in person, depending on the participants' availability and the cities they lived in. The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 to 80 minutes. The fieldwork was completed in June 2025. When contacting my interviewees, I required that they all have a degree in architecture. At the same time, I tried to diversify their backgrounds as much as possible. Nevertheless, since I am a METU student and staff member, most of my interviewees were participants with educational backgrounds from the universities in Ankara and ODTÜ. In addition, I paid attention to gender diversity. Moreover, as mentioned above, transitioning to platforms is a relatively new phenomenon, and young people are the ones who feel the effects of working on platforms most deeply, so I received the most response to my research from young architects. The youngest of my interviewees was 25 years old, while the oldest was 33. For this reason, the experiences in this thesis are limited to those of young architects.

My primary goal before starting the fieldwork was to gain a detailed understanding of the experiences and working practices of architects working in different ways and to

offer a comparative perspective. Before starting the interviews, I assumed that there were three main types of working arrangements: architects employed by architecture firms, freelance architects not using platforms, and architects working through platforms. In this regard, I thought it would be sufficient to interview an equal number of architects from each group. However, when I started looking for participants for my interviews, the first thing I noticed was that the working modes were not as strictly separated as I had thought, and that many architects had already experienced all three types of working. For this reason, the first finding of the field was that many young architects in Turkey work in different modes simultaneously through multiple forms. For example, when I said I wanted to talk to freelance architects, I came across many architects who currently work in an office but have taken on freelance work in the past, who work both in an office and as freelancers, or who work both through a platform and as freelancers through their network of contacts. In other words, it was quite rare to see a young architect working in a single form of architecture practice, but it can be said that most of them worked in hybrid forms.

Table 6. Participant Information Table

Participant Code	**Age**	**Gender**	**University of Graduation**	**Current Working Form**	**Previous Work Experience**
I.1	31	Male	METU	Freelance (online platforms)	Employee of an Architecture Office
I.2	28	Male	METU	Freelance	Employee of an Architecture Office
I.3	28	Male	METU	Freelance (online platforms) and an Employee of an architecture office	
I.4	26	Male	METU	Employee of an Architecture Office	Freelance
I.5	25	Female	Bursa Technical University	Freelance (online platforms) and an Employee of an architecture office	
I.6	25	Female	METU	Freelance (online platforms)	

Table 6. (continued)

I.7	33	Female	Karadeniz Teknik	Freelance (online platforms) and an Employee of an architecture office	
I.8	29	Male	METU	Freelance (online platforms)	
I.9	29	Male	Balıkesir University	Freelance (online platforms) and an Employee of an architecture office	
I.10	27	Male	Fırat University	Freelance (online platforms)	
I.11	28	Female	METU	Freelance (online platforms) and an Employee of an architecture office	
I.12	29	Female	METU	Employee of an architecture office	
I.13	26	Female	METU	Freelance and Employee of an architecture office	
I.14	30	Male	METU	Freelance (online platforms)	
I.15	25	Female	METU	Freelance (online platforms)	
I.16	29	Male	Tekirdağ University	Freelance (online platforms)	Employee of an architecture office
I.17	27	Female	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Freelance and Employee of an architecture office	
I.18	26	Female	ITU	Freelance (online platforms)	
I.19	27	Female	Sakarya University	Freelance (online platforms)	
I.20	29	Female	METU	Freelance	Employee of an architecture office
I.21	25	Female	Ted University	Freelance (online platforms)	Employee of an architecture office

As shown in Table 6 above, young architects' working modes vary considerably. In addition, I decided to prioritize the experiences of architects working as freelancers in the field. The reason for this is that there are already studies that examine the traditional working practices of architects in Turkey (Aykaç and Sert, 2018; Sert et al., 2021; Toprak, 2022; Yılmaz, 2024). However, I could not find any studies in Turkey or even

worldwide that are based on the digital working practices of architects. For this reason, I prioritized participants with freelance work experience when selecting participants.

This thesis deals mostly with freelance mode of work. There are different practices of freelance work. The most common and established practice among architects is to offer freelance work to people in their network. At the same time, architects are increasingly starting to work freelance through platforms. 19 out of 21 participants are currently working as freelancers. Of these 19 participants, 14 continue to work as freelancers through platforms. However, architects who work through platforms also prefer various platforms, which has an impact on their work experience and practices. Table 7 below shows the practice of freelancing among the interviewees and the name of the platforms on which the interviewed young architects indicated to work.

Table 7. Freelancing Practices of Participants

Participant Code	**Freelancing through Personal Network**	**Freelancing through Platforms**
I.1		Upwork
I.2	Freelancing through Personal Network	
I.3	Freelancing through Personal Network	
I.5		Fiverr
I.6		Fiverr, Guru
I.7		Bionluk
I.8		Upwork
I.9		Bionluk
I.10		Bionluk
I.11		Fiverr
I.13	Freelancing through Personal Network	
I.14		Bionluk- Fiverr- Freelancer.com
I.15		Toffuco
I.16		Upwork- Etsy
I.17	Freelancing through Personal Network	
I.18		Toffuco
I.19		Upwork- Etsy
I.20	Freelancing through Personal Network	
I.21		Bionluk

As Table 7 shows, the practice of freelance working of participants is also quite heterogeneous. Nevertheless, the three most preferred platforms are Bionluk, Fiverr, and Upwork. However, Toffuco, Freelancer, Etsy, and Guru were also platforms that

were also mentioned by the interviewees. To be able to contextualize the practices of the interviewed architects, below there is a brief presentation of those platforms.

Bionluk[3] is a local platform founded in 2014 by Utku Subakan and Onur Şahin. Unique to Bionluk, unlike Fiverr and Upwork, is that it only has customers and freelancers from Turkey. To join Bionluk as a freelancer, it is necessary to pay a fee of 70 TL. However, opening an account as a customer is free of charge. The most common jobs on Bionluk are internet advertising, video and animation production, web design, copywriting, voice-overs and dubbing, and graphic and design services. On Bionluk, freelancers create profiles that introduce themselves according to their field of work, provide examples of their work, and give estimated price information. The customer can message to the freelancer they want to work with based on their requirements and obtain information, and the agreement is reached in this way. In other words, freelancers on the platform do not actively search for work but rather advertise the services they offer and wait for customers to contact them. Pricing on the Bionluk platform is primarily job-based. Freelancers set a fixed price for the services they offer, and these services are typically referred to as "gigs." The platform does not support hourly billing; instead, services are priced according to their scope and delivery time.

In addition, package options such as Basic, Standard, and Premium with different content and prices may be offered for each service. When a service is purchased on Bionluk, the amount paid by the customer is first transferred to Bionluk's pool account instead of being transferred to the freelancer immediately, and completion of the job is awaited. After the work is delivered, the customer reviews it. If the result meets the criteria specified in the job description, the customer approves the work. The fee, which was initially transferred to the escrow account, is then transferred to the freelancer's account after deducting a 20% Bionluk.com service fee. Similar to other platforms, Bionluk also has a review system for both customers and freelancers.
Fiverr[4] is similar to Bionluk in terms of how it functions. Fiverr was founded in 2010 by Micha Kaufman and Shai Wininger and is headquartered in Tel Aviv, Israel. The

[3] See *Bionluk* https://bionluk.com (Accessed: 18 August 2025).
[4] See *Fiverr* https://www.fiverr.com (Accessed: 18 August 2025).

difference between Fiverr and Bionluk is that Fiverr serves as a marketplace spread across the globe and is active in approximately 160 countries. Fiverr operates largely on a gig-based system: freelancers create fixed-price "gigs" for the services they offer. The platform was named "Fiverr" because each service initially started at $5. Gigs are typically offered in Basic, Standard, and Premium packages, and prices may increase as the scope of services expands. In 2024, Fiverr introduced an hourly billing option, particularly for freelancers with "Pro" status. This new system offers a more suitable working model for long-term and hourly-based projects. Freelancers who want to obtain Pro status must apply by submitting their resume and portfolio to Fiverr. Freelancers whose applications are accepted are labeled as Fiverr Pro sellers. Freelancers who receive this label can set higher prices for their work. Fiverr takes a 20% commission from every gig and the tip a freelancer earns. On Fiverr, the fee is held in the platform's escrow account for a period of time before being transferred to the freelancer. In addition to the review system, freelancers on Fiverr are classified into four different levels (New Seller, Level 1, Level 2, Top Rated Seller) based on their performance. These levels are determined based on criteria such as the number of orders, customer satisfaction, and timely delivery. As the level increases, visibility improves, and advantages such as creating more gigs, sending special offers, and being featured by Fiverr are provided.

Upwork[5] is one of the most widely used freelance job platforms in the world today, established in 2015 through the merger of Elance (1999) and oDesk (2003) platforms. Headquartered in the United States, the platform operates in over 180 countries and hosts approximately 18 million registered freelancers and around 5 million customers. The most popular job categories on Upwork include web, mobile, and software development; writing and translation; executive assistance and customer service; design and creative work; and sales and marketing. Upwork differs from Bionluk and Fiverr in terms of its working method. Upwork is an ad-based platform. Customers create job ads, freelancers bid on these ads; however, the opposite is also possible. Customers can also send offers directly to freelancers. With this feature, Upwork offers a two-way job search and matching system. Customers may often need to pay

[5] See *Upwork* https://www.upwork.com (Accessed: 18 August 2025).

an additional service fee to contact freelancers directly. Upwork also allows for hourly and project-based work models; an in-platform time tracker can be used for time tracking. This enables time-based labour measurement, especially for long-term or regular jobs. Moreover, the commission system on Upwork is also different. Upwork's commission system is applied on a sliding scale based on the total invoice amount between the freelancer and the client. For work done with the same client, a 20% commission is deducted for the first $500, 10% for amounts between $500 and $10,000, and 5% for amounts over $10,000. Upwork has a multi-layered system that evaluates freelancer performance in addition to customer reviews. In this system, the percentage success score called "Job Success Score" is one of the basic visibility indicators. Additionally, freelancers are rewarded with badges such as "Rising Talent," "Top Rated," "Top Rated Plus," and "Expert-Vetted" when they meet certain criteria.

In addition, *Freelancer.com* and *Guru* operate with a system similar to Upwork. While Freealncer.com charges a 10% commission, Guru charges between 5-9% commission, which is the lowest among all platforms. However, *Etsy* stands out from these platforms. One of the things that surprised me during my fieldwork was seeing architects working through Etsy. Etsy is not a freelance job platform, but an e-commerce marketplace based on the sale of digital and physical products. The main feature of the platform is that it is product-oriented rather than service-oriented. In other words, users display their own digital or physical products (handmade items, designs, templates, posters, planner files, etc.) in their stores and sell them directly. For this reason, it actually differs from other freelancing platforms in terms of platform type.

Finally, the most specific platform I have encountered in this field is *Toffu.co*. Toffu.co defines itself as an architecture marketplace. The platform is active in over 100 countries and provides architects and designers with content such as figures, designs, and layouts that they can use in their projects. The way architects work on this platform also differs from Fiverr, Upwork, or Bionluk. Architects and designers are paid per job to create designs for the platform. Their designs are uploaded to the platform and offered for sale. However, architects and designers do not receive a share of the sales. Architects working here receive specific credit for the product or layout they design,

and at the end of the month, the total credits they earned during the month are deposited into their accounts. Unlike other platforms, architects working here are paid per project and do not receive payments directly from various clients.

To summarize, although most participants appear to work as freelancers, freelancing is a mode of work that encompasses multiple working styles. A freelance architect may work through platforms or personal networks. Architects who work through platforms are spread across a wide variety of platforms. The pricing structure, working style, and algorithm of the platform are components that affect and differentiate the experiences of architects working through these platforms.

Table 8. Overview of Freelance Platforms Mentioned by Interviewees

Platform	Founded / Headquarters	Coverage	Operating Model	Pricing/ Commission	Distinctive Feature
Bionluk	2014, Turkey	Only Turkey	Freelancer creates a profile, clients directly contact them	Job-based pricing, 20% commission	Local platform, entry fee of 70 TL, operates only in Turkey
Fiverr	2010, Israel	~160 countries	Gig-based system with package options, Pro status allows hourly work	20% commission	Global reach, 'gig' model, seller levels and Pro status
Upwork	2015 (merger of Elance & oDesk), USA	~180 countries	Job ads and direct offers, project-based or hourly contracts	Sliding-scale commission: 20% (first $500), 10% ($500–10,000), 5% (over $10,000)	Two-way matching system, 'Job Success Score' and badge system
Freelancer.com	2009, Australia	Global	Job ad-based system	10% commission	Similar to Upwork, classical freelance marketplace
Guru	1998, USA	Global	Job ad-based system	5–9% commission (lowest rates)	Advantage of low commission fees

Table 8. (continued)

Etsy	2005, USA	Global	Product-based marketplace	Listing + sales commission	E-commerce focus, sale of digital/physical products instead of services
Toffu.co	2020s, Turkey-based	100+ countries	Architecture-specific marketplace, designs exchanged for credits	Monthly credit-based payment	Niche for architecture content, no sales share, project-based credit system

4.2. Data Analysis

The fact that the labour practices of the group emerging from the fieldwork are quite heterogeneous makes it difficult to generalize processes from some analytical points. To deal with this complexity, I first transcribed all the interviews conducted during the fieldwork. Afterwards, I used MAXQDA to code these transcripts according to the analytical categories I had defined earlier. This process helped me organize the data, group similar points together, and identify patterns, differences, and specific dynamics that would guide the analysis. The code system I used in MAXQDA can be found here:

Table 9. Code System

Code System	**Frequency**
Code System	277
Labour Process of Architects	60
From Skilled to Deskilled	28
Control Autonomy	32
Architects in Platform Economy	153
Platform Features	22
Competition	23
Platform Work	69
Traditional Work	39
Employment Status	36
Rights That Come From being Registered	8

Table 9. (continued)

Self-Employed	7
Informality	17
Flexibility	4
Motivation to Freelance Work	28

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS: THE CASE OF YOUNG ARCHITECTS ON DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS IN TURKEY

Empirical findings from the field work are mainly aiming to show the transition process of the young architects in Turkey. The overarching finding of the field work is that architects who have had a long-established traditional work regime are now increasingly transitioning to hybrid work forms that also include online work. The three different dimensions of this transition are analysed under this section.

The section 5.1 examines the intersecting dimensions of employment status, modes of working, and informality among young architects in Turkey. It particularly focuses on two key transitions observed in the field. The first is a shift from employee status within traditional, contract-based employment to self-employment, often accompanied by a move towards freelance work arrangements, either on digital platforms or independently. The second is a transition from working entirely in the formal economy to engaging partially or entirely in informal economic activities, such as unregistered freelance work or verbal contracting. These transitions are not mutually exclusive; in many cases, they occur simultaneously, blurring the boundaries between legal status, working arrangements, and the degree of formality in economic activity.

The section 5.2 examines the transition from traditional work patterns to platforms, focusing on job search processes, working hours, wages, security, work benefits, and control systems. At the same time, the specific features of the platforms are also discussed in this section. Here, we can also mention a shift in freelance working methods. Freelance architects who previously obtained work through their networks are increasingly turning to platforms also under the pressures of the existing labour regime in Turkey.

The section 5.3 discusses the third aspect of this transition, namely the change in the nature of the architectural work. When creative architectural projects begin to be carried out on platforms, they lose their integrity. Due to the nature of the platform, the work has to be divided into parts, which negatively affects the creativity of the work and the satisfaction derived from it.

5.1. Intersecting Dimensions of Work: Employment Status, Modes of Working, and Informality

In this section, interviews with 21 young architects are analysed in relation to employment status and informality, in a way to examine modes of working, with particular attention to the distinctive organisational features of platform-mediated labour. This separation is necessary because modes of working not only intersect with legal status and formality but also introduce a qualitatively different set of dynamics shaped by the mediation of work through digital labour platforms. By examining platform-based arrangements in detail, this section captures how digital labour platforms reshape work processes, client relations, working time, and competitive pressures in ways that extend beyond the regulatory and organisational structures of traditional employment frameworks.

Conceptually, it is not always straightforward to draw clear boundaries between legal employment status, mode of working, and formality of economic activity, as they are often deeply intertwined in practice. This complexity is further heightened by the heterogeneity of the fieldwork sample, where hybrid and overlapping arrangements are common. Many interviewees simultaneously occupy more than one legal status, combine different modes of working, or engage in both formal and informal economic activities, making analytical separation challenging yet essential for understanding the dynamics of their work.

Employment status refers to the legal classification of a person's work relationship, determining their rights, obligations, and access to social protection (ILO, 2018). According to the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18), the main distinction is between employees, those working in dependent, contract-based

arrangements under an employer's authority, and own-account workers, who operate on their own account and bear the economic risks of their activity.

In the Turkish context, the Social Security Institution (SGK) makes a similar distinction between dependent workers registered under the Labour Law (insured under the Social Security system as "SSK") and self-employed individuals registered under the Social Insurance and General Health Insurance Law No. 5510 (known as "Bağ-Kur"). Those who work without registration in either category are considered outside the formal social security system.

In this study, three main statuses were observed in the field: employee (I3, I4, I5, I7, I9, I11, I12, I13, I17), self-employed (I1, I14, I16, I19, I20), and non-registered own-account worker (I2, I6, I8, I10, I14, I15, I18, I21). These categories frequently overlap in practice. For example, an architect formally employed in an office may occasionally take on freelance projects without legal registration, effectively operating as a non-registered own-account worker in those cases. Such situations illustrate that an individual's legal status may shift depending on the type of work performed, the contractual arrangement, and whether the activity is registered with the relevant authorities.

Modes of working describe the organisational arrangements through which work is carried out, independent of legal economic registration status. This includes freelance work, typically project-based and involving multiple clients; platform-based work, mediated by digital labour platforms; and office-based work, conducted in physical workplaces. As the ILO (2021) notes, these arrangements can cut across different legal statuses: an employee may also take on freelance projects, while a self-employed person may operate through platforms or direct client relationships.

In the field, the most common mode of working was office-based employment (I3, I4, I5, I7, I9, I11, I12, I13, I17), followed by two distinct types of freelance work: platform-based freelance (I1, I3, I5, I7, I9, I11, I14, I15, I16, I18, I19, I21) and freelance through personal networks (I2, I13, I17, I20). These modes were not mutually exclusive. As observed, a salaried employee might also take on freelance projects in their remaining time, resulting in a hybrid mode of working.

A key conceptual challenge in this study is the distinction between self-employed and freelance. Self-employed refers to a legal economic registration status, while freelance is a mode of working.

All freelancers operate on their own account, but not all self-employed workers are freelancers; for example, a self-employed doctor may work exclusively in their own clinic, serving a stable patient base under long-term arrangements, without engaging in multiple short-term projects for different clients. This overlap, and the frequent movement of individuals between categories, further complicates attempts to analyse legal status and modes of working as entirely separate dimensions.

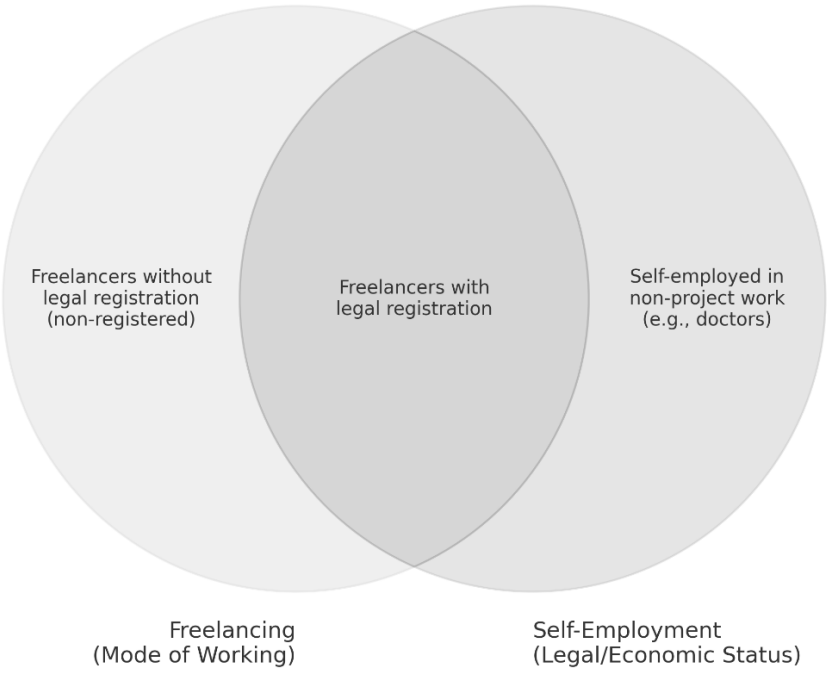

Figure 2. Relationship between Freelancing and Self-employment

The last point of analysis in this section is informality. Informality is not a single, uniform condition but can occur in different forms, cutting across various legal statuses and modes of working. Two types of informality stand out in this study. One of them is status-based informality, which is lack of legal registration as a worker. Individuals who have no legal economic registration, such as social security enrolment, tax registration, or a registered business entity, are part of this group. This group often includes platform workers who receive payments directly into personal bank accounts

through platforms without issuing invoices or contracts. In such cases, both the employment status and the economic activity are informal, placing these workers entirely outside the scope of formal labour market protections and obligations.

The second is activity-based informality, which occurs when individuals possess a formal legal status, for example, registered as self-employed or employed in an office, but do not record all their economic activities. A common example from the field is registered self-employed architects who issue invoices for some projects while accepting direct bank transfers or cash payments for others. In these cases, while the legal status is registered/formal, a portion of the economic activity remains informal.

In other words, informality is a multidimensional concept. The fact that an employee is legally registered does not mean that all their economic activities are formal. As it is seen in the field, where even registered self-employed and employed architects may engage in unreported work alongside their formal practices.

Table 10 summarises the distribution of participants across three analytical dimensions discussed in this section: legal employment status, mode of working, and formality of economic activity. These dimensions often intersect in complex and overlapping ways, making it difficult to find participants who work exclusively within a single mode of working or whose economic activities are entirely formal. For example, an architect employed in an office is legally registered and receives a formal salary, yet when this same individual takes on additional freelance projects through online platforms without declaring the income, these side activities fall into the informal economic activities despite their formal employment status.

Compared to earlier patterns, where an architect might work solely in an office and engage only in registered economic activity, the current field data reveal a far more hybrid and heterogeneous landscape in which the boundaries between formal and informal, and between different working modes, have become increasingly blurred.

Table 10. Distribution of Participants by Legal Employment Status, Mode of Working, and Formality of Economic Activity

Participant Code	Legal Employment Status	Mode of working	Formality of Economic Activity
I.1	Self-employed	Freelance (platform-based)	Formal and Informal
I.2	Non-registered	Freelance	Informal
I.3	Employee	Office-based employment and Freelance (platform-based)	Formal and Informal
I.4	Employee	Office-based employment	Formal
I.5	Employee	Office-based employment and Freelance (platform-based)	Formal and Informal
I.6	Non-registered	Freelance (platform-based)	Informal
I.7	Employee	Office-based employment and Freelance (platform-based)	Formal and Informal
I.8	Non-registered	Freelance (platform-based)	Informal
I.9	Employee	Office-based employment and Freelance (platform-based)	Formal and Informal
I.10	Non-registered	Freelance (platform-based)	Informal
I.11	Employee	Office-based employment and Freelance (platform-based)	Formal and Informal
I.12	Employee	An office employee	Formal
I.13	Employee	Office-based employment and Freelance	Formal and Informal
I.14	Self-employed	Freelance (platform-based)	Formal
I.15	Non-registered	Freelance (platform-based)	Informal
I.16	Self employed	Freelance (platform-based)	Formal
I.17	Employee	Office-based employment and Freelance	Formal and Informal
I.18	Non-registered	Freelance (platform-based)	Informal
I.19	Self-employed	Freelance (platform-based)	Formal and Informal
I.20	Self-employed	Freelance	Formal and Informal
I.21	Non-registered	Freelance (platform-based)	Informal

5.1.1. Employment Status

As mentioned above, among the total of 21 interviewees, nine are working in an office as “employees” with a formal employment contract. Seven out of nine interviewees are currently working as freelancers through platforms or independently as architects in addition to office work. 12 interviewees work exclusively as freelancers. In other words, they make a living without being part of a traditional employment relationship. As discussed in the previous chapters, Turkey, like many other countries, lacks a

specific legal framework that comprehensively defines and protects the rights of freelancers and platform workers.

Not surprisingly, as mentioned above, interviewees who work both in an office (workplace) and as freelancers receive their social security and insurance as a part of their formal employment contract:

> "At least they pay my insurance at the office, but there is no record or security for freelance work. They either transfer the money to my account or we take it in cash. (I18, office worker and freelancer)"

In addition, one of the interviewees who used to work as a freelancer but now works exclusively in the office states that the reason for working in the office is insurance:

> "It was a bit difficult until I started working at the office. Due to my age, my social security from my family was officially terminated. Since I didn't have insurance for a few months, I went through a difficult period for a few months. Then, as I said, because of all this, I felt the need to find a full-time job (I4, office worker)."

On the other hand, some research argues that platform workers do not prioritize benefits that they will be entitled to under the traditional employment relationship. Skyttedal et al. (2022) state that the vast majority of platform workers place a higher value on flexibility, higher pay, and the ability to work across platforms simultaneously than they do on the advantages of a traditional work arrangement. Massi and Longo (2024) mention that some platform workers resist or show indifference to labour protection efforts, mainly due to concerns that such regulations may jeopardize the flexibility to freely enter and exit work depending on their time and income needs (Del Bono, 2023; Haidar et al., 2023). The work of Massi and Longo (2024) shows that social protection is not a major issue for the great majority of interviewees, who also perceive other drawbacks to platform work. Financial instability, platform commissions, and the unpaid time spent creating a profile and a digital reputation are the biggest challenges for the platform freelancers. In parallel to their findings, none of my interviewees mentioned the lack of rights that come from being registered as the biggest fallback of platform work. Especially when I asked those who only work as freelancers, many said they had never even thought about it:

> "No, I'm not covered by insurance. You sign a contract when you join the platform. But there's no insurance or anything like that. If I went to a normal office, I would get insurance, and it would be good for my retirement, but I've never really thought about it before. It's not important to me, but I guess it's a side quest for me (I15)."

In this quotation, what the interviewee refers to as a contract is actually the terms and conditions offered by the platform. Interviewee 18, working on the same platform as Interviewee 15, also said: "We signed a long contract when we joined. It included things like the visual content here cannot be shared anywhere else, etc., it was not about rights…". This is also a significant example of how asymmetric and vague terms and conditions replaced legal employment contracts.

Two of the participants who work on platforms as their main source of income stated that the loss of rights, such as insurance and pensions that come with not working in a traditional form of employment, is not important to them.

> "I never worried about insurance from my point of view. Instead of paying that money into insurance now, I could put it into interest or invest it in something else. Don't you think that would be more profitable? There's no point in retiring anyway, you can't live on a pension (I14)."

> "Not having insurance wasn't something I cared much about. Because, I think, generally speaking, the pensioners' salaries aren't enough, and I'll retire at 60, so, of course, who can stay like that at 60? Secondly, I think I'll find another way out by the time I'm 60, so I won't have to retire (I16)."

Without a doubt, this situation is related not only to the pull factors of the platform but also to certain push factors related to the traditional working regime in Turkey, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Of the 12 interviewees who work exclusively as freelancers, only four of them work as self-employed, while the remaining eight work completely unregistered. This brings up two other issues: self-employment and informality.

Although many platform workers are defined as self-employed by the platforms, Urzì Brancati et al. (2019) state that according to their findings, a sizable portion of platform workers still view themselves as employees despite the fact that a very large portion of them view their work on platforms as a type of self-employment (either as their

primary or a side activity) across all different types of tasks. This is likely due to the fact that they do not have the same level of autonomy and control over their work that is typically associated with self-employment. Skyttedal et al. (2022) refer to this as "bogus self-employment," which is a type of employment that includes all the responsibilities of an employee but does not cover the rights and benefits. Also, De Stefano and Aloisi (2018) highlight that the workers end up bearing the business's risk instead of the employers, who are supposed to bear the economic risk. Therefore, De Stefano and Aloisi (2018) argue that since platform-based employment is not stable and continuous, the employer has the freedom to call the employee in on demand but is not required to give them work on a regular basis; it should be labelled as "app-driven casual arrangements", a subgroup of non-standard forms of work rather than self-employment category.

In parallel with the literature, none of my solo self-employed interviewees mentioned that they feel secure, autonomous, or privileged. One of the few advantages mentioned among the self-employed was that it would make it easier to obtain a visa in the future. Since host countries consider the registered working history of applicants, interviewee 1 mentions that he therefore opened his own company.

> "I didn't actually open the company while I was freelancing. I opened it when I got this regular freelancing job. I applied for a visa for that reason, so I started my company. You know, so it would look like I'd been working for a while. But generally speaking, the legal obligations can be a bit daunting. How will I pay the taxes on this? How do I receive this money? If I start a company, how do I go about it? What are the expenses involved? What are the regular things I need to do? Many of my friends were hesitant to take the plunge, worried about getting themselves into legal obligations. (I1)"

On the other hand, some mention that being self-employed did not bring any advantages, but rather, it has some procedural burdens and disadvantages in the market. Some pointed out that starting a business is quite costly: "I don't have a company right now, but I'm in the process of setting one up. So, to be honest, it puts us under a serious financial burden (I2)". Moreover, they said that being self-employed and passing on tax costs to their business would put them at a disadvantageous position:

> "I think freelancers start out knowing this already. Officially, even if you're a freelancer, you still need to be a company owner and issue invoices for your work. And of course, you have to pay for your own insurance. Therefore, this is also a matter of the freelancer knowing that if they pay for all these expenses, such as insurance, monthly company fees, and accounting costs, they cannot do this work for the current pay, and if they increase the price because they cannot do it for that pay, they will not get any work. (I2)"

In other words, self-employed architects did not mention any advantages of this situation in terms of their work and security. Similarly, those who are not currently registered pointed out that being self-employed can also be an additional burden. As mentioned above, there are no prerequisites for working freelance through platforms. For this reason, many freelancers with non-registered employment status view the process of opening a company in their own name as an additional burden. In particular, the length of the financial and procedural process can be intimidating for these individuals.

5.1.2. Informality

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, informality may refer to different dimensions of economy and economic activity. In the scope of this thesis, two distinct dimensions of informality are examined. The first dimension concerns status-based informality, which refers to the complete non-registration of a worker within the formal labour market and social protection systems. In such cases, individuals do not possess any recognised legal employment status, for example, they are not registered as employees under the Labour Law, nor as self-employed under tax or social security regulations, and therefore remain entirely outside formal institutional frameworks. The second dimension concerns economic activity-based informality, which arises when a worker holds a formal legal status yet does not declare or record all of their economic activities in official registers. This may include, for example, formally registered self-employed individuals who issue invoices for certain projects while accepting direct payments for others without reporting them. Both forms of informality carry significant implications for social protection, taxation, and labour rights, and, as observed in the field, they can also coexist within the same individual's work practices.

Pouliakas and Antonio Ranieri (2022) mention that due to the increasing hybridization of work and the rise in solo self-employment (Bögenhold and Klinglmair, 2017), including gig or platform work (Bögenhold et al., 2017), a lot of focus is being placed on making sure that workers who hold multiple jobs are less vulnerable to labour market fluctuations and work precarity (Conen and Schippers, 2019). Murgia (2025) adds that hybrid combinations occur when people conduct multiple jobs concurrently or along the career biographical axis, allowing us to see parallelisms and patterns of multiplicity. In conclusion, according to Murgia (2025), given these conditions, the clear-cut distinction between dependent and self-employed statuses often fails to reflect the reality of many workers, as individuals frequently occupy positions that combine elements of both rather than fitting neatly into one category. Moreover, due to their legal status and comparatively low incomes, solo self-employed workers frequently take on other jobs, usually low-skilled ones, as employees or self-employed people, or participate in unofficial economic activities, which makes their position hybrid.

My field study shows that this is not only true for low-skilled workers, but also for the skilled ones. The self-employed architects I interviewed also mentioned that they accept freelance work without official declaration. Although they have companies in their own names, they stated that they accepted work without issuing invoices when certain customer requests arose:

> "I still have a company. I still send my accountant his payments every month. I still pay my stamps, my taxes, etc. But the process has shown me that: customers say to me, 'I don't care about your VAT.' They say they don't want to pay 20% more. If my customer is someone who runs a business, if they already own a company, they don't make an issue of it. Because the tax they pay me is the tax they pay to the state. They understand these calculations. They deduct my invoice as an expense. But a housewife says, 'Don't confuse me,' and asks me to send the IBAN [bank account number]. Of course, I'm not rejecting it." (I20)

In other words, even if their employment status is registered, not all of their economic activities are formal. For this reason, it is very difficult to define their employment status with clear boundaries. However, it would not be wrong to say that all interviewees who work as freelance architects take on work in a more or less informal manner.

Bertolini et al. (2023) mention that when Hart (1973) coined the term "informal sector," academics viewed it as the opposite of formal economic activity and the informal economy as everything that the formal economy was not: imperceptible, uncountable, or unaccountable, transient, unstable, and unprotected from risks associated with the job. They add that the formal economy has historically been linked to visibility, countable tasks, stable and predictable pay structures, and predictable working conditions. According to Chen (2012) and Vanek et al. (2014), the informal economy was perceived as its opposite and was described as invisible, uncountable, or unaccountable, unstable, and unpredictable. In this study, informality refers to all of these definitions, as well as a lack of legal registration. Most interviewees stated that all freelance work was agreed upon verbally. Those who registered on the platform emphasised that they accepted the terms and conditions when registering, but other than that, there is no written agreement for each job. They reach an agreement verbally by communicating with the customers via the platform:

> "So, generally speaking, the work I do is verbal. Both the payment part and how payments will be received, etc. The work method part, all of these are things that are based on verbal agreements. They are not tied to anything in written form. (I2)"

With the spread of platforms, informality has also begun to be discussed in this context. Harris and Krueger (2015) mention that in the context of platformization, many Northern academics have been slow to embrace or use the term "informality," preferring to use terms like "precarization." Surie and Huws (2023) question that even if the advanced economies have been affected by the rise of informal and precarious labour through platforms, what is the situation in the developing countries achieve when the majority of their working populations are already informally and precariously employed. Huws and Surie (2023) mention that digital platforms restructured the labour relations in both the South and North in the scope of informality. On the other hand, Bertolini et al. (2023) argue that the global economy has become more interconnected as a result of the restructuring, making it harder to distinguish between the formal and informal economies as well as the Global North and Global South. In addition, Rani (2020: 91) adds that the intensification of globalisation has led companies to alter their organisational strategies by increasingly relying on subcontracting and outsourcing. In response to global competition, many

firms employ their core workforce under formal arrangements while delegating production and service activities to smaller firms or offshore locations.

Moreover, as my fieldwork is presented, there is no need for companies to operate on a global scale in order to alter their organisational strategies by increasingly relying on subcontracting and outsourcing. Many employers hire workers informally through verbal agreements rather than formally. This enables them to avoid responsibility for their employees and save on various expenses:

> "It is also very expensive for employers to hire insured workers. That is why they are turning to freelancers, so they can spend less. In my last job, I requested my own salary as payment. They also suggested my full-time salary for a job where I would work half-time. They were aware of the situation. But when you factor in office expenses, commuting costs, meal expenses, and possibly insurance costs, hiring a recent graduate to replace me would cost them more. We were able to do this job for a much lower amount. At least for them, it was tax-free. (I7)"

> "I applied for a permanent position. They responded that they were not currently hiring architects but were very overwhelmed and asked if I could assist them externally. Subsequently, I worked with them on a freelance basis. (I17)"

On the contrary, in the context of informality, some scholars argue that platforms have positive effects. Firstly, in work areas where informality is widespread regardless of platforms, platforms can provide workers with a certain degree of security despite spreading and expanding this informality. As Park et al. (2025) mention in their work, since there are no formal institutions in the informal economy, mutual trust and other informal institutions that establish order and improve trade and business operations take the place of formal regulations (Burbidge, 2013; Odera, 2013). In freelancing, where informality is very common, workers normally work based solely on mutual trust; however, platforms can emerge as a different source of trust in this context. Park et al. (2025) state that in markets without the kind of formal institutions that regulate transparency, digital platforms can legitimize informal systems and reduce bad practices by implementing machine-powered algorithms (Larios-Hernandez, 2017; Kshetri, 2017; Heeks et al., 2021). In other words, as an institutional intermediary, digital platforms may help to build credibility.

As observed in the field, whether they work through platforms or not, most freelance architects work informally. Those who do not work through platforms either rely entirely on mutual trust when accepting customers or see their connections as intermediaries. However, most of those who work through platforms say that the platforms provide them with a sense of security. They say that the platforms have a certain degree of credibility, both because of their review and rating systems and because they can report problems to the platform if necessary:

> "The platform gives me peace of mind. That's why the 20% commission may seem like a lot, but ultimately, it's a system I trust. Those statements are also critical. Payment not verified. It's actually warning you to be careful. It may not be verified, and you may not receive your money. (I19)"

> "Even though the platform charges a commission, it makes me feel secure (I5)"

Secondly, in the literature, some scholars argue that platforms contribute to the formality, especially in the sectors which are traditionally identified by informality (Bertolini et al. 2023, Bertolini et al. (2023) refer to several studies that highlight that the platform economy in the Global South is rapidly integrating informal workers and generating formal employment, reflecting broader narratives about the role of digital platforms in transforming and formalising traditionally informal sectors, particularly in areas like care work. Ray (2024) adds that scholars have emphasised that informal, small-scale workers are now being systematically mobilised, and recruited institutionalised mechanisms such as platforms to serve the expanding needs of the private sector, leading to what Gooptu (2013) terms a regime of "organised informality". Organised informality is a labour model promoted by neoliberal states that heavily relies on subcontracted, insecure, and low-paid workers, while largely overlooking long-term employment security, access to formal social protection, and basic welfare rights (Guha-Khasnobis et al., 2006; Hung and Ngo, 2019; Mirchandani et al., 2016).

In the case of Turkey, this is also true for some occupations, especially low-skilled ones. As mentioned in previous chapters, normally, platform workers do not have a specific employment status in Turkey, similar to the rest of the world. However, the case for the delivery and transportation workers on the platforms is different. Öz

(2023: 91) states that in Turkey, the model of *esnaf kurye* has become widespread, allowing couriers to work "whenever they want" for a specific company after establishing their own business. In this model, the courier does not become an employee of the company but instead works for their own business. Öz (2023) highlights that the couriers have to start a self-employed business. Moreover, Ceylan (2022) mentions that the term *esnaf kurye* aligns with the notion of an independent contractor and suggests self-employment through its association with artisanship or tradesmanship. Platform workers are not legally recognized as employees but are instead defined as service providers who perform specific tasks, often described in neoliberal terms as business partners owning their own enterprises (Ceylan, 2022; Öz, 2023). Although they may be classified as self-employed legally, in light of the above discussions, it should not be forgotten that this is a 'bogus' employment. Ceylan (2022) clarifies that most couriers stated that their contracts do not grant them any of the social rights typically associated with formal employment under the Labour Law. In addition, the *esnaf kurye* model allows companies to externalize key responsibilities such as equipment provision, insurance, and training, since couriers are classified as self-employed. However, even though it is not explicitly stated in any of the studies, it can be inferred that the majority of delivery workers and couriers are registered, even though being registered does not necessarily mean that they have certain rights and guarantees. As noted earlier, considering that low-skilled jobs such as those in the care sector and restaurant courier services are generally informal, especially in developing economies, it can be argued that digital platforms in Turkey have helped formalise certain groups of platform workers. On the contrary, the situation is quite the opposite in relatively more skilled jobs, such as freelancing and the web-based/online model of their platform work. Most of the interviewed freelance architects are unregistered. The situation is no different for those working on platforms. Freelancing platforms do not impose any legal registration requirements, and since most of them are based abroad, architects who find work through these platforms are not legally registered either. Unlike location-based platforms, they do not require you to be self-employed in order to work under their platform. In this case, the situation of two participants who previously worked in an office and then started working through platforms is also illuminating. The situations of Interviewee 10 and Interviewee 21 are examples of how platforms increase informality. These two architects were previously in a registered

contract-based employment relationship, but for various reasons, they started working on platforms and became part of the informal economy.

To summarise the findings in this section, the interviews conducted with 21 young architects were analysed through the concepts of employment status and informality. Referring to the discussions made in previous chapters, similarities and differences with global trends are observed in the Turkish case of skilled workers in platforms. The first critical point is differentiation in employment status. In this context, the low number of interviewees with legal employment status is also noteworthy. Only 13 of the 21 respondents had legal employment status, and 9 of those were involved in a contract-based employment relationship because they worked in an office. The fact that seven of the architects working in the office also work freelance shows that their working methods are quite hybrid. Another important topic of discussion was access to rights derived from being a registered employee of the architects interviewed. Unsurprisingly, it was observed that interviewees who had access to benefits such as insurance and pensions were those who worked in offices and were involved in traditional contract-based employment relationships. The important point here, as the literature also suggests, is that architects who do not have these entitlements and who work through platforms do not prioritise these rights. The reason for this is not only the pull factors such as higher wages, flexibility, and job choice offered by these platforms, but also push factors caused by the traditional employment regime in Turkey, such as the insecurity. This insecurity is reflected in various ways, including short-term contracts, low wages, lack of social protections, limited career progression, an inability to foresee a stable future, and the prevalence of informal arrangements even within ostensibly formal workplaces, all of which drive workers to seek alternative forms of income generation through platforms.

The second important point is the status of self-employment. Considering that only four interviewees were self-employed, it can be concluded that this is not very common among freelance architects, especially for those who work through platforms. In this section, the self-employment status of workers on the platform was discussed concerning the literature. It was emphasised that this status is actually a bogus concept, as platform workers do not fully benefit from either self-employment benefits or

employee rights. In this regard, the situation in Turkey does not appear to be any different. Among young architects, none of the four interviewees mentioned any advantages of being self-employed. However, some interviewees mentioned that the economic burdens associated with self-employment could negatively affect their work. In addition, another finding is that the borders of self-employment and informality are not that clear, particularly in terms of conducting informal economic activities. Self-employed architects state that, although they generally work in a registered way, they also accept work from outside following more informal ways of verbal contracting. Customers who do not want to deal with legal processes or additional expenses such as taxes are offering verbal, informal jobs to self-employed architects, and architects are accepting them.

The last point in this section is informality. Considering that eight interviewees were completely unregistered, informality in the sense of not being registered, and thus not being able to benefit from many rights, is an important topic for this thesis. In this section, the relationship between digital labour platforms and informality was discussed. Lastly, it can be said that a difference was identified between skilled and low-skilled jobs in the case of Turkey. In Turkey, location-based platforms, particularly in the delivery and transportation sectors, require their workers to establish their own sole proprietorship companies. Although this is due to the platform's avoidance of certain responsibilities, it can be described as a kind of process of formalisation. On the contrary, freelancers, who normally work in offices on a contractual basis, become part of the informal economy when they start working through platforms.

5.2. From Traditional Work to Platform-Based Freelancing: Transitions in Modes of Working

Although platforms have some attractive features that appeal to architects, this is not the only reason why young architects in Turkey are transitioning to platforms. Conditions for workers in Turkey are also deteriorating. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in the AKP era, Turkey's traditional labour regime has increasingly been aligned with capital, further deepening the exploitation of workers' working conditions. This

alignment has resulted in widespread precarity, marked by low wages, insecure contracts, long working hours, and limited opportunities for career development. The lack of adequate social protections, coupled with the uncertainty of long-term employment prospects, are observed to have pushed many young architects to look for alternative income sources. In this context, digital labour platforms emerge not only as a pull factor offering flexibility and access to a wider client base, but also as a response to the structural weaknesses and inequities of the traditional labour market in Turkey.

When assessing platform labour, it is impossible to consider it independently of national labour markets. Schor (2017) states that it is necessary to comprehend the platform economy in part in light of the overall labour market. Moreover, Schor et al. (2020) add that the expansion of platform-based labour is shaped by the structural dynamics prevailing in traditional labour markets. In addition, Farell and Greig (2017) state that declining unemployment rates and rising real wages in the conventional labour market may lead to a reduction in the labour supply available to the online labour platforms. Not surprisingly, when the unemployment rates are high and real wages are significantly less, the conventional labour market will push workers to alternative ways of working.

Bozkurt-Güngen (2018) states that neoliberalism all around the world aims to lower labour expenses and boost productivity, all while reducing capital's role in ensuring the reproduction of labour and in mitigating the effects of unemployment and poverty. Moreover, as cited in Özdemir (2020), it is also crucial to recognize that, although neoliberal policies tend to harm the working classes broadly, their impact is particularly severe on legally formal workers, who experience a tangible erosion of their existing rights—unlike informal workers, who possess few rights to begin with and therefore have less to lose (Easterly & Fischer, 2001; Romer & Romer, 1999).

As elaborated in Chapter 4, the AKP period was defined as neoliberal and authoritarian by many scholars (Çelik, 2015; Özkızıltan, 2019; Uysal, 2024). Birelma (2024) draws attention in Turkey that authoritarianism has gotten worse, particularly since the mid-2010s. Özkızıltan (2019) mentions that an emerging body of literature addresses the

dynamics of labour politics, conceptualizing authoritarian neoliberalism as a dual-faceted process. The first aspect involves the state's implementation of authoritarian measures within labour and industrial relations to facilitate and ease neoliberal capital accumulation. The second aspect relates to the coordinated efforts of the state and capital to suppress workers' collective resistance against these authoritarian neoliberal strategies (see Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018; Çelik, 2015a; Gülmez, 2013; Özveri, 2012).

All these AKP policies have resulted in deep poverty, unemployment, deteriorating working conditions, and the gradual weakening of workers' rights to organise in Turkey. Birelma (2024) mentions that since 2016, Turkey has been ranked among the worst ten countries in the world for labour rights by the International Trade Union Confederation. Moreover, Erol (2019) highlights that this period has come to be increasingly defined by low-quality employment, as precarity, working poverty, and low-wage jobs have shifted from being exceptions to becoming the norm under the AKP rule. While increases in wages and salaries continued to remain below the inflation rate, particularly throughout the 2001–2008 period following the economic crisis, this led to an increase in the indebtedness of workers who were forced to rely on credit to compensate for deteriorating conditions (Erol, 2019). As Kocadost (2023) mentions, according to Indyturk 2021, over the past 18 years, household debt has grown 138 times. Moreover, a high unemployment rate becomes one of the steady features of the AKP period. According to DİSK-AR (2025b), as of July 2025, the number of broadly defined unemployed people is at its peak and even higher than during the pandemic. The broadly defined unemployment rate is 32.9%, while the number of broadly defined unemployed people is 13.4 million. However, the number of broadly defined unemployed people has increased by 1.6 million in 2024 (DİSK-AR, 2025b). On the other hand, unemployment among young people is becoming increasingly serious. According to DİSK-AR (2025a), since the AKP came to power in the third quarter of 2002, the broad definition of unemployment among young people has risen from 26% to 37.5%. The broad definition of unemployment among young women continues to be even higher. In the first quarter of 2025, narrowly defined unemployment among men aged 15-24 was calculated at 11.2% and broadly defined unemployment at 32%, while among young women aged 15-24, narrowly defined unemployment was calculated at 22.1% and broadly defined unemployment

at 46.9% (DİSK-AR, 2025s). On the other hand, the situation of workers who have found jobs and started working is also quite worrying. According to the 2025 Minimum Wage Survey prepared by DİSK-AR (2024), the 2024 minimum wage remained below the poverty line as purchasing power rapidly declined. However, when those earning wages around the minimum wage are included, 8.5 million workers are trying to make ends meet with wages at or below the minimum wage level. In other words, as of 2023, 48.9% of all private sector workers are employed at wages near the minimum wage level. Additionally, the situation is worse for the workers who are not officially registered. According to DİSK-AR (2024), nearly half of the informal workers are forced to work for wages below half of the minimum wage; 85.4% of informal workers earn wages that are 5% above or below the minimum wage.

In this situation, the conditions for young architects in Turkey are not very different. The scope of this study also supports the findings of previous studies that examined the situation of architects who worked in traditional employment relations. Three recent research examining the working conditions of architects employed on a contract basis in offices in Turkey, Sert, Aykaç and Zırh (2021), Toprak (2022), and Yılmaz (2024), reveal commonalities in their fieldwork. Yılmaz (2024) states that unemployment rates among young architects are notably high and highlights that, like many segments of the working class, architects are driven to become part of the "reserve labour army" and engage with the labour market as a result of structural conditions that similarly generate unemployment. Here, it is important to remember that, as a result of the government's constant increases in architecture department quotas at the universities and even the creation of new ones, architects are being produced as interchangeable workers while their potential as specialized professionals is being overlooked (Sert et al., 2021). During my field research, one of the things I heard most often when looking for participants was, "There are no longer any architecture graduates who actually practise architecture." When I asked my participants to convey my request to their architect friends, they mentioned that most of their classmates who graduated with them had moved into fields such as graphic design, game design, and computer programming, which offer higher salaries. However, some interviewees mentioned the length and difficulty of the job search process. One of my interviewees, who works as a freelance architect through a

platform, indicated that she chose to work on this platform because she could not find the job she was looking for after searching for a significant amount of time:

> "Actually, from August to February, until I got this job, I went to architecture offices and had interviews with them. Either I couldn't really warm up to them, or they didn't get back to me somehow. I didn't get any positive feedback either. It wasn't like they were going to hire me, and I didn't like it, actually. Maybe if they had gotten back to me, I could have done those jobs, but…
>
> …At least since I graduated, job postings don't come up every day. The offices already have too much work, and they only hire a few people, so it's not like there's always work available for us to compete for. There's hardly any work available at all. (I18)."

Moreover, also many young workers recently graduated, knowing the state of the labour market in Turkey, they do not want to stick to traditional ways of working:

> "I graduated during the pandemic. And as you know, the construction sector was one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic. And because I didn't like the environment in Turkey very much, because it didn't feel very secure, because it was fragile, I was looking for a different kind of job. What can I do? How can I stand on my own two feet? Independent of the crises or issues in the country. I was looking for answers to these questions. Then I tried for a while. I opened an account on Upwork and Fiverr. (I16)"

In other words, many recently graduated architects are trapped between rising unemployment and precariousness; they either cannot find the office jobs they are looking for or believe that they will never find them, so they turn to alternative platforms.

Moreover, Sert et al. (2021) state, on the basis of their interviews, that since they began working professionally, 85% of their participants reported having encountered labour rights violations. Toprak (2022) states that the difficult job search process, low pay, unstable working conditions, and long hours are the typical circumstances where the labour of young architects is severely exploited. Moreover, Toprak (2022) highlights that the majority of young architects employed in offices experience various forms of labour exploitation, most notably through unpaid overtime and inadequate wages. Similarly, in the case of the interviewees of my study, the interviewees who have experience in architecture offices made similar statements. One of the biggest problems with working in an office was mentioned as unpaid overtime:

> "There is never any overtime pay in offices. It's even considered rude to ask. Someone asked. They were fired. You see that. They put you in a position of ingratitude, a position of ungratefulness. Either you get fired or you are forced to resign after hearing that. (I20)"

> "Let me put it this way: throughout my entire life, or rather throughout my entire career as an architect, I have worked at least half as much overtime as I have worked regular hours. This overtime occurred at times like this: there were days when I worked a full 24 hours and then completed my 8-hour shift the next day without a break. And in three out of four jobs, I did not receive overtime pay (I7)."

While these examples reveal that working conditions in architecture offices are highly exploitative in terms of working times and unpaid labour, it would be misleading to portray platform-based freelance work as a more favorable alternative. As discussed in previous chapters, one of the most discussed issues regarding platform work is working time and flexibility. Although in some cases, this flexibility can be considered as something positive, in many cases, it makes workers more open to exploitation. According to Aleksynska et al. (2019) one of the unique characteristics of working online is that many employees must regularly invest a significant amount of time in finding new clients and tasks, researching requesters through online forums, updating and improving their online profiles, taking qualification tests, obtaining credentials, interacting with clients or requesters, leaving reviews and requesting reviews from clients, and recovering payment for completed work. In addition to that, as Dunn (2020) states, platforms often motivate workers to stay online during times of high customer demand by linking such availability to the possibility of increased earnings (Prassl, 2018); thus, workers must work and stay online for long hours and at peak times in order to garner high earnings.

This constant need to remain visible and responsive online, as highlighted in the literature, directly resonates with the experiences of my interviewees. Their accounts illustrate how the pressure to be among the first to respond to potential clients translates into extended hours of screen time and a persistent state of online availability, often blurring the boundaries between work and personal life:

> "I know that they write to them first because they think they can communicate faster with those who are online at that moment. For this reason, I tried to stay online day

> and night. Just now, I said something about it giving a sense of freedom. Perhaps the only thing that restricts this freedom is this feeling of being tied to a job, to a computer, or to the internet (I19)."

> "When I first started freelancing, I was always in front of my computer. I had that freelance platform open in one tab, and I refreshed it every ten minutes. Because, for example, when a job that suits me comes up, you want to be the first person to bid on it within ten minutes, because that greatly increases your chances. So yes, it's really, really exhausting (I8)."

In addition to that, especially working through international platforms is observed to create serious issues regarding working time due to the overseas customers:

> "For example, countries like the United States and Norway have time zones that are very different from ours. This is really disruptive, and I used to stay up all night to get work. Especially at the beginning. Or there are notifications that you can set up according to your preferred filters, so that you get notified when a job like that comes up, and I don't know how many times my sleep was interrupted by those notification sounds at night (I19)."

It is also linked to the way platforms facilitate transnational connections between clients and freelancers. Although this will be examined in more detail later, the quote reflects how the integration of different economies has contributed to the extension of working hours. As Huws (2014) notes, the overlap of multiple time zones inevitably fosters a 24-hour economy, compelling individuals to work outside conventional hours in order to respond to consumer demands arising at atypical times. This, in turn, necessitates another group to provide these services, leading to a slowly expanding working hours across all sectors of the economy (Huws, 2014).

Aleksynska et al. (2019) add that these tasks are unpaid, in contrast to wage employment. However, according to my fieldwork, unfortunately, young architects in Turkey are forced to work long hours performing various tasks for very little or no pay, even in salaried jobs. One of my interviewees who previously worked as a freelancer decided to start working in an architecture office due to the long and unpaid working hours in freelancing. However, when she started working as a waged employee, she saw that working times are not lighter:

> "Actually, after gaining freelance experience in this field, I wanted to have a proper job, at least. I wanted to sit in an office and go home. I joined the company so that I

> would have fixed working hours. But here, too, the workflow is very intense. So, we end up working long hours with the same intensity. But at least our job descriptions are a little clearer. (I17)"

Another interviewee also made a comparison of traditional work and platform work regarding the working time regime:

> "Sometimes I must respond to customers in the middle of the night. Because when customers are in America, for example, I must respond to them in the morning and at noon. The worst thing was when I had to attend a meeting at four in the morning. And it definitely couldn't be called freedom. But at the same time, I don't set an alarm; I just wake up naturally. So that's a good thing. There are pros and cons. (I8)"

These findings clearly show that both traditional office-based employment and platform-based freelance work models expose young architects to significant temporal exploitation. Although office work offers a relatively clear job description due to its fixed working hours, it does not protect employees from excessive and unpaid overtime. Similarly, despite promises of flexibility and autonomy, platform work often pushes workers into excessive and unpaid work due to constant availability, disruption of daily routines, and pressure from algorithmic visibility and instant and continuous customer interaction.

Undoubtedly, the biggest problem facing young architects in Turkey is inadequate pay. Whether they work in an office on a regular salary or take on freelance work through platforms, the majority of them complain that their pay is insufficient. Regarding the inadequate wages, Sert et al. (2021) state that their participants reported that they regularly experienced major labour rights violations, with being forced to work for less than the Chamber's minimum wage being one of the most prevalent. In their statement, the TMMOB Executive Board (2025) announced that the recommended base salary for salaried engineers, architects, and urban planners for 2025 has been set at 70,000 TL. for 2025. However, for many young architects, starting work in an office with a minimum wage is quite normal (I2, I9, I15, I18); in fact, the opposite would be surprising:

> "Well, I think that even on the worst day, freelancing is better than working as a salaried architect in Turkey. I was shocked when I heard about the highest salary in Istanbul. I had never heard of such a high salary before. I was shocked and couldn't

> believe it. I heard that there are people earning 60,000 TL. And they consider themselves very lucky, which is already a very good salary in this market. But let me put it this way: through freelancing, you can already earn that amount by taking on just two projects. I'm talking about two weeks of work, nothing too demanding. (I20)"

None of the interviewees, regardless of their mode of working, said that their salary was sufficient for them. As mentioned above, some of them started looking for jobs on platforms right away because the salaries offered at first were considered to be absurd: 'They offer salaries that a university graduate would never accept. I didn't want to work for those salaries, so I'm in this process [freelancing through platforms] right now. (I10). In addition, many freelance architects also do not think they earn enough, especially in the beginning. However, for both freelancers working through platforms and those securing projects via their own networks, the possibility of later earning in US dollars or euros and withdrawing this money within a relatively short time acts as a strong source of motivation:

> "You know that our salaries are extremely low in the normal market. Even if I can't get an extremely low salary, I can work freelance myself, so I don't mind not getting it. I can't get it because I'm not working. I may not get any work that month, but it's better than getting a low salary even though I worked 100 hours instead of 40. (I20, Freelancer)"

The success of some particular examples is particularly worth mentioning here. One of the architects I spoke to moved to Berlin after earning money on Upwork for about six years and is able to sustain his life there solely through this platform work. When I asked him to compare the amount he is currently earning with what he would earn if he were to work in an office in Turkey, he said, "If I were to work in an office in Turkey right now, the monthly salary I would receive would be equivalent to my 2-3 days of my freelance income in this platform (I8)." However, it should be noted that this example is one of the rare situations I have encountered in the field. Although many freelancers start out with this hope, it is quite difficult for them to achieve such a breakthrough, especially in the beginning, due to the scarcity of work and the large number of architects on the platforms. In other words, this is not the case for many skilled freelancers in Turkey, for most of them, what they earn from freelance work is equivalent to the overtime pay they should receive at the office but do not, and is only a supplementary income as stated by Interviewee 9 and Interviewee 17. That is why

during the field work, I came across more architects than expected who work at the office, while also taking freelancing architecture jobs through their own networks or platforms. Because most freelancers seem to do this as a side job rather than their main job, as it was the case for Interviewee 10 and Interviewee 17. Most of my interviewees cited additional income as the reason for not giving up freelance work, although they work in an office. However, the majority of those who work exclusively as freelancers also mentioned that they receive financial support from their families, as it is the case for Interviewee 4 and Interviewee 18, or live with their families to reduce their expenses (Interviewee 16). None of the interviewed freelancers working through platforms said they could live solely on this income. While they all referred to it as additional income, they added that they hoped to find different avenues in the future:

> "It is not very likely that a person would spend their entire life working from this platform. Because we never earn a salary close to the minimum wage. So, it's like pocket money, like the pocket money we get from our families. Some children collect more money during holidays, so to speak (I18)."

Many of the interviewees agreed on the same statement as voiced by Interviewee 21: “In Turkey, it is not possible for a young architect to make a living by working solely as a freelancer or solely in an office.”

Another point regarding traditional work is social security. As discussed in the previous section, platform workers in Turkey per se do not have specific legal protection, social security, or employment benefits. On the other hand, benefits like social security and insurance are taken as default rights that come from being formally registered. But the field work also revealed that some offices employ their workers without insurance (I2) or declare all salaries as minimum wage and make insurance payments accordingly in a lower scale (I9) in Turkey. Moreover, social security is not exclusive to office-based employees; self-employed individuals or anyone with registered status are also entitled to certain protections. However, self-employed workers often attempt to reduce their expenses by prioritising other costs and postponing or avoiding the payment of their own social security contributions. However, as also Gruber (2022) also mentions, even though employer benefits have decreased in value over time, they continue to be the main source of protection against

health and numerous other risks. Among the architects interviewed, there were, of course, those who saw insurance as a guarantee (I4) and therefore started working in the office (I13), or those who felt insecure due to its absence (I18). In addition, as discussed with quotes in the previous section, when uninsured interviewees were asked about this situation, they stated that they did not care much (I14, I16). The reason for this, these two interviewees both stated, was that insurance used to be important for retirement, but now it has lost its importance. This is related to the poor conditions of the labour market in Turkey, as well as the weakening of the social security system. According to DİSK-AR (2025c):

> "Pensioners are the second largest group in Turkey after workers. With Law No. 5510, pension payments fell significantly, pensioners' share of national income was reduced to zero, and pension payments fell below the minimum wage. Although attempts have been made to improve this situation with patches, the pension and social security system has become an unfair system. The number of retirees who are either working or seeking employment in Turkey has reached eight million."

Not surprisingly, it becomes inevitable for the interviewees to think, "There is no point in retiring in this country anyway, you can't live on a pension (I14)". This situation shows that certain guarantees, which are long considered as the main advantage of traditional work and the biggest handicap of platform work, have begun to lose their meaning in Turkey. Considering the various advantages of platforms, some workers cannot find a reason to remain in the traditional working regime. In other words, while some are attracted by the advantages of platforms, they are also pushed by the drawbacks of the traditional working style in Turkey. This does not mean that platforms are a bed of roses. It simply shows that people who have not found what they were hoping for in salaried employment, who have lost hope, or who have not been able to find a place for themselves, are turning to platforms in the search for new opportunities. According to the literature, there are various reasons for workers to get into platform work. It might be flexibility and lifestyle fit, to earn extra money or supplement existing pay, as a temporary solution for individuals who are between jobs, changing career, or adapting to changes in their personal lives, as a main source of income for those facing difficulties in finding work in the traditional jobs market (Dunn, 2020; ILO, 2025). The latter reason is generally associated with the lower-skilled jobs. However, being unemployed and underemployed in Turkey's traditional

labour market is not a situation unique to low-skilled workers; it can also be clearly observed in my fieldwork. For this reason, it is quite difficult to generalise why skilled workers in Turkey prefer platform jobs. However, in light of this study, it can be said that the two main reasons are to earn additional income and not being able to find a place for themselves in the current traditional labour market. Although it is difficult to say that the traditional working model itself is a driving force for platforms globally, this can be said for Turkey. One interviewee explains this situation by highlighting the context in Turkey as follows:

> "If I were in the Netherlands, I could work in an office. I think the market here is pushing people to work freelance. They offer 25-30 thousand lira for 6 days of work on a construction site. In the Netherlands, both the conditions and the jobs are good. You can also do design work, and they value you (I14)."

On the other hand, nonstandard employment forms still present many unique challenges for workers. The biggest challenge faced by the interviewed freelance architects is the unstable nature of freelance work. Regardless of whether they work on the platform or not, all freelance architects, especially when they first start working, say that the biggest challenge is instability and uncertainty.

> "You know how they always say that even the worst order is better than disorder? Well, because there's no solid foundation here due to the chaos, it's very stressful. It's like there are two or three people waiting on top of my head. You have to find the next job, do your own work. There's constant anxiety. The biggest stress, especially for freelancers, is that uncertainty. (I10)"

The freelance architects I spoke to do not feel safe or settled because they do not have a secure income or job continuity (I19). However, unlike salaried employees, they must constantly find new work and take care of everything related to that work. As mentioned in the interviews, this concern is relatively minor for architecture office workers because work comes to the offices regularly and is usually done in teams (I4). However, even though salaries are insufficient, the fact that they are fixed and can be relied upon to plan for the future is more important for some architects (I17). As one interviewee jokingly put it, "No one would let their daughter to marry with a freelancer (I16)."

Another important discussion point for this thesis is how labour platforms have specifically changed the mode of working of young architects. Although freelancing for many skilled workers is pretty standard and not a new phenomenon in Turkey, for architects, who have a very established traditional working regime, freelancing but especially freelancing through platforms, is pretty recent. Moreover, freelance work, which was implemented in various ways before the platforms, took a different form with the unique features of the platforms. Firstly, platforms make it easier to get into freelancing, especially for new graduates who lack an extensive network. As discussed in Chapter 2, networking is one of the biggest challenges for new freelancers. Srnicek (2016) mentions that the second crucial feature is that digital platforms generate and depend on "network effects," which state that the more users a platform has, the more valuable it is to everyone else. Although many interviewees mentioned how difficult it was to get their first job after joining the platform, especially due to the competition, the platform still functions as an intermediary that brings together potential customers for those without a network. In addition, one of the interviewees mentioned that looking for a freelance job on a platform feels more professional:

> "Searching for freelance work anywhere is very different from searching through Upwork. Upwork makes you feel that seriousness. You will do good work. You see the profile. You understand the competition. That was very good for me." (I1)

Secondly, the most common reason freelancers choose platforms is their reliability. Those who previously received freelance work through their own network but were eventually unable to receive their payment find the platform trustworthy (I8, I16, I17). Most of the people working through the platforms explain the reason why they prefer the platforms despite the commissions, because the platforms are reliable (I5, I7, I9, I10, I19). This is actually about how the platforms' payment systems work. On most platforms, after the client and freelancer agree, the client sends the money to a shared escrow account. Later, after the work is finished, the client approves it, and the money in escrow is transferred to the freelancer by the platform within a few days. Even if the client does not approve after the work has started, the money will not be refunded to the client unless the freelancer cancels the job. In cases where approval cannot be obtained, the status can be reported to the resolving center. The fact that platforms clearly display customer profiles, have comments there (I19), and have a resolving

center (I7) to contact when necessary can be a source of trust for freelancers. Only three of the interviewees used the platform's resolving system. One of them received payment this way, while the platform told the other two that they could not interfere:

> "I made an agreement with someone once, and everything seemed fine, but halfway through the transaction, they cancelled the credit card, and I did not get my money. The client also complained to their bank, and this time, the bank wanted half of the money back. I wrote to the platform, but they did not care at all. They said the bank wanted it, and we have to do what the bank says. So, since you are the smallest fish, when something happens between the bank and the platform, they decide everything (I8)."

In other words, although some of the platform's tools seem reassuring in theory, in practice, they may not be used frequently to the benefit of the freelancer. However, various tools like comments and the resolving center's ability to access and monitor all conversations may actually be systems the platform uses to control and manage freelancers, rather than to protect them. This will be discussed in detail in the next section.

The last specific feature of platforms is the fact that they have changed the modalities of competition. Since platforms are intermediaries that bring together clients and freelancers from all over the world, this creates a transnational competitive environment. Huws (2018) defines this as a global race where knowledge workers compete fiercely. For young architects that I talked to, this can both be an advantage and a disadvantage. On the one hand, some claimed that they specifically chose transnational platforms like Upwork and Fiverr, because they think that working with foreign clients is both more advantageous in terms of price, and many believe that foreign clients are more visionary than Turkish clients (I1). There were also those who said that customer profiles on Western-based platforms were better compared to domestic platforms like Bionluk. On the other hand, it may also be demotivating for some. One of my interviewees mentioned that when he first joined the platform, he did not think he would be able to get any work, that there were too many Indian freelancers, and that they were working for very cheap. This led him to ask, "There are thousands of people, why would anyone give me a job?" and he became demotivated (I16).

Graham and Anwar (2019) summarize this as although the geographic distribution of online labour is far from uniform, employers can now find new employees anywhere in the world in a matter of minutes thanks to the relative accessibility of digital connectivity and the opportunities offered by digital labour platforms, provided that the workers have access to the necessary ICT tools and internet connectivity. According to Beerepoot and Lambregts (2015), at this point, these platforms are the closest to the concept of a global labour market in which people from all over the world compete for jobs. They create a global labour market where employers can quickly hire and fire employees, resulting in a high level of flexibility. This is defined as "global outsourcing" by Huws (2014) and "planetary labour market" by Graham and Anwar (2019). Another important issue in this regard is that these platforms actually create a new division of labour between the South and the North. Haidar and Keune (2021) indicate that while most of the work is performed by workers from the global south, the majority of online labour platforms are funded by capital from the global north, and the majority of the demand for labour on these platforms also comes from the North. As mentioned above, this is defined as global outsourcing by many (Beerepoot and Lambregts, 2015; Huws,2014; Graham and Anwar, 2019). Beerepoot and Lambrechts (2015) highlight that, thus, service outsourcing and offshoring change the way competition occurs globally and cause opportunities and chances to be redistributed geographically. A key idea in service outsourcing, offshoring, and the development of a global labour market is labour arbitrage. Haidar and Keune (2021) discuss the same issue with different words: clients from the Global North try to cut costs and shift risks by outsourcing work to Southern workers, expecting them to accept lower pay even when they have similar skills and experience. The observation of the field of this thesis was also like this. Freelancers, especially when they first join platforms, often have to offer very low prices to get work (I1, I7). This pay gap is reinforced by the limited job opportunities in the South and the high level of competition on digital platforms, where many workers compete for a small number of jobs, pushing rates even lower. Indian workers are often cited as an example in both practice and literature for skilled jobs, as they are both highly proficient in English and quite skilled:

> “I think the problem with freelancing on platforms in this regard is this: I believe that although it provides you with freedom, it forces you to work for much less than the job is worth. Because these are international sites, there are people from all over the world. Considering the current exchange rate, Turkey is not in a great economic situation either, but an Indian architect can do a job for two dollars that would cost you ten dollars, and in reality, you should be paying much more than ten dollars. (I2)”

> "For example, the job is worth a hundred dollars, but when they convert thirty dollars into Turkish Lira and see that it is a lot, they think it is enough for me. They do not think that they are getting something done for thirty dollars that they would normally pay a hundred for; they genuinely believe that amount is a lot for me. Also, since competition is quite strong there as well, workers in countries like Pakistan and India are willing to work for even lower rates. (I5)"

As the quotes also show, this has become the norm for international platforms. Some interviewees also point out that this is quite normal: “If they were going to get it done for the same price, they would find someone there, shake hands, and get it done face-to-face. Why would they give work to someone here (I16)?” For those working on international platforms like Upwork and Fiverr, it has become the norm to do work for even less than its worth, influenced by global competition. Many of them cannot bring their prices to a normal level until they reach a specific customer base, regular foreign customers. However, they find the courage to do this when they "prove themselves" to others and start doing regular work (I8).

In this chapter, firstly, the interviews conducted with 21 young architects are analyzed in a comparative perspective. Experiences of architects in traditional architecture work and labour platforms are compared based on working-time, salaries, insurance and competition. Particularly when evaluating the interviewees' experiences in the traditional regime, reference was made to the fourth section and the general neoliberal labour regime of Turkey. The first significant finding was that the very high youth unemployment rate of Turkey also applies to architects. During the fieldwork, it was challenging to find young architecture graduates currently working as architects. It is pretty remarkable in this sense that some interviewees started working on the platform because they were looking for a job for a while and could not find a suitable job.

The second important point of comparison was working time. In this regard, it was a significant finding that many traditionally employed architects work long hours without receiving overtime pay. However, architects working on platforms are also

forced to spend long hours on platforms, especially in the beginning, to take works. Furthermore, because platform workers often work abroad, their working hours are significantly extended. The most crucial point in this debate is the issue of salary. In Turkey, the salaries of architects in offices are pretty low. While many start on minimum wage, none earn enough. Freelance architects, however, often struggle to earn sufficient income, especially in the beginning. This is pushing many young architects in Turkey into a new hybrid regime, combining freelance and traditional work. In addition, the weakening social security system in Turkey no longer inspires confidence in workers. This is causing some rights, once seen as a significant advantage of the traditional work system, to lose their significance. The insecurity in traditional working conditions, low wages, workers not receiving their rights, and architects not seeing a future in these jobs are the factors that push them to platforms.

In the second part of this section, the unique features of freelance platforms are discussed. This part also highlights the specific conditions of freelancers on the online platforms. The first point in this discussion is the network effect of platforms. It was noted that these platforms are a good networking resource, especially for architects new to freelancing, and are often preferred for this reason. A second characteristic and reason for preference is that these platforms are considered relatively reliable. With their various tools, the platforms successfully cultivate a trustworthy image among freelancers and attract them. The final topic of discussion was that platforms create a global labour market and provide an environment where customers in developed countries can outsource jobs a low-priced to highly skilled workers in developing countries like Turkey

5.3. Creative Work under Platform Logic: Productization, Task Fragmentation, and Skill Devaluation

As discussed in Chapter 2, the complex nature of architectural work, which encompasses both creative and technical dimensions, has long been a subject of debate. From the outset, questions have been raised about whether architecture should be classified as a fully creative profession, a topic addressed in the previous chapter. At the same time, broader neoliberal transformations in creative work, marked by market-oriented restructuring, cost minimization, and global outsourcing, have

reshaped professional roles and eroded stability and autonomy traditionally associated with creative occupations. Architecture, as a form of creative work, is also subject to these transformations. As Fisher (2015) notes, while architects' creative expertise often places them within the category of "talent," capital in the neoliberal context tends to regard much of the design profession as interchangeable labour. In this context, digital labour platforms emerge as a powerful mechanism accelerating, deepening, and extending this transition. By fragmenting complex design processes into smaller, standardized components, platforms make it easier to outsource the more technical or routine aspects of architectural work, while retaining only the strategically "core" tasks in-house. This process not only alters the scope of work available to architects but also reshapes the balance between creative and technical elements, with creative input becoming increasingly partial.

In this context, the transformation of architectural work under platform logic can be understood through three interrelated dynamics. First, ***productization*** turns the architectural process into standardized, marketable units that can be priced, compared, and sold much like any other commodity. Second, ***task fragmentation*** breaks down what was once a holistic and complex design process into smaller, discrete assignments, enabling them to be outsourced to a wider labour pool. Third, ***skill devaluation*** emerges as both a cause and a consequence of these shifts, as the expertise gained through years of architectural education is increasingly underutilized, replaced by simplified tasks that require minimal specialized knowledge. While the erosion of skills in creative professions is not new under neoliberalism, platforms intensify and extend this process, applying it even to professional fields like architecture, where such commodification and fragmentation were once difficult to implement.

The fact that skills of workers are increasingly less utilized in their jobs under capitalism, and that jobs are becoming smaller tasks requiring fewer skills, is not a new debate. Braverman (1974: p.78) refers to this as "dissociation of the labour process from the skills of the workers." According to him, the labour process is deliberately detached from the worker's craft, tradition, and accumulated knowledge, relying instead entirely on the systems and control mechanisms established by management, rather than on workers' abilities. Building on the analysis of Braverman

(1974), Previtali and Fagiani (2017: p.97) mention that workers are prevented from controlling the labour process through the deliberate separation of conception from execution, meaning the division between intellectual and manual tasks. This separation leads to the progressive deskilling of labour, as work is increasingly reduced to simplified, standardized, and repetitive tasks that lack substantive content. In such a context, what previously required years of professional training can be learned in only a few weeks, rendering workers more interchangeable and less autonomous. The reorganization of work under this principle means that the design, planning, and control functions are concentrated in the hands of management, while the execution is carried out by a broader, less skilled labour pool. The reorganization of work is also referred to by Braverman. Braverman (1974: p.52) states that at this stage, the focus is not on the overall division of labour across society, but on how it occurs within a single enterprise; not on the distribution of work across different industries and occupations, but on how specific occupations and industrial processes are broken down internally. The concern is not with "production in general," but with how the capitalist mode of production operates in particular.

Ramioul and Huws (2009) highlight the outsourcing process with an emphasis on standardization. Tasks that are not considered as a part of a company's core operations can be sourced from external suppliers, while standardized production processes may be relocated to other firms or regions if this improves efficiency at a given time. Over time, more and more business functions have come to be classified as non-core. Valenduc et al. (2007) also add that value chain restructuring involves a growing standardization and fragmentation of processes, enabling them to be set up and reorganized in an extensive variety of ways to meet the requirements of a certain company or group of companies at any given time. Without changes in the utilization of human knowledge and expertise in a commodification process, this standardization and fragmentation cannot occur. Processes such as codification, commodification, standardization, and fragmentation have been key drivers of this shift, making it possible to outsource and offshore service activities that were once managed internally (Ramioul and Huws, 2009). This trend toward outsourcing and standardization forms the structural basis upon which digital labour platforms operate, enabling them to

apply these principles more rapidly, at greater scale, and across new occupational domains.

As also discussed in the previous section, platforms have changed the way of work is distributed. Platforms have extended and deepened this separation to a global scale, applying it even to professional fields where such fragmentation was previously complex. By enabling the division and outsourcing of tasks that were once considered indivisible, platforms have significantly expanded the scope and scale of this process. Srnicek (2017: p.46) explains:

> "We can see that platforms are simply extending earlier trends into new areas. Whereas outsourcing once primarily took place in manufacturing, administration, and hospitality, today it is extending to a range of new jobs: cabs, haircuts, stylists, cleaning, plumbing, painting, moving, content moderation, and so on. It is even pushing into white-collar jobs – copyediting, programming, and management, for instance. Moreover, in terms of the labour market, lean platforms have turned what was once non-tradable services into tradable services, effectively expanding the labour supply to a near-global level."

Architecture, traditionally one of the professional fields where outsourcing and task fragmentation were considered difficult to implement, has increasingly become subject to these dynamics. As mentioned before, this is a relatively recent and still emerging phenomenon in Turkey, where digital labour platforms facilitate the breaking down of design processes into standardized, often highly technical components that can be outsourced globally. This leaves architects to compete for increasingly smaller portions of the creative workflow. The following section examines how this shift is experienced by young architects working through digital labour platforms in Turkey.

As mentioned in section 5.1.2. There are many platforms available for different purposes, and they operate in distinct ways. In particular, the commodification of the labour process by platforms is closely related to the architectural work carried out through them. Platforms like Fiverr and Bionluk, for example, essentially package the creative process of architecture into ready-made products for sale. Additionally, e-commerce platforms like Etsy, which are specifically designed for this purpose, take this approach even further. This creates an understanding among freelance architects who work on platforms that their work is alienating and simplified. In my field study,

interviewees also state that, especially, attempting to practice architecture through platforms often leads architects to perceive their work as commodified and simplified, reducing complex creative processes to standardized, easily tradable outputs:

> "Just as a customer can go to Trendyol [an e-commerce platform] and sort items from cheapest to most expensive when buying a pen, they can also sort you on freelancing platforms. So, in a way, you end up selling yourself in that ranking rather than the work you do. You are no different from a commodity, I would say. (I2)"

> "I do not think there is much difference between freelancing platforms and marketplaces. You post an ad based on your skills. So, it is actually like selling something, like selling a key chain on Trendyol (I3)."

Overall, these quotations illustrate how platforms restructure architectural labour into commodified units, blurring the distinction between creative professional services and standardized market goods.

Moreover, as mentioned above, most of the work that architects in Turkey obtain through platforms can be classified as "non-core" tasks. In other words, the architectural process, which is typically conceived as a comprehensive and holistic practice, is fragmented into smaller components and outsourced, with these discrete tasks often offered as assignments on platforms.

> "The freelance jobs I take on from the platform are usually like the technical part of a larger project. I am usually only involved in the initial stages of large projects. (I8)"
> "Currently, I am doing freelance work for a website, creating and uploading illustrations. For example, they ask me to create icons like the ones you see on a phone app, settings icon, home icon, phone icon, and so on, in a specific format, such as drawing a hundred of them. That is why I don't consider it architectural work; it's not architecture. (I18)"

In other words, in freelance platforms, employees outsource a specific, small part of a broader project. Generally, these parts are relatively technical. Based on the interviews conducted, the most frequently mentioned assignments include rendering, presentation preparation, modeling, and cost estimation. During my fieldwork, I did not encounter any instances in which freelance architects received projects through platforms that involved responsibility from start to finish. Furthermore, I did not come across any cases in which large-scale architectural design or implementation projects, which could be considered core tasks in architecture, were undertaken through platforms.

On the other hand, this does not mean that simplification of work for young architects is specific to platform work. As emphasized previously, in neoliberalism, architects, like many other creative workers, are treated as interchangeable labour. In offices, young architects are often assigned smaller, repetitive tasks like technicians, while the boss architects of the office have a strong and autonomous voice in the design process. Some of my interviewees who work as architects in offices described the situation as follows:

> "When I started working at the office, I realized that in this sector, we receive data from above and we just draw it like technical staff. Since this did not quite meet my expectations, I decided to go back to graduate school. (I17)"

> "The work comes into the office like this. We have already drawn this. Take these small details, paste them here, and revise them according to this area. This is a situation I can never accept, and unfortunately, this is not architecture. However, there's nothing we can do about it. (I7)"

However, according to this field study, architectural work in offices has an advantage over that on platforms. Even though young architects in offices may not have independent decision-making power in the creative process, they at least have the opportunity to see the whole project, form opinions about it, and learn by observing a variety of projects and creative processes:

> "I have drawn plans from scratch at the office. You draw the plan, you draw the section, and you prepare the presentation. This kind of office is more comprehensive. When you take a job from Fiverr, the product you produce is very limited. That is why you do not feel satisfied. Maybe on Fiverr, I am doing something much smaller, something that will be in a corner of a page. (I11)"

> "I get to see a wide variety of projects at the office. The type of work I take on as a freelancer is fixed, but it varies from office to office. A friend of mine worked at an office for three months and only designed the entrance and exit signs. (I13)"

As mentioned in the above quote, although it is not possible to generalize for every office, most of the people I interviewed said that they saw more variety in their work at the office, were able to participate more in processes, and that this contributed to their learning.

Another point raised by Braverman (1978) and addressed by Huws (2014) is the intensification of work and skill. Braverman (1978: p.340) states that the ongoing expansion of mass education for non-professional segments of the workforce became increasingly disconnected from the actual requirements of their occupations. Simultaneously, its role within the broader social and economic structure was solidified through functions that had little or no relevance to job-specific training or to strictly educational purposes. As Huws (2014: p.125) points out, new competency requirements are less related to the essence of professions and more to secondary skills such as social skills, problem-solving skills, and resource management. Therefore, new competencies may be added to existing professional requirements and even overshadow the development of core professional skills.

In my fieldwork, young architects talked about how these changing expectations show up in practice, with a growing focus on secondary skills instead of core architectural work:

> "Right now, I am doing freelance work that I found through my friends, and I usually make simple drawings using a program. Even someone who has nothing to do with architecture could probably figure out how to use this program in a few months. I do not think you need to study for four years to do something like this. (I15)"

This illustrates how professional training and expertise are increasingly undervalued, as tasks once embedded in architectural practice are reduced to simplified, standardized outputs that require minimal specialization. In the case of architecture, this also means that the extensive and demanding education required to enter the profession is devalued, as graduates often find themselves performing work that neither reflects nor requires the full scope of their training.

Moreover, in parallel with the arguments of Braverman, undermining the value of skilled education, the example below from my fieldwork illustrates how, in some cases, years of demanding architectural education are reduced to a symbolic credential with little relevance to the skills required for the job:

> "There was a furniture company looking for a sales representative, but they wanted someone who was an architect or interior designer. They only wanted someone who could work on weekends. And they gave me a five-stage interview. They conducted

> interviews for an entire month. And nothing came of it in the end. They made an offer, but it was an absurdly low salary. There are truly absurd situations. It is a peculiar system where they exploit your title to try to hire you at minimum wage. The job is purely sales-oriented, and there is no need for any architectural education. (I15)"

As noted above, many architects do not regard the tasks they perform in their current workplaces as genuine architectural practice. Moreover, particular positions that are entirely unrelated to architecture and require significantly lower skill levels may nonetheless list an architectural degree as a prerequisite. This shows that the value of architectural education is declining and that it is finding less and less place in working life. Whether working in an office or taking on freelance work through platforms, architects express that they are unable to utilize the architectural skills they acquired during their education:

> "In my student projects, I drew huge libraries and corporate buildings. I researched, drew, and created amazing new-generation technological application solutions. Working as a freelancer, I may never get to try any of these things in my lifetime. But I have to pay my bills (I20)."

According to Huws (2014: p. 121), another important factor that distinguishes creative work from other types of work is the high level of commitment to the work itself. This is a form of personal satisfaction. In the literature on architectural labour, this satisfaction has been discussed in connection with creativity and autonomy. The people interviewed in the field were asked whether they derived satisfaction from their work. In particular, those who worked both as freelancers through platforms and in offices were asked to compare their professional satisfaction. The most popular answer was that young architects did not feel personally satisfied with either their jobs at architecture firms or the freelance work they received through platforms (I5, I11, I17, I21). As stated in the above quote, many young architects lack the opportunity and autonomy to realize their own creative vision. Architects, who have acquired many skills during their education and have been encouraged to be creative, experience disappointment when they start working because the field is not what they expected. This, of course, leads to them not finding the satisfaction they expected from their profession. One of my interviewees, who works as a freelancer on a platform and also as an architect in an office, describes the situation as follows:

> "The market is completely dominated by those who can afford to pay, and everything continues based on their vision. So, I can't suggest my ideas, I can't express myself. Because my job is actually to express the person who has the money. (I7)"

The last point is the consequence of the deskilling and fragmentation of work. Previtali and Fagiani (2017) state that within the capitalist system, as the workforce grows and the availability of jobs declines, competition among workers becomes increasingly intense, distorted, and harsh. This heightened competition benefits employers, allowing them to hire highly qualified individuals for positions at lower wages and with reduced benefits.

This situation is seen as a disappointment in the field. Young architects, who are already unable to find what they are looking for in terms of professional satisfaction, are also questioning their salary, which is one of their basic expectations from their job. Whether they work on a platform or in an office, architects are not earning sufficient wages. When the effort they put into their education to become architects, the difficulty of the work, and its complexity are taken into account, this disappointment deepens. This inevitably leads young architects to question the value they see in their work:

> "I spent the whole day at the office, and the next day too. I couldn't come home in the evening, so I wasn't home at all. Or rather, I couldn't take care of cleaning the house. And the money I earned from freelancing didn't help me hire a helper to clean my house because the helpers who come to the house earn much more than what I earn from freelancing. So, if I were to clean houses instead of doing any freelance work, I'd already be making much more money (I7)."

> "I mean, it's not about looking down on it or anything… If I were to work as a waiter, a barista, or something like that… If I were to work as a salesperson in a store or something, I'd probably make much more money than I earn from that platform (I18)."

In the case of young architects, this dynamic is intensified by the fact that their professional skills are underutilized and undervalued. Interviewees often compared their earnings and working conditions to those in jobs classified as low-skilled, noting that these positions can offer higher pay or better working hours than architectural work obtained through platforms. Such comparisons reveal a dual loss for architects: not only are they deprived of the professional satisfaction associated with meaningful

creative work, but they are also excluded from the higher earnings and economic stability that could meaningfully improve their quality of life. In other words, years of specialized education and investment in developing expertise result in returns that, in economic and sometimes social terms, fall short of those in jobs that require no formal training. This leads to a deep sense of disillusionment, as architects find themselves in the labour market in ways that blur the usual lines between skilled and low-skilled work.

To sum up, in this section, the interviews conducted with 21 young architects are analyzed in terms of the quality of the architecture work. The changes that architecture, previously defined as a creative profession, underwent in neoliberalism and later within platforms were discussed concerning three points.

The first point is the productization of architectural labour. The important point here is that architectural production, which used to be considered a creative process, is now being packaged into small, standardized packages by platforms and sold. Due to the way platforms operate, freelance architects here are forced to offer their products in specific packages and at standard prices. As the interviewees also pointed out, this makes architects working on platforms feel as if they are selling standard products. The second point is task fragmentation. As the literature shows, dividing work into small pieces and distributing them to different workers is not a process specific to platforms. A similar division can be seen in architecture firms. However, platforms have made it possible to completely decontextualize certain parts of architectural work and outsource them to workers around the world. As a result, architects working on platforms have come to be able to take on only certain parts of the work, which are generally low-skilled and technical parts. Unlike in office settings, they are entirely excluded from the broader project environment, limiting their exposure to the overall context and creative processes, and thereby reducing their opportunities for learning.

The third point is skill devaluation. Research shows that neoliberal labour markets increasingly view creative professionals as interchangeable, which gradually undermines the value of specialized education and professional expertise. In architecture, years of demanding training and complex design skills often become

mere symbols of qualifications, with little connection to the actual work done. This situation worsens on platforms due to many non-core, technical, or routine tasks that need little specialization. As a result, architects frequently engage in work that is far below their skill level. Ironically, some non-architectural jobs list an architectural degree as a requirement. This devaluation of skills is also fueled by a lack of creative freedom, low professional satisfaction, and the inability to earn wages that match their qualifications.

In conclusion, in this chapter, empirical findings based on 21 semi-structured interviews are presented. First, the reason for choosing this topic and the gaps in the literature were explained. Then, the preliminary process of the fieldwork was described. Finally, empirical findings that emerged from the interviews were analysed in light of the literature. In conclusion, this thesis has explored how the transition of young architects in Turkey from traditional office-based employment to platform-mediated labour reshapes the organisation and conditions of skilled work. The analysis focused on three key dimensions: the intersecting issues of employment status and informality, the transformation of freelancing under platform logics, and the influence of platforms on the creative nature of architectural practice.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study is conducted with the aim of inquiring into the transition of young architects from the traditional working regime to online labour platforms in Turkey. The primary reason for selecting this subject was a gap observed in the literature. Since most platform studies focus on low-skilled gig work, there are relatively fewer studies focusing on skilled work on platforms. For this reason, the conditions and practices of skilled work on platforms have not yet been examined from all angles. Furthermore, no studies have been found specifically examining how the digital labour of architects is reshaped. As is the case worldwide, the number of digital labour platforms is rapidly increasing in Turkey and is widely used by different sectors. Numerous studies in the literature focus on platform labour, particularly on the types of work that are primarily based on physical skills, such as courier services and cleaning. In that sense, there are many studies conducted on location-based platform work. However, the studies on occupational groups that require specific technical knowledge or creative expertise, which can be considered skilled work, are relatively scarce in the literature. In this context, how digital platforms affect modalities of labour in sectors and professions that require technical knowledge, educational background, and creative skills is an area that has not yet been sufficiently addressed in the literature. In other words, working through platforms has expanded across almost all professional groups, and architects are no exception to this transformation. However, the literature provides little insight into the implications of this shift for skilled and creative professions.

There are specific reasons for focusing on architects in this thesis. While platform-mediated work has long been prevalent in other creative sectors, architecture remains in a transitional phase, offering a valuable perspective to observe the dynamics of

change. Moreover, the long-established traditions of architectural practice and office-based work arrangements allow for a comparative perspective that highlights both continuity and disruption. Most of the skilled tasks carried out on digital platforms are not purely technical; they mainly involve creative activities such as design, content production, or problem-solving. Architecture remains in a more complex position in this sense, as it encompasses both technical and creative work. For this reason, it is also an interesting case to study to see how platforms are transforming the work practices of architects. In addition to this, witnessing the difficulties experienced by architects in my personal circle in their traditional working lives, as well as the new dimensions added to these difficulties by the emergence of platforms, convinced me that this topic needed to be addressed. In light of both the literature and personal observations, the shift of architects towards platforms is identified as a relatively recent phenomenon. Accordingly, the main research question of this thesis has been formulated based on this transition. Moreover, it is considered that young architects are the ones who are undergoing this change and experiencing its effects most clearly. Therefore, the primary aim of this thesis was to address the question of "How does the transition of young architects in Turkey from traditional office-based work to platform-mediated labour reshape the organisation and conditions of skilled work?".

In light of my research question, following the introduction, the Chapter 2 was written to understand and present the concepts and theoretical discussions currently existing in the literature. The Chapter 3 includes a context to provide background information for the study by examining the labour regime, architectural practices, and platforms in Turkey separately. Following this, Chapter 4 describes the case selection and data collection process of the study, and Chapter 5 presents the empirical findings from the field work.

In Chapter 2, three distinct literatures are presented. Platform work is a rapidly expanding field with a high volume of production, which often leads to conceptual confusion. For this reason, platform studies have first been examined across three analytical levels. At the most macro level, the focus was on the platform economy and the structural transformations it has introduced. The second level discussed platforms as business models and their impact on labour relations. Finally, attention was given

to the types of work carried out through platforms and the debates surrounding them. Subsequently, the literature on creative labour, within which architecture is situated, was reviewed. The primary debates highlighted in this section concern how creative labour is defined, the potential theoretical drawbacks of this definition, and the position of creative work within neoliberalism. In addition, particular attention was given to the place of architects within these broader discussions of creative labour. Finally, the debates on digitally skilled labour were examined, with specific emphasis on employment status and on how platforms have reshaped the modes of working of these professionals.

In Chapter 3, the neoliberal labour regime in Turkey since the 1980s, the development of freelance work, the emergence of online labour platforms, and the current actors shaping the architectural profession in Turkey were examined separately. It was discussed how the traditional labour regime, which has become increasingly authoritarian and pro-capitalist since the 1980s, has placed workers in a more precarious position. In addition to the impact this has had on architects, other interrelated issues were also highlighted, such as the increasing number of architecture faculties, the growing number of young architects, and the slowdown in the construction market, which has led to employment problems for architects. In addition, the status and working conditions of platform workers and freelancers in Turkey were elaborated.

In Chapter 4, the case selection and data collection process were described. This thesis adopted a qualitative research method, and accordingly, the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 21 young architects. In the process of finding participants, I first contacted architects I knew personally and then asked them to introduce me to their networks. In addition, I announced the study on various social media platforms to diversify the participant profile. In July 2025, I conducted approximately one-hour face-to-face and online interviews with the interviewees, using the set of questions I had previously prepared based on the themes I had identified. Next, I transcribed my interviews and coded them in MAXQDA according to the pre-determined codes identified in light of the literature. I started the analysis of the qualitative data in this manner.

In Chapter 5, I presented the findings from the field study. Since the main research question was developed in light of the literature and ongoing debates, the themes that emerged from the fieldwork essentially correspond to these discussions. In this respect, the analysis in this Chapter is structured around three principal axes, presented in three sub-sections of the Chapter. The first concerns the intersecting dimensions of work, with a particular focus on employment status, modes of working, and informality. The second highlights the transition from traditional office-based work to platform-based freelancing, which provides the central perspective for examining the ongoing transformation. Finally, the third explores creative work under platform logic, with particular attention to productization, task fragmentation, and the devaluation of skills. Of course, during the analysis, themes also emerged that could not be confined to these three axes or that cut across all of them. This overlap demonstrates the multidimensional character of the analysis and highlights the interrelated nature of the findings.

The intersecting dimensions of work, with a particular focus on employment status, modes of working, and informality, are elaborated in light of the qualitative data in Chapter 5.1. It is indeed conceptually challenging to differentiate employment status, working modes, and economic formality, since these dimensions often overlap in practice. The diversity of the fieldwork further complicates this picture, as many participants combined different statuses, modes of work, or formal and informal practices, making separation analytically difficult yet crucial to understand their labour dynamics. Thus, one of the first findings was that, for most of the architects interviewed, legal status, working modes, and formality of economic activities often appeared in hybrid and overlapping forms. Although this phenomenon has been noted in the literature by organisations and scholars such as the ILO (2018) and Pouliakas and Ranieri (2022), it nevertheless emerged as a surprising finding in my research, since before conducting the fieldwork, I had anticipated that the modes of working and legal statuses of architects would be more clearly distinct.

In terms of the employment status of young architects, three main statuses were observed from the field work: employee, self-employed, and non-registered/informal own account workers. In the literature, when discussing the employment status of both

freelancers in general and all the workers employed through platforms, the most common topics of discussion are these three statuses. One of the most fundamental debates in the literature on self-employment is that solo self-employed individuals, or those who work on platforms, are considered self-employed, but they do not have the security, freedom, rights, and financial comfort usually associated with self-employment (Skyttedal et al., 2022; De Stefano and Aloisi, 2018). Parallel to the literature, in my fieldwork, both self-employed architects and those who were not currently registered emphasized that self-employment does not provide advantages in terms of work or security but rather constitutes an additional burden.

The second emergent point for analysis in Chapter 5.1 is informality. An important emphasis in the literature is that formalities in legal employment status and formalities in economic activity are different but intertwined issues. Murgia (2025) highlights that many self-employed, low-skilled platform workers accept works unofficially without legal procedures. My field study shows that this is not only true for low-skilled workers, but also for the skilled ones. The self-employed architects I interviewed also mentioned that they accept freelance work without formally declaring their economic activity.

Moreover, regarding informality, the literature highlights two perspectives: while some studies argue that platforms contribute to the spread of informality, others show that they can also facilitate workers' transition into the formal market. These views are not mutually exclusive, as both dynamics may coexist. According to my empirical findings, since platforms reduce the costs for employers, not only on a global scale, but even at the local level, employers prefer to outsource part of the work to architects through platforms rather than legally hiring an architect. Lastly, in the Turkish case, a distinction can be observed between skilled and low-skilled jobs. Location-based platforms in delivery and transportation require workers to set up sole proprietorships, which, although driven by platforms' avoidance of responsibility, represent a limited form of formalisation. In contrast, freelancers who would typically work under office contracts become part of the informal economy once they move to platforms.

The Chapter 5.2 of the empirical findings is about transitions in modes of working. In terms of working style, office-based employment and two types of freelance work were observed: platform-based freelance and freelance through personal networks. Firstly, the experiences of architects in traditional architecture work and on labour platforms are compared based on working time, salaries, insurance, and competition. The first finding in this section is that widespread youth unemployment in Turkey is also directly affecting young architects and their decisions about where to work. Some of them are forced to turn to platforms because they cannot find work in offices.

In terms of working time, given the prevalence of unpaid overtime among young architects in architectural firms and the unpaid time spent by architects working through platforms, particularly to secure their first job, both types of work, i.e., office work and platform work, expose architects to significant temporal exploitation. In addition, freelance architects working on platforms in countries with different time zones are significantly extending their working hours. In other words, platform work connects freelancers with international clients, and it disrupts the standard rhythm of working life. In this context, national labour regulations that define daily shifts or set weekly maximum working hours become ineffective, since work is scheduled according to transnational demands rather than local norms.

The central issue in this debate is salary. In Turkey, architects in offices often start on a minimum wage and generally earn incomes insufficient for their subsistence. Freelance architects likewise face financial difficulties, particularly at the beginning, which drives many young architects into a hybrid regime that combines freelance and traditional work. Moreover, the erosion of the social security system in Turkey has decreased workers' trust in salaried employment. It has reduced the value of rights that were once seen as a significant benefit of traditional employment models. Along with insecure working conditions, low wages, unfulfilled rights, and no long-term prospects, these issues increasingly push architects toward platform work.

In addition, the transition of architects who previously worked freelance through their own networks to platforms also brings significant changes. The first aspect of this discussion concerns the network effects of platforms, which serve as valuable

resources for architects entering freelancing and are often chosen for this purpose. A second factor is their perceived reliability, as platforms cultivate a trustworthy image through various tools that appeal to freelancers. The comment system available to customers on platforms, the ability to register on some platforms, and the fact that chats are monitored give young architects working on some platforms a sense of security. In addition, the fact that the money is placed in an e-escrow account by the customer before the job starts and is automatically transferred to the freelancer once the job is completed creates a sense of security. Especially young architects who have previously worked freelance through their networks and were unable to receive payment, find this aspect of the platforms reliable.

Finally, global outsourcing (Huws, 2014) is a key discussion regarding platforms. As Haidar and Keune (2021) state, most online labour platforms are financed by capital from the Global North, and the majority of the demand for labour on these platforms also originates from the same region, even though most of the work is done by workers from the Global South. The situation is no different for architects in Turkey. Most architects who find work on global platforms have employers from the Global North, who can have the same work done on the platforms at a lower cost than they would pay architects in their own countries. This situation primarily means that jobs that were previously distributed only locally are now being distributed in a global competitive environment. Architects are forced to undercut the value of their work in order to secure jobs on the platforms.

The Chapter 5.3. analyses the transformation of creative work under platform logic. As Braverman (1974) argued, under neoliberalism, the redistribution of work is shaped by processes of deskilling, a tendency that gains a new dimension with the rise of digital platforms. In this context, the first aspect brought by platforms is productization. As Srnicek (2017) mentions, platforms have led to the outsourcing of jobs that were previously resistant to such practices. This reflects a broader transformation in which specific creative fields, once difficult to commodify, are now being productized through platform mediation. The interviewed architects also point out that taking on freelance work from platforms is not like managing a work process, but rather like selling a regular packaged product. Architects usually see their work as

a creative and process-oriented practice. However, presenting it as a packaged item on platforms alienates them from this process, lowers their job satisfaction, and diminishes the creative meaning of their work.

In addition, it is also crucial that the outsourced tasks are fragmented and generally do not involve core work. This brings another point of analysis, the fragmentation of work. Although young architects working in offices may not have a say or independent influence at every stage of a project, they nevertheless benefit from the opportunity to learn by being directly involved in the workflow and by maintaining an awareness of the entire process. Architects working on platforms, on the other hand, are executing a fragmented part of the work without even having an idea about the whole project.

The last issue is skill devaluation. Neoliberal labour markets increasingly treat creative professionals as interchangeable, diminishing the value of specialised education and expertise. In architecture, years of demanding training and complex design skills are often reduced to formal credentials. On platforms, this tendency is exacerbated as architects frequently carry out fragmented, technical, or routine tasks that require minor specialisation, sometimes even applying for non-architectural jobs that nonetheless demand an architectural degree. This erosion of skills is compounded by limited creative freedom, low professional satisfaction, and wages that fail to match their qualifications.

To sum up, in addressing the research question of how the transition of young architects in Turkey from traditional office-based work to platform-mediated labour reshapes the organisation and conditions of skilled labour, three dimensions have been examined: the intertwined issues of employment status and informality, the transformation of freelancing through platform logics, and the impact of platforms on the creative character of architectural work. According to the findings of this study, the transition experienced by young architects is not limited to a single dimension but becomes most apparent in three different axes. Each axis captures a particular form of transformation, highlighting how the broader shift produces distinct yet interrelated changes. In other words, it is a complex set of changes that affect different parts of work and professional practice. The first axis is defined by the transformation of

architects' employment status, which unfolds in two interconnected ways. Previously, many of them had been working in offices as employees with a legally recognized position. With their move to platforms, however, two distinct transitions occur: some architects become self-employed, while others work on their account without any legal registration. While office-based employees were part of the registered economy, many platform-based architects, even when self-employed, do not fully register their activities or comply with legal procedures. This demonstrates how platform work not only alters employment categories but also expands the sphere of informality within professional labour.

The second axis concerns the transition in the mode of working, which primarily takes the form of a shift from office-based employment to freelancing. Freelancing itself is not new in the architectural profession, as many architects had previously taken on additional projects through their personal networks. What has changed is that this transition has become more widespread and has acquired new characteristics through the rise of platforms. Several factors shape this shift. On the one hand, the traditional labour regime generates strong push dynamics: unemployment, underemployment, and persistently low salaries in offices force young architects to look for alternatives. On the other hand, freelancing carries its own pull dynamics, such as the possibility of earning additional income and the flexibility to work whenever they want. Rather than leading to a complete exit from office-based jobs, the interaction of these push and pull factors often results in hybrid working regimes, where architects combine salaried office work with freelance projects to sustain their livelihoods. Platforms, however, have further transformed the conditions of freelancing. Platforms have pushed young architects towards freelancing on a global scale. This shift has intensified competition and disrupted working-time regimes, making the traditional notion of fixed hours largely irrelevant. However, for some young architects, platforms have emerged as reliable intermediaries that secure their freelancing process.

The third axis addresses how creative work is reconfigured under platform logic. In architectural practice, creativity is usually embedded in a process-oriented and holistic way of working. On platforms, however, this dimension is transformed through productization, whereby services are presented as standardized and easily marketable outputs rather than as complex processes. Closely related to this is task fragmentation,

which divides projects into small and repetitive units. In office settings, architects have access to the overall project and the chance to learn from different stages, even if they are not directly responsible for each. In contrast, platform-based work restricts them to isolated tasks, limiting their connection to the project as a whole. These dynamics contribute to skill devaluation. Architects are no longer able to use the skills they have acquired in their work, as the work has become much more technical, small-scale, and repetitive. This both diminishes the value of architectural education and distances architectural work from what is considered authentic architecture by interviewees.

Naturally, this analysis has its limitations. First of the sample is limited to 21 young architects, which means that the findings are somewhat exploratory rather than being generalisable. Secondly, although I acknowledge very well that gender-based inequalities exist in the labour markets of any types and the research sample is gender balanced, including 12 female and 9 male young architects, the analysis does not perform a gender-based differentiation per se. Thirdly, the interview data also suggest several directions for further research, which simultaneously highlight the limitations of the present study. This observation was reinforced in the interviews, as young architects pointed to several dynamics that lie beyond the scope of this study and warrant further investigation. In this regard, the first issue concerns algorithmic management, which has been widely discussed in the literature regarding both the location-based and online platform work, but could not be sufficiently addressed in this study. How the new control mechanisms introduced by platforms reshape work remains an important area for further exploration. Another point relates to the organising practices of skilled workers, particularly in the sense of how platforms undermine these practices, which deserves closer attention in future research. Lastly, this study focuses only on Turkey, which affects the findings within the country's specific institutional, economic, and cultural context. While this offers useful insights into platform-mediated skilled labour in a Global South or developing country context, more country case studies and comparative research in different countries are needed to enrich the literature on the skilled labour engaged in platform work.

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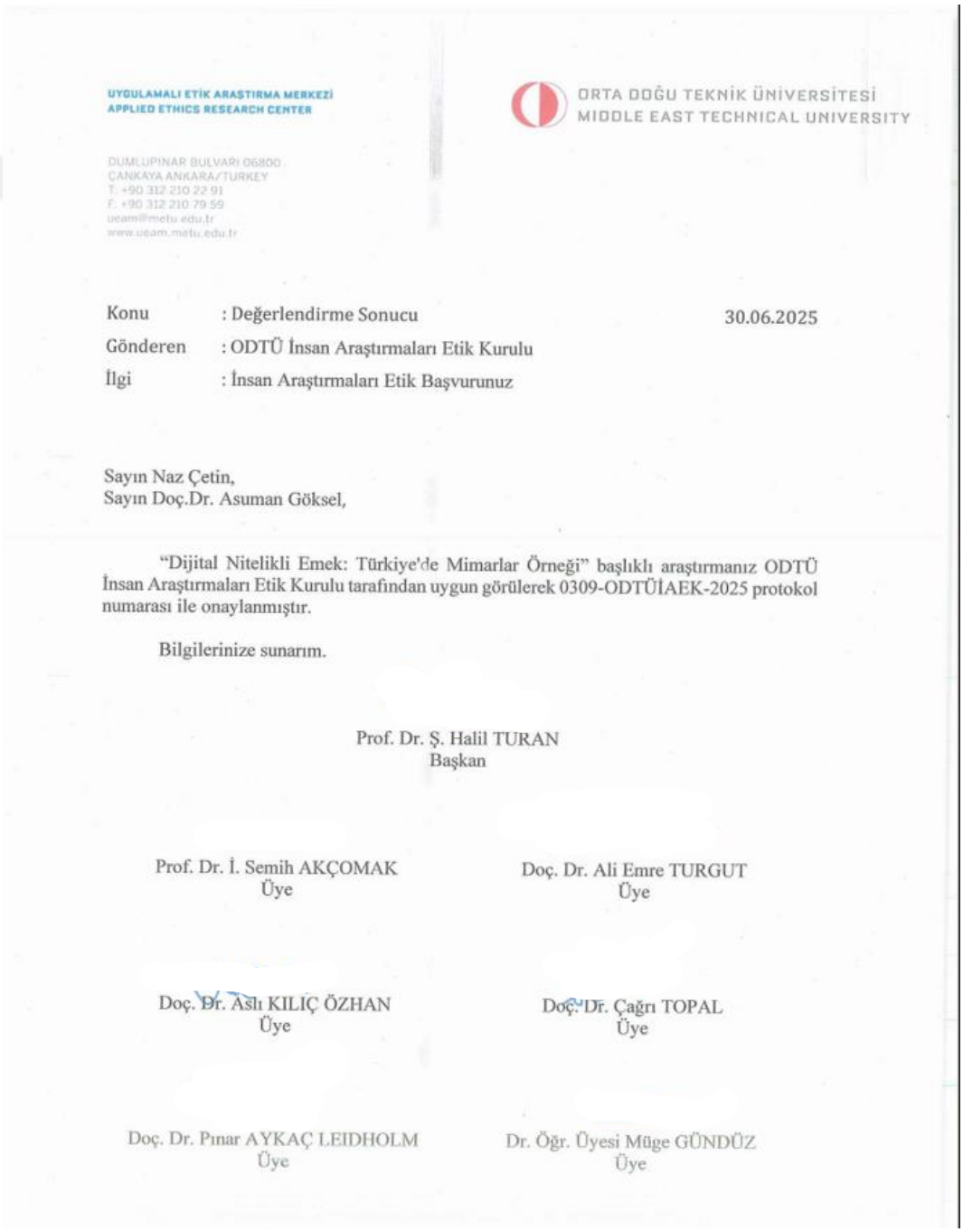
APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE



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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu 30.06.2025
Gönderen : ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu
İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Başvurunuz

Sayın Naz Çetin,
Sayın Doç.Dr. Asuman Göksel,

"Dijital Nitelikli Emek: Türkiye'de Mimarlar Örneği" başlıklı araştırmanız ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0309-ODTÜİAEK-2025 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre TURGUT
Üye

Doç. Dr. Aslı KILIÇ ÖZHAN
Üye

Doç. Dr. Çağrı TOPAL
Üye

Doç. Dr. Pınar AYKAÇ LEIDHOLM
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Genel Bilgiler – Demografik

- Yaşınız, mezun olduğunuz ya da okumakta olduğunuz okul ve bölüm hakkında bilgi verebilir misiniz?
- Şu anda hangi şehirde yaşıyor ve çalışıyorsunuz?
- Çalışma biçiminiz hakkında bilgi verebilir misiniz? (Ofis, bireysel, proje bazlı, dijital platformlar üzerinden vb.)
- Mimarlık eğitiminizden bu yana toplam kaç yıl/yıldır çalışıyorsunuz?

2. Mesleki Beklenti, Kimlik ve Konumlanma

- Mimarlık mesleğini seçme nedeniniz neydi? Bu mesleğe yönelirken ne bekliyordunuz, ne umuyordunuz?
- Eğitim ve iş yaşamındaki deneyimleriniz bu beklentilerinizle ne ölçüde örtüştü ya da ayrıştı? Sizce şu anda yaptığınız iş, mimarlık eğitiminde hayal ettiğiniz mesleki role ne kadar yakın?
- "Yaptığınız işlerde en çok neye odaklandığınızı düşünüyorsunuz? (Tasarım üretmek, teknik çizim yapmak, müşteriyle iletişim kurmak, proje yürütmek gibi)"
- Mimarlığın hem fiziksel (yapı üretimi) hem de düşünsel/tasarımsal bir üretim içermesi sizde nasıl bir mesleki konumlanma duygusu yaratıyor?

3. Çalışma Biçimi ve Deneyim

- Dijital platformlar ya da çevrimiçi mecralar aracılığıyla çalışmaya nasıl ve ne zaman başladınız?
- Ne tür işlerle ilgileniyorsunuz? (Teknik çizim, render, tasarım, danışmanlık, yarışma vb.)
- Genellikle işlerinizi bireysel mi yürtüyorsunuz, ekipli ya da ofis bağlantılı mı?
- Bu çalışma biçiminin size göre avantajları ve zorlayıcı yönleri nelerdir?
- Çalıştığınız işlerin maddi getirisi sizin geçiminiz açısından ne kadar yeterli? Sabit bir geliriniz olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?

4. İş Bulma Süreci ve Networking

- Şu anda yaptığınız işleri nasıl buluyorsunuz? (Dijital platformlar, sosyal medya, tanıdıklar, doğrudan başvuru vb.)
- Sürekli yeni iş bulma ihtiyacı sizin için bir baskı yaratıyor mu?

- Kendinizi tanıtmak için hangi yöntemleri/mecraları kullanıyorsunuz? (Instagram, Behance, LinkedIn, portfolyo sitesi vb.)
- Tanıdık çevreler veya referans ilişkileri iş bulma sürecinizde ne kadar belirleyici?
- Networking yapmayı işinizin bir parçası olarak görüyor musunuz? Bu konuda nasıl hissediyorsunuz?

5. Status/ Informality

- Çalışma biçiminiz açısından kendinizi nasıl bir konumda görüyorsunuz? (örneğin: serbest çalışan, proje bazlı iş yapan, tam zamanlı ofis çalışanı vb.)
- Çalışma şeklinizin yasal statüsü nedir? (Sigortalı çalışan, kendi adına fatura kesen, kayıtsız çalışan vb.)
- Sosyal güvenlik (sigorta, emeklilik, sağlık hizmeti) açısından mevcut durumunuzu nasıl tanımlarsınız? Bu durum sizin için yeterli mi?
- İş süreçlerinizde resmi prosedürlerle (sözleşme, vergi, fatura vb.) karşılaşıyor musunuz? Bu süreçleri nasıl yürütüyorsunuz?

6. Deskilling

- Eğitimde kazandığınız beceriler ile şu an yürüttüğünüz işler arasında nasıl bir ilişki var?
- Şu anda yaptığınız işlerin ne kadarlık bir kısmı yaratıcı tasarım içeriyor, ne kadarlık kısmı teknik ve rutin?
- Dijitalleşme ve platformlar üzerinden çalışma sizce mimarlık mesleğinin yaratıcı yönünü nasıl etkiliyor?
- Yaptığınız işlerde otomatikleşmiş ya da tekrarlayan süreçlerin ağırlıklı olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?

7. Çalışma Koşulları, Management Control

- Zamanınızı ne kadar kendi istediğiniz gibi planlayabiliyorsunuz?
- Teslim tarihleri, müşteri talepleri ya da dijital platform kuralları size nasıl bir zaman baskısı yaratıyor?
- Dijital ortamda çalışmak sizin için özgürleştirici mi yoksa bir tür denetim biçimi olarak mı işliyor?
- İşlerin sürekliliği ve güvencesizlik gibi konularla nasıl başa çıkıyorsunuz?
- Çalıştığınız dijital platformlarda bir değerlendirme ya da puanlama sistemi varsa, bu sistem sizce nasıl işliyor?
- Aldığınız yorumlar, puanlar veya müşteri geri bildirimleri yeni işler almanızı etkiliyor mu?
- Bu tür sistemlerin sizi nasıl etkilediğini anlatabilir misiniz? (Görünürlük baskısı, olumlu puan alma kaygısı vb.)

- Çalıştığınız projelerin veya müşterilerin coğrafi dağılımı hakkında bilgi verebilir misiniz? (Yurt içi / yurt dışı oranı gibi)

- Sizce dijital platformlar aracılığıyla dünyanın farklı yerlerinden müşterilere ulaşabilmenin avantajları ve dezavantajları neler? Bu durumun işin niteliğine, ücret düzeyine veya sizin çalışam biçiminize etkisi olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz

8. Genel Değerlendirme ve Gelecek Perspektifi

- Dijital mecralar üzerinden mimarlık yapmanın mesleğin geleceği açısından nasıl etkileri olacağını düşünüyorsunuz?
- Bu çalışma biçimini sürdürülebilir buluyor musunuz?
- Uzun vadede mimarlık pratiğinizi bu şekilde sürdürmeyi düşünüyor musunuz?
- Sizce mimarlık giderek daha fazla bu tür dijital/bağımsız modellere mi yönelecek?

9. [Eğer Varsa] Ofis ve Dijital Platform Deneyimi Olanlar İçin Karşılaştırmalı Sorular

- Ofis ortamında çalışmak ile dijital platformlar üzerinden çalışmak arasında sizin için en temel farklar nelerdi?
- Hangi ortamda daha özgür ya da daha baskı altında hissediyordunuz?
- Zaman yönetimi, ücretlendirme, karar alma süreçleri açısından bu iki deneyimi nasıl karşılaştırırsınız?
- Mesleki tatmin açısından hangisi size daha fazla katkı sağladı?

10.Kapanış

- Eklemek istediğiniz başka bir deneyim ya da düşünce var mı?
- Araştırmamızın ilerleyen aşamalarında sizinle yeniden iletişime geçebilir miyiz?

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Tüm dünyada olduğu gibi Türkiye'de de dijital emek platformlarının sayısı hızla artmakta ve farklı işkolları tarafından yaygın biçimde kullanılmaktadır. Ancak literatürdeki çalışmaların büyük bir kısmı, çoğunlukla fiziksel beceriye dayanan ve kurye taşımacılığı, temizlik gibi iş alanlarını kapsayan platform emek türlerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışmaların çoğu, belirli teknik bilgi veya yaratıcı uzmanlık gerektiren meslek gruplarını kapsamamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, teknik bilgi, eğitimsel geçmiş ve yaratıcı beceriler gerektiren iş kollarında dijital platformların emek süreçlerine nasıl etki ettiği, literatürde henüz yeterince araştırılmamış bir alan olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye'de dijital platformlar üzerinden gerçekleştirilen işler arasında, yaratıcı emek kapsamında değerlendirilebilecek meslek grupları önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu durum, dijital çalışmanın yaratıcı emek süreçlerini nasıl dönüştürdüğü sorusunu güncel ve kritik bir tartışma alanı haline getirmektedir. Bu çalışmada, söz konusu dönüşümün somut biçimde analiz edilebilmesi amacıyla, geleneksel ofis yapısı içinde kurumsallaşmış bir iş rejimine sahip olmakla birlikte, dijital emek pratikleriyle giderek daha fazla iç içe geçen mimarlık mesleği odak noktası olarak seçilmiştir. Başka bir deyişle, bu çalışma, Türkiye'de genç mimarların geleneksel çalışma rejiminden çevrimiçi emek platformlarına geçişini incelemek amacıyla yürütülmüştür. Konunun seçilmesinin temel nedeni literatürde gözlenen boşluktur. Platform çalışmasına ilişkin araştırmaların önemli bir bölümü düşük vasıflı işlere odaklandığı için, platformlarda yürütülen nitelikli işlere dair çalışmalar görece sınırlıdır. Bu nedenle, platformlarda nitelikli çalışmanın koşulları ve pratikleri henüz tüm yönleriyle ele alınmamıştır. Özellikle mimarların dijital emeğinin nasıl yeniden biçimlendiğini doğrudan inceleyen çalışmalara rastlanmamıştır. Platformlar üzerinden çalışma neredeyse tüm meslek gruplarına yayılmış durumdadır ve mimarlar da bu dönüşümün dışında değildir. Ancak bu kaymanın nitelikli ve yaratıcı meslekler için ne anlama geldiği konusunda literatürde sınırlı sayıda bulgu bulunmaktadır. Bu literatür boşluğunu temel alarak, bu çalışma şu temel iddiayı ileri sürmektedir: Türkiye'deki neoliberal

emek rejimi, çevrimiçi platformların cazibesiyle birleşerek genç mimarların ofislerden platformlara geçişini hızlandırmış; istihdam statülerini daha güvencesiz ve standart dışı formlara kaydırmış ve kayıt dışılığı artırmıştır. Aynı zamanda mimarlık pratiği, platformlarda parçalanmış, metalaşmış ve giderek vasıfsızlaştırılan görevlere dönüşürken, çok boyutlu sömürüyü derinleştiren küresel rekabet dinamiklerine de eklemlenmiştir.

Araştırma sorusu doğrultusunda, giriş bölümünü takiben, ikinci bölüm literatürdeki kavramları ve kuramsal tartışmaları anlamak ve sunmak için kaleme alınmıştır. Üçüncü bölüm, Türkiye'deki emek rejimi, mimarlık pratikleri ve platformları ayrı ayrı ele alarak çalışmaya bağlamsal bir arka plan sağlamaktadır. Ardından dördüncü bölümde, çalışmanın örneklem seçimi ve veri toplama süreci ayrıntılı biçimde açıklanmış; beşinci bölümde ise saha çalışmasından elde edilen bulgular sunulmuştur.

İkinci bölümde üç ayrı literatür alanı tartışılmıştır. Platform çalışması, hızla genişleyen ve yüksek hacimli üretime sahip bir alan olduğundan, kavramsal karmaşalara sıkça yol açmaktadır. Bu nedenle platform çalışmaları önce üç analitik düzeyde incelenmiştir. Çevrimiçi platformlar sade birer arayüz olmaktan çok daha fazlası olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadırlar. Steinberg (2022), platform kapitalizminin ve platform ekonomisinin 2010'ların ortalarından bu yana yeni bir rejim olarak görüldüğünü ve dijital olarak aracılık edilen işlemlerin ekonomiyi, toplumu ve kültürü dönüştürdüğü bir dönemi işaret ettiğini vurgular. Dahası, platform ekonomisi/kapitalizmine dair bu kavramsallaştırmanın önemli bir yönü, platformların yalnızca yeni bir iş modeli değil zamanda emek ilişkilerini, değer üretim biçimlerini ve toplumsal yapıları yeniden şekillendiren yapılar olarak derin ekonomik ve sosyal dönüşümlere de yol açtığı iddiasıdır. Liang, Aroles ve Brandl'ın (2022) savunduğu gibi, platform kapitalizmi, yalnızca bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerindeki ilerlemelerin değil; aynı zamanda değişen tüketici tercihlerinin, dönüşen emek algılarının ve daha geniş çaplı siyasal ve ekonomik yapısal değişimlerin bir ürünüdür. Bu dönüşüm çok katmanlı olsa da en görünür ve etkili olduğu alanlardan biri hiç kuşkusuz emek ilişkilerinin yeniden yapılandırılmasıdır. Woodcock (2017), platformların dijital teknolojiyi kullanarak çalışanlar ve tüketiciler arasında bir aracı olarak platformu konumlandıran ve böylece

etkileşimlerini yöneten yeni bir tür organizasyon yapısını temsil ettiğini belirtmektedir. Schmidt'in (2017) ortaya koyduğu üçlü platform yapısı, platformların nasıl işlediğini anlamak için açıklayıcı bir çerçeve sunar. Bu modele göre platformlar, bir yandan tedarik (freelance çalışanlar) ve talep (müşteriler) arasında dijital arayüzler üzerinden aracılık ederken, diğer yandan bu etkileşimlerin merkezinde yer alarak işin organizasyonunu ve kontrolünü de sağlar. Bu durum, geleneksel işveren–işçi ilişkisini değiştirerek platformu üçüncü bir kontrol noktası haline getirir. Dolayısıyla platformlar, sadece bir teknolojik arayüz olmanın ötesinde, emek süreçlerini düzenleyen ve şekillendiren yapılar olarak da öne çıkar.

Geleneksel işveren–işçi ilişkisinin dönüşmesi, işverenin sorumluluk alanını daraltan ve birçok yükümlülüğü işçiye devreden yeni bir emek rejiminin önünü açmaktadır. Srnicek'in (2017) de belirttiği gibi, bu taşeronlaştırma başlangıçta üretim, idari işler ve konaklama gibi alanlarda sınırlıyken, bugün hem mavi yakalı hem de beyaz yakalı birçok işe yayılmış durumdadır. Yine Srnicek'e (2017) göre platformlar daha önce yalnızca yerel olarak sunulan bazı hizmetleri küresel ölçekte ticarete konu hale getirmiş, böylece iş gücü arzını neredeyse dünya çapında genişletmiştir. Bu durum, gelişmekte olan ülkelerdeki ucuz emeğin daha yoğun biçimde sömürülmesine olanak tanırken, aynı zamanda küresel ölçekte ücretler üzerinde aşağı yönlü bir baskı yaratmaktadır. Tüm bu sürecin kaçınılmaz sonucu olarak işçi, giderek daha fazla güvencesizlik, bireyselleşme ve belirsizlik içeren yeni bir çalışma rejiminin parçası haline gelmektedir.

Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, çevrimiçi platformlarla yeni bir boyut kazanan dijital emek biçimleri, teknik bilgi, eğitimsel geçmiş ve yaratıcı beceriler gerektiren nitelikli işkolları açısından da önemli bir dönüşüm alanı haline gelmiştir. Bu da beraberinde dijital nitelikli emek tartışmasını tekrar gündeme taşımaktadır. Dorschel (2022), dijital emek araştırmalarının ilk dalgasında, dijital emeğin 2000'lerde Terranova öncülüğünde ücretsiz sosyal medya çalışması olarak ele alındığını; daha sonra Fuchs'un, modern sosyal medyanın kullanımı yoluyla hem yeni hem de eski sömürü biçimlerini teşhis etmek için Marksist bir çerçeveyle bu terimi geliştirdiğini belirtmektedir (Fuchs, 2013b; Fuchs ve Dyer-Witheford, 2012). Dorschel (2022),

kendisinin de bir parçası olarak kabul edilebileceği üçüncü nesil dijital emek araştırmacılarının, dijital emeği dinamik ve akışkan dijital ekonomi içindeki tüm işler olarak gördüğünü savunmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, mevcut literatürde dijital emek yalnızca belirli iş türlerini kapsamamakta, tüm emek pratikleri internet tabanlı dijital teknolojiler tarafından ortaya çıkmış veya temelden yeniden şekillendirilmiştir. Dolayısıyla, dijital nitelikli emek için kesin bir tanım bulmak zor olsa da dijital aracılık yoluyla yapılan ve belirli bir eğitim, diploma, statü ve beceri gerektiren tüm işleri bu çerçeveye dahil etmek mümkündür.

Günümüzde bakıldığında ise nitelikli olarak tanımlanman işkolları arasında dijital emek pratiklerinin en yaygınlaştığı alanlar çeviri, tasarım ve mimarlık gibi yaratıcı olarak sınıflandırılabilen meslek gurplarıdır. Gill ve Pratt'e (2008) göre, genellikle maddi olmayan emek olarak değerlendirilen yaratıcı emek; hizmetler, kültürel ürünler, bilgi veya iletişim gibi maddi olmayan çıktılar üretir. Her ne kadar yaratıcı emek her zaman geleneksel anlamda bir "iş" olarak görülmese de, bu tür üretimler sanatsal ve kültürel normları, tüketici beklentilerini ve toplumsal algıları şekillendirme gücüne sahiptir. Benzer biçimde Hesmondhalgh ve Baker (2011), yaratıcı emeğin tüm emek biçimlerinde bulunabileceğini kabul etmekle birlikte, özellikle kültürel endüstrilerde yaygın olan sembolik üretim süreçlerine işaret ettiğini vurgular. Lazaretti, Capone ve Seçilmiş (2019) çalışmalarında Türkiye'deki yaratıcı meslekleri yayımcılık yazılım ve programlama, tasarım, film ve video, reklamcılık, eğlence-sanat ve kültürel eğitim, müzik, radyo ve tv, fotoğraf ve mimarlık olarak sınırlandırmıştır. Yaratıcı emek tartışmasında mimarlık özünden dolayı bir ikililik doğurabilmektedir. Smith (2013), mimarlık tartışmalarında emeğin hem inşaat işçilerinin sahada gerçekleştirdiği fiziksel görevler gibi uygulamalı görevleri hem de inşaat sürecinden uzakta bina formlarını kavramsallaştırma ve tasarlama gibi entelektüel çabaları ifade edebileceğini belirtmektedir.

Gandini'ye (2016) göre, teknolojik uzmanlık ile yaratıcılığın birleştiği bilgi temelli sektörlerde, 1990'lar ve 2000'ler boyunca proje bazlı örgütsel yapılar giderek yaygınlaşmış; başlangıçta standart dışı olarak görülen bu modeller, zamanla yeni bir istihdam normuna dönüşmüştür. Bu dönüşüm özellikle yaratıcı mesleklerde, freelance çalışma biçimini en yaygın ve baskın istihdam pratiklerinden biri haline getirmiştir.

Dünyanın geri kalanıyla benzer olarak Türkiye'de de mimarlık, özellikle inşaat sektörüyle kurduğu güçlü yapısal ilişki ve sahada konumlanan mimarlık pratiklerinin etkisiyle, diğer yaratıcı iş kollarından farklı olarak daha kurumsallaşmış ve yerleşik bir ofis çalışma rejimine sahiptir. Ancak diğer yaratıcı sektörlerde çok daha önce gözlemlenmeye başlayan esnek ve standart dışı çalışma biçimleri, mimarlık alanında da giderek daha görünür hale gelmiştir. Geleneksel ofis yapısının belirleyiciliğine rağmen, özellikle genç mimarlar arasında freelance ve proje bazlı çalışma gibi alternatif emek pratikleri yaygınlaşmakta; mimarlık da yavaş yavaş bu yerleşik rejimin dışında kendine yer bir alan bulmaktadır. Pek çok araştırmacı, mimarların da içinde bulunduğu kültürel endüstrilerde serbest, sözleşmeli ya da kendi hesabına çalışan emekçileri, 21. yüzyıl kapitalizminin en karakteristik örneklerinden biri olarak değerlendirmektedir. Bu değerlendirme özellikle, risk almayı teşvik eden, esnek çalışma saatlerini önceleyen, maddi olmayan emeğe değer atfeden, girişimci öznelik biçimlerini öne çıkaran ve devletin ya da işverenin üstlenmesi gereken pek çok görevi bireyin kendisinin üstlenmesini bekleyen bir yönetimsellik biçimini ifade eden siyasal-ekonomik bir sistem bağlamında yapılmaktadır (Ross 2000; McRobbie 2001; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005; Neff et al. 2005; Fraser 2006; von Osten 2007a, 2007b; Sholette 2011; Bryan-Wilson 2012; Steyerl 2012; Raunig 2013).

Tüm bu dönüşümler, yaratıcı emek alanlarında serbest çalışmayı giderek daha yaygın hale getirirken, dijital emek platformlarının yükselişi bu eğilimi daha da pekiştirmiştir. Bu süreçte, halihazırda geleneksel iş rejiminin dışına itilmekte olan nitelikli emekçiler, platformlar aracılığıyla biçimlenen yeni bir freelance çalışma biçimine yönlenmektedir. Bu platformlar, yalnızca mevcut freelance pratikleri kurumsallaştırmakla kalmamış, aynı zamanda serbest çalışmayı aktif biçimde teşvik eden ve pazarlayan yapılar olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

Türkiye özelinde de süreç çok farklı işlememiştir. 1980 darbesinin ardından Türkiye, küresel ölçekte ivme kazanan neoliberal dönüşümün etkilerini en sert biçimde deneyimleyen ülkelerden biri olmuştur. Bu dönüşüm yalnızca ekonomik yapının değil, aynı zamanda emek rejiminin yeniden yapılandırılmasıyla da kendini göstermiştir. 2003 yılında yürürlüğe giren 4857 sayılı İş Kanunu ile birlikte esnek, güvencesiz ve

taşeron çalışma biçimleri yasal bir zemine kavuşturulmuş; böylece iş güvencesi, kıdem tazminatı, sendikal haklar gibi temel haklar aşındırılmıştır. Özellikle AKP döneminde, piyasa öncelikli politikalarla birlikte emek piyasası daha da deregüle edilmiş; kayıt dışı istihdamın yaygınlığı ve sosyal güvencelerin zayıflığı, emekçilerin güvencesizliği artırmıştır. Bu yapısal dönüşüm ile pek çok hakkı elinden alınan, çalışma koşulları giderek güvencesizleşen, sermaye yanlısı ücret politikaları sebebiyle emeklerinin karşılığını alamayan tüm işçiler geleneksel çalışma biçiminin dışında çözüm aramak zorunda bırakılmışlardır. Mimarlar da diğer tüm işçilerle benzer süreçleri yaşamak zorunda kalmışlardır. Ancak Aykaç ve Sert'in (2019) belirttiği gibi tüm bunlara ek olarak AKP hükümetinin neoliberal politikalarıyla birlikte dönüşen inşaat sektörü, Türkiye işgücü piyasasındaki genel istikrarsızlık ve genç mimar sayısındaki artış, mimarların çalışma koşullarını daha kırılgan ve güvencesiz hâle getirmiştir.

Tam da bu noktada dijital platformlar, güvencesizliği daha da derinleştiren, bireyselleştirilmiş sorumluluk rejimlerini kurumsallaştıran bir ara mekanizma olarak devreye girmiştir. Tüm dünyada olduğu gibi Türkiye'de de dijital platformların sayısı ve kullanım alanları hızla artmaktadır. Özellikle e-ticaret ve yemek siparişi platformları en yaygın kullanılan türler arasında yer almaktadır. Türkiye, 2029 yılına kadar en yüksek bileşik yıllık büyüme oranına sahip ilk 20 küresel e-ticaret pazarı arasında yer almaktadır (Statista, 2024). Ticaret Bakanlığı'nın verilerine göre, 2023 yılında Türkiye genelinde 559.412 işletme e-ticaret faaliyetinde bulunmuş; e-ticaret hacmi bir önceki yıla göre %115,15 artarak 1,85 trilyon TL'ye (77,89 milyar ABD doları) ulaşmıştır (T.C. Ticaret Bakanlığı, 2024). Trendyol ise 2020 yılı sonu itibarıyla %50,7'lik net satış oranıyla sektördeki belirgin pazar hâkimiyetini sürdürmektedir (Yeşilbağ, 2022). Bunlara ek olarak, Bionluki Fiverr, Upwork, Freelancers gibi platformlar da Türkiye'de giderek yaygınlaşmaya başlamıştır. Bu platformlar başta yaratıcı endüstrilerde çalışan işçiler olmak üzere birçok kişi tarafından aktif kullanılmaktadır. Similarweb (2025) verilerine göre, Bionluk.com'un Nisan 2025 itibarıyla aylık toplam ziyaretçi sayısı yaklaşık 488.500'dür. Bionluk (2025) verilerine göre, serbest çalışma alanları arasında en yaygın olanlar seslendirme, çeviri, tasarım ve yazılımdır.

Tüm bu yapısal dönüşümler, platform temelli dijitalleşmenin yükselişi ve yaratıcı/nitelikli emek alanlarındaki dönüşen çalışma biçimleri ışığında, bu tez Türkiye'de genç mimarların freelance ve dijital emek pratiklerini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Dördüncü bölümde, örneklem seçimi ve veri toplama süreci tanımlanmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, Temmuz 2025'te Türkiye'de serbest ve/veya dijital platform aracılı çalışmış 21 genç mimarla yaklaşık birer saat süren yüz yüze ve çevrimiçi yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılara ulaşmak için öncelikle kişisel olarak tanıdığım mimarlarla iletişime geçilmiş, ardından bu kişilerden kendi ağlarındaki meslektaşlarıyla bağlantı kurmaları istenmiş ve katılımcı profilini çeşitlendirmek amacıyla sosyal medya üzerinden duyurular yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler, literatür taramasından yola çıkarak belirlediğim temalar çerçevesinde hazırlanmış sorular üzerinden yürütülmüştür. Tüm görüşmeler deşifre edilerek MAXQDA programına aktarılmış, önceden belirlenen kodlara göre kodlanmış ve bu şekilde nitel verilerin analizi başlatılmıştır.

Araştırma bulguları, literatürdeki tartışmalarla örtüşen ve onları derinlemesine inceleyen üç ana eksen etrafında yapılandırılmıştır; bu eksenlerin ilki, istihdam statüsü, çalışma biçimleri ve kayıt dışılığın kesişen boyutlarıdır. Görüşmeler, genç mimarların hukuki statüleri, çalışma biçimleri ve ekonomik faaliyetlerinin formalliği arasında hibrit ve iç içe geçmiş yapılar olduğunu; pek çok mimarın aynı anda birden fazla statüde faaliyet gösterdiğini—örneğin bir ofiste bordrolu çalışırken eşzamanlı olarak platformlar üzerinden kayıt dışı işler üstlendiğini—ortaya koymaktadır. Bu tablo, ILO ve çeşitli akademisyenlerin vurguladığı karmaşık emek dinamikleriyle paralellik gösterirken, kendi hesabına çalışan ya da kayıtsız çalışan kimi mimarların serbest çalışmanın güvenlik ve özgürlük getirmediğini, aksine idari yük ve belirsizlikleri artırdığını dile getirmesiyle daha da belirginleşmektedir; nitekim Murgia'nın işaret ettiği gibi, sadece düşük vasıflı platform çalışanları değil, nitelikli mimarlar da resmi prosedürleri izlemeden iş kabul edebilmektedir. İşverenlerin maliyetleri düşürmek amacıyla mimarları platformlar üzerinden, yasal yükümlülüklere girmeden çalıştırmayı tercih etmesi, platform ekonomisinin formel ve enformel emek süreçleri arasındaki sınırları bulanıklaştıran ve kayıt dışılığı yaygınlaştıran bir mekanizma olarak işlemesine yol açmaktadır. Görüşmeler ayrıca, istihdam statüsü ile formellik arasındaki sınırların pratikte iç içe geçtiğini; kendi hesabına ya da kayıtsız

çalışma yönündeki geçişlerin çoğu zaman idari yükler, vergi/muhasebe maliyetleri ve belirsiz talep akışının yarattığı gerilimle biçimlendiğini göstermektedir. Bir kısım genç mimar bordroda kalırken platformdan küçük işler alarak geçimini çeşitlendirirken, bir kısmı bütünüyle platform temelli bir strateji kurmaktadır; bu hibritleşme, işverenin sorumluluk alanını daraltırken riski ve idari yükü bireye devretmeyi normalleştirir. Platformların "güvenli aracı" imgesi ödeme almama riskini kısmen azaltsa da komisyon oranları, itiraz süreçleri ve hesap kapatma kararlarındaki asimetriler, yeni bir denetim ve bağımlılık zinciri üreterek güvencesizliği farklı biçimlerde yeniden üretmektedir.

İkinci eksen, geleneksel ofis bazlı çalışmadan platform aracılı freelance'e geçişle ilgilidir. Türkiye'de genç mimarların önemli bir kısmı için geleneksel ofis çalışma düzeni hâlâ bir seçenek olmakla birlikte, yüksek genç işsizliği, düşük ücretler ve sosyal güvenceye dair azalan güven, mimarları alternatif çalışma biçimlerine yönlendirmiştir. Bu koşullar, serbest çalışmayı ve platform aracılı emeği bir çıkış yolu haline getirmiştir. Ancak bu geçiş yalnızca yerel düzeyde kalmamış, platformlar aracılığıyla küresel ölçekte hızlanmıştır. Farklı zaman dilimlerindeki müşterilerle çalışan mimarlar uzun ve düzensiz çalışma saatlerine maruz kalmakta, bu da ulusal iş yasalarının tanımladığı çalışma sürelerini işlevsiz hale getirmektedir. Bununla birlikte, Küresel dış kaynak kullanımı dinamiği, bu tabloyu derinleştirir. Talebin büyük kısmının Küresel Kuzey'den gelmesi ve göreli ücret farkları, genç mimarları fiyat kırmaya zorlamakta; yerel piyasada yalnızca ofis içi hiyerarşilerle değil, aynı zamanda dünya ölçeğinde "en düşük teklife" dayalı bir yarışla karşı karşıya bırakmaktadır. Bu rekabet, teknik becerilerin sürekli güncellenmesini gerektirdiği kadar, pazarlık, müşteri yönetimi ve görünürlük stratejileri gibi "emeğin görünmez işlerini de büyütmektedir. Sonuç olarak, emek süresi yalnızca üretime değil, teklif hazırlamaya, portfolyo düzenlemeye, platform içi mesajlaşma ve değerlendirme takibine ayrılan ücretsiz zaman dilimleriyle genişlemektedir.

Ek olarak, ofislerde asgari ücret düzeyinde başlayan maaşlar ve platformlarda başlangıçta düşük kazançlar, birçok genç mimarı hibrit bir rejime yönlendirmektedir. Bu hibrit rejimde mimarlar, hem ofislerde çalışarak hem de freelance işler üstlenerek gelirlerini çeşitlendirmekte ve yaşamlarını sürdürmeye çalışmaktadır. Platformların

sunduğu ödeme güvencesi, müşteri yorumları ve e-emanet hesapları gibi mekanizmalar, ağ üzerinden yapılan serbest çalışmada karşılaşılan güvensizlikleri azaltarak bu geçişi cazip hale getirmiştir.

Bu bulgular, Türkiye'de genç mimarların emek deneyimindeki dönüşümün yalnızca bireysel tercihlerin toplamı olmadığını, tersine neoliberal emek rejimi ile platform mantığının kesişiminde kurulan yeni bir iş örgütlenmesinin sonucu olduğunu göstermektedir. Ofislerde asgari ücret düzeyinde başlayan maaşlar, yaygın fazla mesai ve kısıtlı yükselme olanakları, genç mimarları farklı gelir kanalları aramaya iterken; platformların düşük giriş maliyeti, geniş müşteri havuzu ve e-emanet/yorum gibi "güvence" araçları bu geçişi hızlandırmaktadır. Ancak bu çekim, güvencenin yerini tutmamakta; ücretlerin proje başına mikro ölçekli pazarlıklarla belirlenmesi, teslim tarihlerinin küresel saat farklarına göre kayması ve görünürlük/reyting döngüsünün iş akışını belirlemesi, çalışma zamanını ve geliri daha da istikrarsızlaştırmaktadır.

Üçüncü eksen ise platform mantığı altında yaratıcı emeğin dönüşümünü kapsamaktadır. Mimarlık genellikle süreç odaklı ve bütüncül bir yaratıcı faaliyet olarak tanımlanırken, platformlarda bu üretim biçimi giderek standartlaştırılmış ve paketlenmiş ürünlere dönüştürülmektedir. Katılımcılar, platformlardan aldıkları işlerin bir yaratıcı süreç yönetimi olmaktan çok, hazır bir ürün satışı gibi hissettirdiğini ifade etmiştir. Bu durum, mimarların emeğiyle kurduğu ilişkiyi zayıflatmakta, mesleki tatmini azaltmakta ve yaratıcılığın anlamını aşındırmaktadır. Ayrıca platformlar, projeleri küçük ve tekrarlayan görevlere ayırarak görev parçalanmasını artırmakta, bu da beceri kaybına ve mimarlık eğitimiyle edinilen yetkinliklerin değersizleşmesine yol açmaktadır. Bazı mimarlar, platformlarda bazen mimarlık diploması gerektiren ancak mimarlığın özünden uzak teknik işler yaptıklarını, bunun da mesleki prestiji düşürdüğünü belirtmiştir. Bu bulgular, neoliberal emek piyasalarının yaratıcı profesyonelleri giderek daha değiştirilebilir gördüğünü ve uzmanlık değerini azalttığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Başka bir deyişle, yaratıcı emeğin örgütlenişi, platform mantığı altında belirgin biçimde yeniden tanımlanmaktadır. Süreç odaklı ve bütüncül tasarım pratiği, platformlarda çoğunlukla "paketlenmiş" hizmetlere—örneğin belirli metrekare için

eskiz, belli sayıda revizyon içeren üç render, kısa süreli modelleme ya da görselleştirme—indirgenmektedir. Görevlerin bu şekilde parçalanması, projeye bütünsel katılımı azaltmakta; karar süreçlerine etkisiz, teknik ve tekrarlı alt işlere sıkışan genç mimarlar açısından mesleki öğrenmenin sürekliliğini zayıflatmaktadır. Telif, yazarlık ve proje sahipliği sınırlarının flulaşması; müşteri yorumlarının ve puanın bir tür "mesleki sermaye"ye dönüşmesi, yaratıcı özerkliği kısıtlayan bir başka boyut olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Görüşmelerde ifade edilen tatminsizlik hissi, tam da bu ürünleştirme ve görev parçalanmasının yarattığı yabancılaşma ile ilişkilidir.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Türkiye'de genç mimarların çalışma deneyimlerini, platform ekonomisinin ve neoliberal dönüşümün yarattığı koşullar altında inceleyerek, dönüşümün tek boyutlu olmadığını ve birbirine bağlı birçok eksende gerçekleştiğini göstermektedir. Platform ekonomisi, yalnızca istihdam statülerini ve çalışma biçimlerini değiştirmekle kalmamış, kayıt dışılığı yaygınlaştırmış, freelance çalışmayı küresel bir rekabet alanına dönüştürmüş ve mimarlığın yaratıcı karakterini dönüştürmüştür. Bu bulgular, gelişmekte olan bir ülke bağlamında platform aracılı nitelikli emeği inceleyerek literatüre katkı sunmakta ve mimarlık mesleğinin geleceği için önemli ipuçları vermektedir. Ayrıca algoritmik yönetim mekanizmalarının etkileri, nitelikli emekçilerin örgütlenme pratikleri ve farklı ülke karşılaştırmalarının yapılması, bu alandaki gelecek araştırmalar için kritik önemde görünmektedir. Bu yönüyle çalışma, hem Türkiye'deki neoliberal emek rejiminin güncel bir analizini sunmakta hem de platform kapitalizminin yaratıcı mesleklerdeki etkilerine dair özgün bir bakış açısı geliştirmektedir.

Son olarak çalışmanın sınırlılıkları göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Örneklemin 21 genç mimarla sınırlı olması, bulguların keşif niteliğini artırmakta, genellenebilirliği sınırlamaktadır. Cinsiyet eşit dağılmış olsa da analiz, toplumsal cinsiyet temelli ayrımları özel olarak ayrıştırmamaktadır. Görüşmelerin belirli bir zaman aralığında yapılmış olması, ekonomik konjonktür ve platform algoritmalarındaki olası değişimleri tam yansıtmayabilir. Buna karşın elde edilen veriler, gelecekte ayrıntılandırılması gereken bazı yönlere işaret etmektedir. Algoritmik yönetimin yeni denetim mekanizmaları ile emeği nasıl yeniden biçimlendirdiği, nitelikli çalışanların örgütlenme pratiklerinin platform mantığı altında nasıl zayıflatıldığı ve ülke

karşılaştırmalarının genişletilmesi, ilerideki araştırmalar için önemli açılımlar sunmaktadır.

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): THE PLATFORMIZATION OF SKILLED LABOUR: YOUNG ARCHITECTS ON DIGITAL LABOUR PLATFORMS IN TURKEY

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ☒ **Doktora** / PhD ☐

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