LABOR PROCESS AND WORK IN PLATFORM CAPITALISM: A STUDY ON MOTOR COURIERS OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN ISTANBUL

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

BY

BURAK CEYLAN

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

SEPTEMBER 2022

Approval of the thesis:

LABOR PROCESS AND WORK IN PLATFORM CAPITALISM: A STUDY ON MOTOR COURIERS OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN ISTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

LABOR PROCESS AND WORK IN PLATFORM CAPITALISM: A STUDY ON MOTOR COURIERS OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN ISTANBUL

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September 2022, 179 pages

By linking the practice of delivery to the history of capitalism as a primary premise, this study argues that the two concepts have a profound connection. The examination of the reciprocal development of concepts exhibits the impacts of capitalism on the practice of delivery. The thesis, by focusing on the final forms the two concepts took in historical genesis, goes after the inquiry to detect the effects of platform capitalism on the labor processes of courier job. The study inherits the argument that delivery workers occupy a vital place in the growth strategies of platforms. The growth and profit strategies embraced by platforms imply the imposition of more control on labor and attempts to cut labor costs. The vital place couriers possess makes them one of the most prominent targets of these practices. Therefore, by focusing on couriers' cases, the study further explores the ways platforms attempt to achieve both goals. In that sense, apart from mutating practices such as outsourcing, platforms also provide pioneering examples by the involvement of digital technologies. To detect the effects, a case study based on semi-structured interviews with digital platform couriers in Istanbul is conducted. Through the case analysis, the study aims to show transformations occurring due to platforms. The focused analysis on particular

components related to the labor process displays novel features platform work offers and the uniqueness the Turkish case bears regarding that.

Keywords: Platform Capitalism, Delivery, Digitalization, Labor Process, Istanbul

ÖZ

PLATFORM KAPİTALİZMİNDE EMEK SÜRECİ VE İŞ: İSTANBUL'DA DİJİTAL PLATFORMLARLA ÇALIŞAN MOTOR KURYELER ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Asuman GÖKSEL

Eylül 2022, 179 sayfa

Bu çalışma, teslimat pratiğinin kapitalizm tarihiyle ilişik olduğu kabulüyle iki kavram arasındaki ilişkinin derinliğine vurgu yapıyor. Buradan hareketle, iki olgunun karşılıklı gelişimini inceleyerek kapitalizmin teslimat pratiği üzerindeki etkilerini gözler önüne seriyor. Bu iki olgunun tarihsel zincirdeki son görünümlerine odaklanan çalışma, platform kapitalizminin kuryeliğin emek süreci üzerindeki etkilerini soruşturuyor. Çalışma, platformlar tarafından benimsenen büyüme ve kâr stratejilerine, emek üzerinde daha fazla denetime ve emek maliyetlerini kesme girişimlerine, dolayısıyla bahsi geçen etkilerin temel kaynağına işaret ederken, aynı zamanda teslimat işçilerinin, platformların büyüme stratejilerinde hayati bir yer işgal ettiği argümanını devralıyor. Teslimat işçileri olarak kuryelerin bu düzlemdeki hayati rolü, onları bu pratiklerin öncül hedeflerinden biri haline getiriyor. Buradan hareketle çalışma, kuryeler örneği üzerinden platformların bahsi geçen hedefleri gerçekleştirme bağlamında emek süreci ve çalışma koşulları üzerinde yarattığı etkileri tespit etmeyi hedefliyor. Takiben, dışa mal etme [*outsourcing*] benzeri pratikleri genişletmeleri dışında platformların, dijital teknolojilerin de yardımıyla emek süreçlerinde öncü uygulamalara yol açtığı gösteriliyor. İstanbul'daki dijital platformlarla çalışan moto-kuryelerle yapılmış yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayalı vaka çalışması,

platformların yol açtığı bu dönüşümleri ortaya koymayı hedefliyor. Emek sürecinin sözleşme ve statü, algoritmik yönetim, ücret ve fiyatlandırma, iş yeri gibi belirli bileşenlerine odaklanan analiz, platform çalışmasının sunduğu yeni özellikleri ve bu konuda Türkiye örneğinin taşıdığı benzersizliği ortaya koymayı hedefliyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Platform Kapitalizmi, Teslimat, Dijitalleşme, Emek Süreçleri, İstanbul

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I hereby express my deepest gratitude to my mother and brother, who provided the necessary conditions and motivation for me to write this thesis.

My advisor, Asuman Göksel, deserves a special mention. She put an immense amount of labor into this study in an untiring fashion. Without her mentorship and patience, this work would not be possible.

I am also thankful to the examining committee members, Prof. Dr. Attila Aytekin and Prof. Dr. Metin Özuğurlu, for their enlightening and stimulating contributions, which charted pathways in my mind for further academic research.

Eylül's unconditional care and Fahir's guidance helped me get through the hard times. Yet, all my friends who have been within my reach in this process deserve genuine thanks.

Special thanks to Halil Can for sharing his valuable opinions and sparking the ideas in my head that formed this thesis.

Finally, I am grateful to live with a warrior cat, Bulut, whose miraculous struggle and existence fill me with life on a daily basis and inspire me to achieve good things.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAĞKUR : Social Security Organization for Artisans and the Self Employed

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

EU: European Union

EMPL: Committee of Employment and Social Affairs

ETUC: European Trade Union Confederation

GE: General Electrics

GPS: Global Positioning System

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

ILO: International Labor Organization

IPA: Istanbul Planning Agency

ISKUR: Turkish Employment Agency

MDM: Mobile Device Management

NEET: Young Persons not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training

POS: Point of Sale

SGK: Social Security Institution

SMS: Short Message Service

TL: Turkish Lira

TMS: Transport Management System

US: United States

USD: US Dollar

WMS: Warehouse Management System

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "delivery" has a long history. From the mythological god Hermes to today, the idea of delivery has witnessed remarkable changes. As with many other important concepts, many researchers and historians have attempted to analyze the historical transformation it passed through. From "head carrier" of Africa and India, who "connected long-distance trade routes" documented from the very first century to post relay mail runners worked in British colonies; from workers who carried both cargo and people throughout Asia to global transport workers, one thing has never changed: the delivery workers were always in demand (Cole&Hart, 2018: 558-560). Gambino and Sacchetto depict that the fifteenth century represents a turning point in the discovery of the importance of "transcontinental long-distance trade" and the "basis for the international division of labor" – with the use of slave labor (as cited in Linden&Roth, 2014: 449). It is doubtful if, since then, the concept has ever lost its importance. The navy sailors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who were "forcibly recruited" and "were used to protect the transoceanic trade routes and imperialist expansion," represent a proof of it, and pre-industrial forms of the transportation workers (Linden&Roth, 2014: 449-450). It is also rightly pointed out that "the extraordinary mobility of the proletarian multiverse was – and continues to be an essential feature of this more than five-hundred-year genesis" and "it always consisted of two components: transportation-work and labour migration" (Linden&Roth, 2014: 450).

Consequently, this study is an attempt to examine the last part of this chain under platform capitalism, firstly by focusing on the common idea that the concept of transportation and delivery has acquired a different place and character since the modern cities were established, along with the introduction of the concept of

consumption. It is hoped that the changes in critical concepts such as consumption and production will explain the driving force behind this study, i.e., examination of the platformization of the delivery work. Also, amongst variety of implications that the concept of transportation includes, the study will focus on the delivery of *goods* inside cities by arguing that it is one of the most current and crucial forms of delivery. As with any other attempt to explain phenomena, this study, too, carries a baggage of notions. Among various perspectives, making sense of the progress of events and ideas based on capital accumulation strategies still seems valid. Following this line, the study aims to provide a framework to understand the contemporary version of the "delivery man", i.e., couriers.

The practice of delivery, like many other practices, is regarded as a job implying particular labor processes valued by wages. Therefore, the implications of the concept are affected by the characteristics of labor markets and could transform accordingly. This indicates that a clear understanding of the last version of the delivery man and its relation to the final chain of capitalism's history, namely the platform economy, requires historical sketching of the system. In other words, to develop a profound inquiry on the linkage between delivery and platformization, depicting the progress that paved the way for the platform economy occurs as a necessity. In that sense, the first goal of the thesis is to explore the historical background of the issue, focusing on a periodization of post second world war. Yet, the historical sketching does not only present a broad summary of progressive events. Instead, the study intends to conceive the developments in relation to the capitalist accumulation strategies by inheriting the idea that the system is growth and profit-oriented, thus ought to dynamically establish solutions in cases of crisis. This implies that underlining transformations in notions of production and consumption regarding these strategies occupies a vital place.

Concerning the periodization, first dynamic to highlight is the dissolution of the Fordist strategy of mass consumption and rigid labor markets as a start of a new period. The historical line shows that deregulation and flexibility are marked as the concepts that created severe impacts on labor markets, the very impacts that opened the path to the emergence of the platform economy. The thesis intends to show these impacts by pointing out the coinciding developments in the transportation and delivery sectors. In

that sense, the historical framework constructs itself around merging the connection between these concepts. This purpose allowed the inclusion of some concepts, while excluding some others. While definitions such as the logistics revolution and the rise of the retail sector are used to point out the importance of the circulation of goods in the history of capitalism; the specific effects of the revolution on transportation workers on an intercontinental basis are excluded since related to its size, it could be a topic for another thesis. Also, in the context of this study, the rise of the retail sector is significant only because it comprises an example for following multinational cooperation due to the fact that the sector introduced novelties such as "Just in Time" production and delivery.

Inspecting the effects of platformization on labor processes and organization of labor is not possible by only tracing historical progress with certain concepts. A theoretical framework is also critical to make sense of the platformization of economy and labor processes. Srnicek states that: "Capitalism, when a crisis hits, tends to be restructured. New technologies, new organisational forms, new modes of exploitation, new types of jobs, and new markets all emerge to create a new way of accumulating capital" (2017: 40). Following the scholar's argument, one of the primary arguments in this study is that platforms were born in a particular context as a business model that emerged as a response to a crisis in the history of capitalist development. Data, as the new raw material, was perceived as a breakthrough to create pioneering ways for profit and growth. Consequently, this thesis goes after the inquiry if the platforms, as technological products, apart from being apparatuses for extracting data, have also created novel impacts on labor. As technology bears a vast number of connotations, it is used in a scheme where the notion operates in a way that capitalists have to dynamically develop to reduce labor costs, control labor processes more effectively, and solve crises. Silver's (2014) theoretical framework, which elaborated on Harvey's concept of spatial fix (Harvey, 1990: 183) guides the goals aimed to achieve in the thesis. Silver depicts four capitalist strategies to overcome the crises: spatial, financial, product and technological (Silver, 2014: 49). Yet one, namely technological fix, is selected as the most practical concept for context of this study. The concept is defined as: "efforts to deal with the crises of profitability and labor control by introducing major changes in the organization of production and labor process" (Silver, 2003: 39).

The notion steps further as a constituent element of this study for few reasons. First, platforms are, in the end, technological products. Second, as already argued, they appeared as an innovative model for the sake of profit by extraction of the new raw material: data. Yet, most importantly, this thesis searches the significant impacts of platforms in labor control and the organization of labor processes. It should be underlined that impacts on production processes are excluded since the primary goal is to trace the process in the case of delivery couriers. Also, it is well known that the concept of technology could be approached from various perspectives. Other strategies put forward by Silvers also are not included in this study not to distract the primary focus and extend the discussion to further points.

The inquiry on the effects of platforms on labor control and processes is to be conducted based on theoretical approach related to both practices. In that sense, the framework offered by American political economist Harry Braverman is helpful. The capitalist attempts to implement control over labor processes by the introduction of 'scientific management' methods are insightful for the context of this study. Arguments included in Braverman's work, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1998) also support the preceding arguments that the primary reason behind the imposition of control on labor processes and reshaping labor organizations is the capitalist desire for growth and profit. Especially the analysis of Tayloristic management occupies a critical place for this study in the sense that its attempts to divide labor processes into the tiniest components with the purpose of precise calculations of both workers' movements (fulfilling time etc.) and costs. The division also occurs to implement a higher level of control since the accomplishment of these tiny components named *tasks* does not require a mixture of specific crafts. The discussion also occupies a vital place for this study regarding two issues. First, it is argued that platforms also work on task providing basis; thus, the management techniques applied highly converge with Taylorism. Moreover, platforms appear novel by applying to Tayloristic management approach with the advantage of digital technologies. Second, the popularization of task-based work implies a rising trend in labor markets named deskillization by Braverman. The thesis attempts to show that this deskilled workforce is, coinciding with the term 'surplus populations' is absorbed by several rising sectors in the history of capitalism, and they constitute a decisive place in the operation and growth of

platforms, especially in the delivery case. It is also well known that an enormous literature stands out related to the labor process debate sparked by Braverman. Although this literature poses essential questions on Braverman's theory and concept of deskillization, the fundamental arguments defended by American theoretician had adequate explanatory power for the questions the thesis attempts to answer. Thence, further debate on labor process theory is not included here. To sum up, the chapter focuses on the discussion that outsourcing practices are increased along with flexibilization of labor markets and standardization of labor processes. This phenomenon implied drastic changes in both characteristics of the organization of labor and capital, which led to the emergence and rapid growth of the platform economy.

Adding to the historical examination made in the first chapter, events such as the burst of the dot.com balloon and the rise of venture capital also occupy an important place in the expansion of platforms. Arising from the ground of digital infrastructure built in the 1990s, platforms as business models can be detected in every aspect of people's daily lives now. This points out that the areas they operate and the goals they desire to achieve might differ. Yet, most platforms tend to meet on the ground of the triangular model, which means operating as an interface between supply and demand. There is a considerable number of attempts to classify the platforms. Yet, two approaches come out as most helpful for this thesis. Schmidt's classification of platforms in relation to work regimes they operate through (Schmidt, 2017:5) is the first since one of the primary intentions is to depict the outcomes platform caused in labor processes. The second was Srnicek's classification, and what made it operational was scholar's depiction on platforms in regard to their market or growth strategies. What made it functional for this thesis is the connection built by scholar between the growth strategy of lean platforms with hyper-outsourcing and surplus populations (Srnicek, 2017: 92). Thereby, the attempt to understand the platforms founded and operate in Turkish markets included in this thesis stem from two classifications; they are location- and gig work-based, and they tend to show lean platform characteristics.

The thesis also restricts its research terrain to delivery platforms. It is already stated that the circulation of goods has always occupied an important place in the history of

capitalism. Yet, it is argued that along with the rise of the platforms, its importance has also increased. The rise of the e-commerce sector and online purchasing appeared as the confirmation of the trend, and it is observed that Turkey has not been an exception. The quality of the platforms to present themselves as blank mediators allowed them to outsource labor costs by escaping the employer status and perform rapid growth since the costs of operating through a software interface are lower than physical infrastructure. Especially within the context of the pandemic, the extent of growth has advanced enormously. The growth for e-commerce worldwide was depicted as 50% (ILO, 2022: 10). In Turkey, mobile retail sales increased by 200%; and the demand for national market chains on a digital basis increased by 150% (ILO, 2022: 10). Massive growth in online purchasing implied the need for a workforce to deliver purchased goods. Social Security Institution's 2019 data shows that while the decrease in the employment rate was 2.37%, the increase in the courier employment rate was 6.59% (ILO, 2022: 20). This implies that the courier job absorbed a workforce and appeared as a rising trend. To understand both the core questions posed by the thesis and the linkage between the growth of digital platforms and delivery job in Turkey, three platforms founded and operate in Turkish markets are chosen: Yemeksepeti, Getir and Trendyol. The selection is made according to several factors:

- *First*, all three companies displayed rapid growth numbers and attracted vast amounts of venture capital. This indicates that companies have high network effects and the capacity to influence labor markets more.
- *Second*, all the companies have food and groceries delivery operations.
- *Third*, all the companies operate in the Turkish market.
- *Fourth*, despite having contracted couriers, all companies work through self-employment model and exhibit outsourcing practices.
- *Fifth*, all companies operate as digital platforms and through applications. Thus, use triangular business models where supply (self-employed workforce) and demand (consumers) meet. Despite some act also as employers, this does not prevent the depiction of the mediator position.
- *Sixth*, and last points out one of the inquiries the study attempts to offer. All companies possibly created irreversible impacts on courier job, as operating by pioneering practices in their delivery operations.

Several themes are chosen to explore the effects of platformization on labor processes inherited in the courier job. The most crucial factor that affected the selection process was the literature review (Fairwork: 2020, Prassl: 2018, ETUC: 2018; ILO: 2018; ILO: 2021; DeStefano: 2016; Eurofound: 2018a, Eurofound: 2018b; Huws et al.: 2017; EMPL, 2020; DeStefano&Aloisi: 2018); and the suitability of the themes identified in this literature to the context of the thesis. Accordingly, several themes stepped further regarding the platform work: *Contract and Status, Algorithmic Management, Wage and Pricing, and Workplace*. Therefore, the study intends to explore and depict changes brought in by digital platforms in relation to each theme. In other words, the objective is to inquire about the effects of platformization on labor processes through each theme. Primarily, the fifth chapter introduces a theoretical/conceptual framework for each theme. This framework is supported by operational examples from delivery companies around the world, but especially from Europe. Under each subheading, a set of preparative questions are asked to guide for the case for the analysis in the following empirical case study chapter.

The empirical case study analyses the qualitative data collected from 11 delivery couriers. They are chosen on the basis that they should deliver food and groceries by motorcycles, by using applications, and for platforms included in this thesis. While seven couriers work for Yemeksepeti, two are from Vigo, a company that delivers for Getir, and two couriers work with Trendyol Go. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each courier between June and August. The interview questions are explicitly divided in relation to themes identified in the conceptual framework and aimed to gather answers accordingly. The contact with couriers was established mainly with the help of DİSK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions), friends, and other couriers. The interviews are conducted under different circumstances. While some were physical and in-person, some of them were made online. One interview was conducted while the courier was on the delivery task. The primary reason behind the high number of interviewees in the Yemeksepeti sample is related to the existence of a warehouse. Four of the interviews were conducted in the warehouse. As a gathering point, it was possible to contact couriers in an easier fashion. This also implied that, mainly in the case of Vigo, couriers did not know their colleagues well.

Thereby, it was hard to persuade them to help me get in touch with other couriers due to a lack of trust.

Apart from these, two interviews were also conducted. The first was with a warehouse team leader, and the second was with a Trendyol Express worker, who only delivered goods purchased on the website. Thereby, their statements were excluded from the analysis, and only one single conversation with the team leader is included.

Amongst 11 interviewees, nine couriers are self-employed. Three of the couriers did not share educational information, whereby four of them had university education. The couriers are relatively young; except for two who did not share age information, the oldest courier is 35. All couriers were male, which deserves a particular attention with regards to the gendered nature of courier job. Amongst 11, only four are married and carry the economic responsibility of a family. The couriers come from several different profession/job backgrounds. Apart from the cooks, all other job backgrounds possessed were in the service sector and do not require a specific occupation or training background.

All the interviews conducted for this study are intended to help the qualitative analysis to answer the main research question of this study: "How the digital delivery platforms reshape labor processes and working conditions regarding the courier job in Turkey?"

CHAPTER 2

ROAD TO PLATFORM CAPITALISM: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Apart from the remarkable place it occupies in the history of humankind and the production process, delivery, like many other practices, nowadays exists as a job valued by wage. Consequently, the occupation has its unique place in the labor market, both as a rising job and driving force of several digital platforms. The metamorphosis of the very practice, accordingly, is related to and affected by the changes in the labor market structure. Therefore, to achieve the goal of this study, first, the broader picture of historical development should be drawn to avoid drowning in detail and have a sense of unity. In doing so, the post-second world war context will be a milestone for both history of capitalism and the topic investigated. Following that, Huws' periodization, consisting of four stages of capitalism in the post-second world war context, including different economic and political breaking points from then to recent days, will be used. These are the Welfare State Capitalism; the collapse of Welfare State Capitalism; and the emergence of Platform Capitalism in the 1990s and onwards. By briefly mentioning the characteristics of each period while trying to depict major global patterns included, the study later will attempt to build a framework that can be useful to interpret delivery phenomena under the existing paradigm of capitalist accumulation strategy in general and the evolution of the courier as a profession/job in specific.

2.1. The Welfare State Capitalism

Following Huws, the first period of capitalism in the post-second World War context, dated between 1945 to 1973, has been named in several ways and: "the era of manufacture", "Keynesian welfare state", "the golden age of Capitalism" and "Fordism" are only some of them. Nation-states with strongly defined borders and

planned economic structures were one of the many features the Fordist paradigm was marked by (Huws, 2014: 31-32). The Fordist accumulation strategy aimed to accomplish corporate growth and profit mainly by mass production. However, the road to achieve this was not only, in the classical sense, the issue of economic regulation. Ford himself was aware that: “mass production meant mass consumption, a new system of the reproduction of labour power, a new politics of labour control and management…” was necessary. Thus, it meant “to provide workers with sufficient income and leisure time to consume the mass produced products…” (Harvey, 1990: 126). The necessary actor to accomplish this was no one but the workers themselves.

This new project's intention of reshaping both production and consumption, thus the daily reproduction of labor itself, to say, was not possible without the help of nation-state. In this context, the state's involvement implied regulating and controlling the mass production/consumption-based market economy by setting the rules between labor and capital. In Harvey's words: “Fordism depended, evidently, upon the nation state taking much as Gramsci predicted - a very special role within the overall system of social regulation” (Harvey, 1990: 135). Therefore, despite being a capitalist and corporate growth-based model, this defined structure allowed governments to exert control upon corporates. In line with these, the concept of nation-states and “rigid” labor markets were witnessed. Apart from exceptions, the certainty of job structure, the definitive working hours, involvement in production by occupation or task-based practices, waged labor, and trade unionism could be detected as some of the features of this rigid structure (Harvey, 1990; Huws, 2004).

Before moving into the second phase, briefly emphasizing one of the reasons why the delivery of goods bears a critical place seems appropriate. Following the logic which perceives the concept of production as a process will be the first step to take. As Huws quotes from Grundrisse of Marx: “Economically considered, the spatial condition, the bringing of the product to the market, belongs to the production process itself. The product is really finished only when it is on the market” (Marx, as cited in Huws, 2014: 323). This almost intrinsically means that the delivery of commodities as an integral unit of “productive labor“ considerably gained importance in the Fordist paradigm, whose accumulation strategy was based on the mass consumption of commodities. If,

in Harvey's words, “ability to provide collective goods depended upon continuous acceleration in the productivity of labour in the corporate sector was one of the dynamics that made Keynesian/Fordist welfare state fiscally viable”, the delivery of the mentioned goods also occupied a crucial place. As Silver paraphrases: “Historically, rapid expansions in manufacturing output in any particular location have depended on the development of new transportation and communication networks for the distribution of goods and the acquisition of raw materials (Riddle, 1986; Hartwell, 1973, as cited in Silver, 2003: 97)” In other words, if the product is only completed when it is delivered, it requires well-organized delivery and transportation sector to guarantee the circulation of goods, thus, mass consumption. Huws' (2014) precise sketching of the process in the modern phase might serve as a proper conclusion:

> a wide range of functions to be found in a modern corporation can be assigned to this directly productive category, including marketing, logistics management, distribution, transport, customer service, retail and wholesale sales (whether online or offline), and delivery—in short, the whole supply chain from factory gate (or software development site) to the final consumer should be regarded as productive labor (Huws, 2014: 323-324, 2020).

In light of the information given, it is likely to say that delivery workers enjoyed being an actor at the heart of this supply network as workers who were always in demand. Since capitalists acquired the fact that if this chain is disrupted, losses caused by it would be massive. In Silver's words, they did and still possess “relatively strong workplace bargaining power” as the workplace is defined as “the entire distribution network in which they are enmeshed” (Silver, 2003: 100). Thus, contrary to other formal sectors, their impact was not found in direct reaction against employers but in their ability to disrupt the delivery of goods and services (Silver, 2003). Yet, the advantages and disadvantages they carry are not limited to this**.** Constant paradigm shifts forced by technology presented the workers several choices. These workers, who are defined by mobility, were able to choose the ways such as seizing “the possibilities and risks of precarity in order to maximize profits” or establishing “prosperous and stable lives through their manipulation of risk” (Cole&Hart, 2018: 549-550). However, some were also able to seek “stability in the formal sector, organizing themselves into labour unions and workers associations, which set standards for working conditions and pay” (Cole&Hart, 2018: 549-550). Nonetheless, it could be

stated that by means of unionization and job security, they shared the fruits of the rigid and regulated labor market.

2.2 "The Collapse"

The paradigm of relative wealth did not last too long, and the process of its diffusion created several crucial effects lasting to the present. Retrospectively, this golden, wealthy palace of capitalism has melted down on workers, and the burns were heavy. The Second World War US-led manufacturing paradigm, soon enough, began to experience vital contradictions triggered by particular occasions. One significant case was the decline of profits in manufacturing by the involvement of agencies other than the US, such as Japan and Germany. One of the reasons for this was, for Benenav (2020: 70), these countries represented frontlines against Communist expansion, and thus the US was willing to transfer its technology to them. Meanwhile, in Harvey's (1990) vocabulary, this was a typical answer of capital, which is prone to have an overaccumulation crisis. As a capitalist accumulation strategy, Fordism survived by postponing the crisis with several tactics. Printing money "in order to overcome the problem of overaccumulation" which "triggered the inflation that reduced the value of old debts; linked with this, new geographical centres of accumulation – the US South and West, Western Europe and Japan ... were created" (Harvey, 1990: 185).

However, this had several chain effects. One of them was the rising competition. Further, as these countries were able to produce manufacturing goods, the homogeneity in the market correlatedly raised, resulting in an overcapacity of manufacturing goods. With the involvement of other agencies, this crowded international market was now giving a clear signal that it would not be easy to grow by manufacturing anymore (Benenav, 2020: 63). As the hegemonic power and the first one to pay the price, the US, as a reaction, by leaving Bretton Woods and devaluating the dollar, exported the crisis to Japan and Germany in the early 1970s. Later, factors such as the overcapacity (Benenav, 2020; Jones, 2021; Brenner, 2006), the decline in profits, and increasing labor-employer conflicts (Huws, 2014: 32) were crystallized in the events such as the oil crisis of 1973 and the Vietnam war.

The period of the long downturn was not accompanied by increased demand for labor and the stoppage of growth (Brenner, 2006) but pointed out a crucial fact for capital. It was necessary to abandon known practices of the preceding capitalist accumulation strategy since it was no longer profitable to produce mass manufacturing products. As Silver states, “in response to the crisis of the 1970s, economic and political elites abandoned the mass consumption social contract and the development project and launched the neo-liberal counter-revolution” (Silver, 2014: 57). This "counter-revolution" implied the acceleration of deindustrialization, which is linked with the fall in productivity and the share of employment rates in manufacturing (Benenav, 2020: 45). As Huws (2014: 32) argued, one strategy to be embraced was “acquisitions brought an increasing concentration of capital, and the multinational companies that resulted began to relocate manufacturing work to lower-wage countries”. This created a conflict between disparate Fordist types, and low labor cost regimes were included in the scenario. This also drove “other centres into paroxysms of devaluation through deindustrialization” (Harvey, 1990: 185).

Capital's movement at the expense of profitability also indicated several fundamental changes in labor-capital relations, hence, in the structure of labor markets. Amongst vast results, the following can be shortly mentioned to pave the way to the analysis of the third phase. Firstly, the emergence of multinational companies forced some governments “into competition to attract foreign direct investment, offering subsidies and other inducements to lure such prizes as a major auto plant to their territory” (Huws, 2014: 32-33). Considering the introduction of new information technologies at this phase, this meant “undermining the bargaining power of some traditionally well-organized groups of workers, while also opening up new areas of employment for others” (Huws, 2014:32-33).

Secondly, one keyword represented various problems on capital's side: rigidity. In other words, “there were problems of rigidities in labour markets, labour allocation, and in labour contracts (especially in the so-called 'monopoly' sector)” (Harvey, 1990:142). This was seen as a problem to be overcome by introducing the concept of flexibility into labor markets. The emergence of new types of work related to this phenomenon will be widely discussed in the next phase, however at the end of this

phase, as Huws (2014:32-33) emphasizes that "although a discourse about 'atypical' employment began to emerge, jobs were, on the whole, still regarded as subject to formal regulation and contractual negotiation".

Thirdly, the relocation of production centers to lower labor cost areas and deindustrialization indicated "the disappearance of industrial districts and factories in large areas of the industrialized world…" and the destruction of "once homogeneous class communities" (Atzeni, 2014:5). The "relative displacement of more and more workers from manufacturing" (Harvey, 1990: 141) pointed out the emergence of a new dominant paradigm: services. The definition of the concept is quite comprehensive (from finance to retail, housing to caring). It becomes a concept to define almost anything outside manufacturing and agriculture (Jones, 2021: 35) and represents a vital change in labor history and the context of this study.

2.3 Third and Fourth Phase: The Emergence of Platform Capitalism

The third phase, corresponding to the 1990s, refers to significant worldwide changes. On capital's side, the context was not only new in the sense of strategic shift, but it also indicated remarkable physical changes such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Allowing capital to reach uncharted lands for capital accumulation, this symbolic event also meant the fear of mass worker movements embracing communism was gone. This motivation is followed by a "general wave of deregulation, opening up free trade in goods and services and enabling unhindered flows of capital…and information across national borders throughout the world" (Huws, 2014: 34). The opening up with the introduction of new technology is accompanied by the relocation of manufacturing centers, as mentioned above.

However, the expansion of capital was not only physical (Huws, 2014). Apart from attempts to solve the profitability crisis by dissolving the rigidity of the movement of capital, privatizations, and more, an attack on labor was also intended and materialized. This was crucial for capital since "capitalism is founded…on a class relation between capital and labour", which indicates "growth in real values rests on the exploitation of living labour in production" (Harvey, 1990: 165). This happens in

a sense that "growth is always predicated on a gap between what labour gets and what it creates" (Harvey, 1990: 165). Finally, "since labour control is essential to capitalist profit, so, too, is the dynamic of class struggle, over labour control and market wage fundamental to the trajectory of capitalist development" (Harvey, 1990: 165).

In line with the given framework, the intrinsic character of labor for capitalist development and the profit crisis was now affected by a massive wave of deregulation since cutting the cost of labor represented a vital strategy for more and more profit. The collective organizations of the working class now implied a blockage for profitmaking for capital. Following, the hunger for profit began to show itself as an "offensive against trade unions, reducing employment protection" (Huws, 2014). Accompanied by deindustrialization, the working class is now "atomised and dispersed…in the ever-increasing services sector" which has led to "a decrease in unionization and an overall individualization of employment" (Atzeni, 2014:5).

Yet, at this point, several questions arise: what is the meaning of all these occasions for transportation? In which senses is it included in this picture, and what importance does it bear? One could say that while a significant amount of attention has been paid to the development of production and consumption, the transportation aspect of the process did not capture the same interest. At this site, "in the way consumer goods are being produced and delivered, "the change occurred more quietly, "but it had a sizeable impact on society and the way it is organized" (Bonanich&Wilson, 2008: 3). The scholars name this change "the logistics revolution" by taking it one step further. Following the sketch drawn above, Bonanich and Wilson also inherited the idea that the overproduction crisis was an issue for capital to solve. Accordingly, they depict this logistic revolution as a result of this "chronic problem of the capitalist system, namely, the disjuncture between production and distribution, or supply and demand" (Bonanich&Wilson, 2008: 3). Consequently, the logistic revolution that occurred in this context involved "attacks on the welfare state, deregulation, and increased international free trade…" (Bonanich&Wilson, 2008: 5). Along with deregulation of trade and labor market, "workers in trade, transport and services participated directly in the growth of this global economic system" by "transporting goods and people around the world" (Cole&Hart, 2018: 548).

The involvement of logistics in this new paradigm to solve the overproduction crisis is also to be understood in terms of a shift in labor markets and a change in capitalist production strategy. This was a shift from "Fordism, or mass production, to flexible specialization or flexible production" (Bonacich&Wilson, 2008: 12). The manufacturing product is now designed and oriented in accordance with consumer choices, which led to flexibilization in production. The tendency for this flexibility to grow correlated with the constant change of demand; the manufacturing was evolving into producing specific products from mass production. This implied first "to produce and deliver a much greater variety of fashion basics", second "growth in contingency… goods are only produced on an as-needed basis" (Bonacich&Wilson, 2008: 12).

Several consequences could be pointed out related to this change. Now that the production is defined on a more flexible and individual basis rather than mass, it also means a power shift from producers and manufacturers to retailers. One of the reasons for this was the collection of POS (Point of Sale) data power by giant retail companies. Bonacich&Wilson, (2008: 6-8) state that "they knew what consumers were buying, which prices were most effectively maximizing sales, which products were gaining and losing popularity". The production was now externalized to several companies, i.e., contractors. In other words, core companies now had several options that produced only an exclusive part of a product. In this way, especially giant retail companies with data power acquired the option of dropping off these contractors at any point they wished (Bonacich&Wilson, 2008: 12-13). Nevertheless, the changing character of production and the rise of retail and services did not occur only at one dimension. It was a phase where globalization and shift in production were on head-to-head elevation. Factors such as "elimination of government regulation", changes in trade rules "which protected manufacturers against discounting at the retail level by letting the manufacturer set the retail price", and the "deregulation of transportation" all together pave the way for the new age of retail and services (Bonacich&Wilson, 2008: 5).

This contingent network of production indeed had a profound impact on the idea of delivery. As stated, the control retailers amassed over suppliers grew more and more. Amongst several implications, the insistence on "speed and perfection in deliveries" bore extreme importance. In simpler words, the ever-changing demand also meant the need for quicker circulation of goods, i.e., more frequent delivery period. Not only the fastening pace of delivery was necessary, but the packaging and the organization of codes were also essential to deny any sort of disturbance. The necessity of "coordinating complex, sprawling, ever changing supply network" was apparent with contracted production networks. This meant the movement of goods "quickly…accurately, at low cost, over great distances" with newly introduced technology (Bonacich&Wilson, 2008: 14).

In line with this need and acceleration of globalization, ideas such as just-in-time production and delivery started to gain momentum. The big-box retail companies like Wal-Mart "have supplanted the manufacturing firms of the Fordist era as the mobility of retail capital dominate labour(ers) far less mobile" (Cole&Hart, 2018: 581-582). The ever-growing power of the retail sector on manufacturing implied the domination of companies such as Wal-Mart over global supply chains and global capitalism (Cole&Hart, 2018: 581). It is also to be emphasized that the fastened production and delivery occurred under the neoliberal free-market regime. It was clear that the retail companies had the initiative to flee or drop off the contractor where the labor is organized since it might represent the strong bargaining power of labor and higher costs (Bonacich&Wilson, 2008). Therefore, for labor, the growing power of retail over the manufacture, the rigorousness expected from contractors meant "increased contingency, weakened unions, racialization, and lowered labor standards" (Bonacich&Wilson, 2008: 15). It also implied severe changes in the labor process and the control of workers over the process, which the study intents to elaborate in further chapters as to show how platforms followed the path opened by the retail sector, in which ways they are differentiated and how they shaped the idea of the delivery of goods and the work of delivery itself.

The beginning of the final period before the rise of platforms, the fourth period, which corresponds to the 90s from the mid-2000s was marked by specific events that shaped

the world economy. Apart from the phase of deindustrialization and relocations of manufacturing centers, the 1990s also witnessed the growth in delocalizable services and software of, which are related to activities such as the "conversion of European currencies to the euro, the explosive expansion of the Internet, and the much-hyped 'Millennium Bug" (Huws, 2014: 36-37). In addition, events such as the crash of Asian Tiger economies and the blowout of the dot-com balloon might be counted as some basic proofs that the 1990s also represented a period of deepening economic instability. Nonetheless, this was a period when the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) started to gain a remarkable pace, which led to an emergence of new companies and industries established on their use. In Huws' (2014: 36-37) words: "these included the 'new breed of multinationals'... and the beginnings of the giant corporations that now dominate the Internet".

The deregulation of trades and exports in the 1980s also corresponded to a new shape in the global division of labor. The globalization of labor was considered with dynamics such as "opening up of world markets" and the emergence of new global markets "for both goods and services" (Huws, 2014: 160). This is accompanied by a "strong concentration of capital, leading to the increasing dominance of many market sectors by a relatively small number of large transnational corporations" (Huws, 2014:160). Lastly, the expansion of digital technologies, which allows the remote control and development of what is now called algorithms, bears great importance in terms of globalization. During this period, the flexibility in trading of economic activities allowed companies to "shuffle and reshuffle these activities into new combinations" (Huws, 2014: 248-249). Meanwhile, some companies choose a different path other than manufacturing, consolidating their power on service suppliers.

To conclude, all the factors stated, the ever-increasing growth of the service companies and retail companies mentioned, such as Wal-Mart, indicated a new page in the world's history for both capital and labor. What will be witnessed is how the flexibility and contingency in economic activities, the free trade rules, deregulation, and continuous expansion of capital are linked with the emergence of the Platform companies. Under the The Rise of Platforms title, it will be emphasized that how some

of those suppliers coincide with the emerging transnational ones mentioned as "dominate the internet today" (Huws, 2014), such as Amazon has led the way for the new paradigm of digitalization platformization of the economy. Further, the outcomes of these historical processes on labor will be shown. Following this framework, the study will discuss and show these same effects and try to depict if they continue nowadays in its specific case; couriers.

CHAPTER 3

DIGITALIZATION AND ATOMIZATION OF WORK: EFFECTS ON LABOR

The relationship between technology and labor has always been a widely discussed one. The method of approach to this vital discussion, so called hot topic, might shape the ways one tends to depict the problems or outcomes of the current trends, such as the topic of this study. The approach developed on the issue by Harvey (1990) offers a coherent beginning point. Accordingly, capitalism is a dynamic system technological wise. The main reason behind is that the system simply is growth and competition based. Therefore, the ambition of capitalist to reach more and more profit is a never ending one. However, the concept of technology here implies more than the production of machines, robots, etc. Almost naturally, profit-making necessitates a control implemented towards labor (Harvey, 1990: 180). For this reason, the conceptualization of technology not as a neutral process but in relation to labor suggests a better use for the very context. In line with this, this part will explore how technology is involved in labor processes and in which ways the effects of technology on labor markets are materialized in general. Also, emphasis will be on the importance and relation of the process, i.e. on the relation between courier jobs and Platforms, as the case of this study, which are, basically, the outcomes of technological design.

To accomplish the intended discovery in a straightforward manner, Silver's (2014) framework, which elaborated on Harvey's conception of spatial fix seems appropriate. For Harvey, the spatial fix was a way for capital to solve the crisis of overaccumulation by geographical expansion (Harvey, 1990: 183). By inheriting the idea that capital produces various strategies to overcome the crisis, Silver (2014) added that these also involved the reduction of labor cost and thus the control implemented over it. Accordingly, she counts four major strategies: spatial fix, technological fix, product

fix, and financial fix (Silver, 2014: 49). All four of these strategies might represent a holistic approach to examine the historical development of capitalism, or they can be linked to each other while exploring certain contexts. One might detect, to say, two of these in particular analysis of corporate strategies in a specific case. Cognizant that these four fixes cannot simply be separated, this chapter will structure itself by using one of these, namely technological fix, mainly as an analytical core.

The 'technological fix' is the most relevant for the context of the study for several reasons. To point out why it is convenient, it is necessary to inquire about the other strategies very shortly. Silver (2014: 49) defines the first concept, spatial fix as "geographical relocation of capital in search of cheaper and more controllable labour". The concept is conducted on making sense of the historical capitalist pursuit of reducing labor costs and conflict by relocating production centers. However, this also implies that the cluster is limited to industries that are already in production, such as manufacturing and automotive. Although recent companies with platforms use this strategy, which is indirectly related to the creation of platform economy, in practical ways, it exceeds beyond the limits of this study. Also, the product fix, which is defined as "movement of capital out of industries and economic activities subject to intense competition… and into new (innovative) spheres with few competitors and high profit margins" (Silver, 2014: 61) might also be easily related to the emergence of the platform economy. If one digs in properly, one can, maybe not easily but indeed, will detect several companies which foresaw the profits of platforms and made serious investments in them or reshaped themselves as a platform. Yet, despite it deeply deserves mention in certain points of the analysis since one of the main intentions of this study is to explore how certain digital platforms transformed the labor processes in courier job, it is not comprehensive enough to incline an analytical basis for this chapter. The last concept other than the technological fix is the financial fix. This strategy is formed in continuity with the product fix. Accordingly, capitalists' urge to move into new lines of production is still valid "but they also sometimes choose to pull their capital out of trade and production entirely and reinvest in financial deals and speculation" (Silver, 2014: 64). This latter is the financial fix, which might become a useful tool to investigate, for instance, to understand flexible characteristics the platform companies inherit. Hopefully, a comprehensive study of platform economy

that uses all four strategies could be accomplished in the near feature. Yet, in the context of this study, clearly depicting the selection of technological fix appears as a necessity.

Silver's (2003: 39) definition of the concept is quite useful for a beginning: "efforts to deal with the crises of profitability and labor control by introducing major changes in the organization of production and labor process". This organization of production and labor processes implicates several phases that inspired the title of this chapter. Thus, the exploration that will be carried out in this chapter will consist of three phases. The first phase will be about the organization of labor process, in other words, management. Theories of influential names in the management area that reached out to our days will be investigated. The discussion will aim to point out the relevance of these theories in the context of the study by linking them with management methods are in use in the platform work. Following part will concentrate on one of the fundamental concepts of the chapter: surplus labor force. After exploring the idea, the chapter will attempt to depict first its importance in implementing labor control; and second, its formation and quality in specific capitalist accumulation strategies and the ways in which these populations are absorbed. By appealing to the help of the notion of deskillization, it will be discussed how the creation of these populations is in association with the preceding topic, i.e., the rise of management strategies. Following this part, the focus will be shifted toward the concept of standardization. By doing so, emphasis will be made on the usage and effects of standardization -which is also historically linked with management- in strengthening labor control and raising profitability. The analysis of the concept by combining with the discussions developed right before, will try to delve into the ways in which the involvement of digital technologies effected the character of both labor markets and capital. In short, this part will focus on finding out how the terms technological fix functioned throughout the historical process with a framework built on certain concepts. Finally, the reason behind the selection of the concept appears straightforwardly. The technological fix, among four, provides the best opportunity to formulate a coherent conceptualization for the analysis of the link between platform economy and delivery job and the transformation of the latter accordingly.

3.1. Attempts to Control Labor Process: Brief Inquiry on Management

Although the concept of the technological fix sounds new, the control over labor by the involvement of "science" is certainly not. The so called "labor process debate" is a decent proof that the discussion on labor and the control of it is not immature. The debate inherits and develops itself around the Marxist framework of labor. Humans convert the world around them by using tools and transforming objects. They do so, not just simply by acting towards the objects around, but by also creating a conception of the intended work in their minds beforehand. In the most basic sense, this set of actions is called the labor process, in which humans create value. By putting labor, humans "transform their material environment and also their own nature" (Tinel, 2012: 188). The use and organization of the labor process might be read throughout the world's history. However, this section, practically, will attempt to shed light only on specific periods and techniques that were applied under the capitalist mode of production to control labor process. In which, the labor power that workers offer to sell to capitalist as a commodity appears as a critical point. The importance of the concepts lies in the fact that this very power is offered for a certain amount of time and, in most cases, in place. For capitalist, the vital issue is to extract the most surplus value possible (Tinel, 2012:188). This profit-oriented aim is expected to force capitalists to use various strategies; to both make sure the production or 'labor process (which evolved into merely producing for capitalist)' thus profit grow. The latter goal also obliged the owners of the means of production to invent ways to cut the labor cost by again, applying several tactics consisting of the constant development of technology and adjustments in labor processes.

As Tinel (2012) also mentions, this historical flow of the ways implemented to control the labor process is examined by several authors such as Coriad (1979), Friedman (1977), and Marglin (1974). However, the words of an American political economist, Harry Braverman, on the issue, was one of the most insightful ones. The *magnum opus* of the scholar, named *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, has become a milestone for both studies and debate carried out in labor studies. Following Marx, Braverman foresaw the notion of capitalist necessity to control the process of labor and reduction of labor costs. Contrary to the early stages of capitalism, he understood that now, the selling of

labor power also meant the handing over of the labor process, the way the work is done, trade, and more. This "transition presents itself in history as the progressive alienation of the process of production from the worker; to the capitalist, it presents itself as the problem of management" (Braverman, 1998:121-122). This "management problem" is comprehensively analyzed by the scholar. For him, the beginning of the labor process takes a form of contract of the selling of labor power of worker under certain conditions. These conditions imply the separation of worker "from the means with which production is carried on", worker's ability or freedom to sell the labour power, and acceptance of becoming the "expansion of a unit of capital belonging to the employer" (Braverman, 1998: 114). Yet, apart from other "units" of capital which can be precisely evaluated, such as infrastructure, materials, or tools, the human labor still occupied a different role implying contingent behaviors. In a growth and profit-oriented system, the preciseness of calculation represents a vital point where the idea of scientific management is involved.

Capitalist division of labor, aiming to achieve preciseness in the calculation at all levels to guarantee growth, brought "scientific management" practices into labor processes. The first attempt was to remove the monopoly of combined features that historical worker -craftsmen- held in hand, i.e., conception and execution. Charles Babbage was one of the most known practitioners of management techniques and was a defender of the very idea. He claimed profoundly that "the master manufacturer, by dividing the work to be executed into different processes, each requiring different degrees of skill or force, can purchase exactly that precise quantity of both which is necessary for each process…" (Babbage, as cited in Braverman, 1998: 151-152). Now, the laborer is not only devoid of control over both the production process and the product itself but also the skill set required to produce. This, for manufacturer, also implied the reduction in wage costs since now he can choose the almost exact amount of skills required for the job. The destruction of the control of individual over labor process also implicated that the workers now have specializations only to achieve specific tasks. With the loss of power of knowledge over the production process and by minute division of labor, the downgrading of the laborer into becoming a calculatable "unit" of capital reaches a new level. Marx depicts this process as

"reducing labor costs through the systematic degradation of human labor" (Marx, as cited in Braverman, 1998: 27).

The strive for growth and profit by discovering domination techniques over labor is almost ceaseless in capitalist production. This endless search for profit over the reduction of labor costs implied the implementation of new strategies too. Frederick William Taylor might be one of the best representatives of this search of capital over history. In his work, *The Principles of Scientific Management (1911),* Taylor followed the idea of inventing the "science of work". His aims were reaching beyond the limits of control over labor process. In the most simplistic sense, the blueprint of the theory was also to enforce the way work is done. Subsequently, the separation of conception and execution takes the form of division of the workforce into separate bodies: "In one location, the physical processes of production are executed. In another are concentrated the design, planning, calculation, and record-keeping" (Braverman, 1998: 212). Thus, as a concrete unit, the management had a brand-new role. Following the primary goal of the reduction of labor, Taylor's desire is to build an idea of management that will have the ability to pre-plan and measure almost all dynamics in the production process. Amongst many, two ways were visible to accomplish the intention: "gathering and development of knowledge of labour process" and "the concentration of this knowledge as the exclusive province of management" (Braverman, 1998: 206). One of the targeted results of this process is to prepare and hand over the ready-made plans to workers, which includes the quickest way to do the work. In other words, Taylor aimed to divide work into simple tasks. These tasks specified "not only what is to be done, but how is it to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it" (Braverman, 1998: 205). One could state that the idea represented here is to downgrade the worker to a mere executor. Contrary to what has been witnessed before, even the way how execution occurs is defined by the working unit of "management". The implementation of this strategy was focused on wiping away any crumb of control and authenticity the worker has over the labor process. Braverman depicted the basic principles of Taylorism as: "'dissociation of the labour process from the skills of workers', 'separation of conception from execution', and 'use of this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labor process…" (Braverman, 1998: 28).

3.2. Effects of Management on Labor Markets: Deskillization and Surplus Populations

Many followed the path opened by Babbage and Taylor, such as Henry Ford himself (Bratton, 2020: 37). Capitalist characteristics of "incessant drive to enlarge and perfect machinery on the one hand, and to diminish the worker on the other" (Braverman, 1998: 29) do not seem to fade away soon. However, one might rightfully investigate the implications of the mentioned strategies inside the context of this study. It is to be said that these very strategies were the ones that fundamentally changed the "labor market" in irrevocable ways. On the effects of the qualities of a labor market on a society, Polanyi insightfully stated:

> Labor and land are no other than the human beings themselves of which every society consists and the natural surroundings in which it exists. To include them in the market mechanism means to subordinate the substance of society itself to the laws of the market (Polanyi, as cited in Silver, 2003: 17).

The ways in which the society is subordinated to these laws might have happened both on major and minor levels. Yet, the investigation of this study is around only a few to provide a meaningful framework. Accordingly, the first important result to be detected as a crucial change in labor processes is the standardization of labor. Following the aim of reducing labor cost by techniques of management gained pace by the involvement of technological developments into the process of control. Braverman (1998), developing ideas of Marx, saw this as a general tendency of capitalist production and named it as "deskillization". This "underlying force governing all forms of work in capitalist society" (Braverman, 1998:23) brought critical changes along with it. The diminishing of dexterity and skills along with the new division of labor powered by the scientific management firmly aimed to disperse all knowledge and technical capacity held by workers. This, again, implied the reduction of work to a "need to know basis" (Braverman, 1998). However, a distinct outcome of this from simply cheapening the labor cost is the reduction of worker to something easily replaceable. The wheels of scientific management, along with the separation between mental and executed labor, worked to "ensure that as craft declined, the worker would sink to the level of general and undifferentiated labor power" (Braverman, 1998:207).

At this level, the dream of pre-calculation and absolute power over labor process reaches out to a different level: complete commodification or objectification of the human labor power. For the capitalist, the path toward the creation of mass task executers also meant a strong dependency of workers to him. Since now, he can easily replace the worker, the threat of dismissal arises; the worker's bargaining power is now at stake. Nevertheless, the involvement of another dynamic made this historical fashion more complex. The replacement of human labor also implied a replacement with machines in case of profitability. This involvement is discussed under several subheadings, such as "automation" , "digitalization," and more. But before focusing on this issue, to avoid distraction, it should be briefly emphasized the first outcome of the standardization, i.e., the creation of undifferentiated labor power.

Braverman (1998) has a clear depiction while he is developing the concept of deskillization. He observes that along with the progress of capitalist production, both new skills and the masses to execute tasks are required. He also, in line with Polanyi's words quoted above, strongly states that this "law" does not only affect work itself but the populations as well, since it will result in the creation of a mass labor population, which will be an essential feature of developed -which will be discussed in incoming chapters if the case is only specific to these- countries (Braverman, 1998:156).

Indeed, the concept of mass labor population is developed by Karl Marx. Marx depicts these masses with concepts such as "industrial reserve army" or "relative surplus populations". He illustrates the characteristics of the phenomenon step by step; one is that these populations tend to grow in a stagnant economy. Following, he profoundly claims that: "This stagnant surplus population comes to form a 'self-reproducing and self-perpetuating element of the working class'" which takes "a proportionally greater part in the general increase of that class than the other elements" (Marx, as cited in Benenav, 2020: 102). Also, since their work is "characterized by a maximum of working time and a minimum of wages"' their conditions of life tend to "sink below the average normal level" (Marx, as cited in Benenav, 2020: 102).

The growth and orientation of these mentioned populations differ for sure in different geographical and economic contexts. Nonetheless, as if it is maybe not the "absolute

general law of capitalist accumulation" (Marx, as cited in Benenav, 2020: 102), it is at the very least relatable and applicable to certain contexts. Yet, it is still to be stated that the effects related to the surplus populations could be worldwide. These very effects are to be detected under distinct phases. What makes effects different in these phases are linked with the dynamic specified: the involvement of technology. With the rising productivity via the involvement of successful management techniques and the involvement of machinery results in shifts in employment. This transfer of labor force to other fields "where it accumulates in large quantities because the processes employed have not yet been subjected… to the mechanizing tendency of modern industry" (Braverman, 1998: 273). Thus, it is to be stated that the pace of innovation and the success of the application of management techniques create an impact on the character of relative surplus populations.

In line with this, accompanying the tendency of the downgrading of skills, capitalism also absorbs and guides the populations outside the core of the main workforce according to its needs. However, there are solid reasons to doubt these processes worked mechanically. In his recently published book called *Work Without the Worker,* Phil Jones (2021) briefly sketches out how the involvement of technology is related to the surplus populations and in which aspects it shaped the character of the labor markets up to the recent days we live in. Scholar emphasizes the fall of manufacturing post-world war II context, which is also briefly mentioned in the first chapter of this study. His argument is built around the notion that the surplus populations had the tendency of "growing surplus of unemployed and underemployed" to wait for being replaced to new profitable industries that capital will likely to invest on (Jones, 2021: 33). The replacement of workers, in order, from agriculture to emerging textile, textile to emerging electricity and telecommunications because of rising competition in textiles in England represents a valid example of how capital movements towards different industries shape the destiny of surplus populations, thus, impacting on the labor market directly. Jones (2021: 33) entitles this process as "displacement, replacement, expansion". Nonetheless, this process is not devoid of suffering from contingent elements, such as the crisis of the 1970s. Yet, the experienced rise of informality and underemployment in post-crisis context is not something simply to be explained by working forces being replaced by machinery; it is mostly about the

involvement of machinery in a certain context: “unlike past industrial paradigms … digital developments have failed to facilitate the gains in productivity that previously served to soak up the surplus and facilitate the system’s expansion” (Jones, 2021: 35). The result was drastic: “rather than reproducing capital” the system reproduced “labour surpluses on a larger scale” (Jones, 2021: 35). In Brenner’s words: “the decline of manufacturing profits, which not only spelled the end of a model of growth but failed to produce a new one” (Brenner, cited in Jones, 2021: 35).

One very critical outcome of this was the transfer or absorption of this surplus to services - a term that might contain a very wide scale of jobs outside of manufacturing and agriculture (Jones, 2021: 37). However, contrary to manufacturing, involvement of innovation carried different connotations in the services paradigm. In the words of Baumol, the service jobs are “technologically stagnant ” (Baumol, cited in Jones, 2021: 37). This means that while it might indicate a rise in productivity gains and employment, for instance, in the automotive industry, one cannot detect the same for the latter. One reason for that is that services require low skill. Some of the jobs included, such as cleaning a room and babysitting, do not seem to be likely to be replaced by machines since they still require a sort of ‘human touch’. The unavailability of the involvement of technology in the same sense as manufacturing means that they tend to stay labor-intensive. Now, “ever greater numbers have been forced into these low-productivity jobs” in a context where the productivity does not grow as it did in manufacture (Jones, 2021:38). Jones continues by making a significant claim, which will directly touch upon the context of the 21st century: “this is why so many jobs in warehouses, taxi driving, hospitality and retail are low-paid, part-time or entail bogus ‘self-employment’ contracts” (Jones, 2021:38). Although “cross-country institutional differences determine the degree to which experiences of precariousness diffuse through the workforce or remain concentrated” such as those to be explicitly discussed in the Turkish case; Benenav rightfully claims: “Marx’s analysis has become contemporary once again. In the slow-growing economies… job losers have been obliged to join new labor market entrants in low-quality jobs—earning less-than-normal wages in worse-than-average working conditions” (Benenav, 2020: 102). Under the following chapter on platform capitalism, by giving specific references to this part, it will be pointed out how the Platforms have risen in this

particular labor market conditions and how the hosts of this study, delivery workers, are included in this process.

3.3. Digitalization: Effects on Labor and Capital

This evolution of the labor market by innovation and technology, however, has a different facet, which requires a return to the discussion on "skill". As in the absorption of surplus processes, i.e., "displacement, replacement, expansion"; the deskillization does not carry on undisturbedly as well. Thus far, the tendency of the capitalist labor process to create unskilled, replaceable, and quantifiable masses is emphasized. Yet, the process might develop in a Janus-headed orientation. Constantly developing innovation might create ascending complications in the division of labor. In other words, the path opened by the division between conception and execution, while deepening, might create several different prospects in the labor process. Consequently, putting the management unit aside, the innovation might also equal to the need for a labor force that will expertise in the new and diverse skills brought by the progress itself. The process, thus, in appearance, is contradictory, creating unskilled masses by also giving birth to a labor force with high skills. However, one might say that the goal of deskilling the general labor force is still evident, and periodically created skillful workers are not devoid of it. Huws (2014: 53) argues that "Before a task can be automated, it is necessary to draw on the expertise and experience of someone who knows exactly how to do it… work out how it can be standardized". The establishment of this standardization results in the replacement with machines or cheapening of this crafted labor force since the knowledge provided is no longer essential for the process. Therefore, it could be said that the constant construction of new skills is also directly related to the destruction of both already existing and newly emerged ones.

The contradictory development of the capitalist labor process forms the labor markets accordingly. The deepening division between heads and hands tends to create a segmentation, which means labor markets could differentiate within themselves. The quality of this segmentation could be "shaped by an interplay of factors including national education systems, industrial structures, cultural traditions … and the ways in which workers are organized" (Huws, 2014: 61-62). Although these dynamics might

become helpful tools for a comprehensive labor market analysis, what is to be emphasized is, as a general tendency, that this process creates segmented labor markets. This segmentation is, so to say, pioneered by a duality. For Peter Doeringer and Michael Piore (cited in Huws, 2014: 47), this duality in labor markets is named as "internal" and "external" labor markets. The features of the internal labor market are mostly defined by "internal rule systems" which implies employers' need for particular skills and their return to loyal workers. To keep those, employers offer specific benefits. These markets are also "highly structural and hierarchical, with internal advancement paths, relying heavily on firm-specific knowledge" (Doeringer & Piore, as cited in Huws, 2014: 47). The firms are ready to invest in these workers with specific skills for their own sake in the sense of productivity. On the other hand, contrary to internal labor market employees, those in external labor markets do not seem to enjoy the same benefits. Here, the character of compromise is quite distinct: "employers do not make a long-term commitment to the workforce but are prepared to accept lower levels of commitment and productivity from workers they feel free to lay off at will" (Doeringer & Piore, as cited in Huws, 2014: 47). The members of the secondary labor market consist of deskilled, surplus labor army mentioned thus far. As an early insight, some of these workers are known by a name, especially after the context of the pandemic, as "essential workers" Again, as will be argued workers who work for certain platforms are also divided by a similar logic. Apart from units such as software developers, designers, and marketing that represent the "heads", firms are in need of "hands" that deliver and execute, namely, couriers.

Braverman's framework is not only fruitful in providing insights for a crude theoretical discussion. Some specific results of the digitalization of labor market and the involvement of information technologies are also tracked by the ideas introduced by the thinker. Emphasizing the diffusion of rigidness mentioned in the first chapter might be a proper place, to begin with. It is witnessed that the idea of occupation also gets its share from this diffusion. Along with the constant deskillization/skillization, the introduction of information technologies and computers implied, in many sectors, the removal of distinct characters of what are named as occupations. The globalizing and digitalizing labor markets are now based on much more on a workforce that should be able to adapt to any condition rather than holding onto one definite occupation. At this

phase, "there is now a universal need for new generic attitudes and abilities"; however, "this time it is not within national borders, or competing empires, but on a global scale" (Huws, 2014: 76-77). Yet, the erosion of occupation is not the most unique result of the flexibility brought by neoliberal policies and the quick escalation of digital technologies. The uses of "scientific management" also acquired a different character with the involvement of these technologies, which had severe consequences. Now, with the help of digital technologies, the standardization process has gained pace, since "for instance by introducing standard reporting procedures that make it possible to compare performance over time and between different locations" (Huws, 2014:135-136). This high degree of transformation allowed companies to delocalize considerable amount of activities, torn tasks into tiniest pieces, and distribute them accordingly. These new tasks, which do not require a specific occupation anymore, could be carried out in different places such as "home". Furthermore, "they can be outsourced or delivered through some partnership agreement" (Huws, 2014:136-137). What is critical is that the consequences of this process have not only transformed the labor force but also oriented the companies in a new direction. It does since every task is standardized and separated into even smaller units, "each of these could be carried out by a separate entity, but it could be (and increasingly is) the same giant multinational company that ends up winning the majority of these contracts" (Huws, 2014: 136-137). This, in the most basic sense, might be one of the paths that led to the emergence of huge multinational companies, amongst which platform companies could also be detected.

Nonetheless, the effects of the arising context of digitalization are not limited to erosion of occupation and emergence of the new brand of companies. The wheels of deregulation also worked for concepts such as sector and enterprise. In relation to the notion of flexibility acquired by transnational companies due to the concentration of capital, the concepts are also in the process of being reshaped. It is not easy to define the character of an enterprise "in a period characterized by rapid merges, de-merges, strategic alliances … large-scale outsourcing and multiplication of contractual forms of employment" (Huws, 2014: 162). Under the very conditions, it also becomes harder and harder to define a sector since its defined "in a situation in which there has been rapid convergence between many traditional sectors" (Huws, 2014: 162). What was

also fruitful for the newly emerging companies was the nature of service sectors, in which they gained power relatedly. As implied within the discussion above, service jobs tend to be less skilled. This makes services more vulnerable to the standardization process paced by digital technologies. Accordingly, "major new multinationals are emerging to supply standardized services on an outsourced basis" (Huws, 2014: 181) too. The erosion of the concepts of occupation, sector, enterprise, and emerging trend of multinational corporations could be detected as the matrix which gave rise to platform companies.

The destination of standardization, detected by Braverman, continues in an apparent manner inside this new context. Workers' knowledge is codified, which allows standardization. This consequently results in quantification and measurement of the labor process, which enables the companies to manage workers accordingly and remotely. The process at its last stage creates a possibility for businesses to reorganize the work in several ways (Huws, 2014: 180). In other words, "the deconstruction and reconstruction of companies, sectors, and regional and national economies is thus integrally linked with the deconstruction and reconstruction of skills, labor processes, and occupational identities" (Huws, 2014: 188-189). Related to this 'reconstruction', many occupations or jobs started to transform and gain a new character compatible with the digital paradigm. This happened in many ways, but it is now witnessed that even the fundamental features included in the process of 'work', such as wage, status, contracts, workplace, pricing mechanisms, and more, are constantly reshaping. This study in following chapters will examine how these changes occurred in the case of couriers under the mentioned themes.

CHAPTER 4

THE RISE OF PLATFORMS

Thus far, the historical track of capitalist development is followed. Amongst countless effects, some are mentioned to make sense of what shape this development gained. It is indicated that the development of capitalist accumulation tends to ensure control over the labor process by discovering new management techniques. Whereby the results were drastic; the development path tends to create surplus labor armies mostly deskilled. Coinciding with this, it was also emphasized how this process is achieved by standardization and atomization of labor and how it tends to create segmented labor markets. Further, the general trend towards flexibilization of labor is pointed out. The concluding remarks were made on how technology and digitalization relate to this context. Yet, the inquiry of today's conditions and the effects of emerging models on labor markets remain a critical quest for the study. In this regard, this chapter aims to establish a ground to identify these effects. Thus, first, particular historical events that gave birth to platforms are highlighted to determine the characteristics of the new model. Later, the conceptual lexicon is explored to underline the differences in approaches to the unique ecosystem and to express the reasons behind using the term platform capitalism in this study. After introducing a broad scheme, classifications were made based on two major approaches. The examination of deliberately chosen classifications led the discussion to a specific one. Thus, the chapter lastly shifts its focus toward gig and location-based platforms due to their capability to visibly affect labor markets and comprise the sample of this study.

4.1. Preliminary Economic Atmosphere Gave Birth to Digital Economy

The attempt to define the emerging economic model after mid 2000's is not new. One could easily say that there is an inflation of definitions: sharing economy, the gig

economy, the fourth industrial revolution, and the on-demand economy (Srnicek, 2017: 8) are some of them. Before moving on to why the definitions differ and what do they imply, a brief investigation of the events that led to the current situation seems accurate. Above, it is pointed out that the descent of manufacturing in the 1970s and the deindustrialization trend led capital to search for uncharted areas for profit. Telecommunication was one of the sectors that stepped forward. Capturing the interest of venture capital, this new sector seemingly had the potential for mass and sudden growth. Although "these businesses lacked a revenue source and, even more, lacked any profits," the driving force was to seize the moment of future profits beforehand simply: "the hope was that through rapid growth they would be able to grab market share and eventually dominate what was assumed to be a major new industry" (Srnicek, 2017: 24). Subsequently, rapid growth and commercialization of the internet were observed. The bizarre hype towards this new industry surpassed all the past examples of capital enthusiasm toward technological development ever:

> In 1980 the level of annual investment in computers and peripheral equipment was $50.1 billion; by 1990 it had reached $154.6 billion; and at the height of the bubble, in 2000, it reached an unsurpassed peak of $412.8 billion. This was a global shift as well: in the low-income economies, telecommunications was the largest sector for foreign direct investment in the 1990s – with over $331 billion invested in it (Srnicek, 2017: 25).

However, after one edge, the massive investments, "declining borrowing costs and rising corporate profits" meant a boom in the stock market, which implied a loss of connection to the real economy (Srnicek, 2017: 25). This new growth model, i.e., bubble driven by finance, also known as the "dot.com" balloon, eventually burst, and the chain of events after its burst led to the crisis of 2008. Attempts of governments to calm the situation with monetary policy "has let loose a vast glut of cash, which has been seeking out decent rates of investment in a low-interest rate world" (Srnicek, 2017: 36). Even though the intention here is not to argue the emergence of platforms with mere economic definitions, it should be emphasized that this cash would soon become the source of growth for emerging companies. In other words: "cash hoarding has left US companies – particularly tech companies – with a vast amount of money to invest" (Srnicek, 2017: 34). To conclude, regardless of the burst, the massive investment has left strong technology companies resulting in a 'technological

revolution' behind, which installed "an infrastructural basis for the digital economy" (Srnicek, 2017: 23, 35).

4.2. Making Sense of the Platform Economy: A Brief Conceptual Inquiry

The digital economy emerges as the heritage of this infrastructural basis and the burst. In its most basic form, this economy is defined as: "businesses that increasingly rely upon information technology, data, and the internet for their business models" (Srnicek, 2017: 10-11). This newborn phenomenon crosscuts multiple traditional sectors, such as manufacturing, services, transportation, mining, and telecommunications, and became almost essential for each (Srnicek, 2017: 10-11). The place where the digital economy appears on the timeline corresponds to the context of the post-2008 crisis. What makes it crucial is the characteristic of capitalist system to solve the crisis by various strategies strongly emphasized above with reference to Harvey (1990) and Silvers (2014). By applying the technological fix and other strategies, it tends to reshape itself to overcome the crisis. In Srnicek's (2017: 40) words: "Capitalism, when a crisis hits, tends to be restructured. New technologies, new organisational forms, new modes of exploitation, new types of jobs, and new markets all emerge to create a new way of accumulating capital". Thus, the system had to find a way to shell out, and in the context of the digital economy, a core solution has been found: data (Srnicek, 2017: 42).

With the rise of the internet and digital infrastructure, it was now much easier to remotely control production and move the production centers to places where labor cost is cheaper, named the spatial fix. (Silver, 2014). However, to emphasize once more, the digital economy and internet use crosscut several sectors. This implies a shift towards a new business model, rather than classical model that was based on producing and selling goods and "never to learn anything about the customer or how the product was being used" (Srnicek, 2017: 44-45). Classical model did not appear to be useful inside a context where "the technology needed for turning simple activities into recorded data became increasingly cheap; and the move to digital-based communications made recording exceedingly simple" (Srnicek, 2017: 43). The usage of this new raw material could be applied to almost any sector; from consumer

statistics to calculation of actions of workers to depict and cut 'non-productive working hours'; it represented itself something as could be used both for reduction of labor cost, thus for more profit, and to be sold to others. To put in a metaphorical way, this new key out of the crisis for capitalism, served as the one that could open all the doors. Withal, the fading away of the classical business model did not directly mean a birth of a new one. Hence, the need for a new model represented itself as a necessity: "The platform has emerged as a new business model, capable of extracting and controlling immense amounts of data" (Srnicek, 2017: 11-12). This new business model quickly proved itself as an adequate way to hold, extract and use the data in various ways. The result of this was that this "model has come to expand across the economy, as numerous companies incorporate platforms: powerful technology companies (Google, Facebook, and Amazon), dynamic start-ups (Uber, Airbnb), industrial leaders (GE, Siemens)" (Srnicek, 2017: 45).

The fast expansion of this new business model gave way to another expected result: various definitions to make sense of this dynamic structure that exceeds traditional sectoral analysis were made. As pointed out above, the sharing economy, on-demand economy, gig economy, and platform economy are only a few. If the definition of a notion indicates a particular understanding of practical events, then a concise examination of these definitions is necessary for the sake of the study. The concept of sharing economy seems an adequate point to start. The primary claim of the notion is that, as defended by companies such as Airbnb and Uber, "sharing of underutilised assets" (Schmidt, 2017:3). In other words, it includes "the peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services)" (Hamari et al., as cited in Boyacı, 2020: 10). However, it is debatable if the concept is able to fully explain the activities of platforms since "the large digital platforms in this area are not based primarily on the sharing of common goods but on the commercial coordination of various services offered by private individuals" (Schmidt, 2017:3). Thence, this also implies that rather than simply providing a blank mediator to activate the non-used assets, the platform coordinates them, by aiming to reproduce value by commercializing these assets (Boyacı, 2020: 10). This, if not refuted, strongly disorientates companies' defended neutrality because the coordination of assets also indicates that the trade does not

happen amongst equals in a neutral area as its claimed but instead occurs in an organized fashion.

Likewise, the on-demand economy is popularly used to depict current economic trends. It is defined as "the economic activity created by technology companies that fulfill consumer demand via the immediate provisioning of goods and services" (Jaconi, as cited in Boyacı, 2020: 10). The concept might help explain the operation of platforms (which will be done under the incoming part) since it might include the connotations of the on-demand workforce that occupies a vital place for the growth and operation of platforms. However, in a theoretical sense, the concept consists of all sorts of atypical employment relations, thus exceeding the limits of platform operation and what platform economy implies. Therefore, the concept does not stand out as the best analytical option despite its usefulness when discussing the link between the on-demand labor force and platforms.

Amongst counted terms, the gig economy might stand as the most popular. The origin of the term is dated back to the 1920s. At that time, it referred to "musicians…performing one-night performances, and these workers did not receive health coverage or paid holiday" (Bratton, 2020: 41). The term's usage started to gain momentum in the context of 2008: "when the unemployed made a living by 'gigging', or working several part-time jobs, wherever they could" (Bratton, 2020: 41). The emerged digital infrastructure and thus digital labor along with it prepared the proper conditions for the rise of gig work: "Internet-based labour platforms have driven the growth of the gig economy" by helping the workers connect "with individual gigs or clients, such as Uber linking customers to taxi drivers" (Bratton, 2020: 42). Therefore, the just-in-time service system[1] evolved into 'just-in-time workers', which was born in a 'free' labor market that organized independent and freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs (Morgan and Nelligan, as cited in Bratton, 2020: 41). Three core features of gig work are described as follows: "a high degree of autonomy; payment by task, assignment or sales; and short-term relationship between the worker and the

[1] As a short reminder, the term is defined as: "a manufacturing process or service system (e.g., supermarket) in which materials or components or food items are delivered immediately before they are required in order to minimize storage costs" (Bratton, 2020: 41).

customer" (Manyika et al., as cited in Bratton, 2020: 41). Inside the given context, it is observed that gig work bears a high value while explaining the digital economy. However, the platform economy likely suggests a broader understanding in terms of examining the digital economy and operation of platforms. The gig work includes on-demand task providing, and although some digital labor platforms work on this basis, the gig work could be seen in other areas where digitalization is not involved. Thus, the term looks closer to being evaluated as a sub-category for platform economy since particular digital platforms (see: Figure 1.2 below) are characterized by gig work (Boyacı, 2020: 11).

4.3. Platform Capitalism: What is a Platform and How Does It Operate?

If this dynamic ecosystem cannot be compressed to definitions discussed thus far, what should it be called? Under the circumstances where the term 'platform' points out to a vanguard model toward the change in the digital economy, the word platform itself could be the primary point. The term is helpful because "it points to the crucial structural similarity of various new digital business models and methods" and also contrary to terms as sharing economy represents platforms as neutral mediators, it is "less tainted by ideology or marketing" (Schmidt, 2017:10). While Schmidt prefers to name it as 'platform economy,' other scholars also use it as 'platform capitalism' (Kenney & Zysman, 2020; Lobo, 2014, Srnicek, 2017). This study will adopt the idea that platforms were established to use the data to its fullest after the crisis of capitalism; and are materialized as "restructuring the space of capitalist accumulation" (Kenney & Zysmand, 2020: 1). Therefore, if platforms appear as tools of the new capitalist accumulation strategy, the new ecosystem could be called platform capitalism.

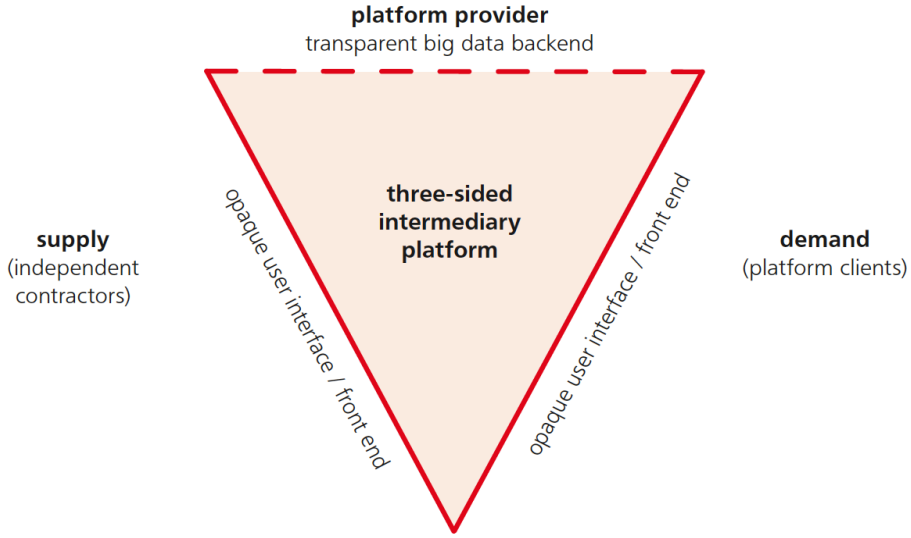
Although the theoretical definitions have practical effects, it is essential to make sense of how the platforms operate and what are the main characteristics of this new model. A primary point to begin with, could be a basic definition of a platform, other than how it is defined in connection with capitalist development. As with the case of the gig economy, there are several efforts to describe the platforms (Liang et al., 2020). However, few of them step further in practicality. Platforms are defined as "digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact" where "they, therefore,

position themselves as intermediaries that bring together different users: customers, advertisers, service providers, producers, suppliers, and even physical objects" (Srnicek, 2017: 45-46). The definition outshines one of the vital features defining the platforms, the role of mediation via digital infrastructure, which was briefly mentioned under the discussion of shared economy. The platforms, therefore, are software systems that provide a digital ground for various agents. If to refer to Srnicek once more, "this is the key to its advantage over traditional business models" which puts platform in an advantageous position in data recording "since a platform positions itself (1) between users, and (2) as the ground upon which their activities occur, which thus gives it privileged access to record them" (Srnicek, 2017: 46).

This triangular operation of platforms (see. Figure 1) allows platforms to outsource the costs to these other two parties since the platforms are "entirely virtual service (just an app or a website) and can thus grow exponentially, without having to face production costs growing proportionally as well (very low marginal costs)" (Schmidt, 2017:5). Thereby, platforms appear to be novel in a sense that they can outsource costs to both parties without the certain necessity to own (some of them do) any sort of production tools or centers except a software (application, website) which meanwhile allows them to capture the data of both sides. Access to data does not only mean recording or extracting actions of the users of the platform; it also gives the platform provider the power "to influence the exchange between the other two and potentially do this in real-time" (Schmidt, 2017:10). The cited influence implies that providers know when, where, and how the interactions occur. Nonetheless, the power is not restricted to tracing particular interactions; the data will also be collected on how workers do the job, which will have colossal effects on the work. These very effects on the labor market and work will be discussed under following chapters, especially regarding to the case analysis.

Before moving into how platforms grew and expanded and their effects on work, it is required to answer how to classify platforms. Except for the common core practices, the platforms differ in practical ways. The classification is important to understand what other novelties platforms might bear, how they can crosscut several sectors, on what basis their growth takes place, and how they affect the notion of work. Thus, to

categorize digital labor platforms, two fundamental questions to be asked: “are the services and tasks coordinated via the platform bound to a specific location?” and “are these services and tasks bound to a specific person?” (Schmidt, 2017:5)



(Figure 1 Exerted from: Schmidt, 2017: 10)

The answers, naturally, open different paths. These paths, as outlined, take one to the massive plateau of how each category operates. Nonetheless, the word operation here implies more than software-wise technical processes or business transactions. It defines the way the work is done. As follows: “if the task is not location-based and can be done remotely via the internet, it is cloud work and when a task has to be done at a specific location and time… it is gig work” (Schmidt, 2017:5). Under each rubric, three different types of work regimes appear:

Cloud work (web-based digital labour)
1.freelance marketplaces
2.microtasking crowd work
3.contest-based creative crowd work
Gig work (location-based digital labour)
4.accommodation
5.transportation and delivery services (gig work)
6.household services and personal services (gig work) (Schmidt, 2017:5)

Figure 1.2 below provides a prominent picture of what basis of work the platforms operate. The first type of digital labor platforms, i.e., web-based platforms, base

themselves on the triangular model and act as an intermediary agent as a primary principle. These platforms usually work on task accomplishment basis. On freelance work, independent contractors sign up to specific websites such as Freelancer.com or Upwork and choose among the given tasks. These tasks require specific end products and skills and are generally completed by one person. The client and independent contractor negotiate the payment, and client can choose the related skills. Schmidt (2017:14) states that "the types of jobs mediated via freelance marketplaces are very heterogeneous…complex, demanding and specialized". Web development, marketing, designing, and creative writing can be given as examples (Boyacı, 2020: 27). On this occasion, as a mediator of supply and demand, "freelance marketplaces typically charge a fee of 10 to 20 per cent from the independent contractors", whereas "the service is often free" for the clients (Schmidt, 2017:14). Few outcomes step forward in this work regime. First, as with the outsourced tasks, although they might be complex and could be accomplished remotely, the independent contractors have to compete globally. This can easily lead prices to a downward trend since there is an on-demand global workforce the client can easily reach via the website. Second, these contractors are on exposure to high surveillance. Clients can view the workers from time to time; in some cases, the platform takes a screenshot of workers in particular periods to ensure that work is in process (Schmidt, 2017:14). Therefore, although contractors might get paid relatively higher due to the complexity of the tasks; the wheels work out for the sake of platform because it cuts the cost by merely mediating between supply and demand and can extract a mass amount of data from both client and worker; especially worker on how the job is done.

Microtasking, in other words, 'cognitive piecework' (İrani, 2013) consists of many "tiny, repetitive tasks that are distributed across a large and unspecified group of crowd-workers" (Schmidt, 2017:15). Therefore, unlike freelance work, these non-complex tasks are presented to masses. There is on-demand labor once more, but this time, no special skills are necessary to complete the tasks. This implies that workers who choose the task are easily replaceable. Most parts of the tasks are usually automated. In simple words, what is outsourced on this occasion is the necessary human touch to the automated processes. This human touch is still preferred due to the fact that "residual tasks of larger data processing operations that unskilled humans can

still solve more cheaply and with a lower error rate than computers" (Schmidt, 2017:15). The work is also defined by Amazon, which was the frontier of the work with its novel platform called Mechanical Turk, as human-as-a-service, and Bezos describes the workers as 'artificial artificial intelligence' (Jones, 2021). The tasks could differentiate from distinguishing violent content on a social-media platform to transcription; from labeling specific products to validating Uber drivers are really on the pinned location; the outsourcing offers a wide scale (Jones, 2021: 82; Schmidt, 2017:15). Workers, meanwhile, remain anonymous and assign themselves to the task. Again, the clients have direct access to deskilled, on-demand, in other words, as outlined above, surplus populations. Only this time, the payments are very low, several workers could do the job, and most of the time, there is no mechanism that a worker can complain in case the payment is refused to be made by client based on arguments that the tasks were made correctly by other workers, or exceeded time-limits (Jones, 2021: 82; Schmidt, 2017:15). Thus, as with others, this model also operates on the triangular basis, presents itself as the mediator, and the recording and extraction of data continue.

The contest-based platforms use the same logic with the different work processes. The platforms claim to provide a basis where clients show up and choose amongst a vast amount of completed creative work produced by particular demands or occasions. Usually, only one work is picked, and the others are discarded (Schmidt, 2017:17). This work is also considered a sub-category of crowd-work, but contrary to microwork, the tasks are mostly more skill based. However, it should be emphasized that the trend toward outsourcing "work hitherto done by regularly paid professionals to a 'standing army' of crowd workers, for whom it has made the possibility of fair payment into a gamble" continues (Schmidt, 2017:17). The situation where the companies can directly reach - although high-skilled and relatively well paid – workforce appears to create a precarious situation for workers, while the competition is robust. As in all three cases, platforms benefit the situation; by hosting creative work, some platforms take high transaction costs from clients (Schmidt, 2017:17).

Srnicek (2017: 50) makes another classification that could be counted as insightful. Scholar classifies the platforms as; advertising (Facebook, Google), cloud (AWS,

Salesforce), industrial (GE, Siemens), product (Rolls Royce, Spotify), and lean platforms (Uber, Airbnb). The activity of advertising platforms is based on excerpting the user information, processing it to make them useful as products, and then selling ad space as the outcome of this process. In this sense, the number of users gathered on platforms correlates to the number of online activities recorded and extracted. This extracted data is processed and analyzed in a way that advertising companies can use, representing a revenue created solely by the usage and processing of raw data rather than involving more complex labor processes (Srnicek, 2017: 71-72). The second type of platforms, the cloud platforms, as the most fundamental principle, work on the renting of digital software and hardware.

Cloud platforms are pioneered by Amazon's integral platform -Amazon Web Services- which was built as a digital structure to handle the complex logistics process related to e-commerce and run the services quicker. It was not long before the company realized the product was rentable to other companies. The benefits were mutual since firms that needed the digital infrastructure did not have to build their own, and the company that owned the service could extract data for themselves from various businesses. These services included "on-demand services for servers, storage and computing power, software development tools and operating systems, and ready-made applications" (Srnicek, 2017:77).

The primary goal of the use of the third type, namely industrial platforms, is to transform traditional manufacturing into an internet-connected system by using both hardware and software. By doing so, it was aimed to reduce both production costs and the time needed. The system is built upon "embedding of sensors and computer chips into the production process and of trackers" which aim to make "each component in the production process…able to communicate with assembly machines and other components…" (Srnicek, 2017:80). The platforms, like others, rely upon the extraction of data. Therefore, the same 'profitability' logic in cloud-based platforms applies in this case, too: the services rented to manufacturing companies allow them to transform their production process and lower the production costs, while platforms get to have a grip on massive amount of data of how production processes and logistics function in different corners of the world. Consequently, the platform owners become

available to offer more functional services and sell their product to bigger companies, thus, growing exponentially (Srnicek, 2017: 83-86).

The product platforms, meanwhile, "generate revenue by using other platforms to transform a traditional good into a service and by collecting rent or subscription fees on them" (Srnicek, 2017: 50). The transformed traditional goods, from music to renting a car, has a wide scale. It might even involve the rental of a jet engine. The same logic appears again; the companies now have the option not to buy a new engine, and platforms can extract data from each flight by the sensors put on engines, including "weather conditions, information on the wear and tear on engines, possible problems, and times for scheduling maintenance" (Srnicek, 2017: 90). This puts them in an advantageous position in competition with other platforms.

Amongst others, the last type, lean platforms (Uber, Airbnb, TaskRabbit, and more) could be counted as the closest category to the 'sampling platforms' of this study. The particular importance of this type relies on the fact that they "attempt to reduce their ownership of assets to a minimum and to profit by reducing costs as much as possible" (Srnicek, 2017: 50). By following the trend of outsourcing, the pursued strategy of the companies is to remain assetless, except a virtual software basis that all parties can meet and data analysis could be made. Subsequently, these platforms rent the services of other platforms and other's assets. As summarized:

> Lean platforms operate through a hyper-outsourced model, whereby workers are outsourced, fixed capital is outsourced, maintenance costs are outsourced, and training is outsourced. All that remains is a bare extractive minimum – control over the platform that enables a monopoly rent to be gained (Srnicek, 2017: 92).

Outsourcing leads to several distinguishing consequences. Firstly, as the primary aim of the lean platforms is to reduce labor costs by outsourcing, the employment relations shape accordingly. In line with the neutrality argument, these platforms relate to the workers as "independent contractors" instead of "employees". This points out a crucial change because, as outlined, companies are now devoid of labor costs and responsibilities such as equipment and training. Further, this model shows a tendency

toward those in an external position in labor markets, what is referred to as surplus populations in a previous chapter, or on-demand labor force, since the practical work to be done for platforms mainly does not require specific skill sets. Relatedly, contrary to the skillful workforce, these workers are disposable, indicating that the process of outsourcing could be more straightforward whereby platforms have access to a surplus army who are characterized mainly by weak labor moment and a cheaper workforce: "An increasingly desperate surplus population has therefore provided a considerable supply of workers in low-wage, low-skill work" (Srnicek, 2017: 84).

Also, in line with the discussions of upskilling and deskilling, internal and external labor markets outlined in the previous chapter, these companies: "simply continue the secular trend of outsourcing low-skill workers while retaining a core of well-paid high-skill labourers" (Srnicek, 2017: 83). The distinguishing character of lean platforms does not only lie in their high level of dependency on surplus labor force. The second outcome of hyper-outsourcing also creates a dependency on other levels. Despite the platform owns the virtual software and can keep the data provided by workers and customers, they rely on other companies for several other services; since they can rent cloud services: "Airbnb, Slack, Uber, and many other start-ups use AWS … Uber further relies on Google for mapping, Twilio for texting, SendGrid for emailing, and Braintree for payments" (Srnicek, 2017: 77-78). However, the dependency does not stop here but only goes further. The lean platforms are mostly supported by "surplus capital seeking higher rates of return in a low interest rate environment" whereas "the low interest rates have depressed the returns on traditional financial investments, forcing investors to seek out new avenues for yield" (Srnicek, 2017: 80). The surplus capital mentioned is no other than the cash created by the monetary policy after 2008, which, as emphasized and quoted under the first title of this chapter: "has let loose a vast glut of cash, which has been seeking out decent rates of investment in a low-interest rate world" (Srnicek, 2017: 36). All in all, this cash appears as the source behind the growth of lean platforms since this cash was, as mentioned in the first part, left in the hands of particularly tech companies.

In conclusion, lean platforms are characterized by: "outsourcing, surplus populations, … digitisation of life, along with the post-2008 surge in unemployment and rise of an

accommodative monetary policy, surplus capital, and cloud platforms that enable rapid scaling" (Srnicek, 2017: 81). These distinguishing features reveal why the categorization of lean platforms is influential in the context of this thesis since, as will be emphasized in the next chapter, almost all these concepts coexist in the Turkish economic ecosystem at times when local platforms flourished. Therefore, with the help of the notion, the similarities and originalities of Turkish platforms such as *getir*, *yemeksepeti*, and *trendyol* will be depicted. Also, the inquiry will develop around if lean platforms step further in the Turkish case, among other categories (advertisement, product, cloud, industrial). Before moving on to the next chapter, Schmidt's second category, location based digital platforms (2017:5) will be discussed for two purposes. The first is to further the specification of the topic of this study. The second is to shift the focus more on the concept of work, particularly gig work.

4.4. Gig Work and Location Based Digital Labor Platforms

Thus far, platforms, their classification, and particular differences in operations are discussed with one exception: gig work related, location based digital labor platforms. Although they have several common features with lean platforms, these platforms occupy a more specific category. Since, for instance, lean platforms can include a microtasking website such as TaskRabbit or Upwork, location based digital labor platforms refer to specific platforms that operate in 'real world'. The decisive difference in categorization stems from the work regime related to the latter, namely, gig work. Therefore, to better understand how these platforms operate and how they differ from the web based or cloud platforms, the concept of gig work is to be explored. Although the concept is briefly discussed above, it appears necessary to spot the place it occupies concerning the operation of location-based platforms.

The first point, to begin with, could be a reminder of what the gig economy is mainly characterized by: "the prevalence of short-term or zero hours contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs" (Bratton, 2020: 28). This phenomenon flourished per the mentioned trends such as deindustrialization, the rise of service sector, and a flexible labor regime. This flexible, on-demand labor paved the way for "employment contracts that are part-time, fixed term, short term or seasonal and create what has

become known as ‘on-demand’ or ‘precarious’ employment” (Bratton, 2020: 28). The flexibilization of the economy deeply impacted the concept of work itself. Now the workers are almost forced to low-wage, precarious contracts, meanwhile losing control over the design of labor itself (Bratton, 2020: 28). In a much more profound manner:

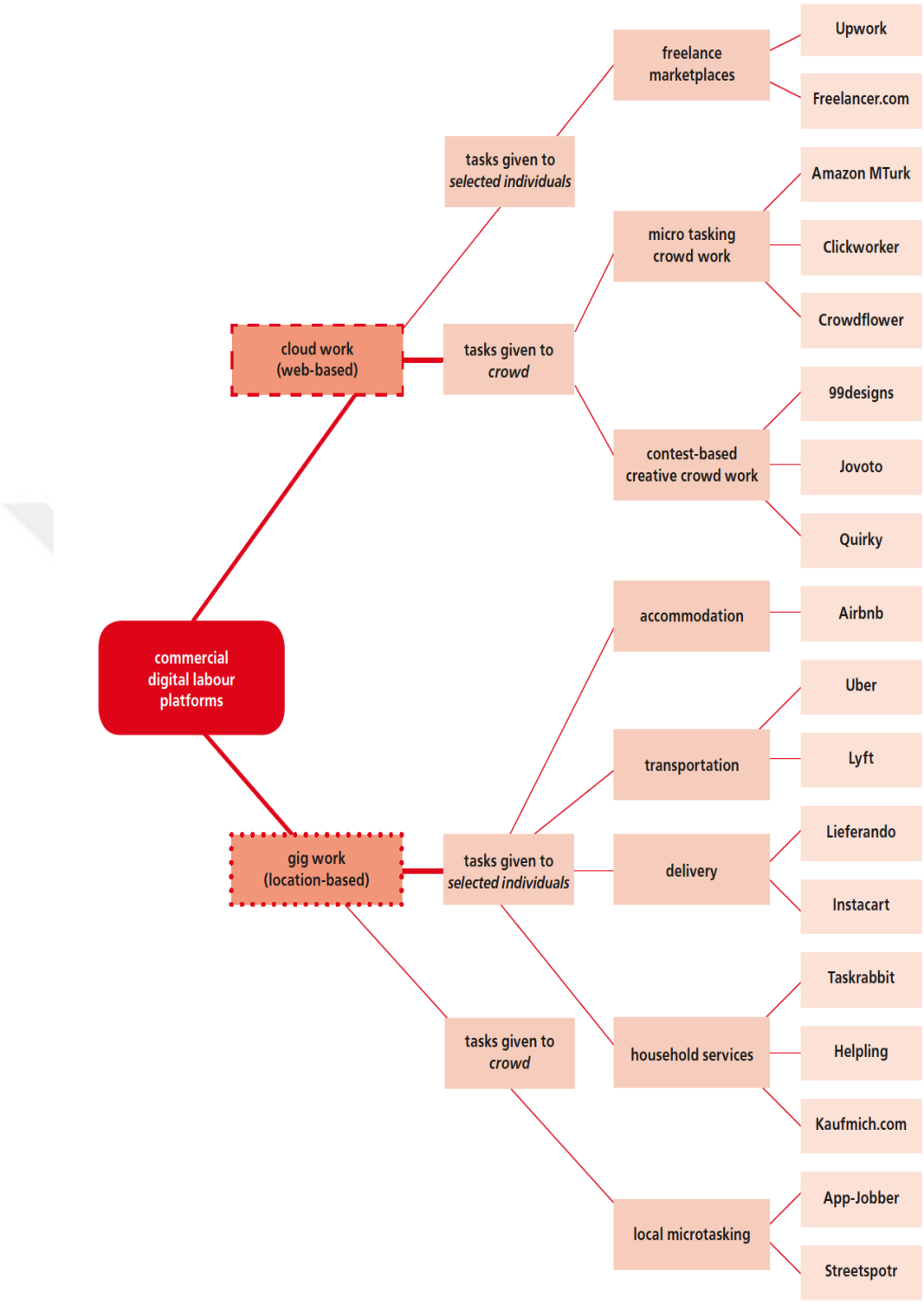
> [Flexibility] make[s] it possible to transfer the burden of market uncertainty onto wage-earners, but also subcontractors and other service providers. It breaks down into internal flexibility, based upon a profound transformation in the organization of work and the techniques employed (e.g., multitasking, teams, self-control), and external flexibility. The latter presupposes a so-called network organization of work, wherein ‘lean’ firms seek the resources they lack from among a profusion of subcontractors, as well as a labour force that is malleable in terms of employment (casual jobs, self-employed, autonomy), working hours, or the duration of work (part-time, variable hours) (Boltanski and Chiapello, cited in Bratton, 2020: 39)

The birth of digital platforms occurred under depicted circumstances, and it is witnessed, especially in the case of lean platforms, that some grew hand in hand with the flexible labor force. Yet, the process is evolved by the digital labor platforms since they provide a ground to connect workers to gig works or clients. This implies that the growth of the internet bred gig work and expanded its reach as a new model beyond the limits of the internet. The characteristic feature of gig work, short-term contracts began to cultivate in different areas of service sector, from hotels to fast-food chains, from education to health (Bratton, 2020: 42). The diffusion of rigid employment also suggested that workers could now arrange the times they will work or shift jobs easier. However, along with these new advantages, “new forms of work emerged that allowed workers to engage in work in less rigid ways, but only by taking on increased risk” (Woodcock, 2021: 49-50). The increased risks, as outlined several times, could be read through the trend of outsourcing. In addition, the autonomous working hours mostly did not involve adequate career, fixed income stream, or protections along with the worker status (Bratton, 2020: 42). However, what is novel about the context of digital labor platforms is not that they invented service jobs or flexibility. Instead, platforms provided a new way of connection, as the triangular model (see. Figure 1) presents. Before Uber, taxi drivers existed, but with its emergence, booking a taxi became quicker and easier, along with growing transparency and time prediction (Woodcock, 2021: 24). What this triangular platform model appeared to achieve is that it offered a

differentiating model to workers under the circumstances where labor market behaves in line with principles of flexibility. This model offered workers a new way to execute their already existing, precarious, or flexible jobs with autonomy in working hours and relative freedom from classical management techniques. These point out a crucial change in labor markets, whereby "workers search for different ways to work or to escape their local labor market" (Woodcock, 2021: 25-26). The attraction of status' such as independent contractor or entrepreneur, might have emerged under such circumstances. Yet, as will be outlined under the *contract and status* title, it is highly controversial if the new model is devoid of disadvantageous features included in precarious work. Therefore, in relation to the data provided by interviews conducted for this study, it is to be discussed if the achievement of the platforms is restricted to finding ways to extract data. In other words, it is to be explored if this new business model and capital have found ways to exploit this precarious workforce and if the establishment and growth of platforms coincide with the effort (Woodcock, 2021: 25-26).

It is so far emphasized under what conditions platforms were born and how they are related to the rise of gig work and flexibility. Nonetheless, the gig work, as outlined, might include a wide range of physical activities. The relationship between location-based digital platforms and gig work shines out as one of these platforms' unique and distinguishing features. The operation of the platform differs from web-based platforms because, in location-based gig work, the job is "bound to specific person who has to show up" , "need to have a profile with real name", "set of ratings" and thus, more commitment (Schmidt, 2017: 18). The work is accomplished in the physical world, which implies a need for a constant encounter of workers with customers. The triangular model is still in the process, but it happens on concrete grounds this time. Amongst a vast number of outcomes of this process, several of them step further. In this case, contrary to web-based work, the quality of the worker delivering the job must be defined; s/he might have to have a friendly behavior; deliver the results in expected times and ways; can have a traffic accident, damage a property and more (Schmidt, 2017: 19). Following that, these workers are to be supervised, and documents such as criminal records or 'personality traits' might gain specific importance as they could be rated accordingly. The supervision, however, is not limited to the documents gathered:

the workers or -independent contractors- could be watched through application by both platform and customer. If put in another way: “With just a touch on the smartphone, they can summon a car, see who their driver will be and where they are at the moment. They can see a representation of the car approach in real-time on their screen and they can give the driver a call to coordinate details” (Schmidt, 2017: 20). Except for giving coordinate details, the same process applies to the food delivery platforms, on which the activity of worker could be surveilled. The definitive consequences of this feature will be discussed under the title of *Algorithmic Management*.



(Figure 1.2 :Exerted from: Schmidt, 2017: 7)

The physical world where activities occur does not only imply a difference in a worker's profile. Although some of these platforms pursue the logic of lean platforms,

i.e., the outsourcing model, they outsource the physical assets. The operation of these assets makes the effects of these platforms much more visible, for instance, in cities. The taxi drivers could be converted to independent contractors with their own cars by Uber, and the apartments are rented in particular regions through Airbnb, which can affect the rent prices. A vital point to remember here is that the extraction of data, in this case, gains particular importance, whereas it involves the tracking activities of real people in physical places. The drastic physical effects might change in different contexts and will be observed in the context of Turkey (warehouses) in the following chapters. Also, tracking actual activities captures significant attention, whereas platforms' emergence and growth strategy rely on the extraction and use of raw data. The exemplifying outcomes of this real time tracking and the usage of this data by companies such as Uber will be discussed under the title *Algorithmic Management*. Also, based on these examples, the differences and similarities -if there are- will be explored with analysis of data acquired from interviews.

Another distinctive point is that, although this workforce appears independent, the impacts of the emergence of location based digital platforms on workforce are more comprehensive than its web-based counterparts since it involves physical vehicles to be used, 'real' contracts to be made, and despite the changes, the works are mostly not new and fall under legislations. The last point to make on the importance of these platforms is their growth potential. In line with the relation between lean platforms and surplus capital, the location-based gig platforms also appear to be successful in attracting venture capital investments. Whereas these platforms do not only "integrate only the labour of their independent contractors into their own value chain, but also their capital in the form of cars and homes" (Schmidt, 2017:11). It is also claimed that this feature allowed the companies to challenge traditional companies in their own sector (Schmidt, 2017:11). It remains to be explored if this case applies in the exact same way in different contexts such as the Turkish context.

CHAPTER 5

COMPONENTS OF LABOR PROCESS

Depicting the historical channel from which platforms stemmed provides concrete grounds to discern particular notions related to changes in the history of capitalism per se. The illustration of shifts of patterns in capitalist development has led this study's narrative into the last phase corresponding to recent history. Despite the uniqueness of practices in every historical chapter in the capitalist odyssey, in the previous chapters it was argued that the concept of technology occupied an essential place in each. The effects of technology on certain historical phases were examined to make sense of the particularities that gave birth to platforms. The main attempt, however, was to depict the effects on labor markets and processes. In that sense, the concept of technological fix was used since the concept was helpful to accomplish a sense of unity on how technological development is related to capitalist historical development. The joint development involved inventing strategies to reduce labor costs and implement more control over the labor process. Therefore, the concept implies that the history of technological development is highly related to changes in the character of labor markets. These changes were explored in relation to concepts such as management, deskillization, surplus populations, and digitalization. The goal was to inquire how the 'science of management' related to the emergence of upskilled, particularly downskilled labor force, and, in the end, how digitalization impacted these characteristics. Followingly, the absorption of these labor forces into different sectors was linked with digitalization, and it was pointed out how these surplus populations were now synonymous with an on-demand, low-skilled workforce, which appeared as a fertile ground for platforms to flourish. The inquiry on digitalization, concerning occurring historical events such as the dot.com balloon, also opened a pathway to understand how and why the capital also underwent characteristic changes, thus, inventing new ways to survive. The fast-paced digitalization process brought vital

outcomes: it left a digital infrastructure as a heritage, which implicitly put a new 'raw material' in a central place in almost all layers of life: data. Platforms emerged as software structures where the data could be extracted and processed. With the help of a post-crisis low-interest, cash-abundant environment, platforms of all types have arisen and now are everywhere.

Subsequently, it was presented that it became inevitable for platforms to generate effects in almost all areas. Thus, it was crucial to classify the platforms to be able to differentiate their impacts on labor, which is the aim of this study to explore. The classifications helped make sense of how platforms operate. The operation happens in a triangular fashion; platforms are bringing the supply and demand together on a virtual basis. It is also seen that they might differ practical-wise, but the triangular model applies to nearly all. It is emphasized that this model allowed platforms to claim neutrality. The driving force is to bring 'clients' and an on-demand workforce consisting of independent individuals seeking jobs. The novelty of platforms is not considered to be restricted to the model they offer; but it is also revealed that apart from business operations, the practicality creating difference between them is based on how the workforces operate on a particular platform. These could be either remote or location-based. In both senses, it is implied that platforms, in some cases, have given birth to new work models and, in other cases, have reshaped the traditional work. Following this idea, it is argued that the effects of location-based platforms are more visible because they can affect the majority of the workforce and operate by physical assets.

Further, to deepen the inquiry, it is examined how the location-based platforms operate specifically. While doing so, it is observed that the growth of most of these platforms is based on concepts such as gig-work, flexibility and outsourcing. It is briefly highlighted in the context of location-based or lean platforms how "the 'platformisation' of labour relations may reshape and revive traditional outsourcing practices" (Aloisi & DeStefano, 2018: 9). Consequently, the relation between the growth of the platforms and gig-work related flexibility is inspected. However, the investigation requires deeper analysis to clearly understand how platformisation changed or re-forged the conditions and process of work. It is necessary to understand

the growth of particular platforms in particular places, the ways it happens, and the general effects of it on the workforce it operates. An inquiry in the literature shows that the topic is widely discussed, and attempts to detect these changes are not new (Fairwork: 2020, Prassl: 2018, ETUC: 2018; ILO: 2018; ILO: 2021; DeStefano: 2016; Eurofound: 2018a, Eurofound: 2018b; Huws et al.: 2017; EMPL, 2020; DeStefano & Aloisi: 2018). Although with different commentaries, purposes, and methods, several components step further in these attempts. Following the literature, this chapter intends to develop a theoretical framework related to platformization by bringing these components into a model for the analysis of the empirical case study. Those components are *Contract and Status*, *Wage and Pricing*, *Workplace,* and *Algorithmic Management*. With the help of conceptual baggage structured here, it is also aimed to use these components as operationalization tools later in the analysis of the qualitative case of couriers in Turkey.

5.1. Contract and Status

It is already emphasized that, one of the most novel features platforms inherit is their ability to bring supply and demand together. Yet, this novel feature, supported by the neutrality narrative, has several consequences. The assertion of neutrality allows platforms to conceive a workforce consisting of independent individuals who, just as clients, apply to platform and work with them by consent. From that perspective, both sides are claimed to benefit from the process; the client can easily find a person who can do the job, and people seeking jobs now have quick access to work.

In most cases, the employment status detected by work contracts might imply severe changes. It can affect the worker's place in the organization of work, the organization of time schedules, the application of management, payment structures, leaves, training; the rights in case of dismission; insurance, taxation, and more (Boyacı, 2020: 42, 47-48). Although there is no known consensus on how the digital platform workers are classified, one can still mention how the employment status is depicted. Amongst many, several determinants on how to classify them include the following: whether worker gets specific instruction on how to do the work, where and when the work is conducted, the specification of work times, the level of control exerted on process, and

maybe most importantly whether or not the individual provides her means for work (Boyacı, 2020: 42-43). Later on, under this title, the practical commentaries and outcomes of these components will be shown through several examples. Before, it is significant to depict the tendency of platforms regarding the issue of contract and status.

The previous chapter provided information on how platforms are heterogenous and can vary organizationally. Yet, their tendency towards acting as neutral meeting grounds could also be strongly emphasized. The operational differences might result from many complexities in status classification. However, there is almost an umbrella status term that platform workers gather under: independent contractor (Schmidt, 2017). The term inherits synonymous implications with self-employed status. The self-employment in platform case suggests that the contractor is neither employee nor employer. The contractor mentioned still has a type of contract. Yet, the process of diffusion of rigidity expectedly poses itself upon the concept of the contract itself. The process was marked by "individualization of contracts leading to a breakdown of collective structures and solidarities" (Huws, 2014:147). The individualization mentioned is accompanied by the advancement of non-standard types such as contingent work and temporary employment arrangements. Yet, platforms show their novel character once more on this occasion. If not too bold to state, the contacts are, as the last part of this historical chain, evolved into terms and conditions. This might indicate to a continuation of the results generated by the involvement of flexibilization regarding contracts. These terms and conditions determine the relationship between the platform and independent contractor, i.e., self-employed individual (ILO, 2021: 12). These agreements, in the most straightforward manner: "describe the rights and obligations of each of the parties in the legal language of consumer law" (Eurofound, 2018b). Despite the differences in expressions, the goal is primarily to define the boundaries between platform and contractor. Amazon Mechanical Turk for instance, clearly states the contractor should "comply with all applicable laws and registration requirements, including those applicable to independent contractors and maximum working hours regulations" and the "Agreement does not create an association … employer/employee relationship" between contractors and requestors and Amazon (ILO, 2021: 12). Doordash's strongly emphasizes that "contractor represents that

he/she operates an independently established enterprise that provides delivery services" and "the parties acknowledge and agree that this Agreement is between two co-equal, independent business enterprises that are separately owned and operated" (ILO, 2021: 12). Meanwhile, Handy's points out: "Service Professional represents that he or she is customarily engaged in an independently established trade" (ILO, 2021: 12). The examples can be augmented, yet the intention of this chapter is not to discuss technical statements included in conditions in detail. Instead, the aim is to point out two novel impacts platforms had on the concept of work and working conditions. First is their novel character of bringing together the clients and workforce (employers and employees, supply and demand). The second is, related to the first, the way platforms reshape the self-employment status into an independent contractor, which is depicted by new and commonly used terms and conditions.

Apart from the question if these agreements could be counted as work contracts of any sort, their qualities appear to be highly controversial. Schmidt states that: "The problem of overreaching terms of service occurs in all areas of the platform economy. They are sprawling in terms of the sheer amount of text (with 55,000 words, Airbnb's terms of service have almost the length of a novel)" (Schmidt, 2017: 11). The scholar also emphasizes that the agreements are biased against the users (Schmidt, 2017: 11), whose terms mostly coming up as unnegotiable. In this case: "the weaker contracting party has only two options or, even better, a 'take-it-or-leave-it offer': he or she may (i) adhere to the terms as drafted en bloc or (ii) reject the clauses entirely" (De Stefano&Aloisi, 2018: 17). In other words, workers are mostly faced with long terms and conditions on which they can have no impact upon; and the presented choice is to accept or decline. The controversial character of these agreements is not limited to their length or unnegotiability. These agreements can also 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" (Lomas and Dillet, 2015, as cited in Eurofound, 2018b: 57). Finally, as stated above, the terms and conditions are critical since they also detect the employment status as self-employed.

As with the terms and conditions, self-employment status is also widely discussed (Schmidt, 2017; Eurofound, 2018b; Woodcock, 2021; DeStefano&Aloisi: 2018). The

reason behind this is that the issue carries great importance. The classification of an individual as an independent contractor might imply certain obligations since the workers are self-employed. They might have to cover contributions themselves or accept less coverage (Eurofound, 2018a). If the terms and conditions could be counted as the last part of the historical chain where flexibility and non-standard employment are located, so as the independent contractor status. With more and more flexibilization, complex trade-offs between labor and capital emerged. "Working longer hours in exchange for more autonomy in determining when you work them" or "shedding some administrative tasks in exchange for more travelling to meet costumers" and "earning more in exchange for agreeing to meet certain targets" are some the examples Huws uses (2014: 143). It could be stated that these trends, associated with non-standard or contingent employment, are now applicable to independent contractors. Yet, the difference is, in non-standard types, although temporary, there is mostly a contract; and the individual responsible for doing the job is still counted as an employee. Despite being weakened in the historical process, as mentioned in the first chapter, these contracts might still imply certain regulations such as time periods, coverages, terms of dismission, social protections, and more (EMPL, 2020). Some platforms offer contracts, but this is not a consistent pattern (Eurofound, 2018b: 50). Rather, the pattern is more likely that platform workers "typically have no written contract similar to an (employment or service) contract in traditional businesses… the contracting is done online, through a simple subscription or enrolment, often without any personal contact" (EMPL, 2020: 27). Therefore, the status of an independent contractor, as it is synonymous with the self-employed, most of the time does not include any social protection.

The controversial implications of the independent contractor status have also related to the companies' growth strategies. As quoted above, the "'platformisation' of labour relations may reshape and revive traditional outsourcing practices" (DeStefano&Aloisi, 2018: 9). In that sense, as one of the essential features of self-employment status, platform workers are expected to meet their own 'means of production' for work. For a location-based delivery company worker, this could be a bicycle or motorbike; for a cleaner who works with a digital labor platform, these could be cleaning supplies. The independent contractor status carried the outsourcing trend

that began in the 1970s, briefly touched upon under the discussion of lean platforms (Srnicek, 2017:83) to a new phase. Accordingly: "the independent contractor classification frees firms from having to pay for a number of costly worker protections—minimum wage, overtime, contributions to Social Security" (Shapiro, 2019: 6). The platforms, however, are not only freed from these costs. They can also outsource "medicare, workers' compensation, unemployment, and health insurance" and, maybe most importantly, the equipment (Shapiro, 2019: 6). In the US example, the independent contractor status "enables the companies to save around 30 per cent on labour costs" (Srnicek, 2017: 72). Therefore, it could be implied that the independent contractor status bears great importance for the growth of platforms. Because, as argued by Srnicek (2017: 11), "to achieve the exponential growth expected by the investors, the marginal costs of the product must be as low as possible, which in turn means that the product must be mainly virtual". The outsourcing of equipment and physical assets allows the platforms to do so, and mostly "a few hundred employees are often enough to facilitate the business exchange between millions of users and take a cut of typically 20 to 30 per cent from every transaction between them" (Schmidt, 2017:11). Regarding the discussion under the title *Digitalization: Effects on Labor and Capital,* it is to be emphasized that these 'few hundred employees' mostly coincide with the upskilled workforce who are integrated with 'internal' labor markets. The workforce that platforms recruit for the low-skill jobs as independent contractors are the ones who were traditionally excluded from formal employment and who have long been forced to "hustle" with precarious gigs (Shapiro, 2019: 6); in other words, the surplus labor populations. Despite the platform-linked gig work provides autonomy to workers in terms of working time schedules, moonlighting, and more (De Stefano et al., 2016), it appears that it comes with a price with no social protection and high levels of outsourcing.

The independent contractor status is highly discussed in both theoretical and practical ways. It is highlighted that the contractors are potentially misclassified (EMPL, 2020: 70; Schmidt, 2017; ETUC, 2018). The actions of platforms that contradict their claim of neutrality occur as the source of dispute. This contradiction is named as the Platform Paradox:

> platform economy operators present themselves as marketplaces even though in reality they often act like traditional employers. Instead of passive matchmaking, platforms rely on rating systems and algorithmic control to ensure that each aspect of the worker's task is completed in compliance with company policy and customer instructions (ETUC, 2018: 8).

Apart from rating structures and algorithmic control, which will be discussed under *Algorithmic Management*, platforms are also accused of exerting much control that contradicts the independent contractor status. The consensus on the issue does not exist: "a courier performing the same activity can be classified as a quasi-subordinate worker in Italy, as a self-employed worker in France, as an employee in Germany, as a 'zero-hours' contract worker in the UK" (DeStefano&Aloisi, 2018: 53). There are few examples from various countries both show the novelty of the model and the dissensus. Spain's *Supremo* decided that the algorithmic management techniques such as the scoring system, which affects their access to slots, imply that "theoretical freedom to schedule time slots is quite different, from the actual freedom" (ILO, 2021: 32-33). Meanwhile, according to *Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Madrid*, the claim that couriers can choose their work times freely has to be put in a context that it is still the platform that decides "when to allow workers to work on the app based on the anticipated demand and according to the algorithm's metrics" (ILO, 2021: 32-33). *Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Catalunya* highlighted that Glovo couriers are employees since the company "exercise control over riders' schedules through variable remuneration and methods of rating and evaluation" (ILO, 2021: 33). A court in Amsterdam, however, agreed on the statement that Deliveroo couriers are self-employed regarding flexibility on working time, another court in the same city pointed out that same company limits the couriers, and still be considered bound by an employment contract, despite the significant amount of freedom enjoyed (ILO, 2021: 33). Also, both by Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Madrid and the Court of Canada, it is implied that the GPS could be considered as a layer of control, while in the Foodora case in Canada, it is emphasized that algorithms, GPS, automated alerts, SMS communications – allows Foodora to control the operation with minimal human interaction. This does not mean Foodora does not closely supervise the couriers (ILO, 2021: 37).

It is observed that all the theoretical and practical discussion mentioned here thus far, evolving around the novelties that platforms provide in employment conditions and work, inevitably leads one to examine another novel concept that came along with platforms: algorithmic management. But, before moving on, a few concluding remarks should be made on how this subheading is related to the framework provided by the study so far. Firstly, the discussion thus far revealed that platforms appear not only as the operational grounds where the new raw material, i.e. data, is extracted. They also serve as technological conduct, whose operation allows classifications such as independent contractors, which enables capital owners to reduce labor costs drastically, as implied in the concept of technological fix. There, if not too bold to state, platforms, by means of reduction of labor costs, could be perceived as a technological fix, which impacted on the concept of work and labor market structures deeply.

Secondly, as mentioned, the aim is to use each of the subheadings as an operational tool to analyze the specific case of digital platform couriers in Turkey who work for three platform companies. Therefore, in line with the informative structure provided here, the intention of the next chapter will be to explore: (I) The employment status of couriers, (II) the contractual status of couriers related to the status, (III) outsourcing practices -if there are- related to the first two. Thus, it will also be implicitly discussed that if the independent contractor status or terms and conditions discussions coincide with the context of Turkish couriers, the differences and similarities.

5.2. Algorithmic Management

Algorithms, indisputably, carry great importance for the operation of platforms since the platform is a virtual software. Yet, it seems essential to understand the merging of the term with the concept of management. Therefore to ask, how have algorithms, the set of calculations to meet a specific end by computers, which resulted from the digital infrastructure, merged with management? In third chapter, under the subheading Attempts to Control Labor Process: Brief Inquiry on Management, fundamental features, especially Taylorism, are underlined. However, it is dubious to detect that Taylorism survived in its purest form without complications through decades.

Taylorism and Fordism was interpreted to be in crisis with "the crisis of Western capitalism in the late 1960s and 1970s- fall in profitability and a slowdown in productivity gains-" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2018; Grey, 2013, as cited in Bratton, 2020: 40). There were several reasons behind the phenomenon. The highly controlled jobs required higher coordination costs, which implied the employment of a supervisory and quality controlling workforce. Also, most simplistically, the tighter the management's control over the worker, the lower job satisfaction would be, which might lead to a decrease in commitment (Bratton, 2020: 40). In other words: "Taylorism exposed a basic paradox, 'that the tighter the control of labour power, the more control is needed'" (Littler and Salaman, 1984, as cited in Bratton, 2020: 40). Hence, the mentioned profitability crisis, along with direct or indirect effects on labor also implied changes in management techniques. Japan, who became a strong actor in manufacturing, as mentioned earlier in the historical summary in first chapter, also took part in the solution to the management crisis. Their job design model identified "three notable elements: flexibility, quality control, and minimum waste" (Bratton, 2020: 41). It could be seen that this approach coincides with the flexibilization of labor markets accelerating in the 1980s.

However, it appears that management has a complex and vital role in the process ascent of digital infrastructures, algorithms, and platforms. The main goals characterize the concept, the precision of the actions of workers, and the calculation of those to find better and quicker ways to finish the job remained still. In line with this, it seems appropriate to remember the discussion evolved around Taylorism. Huws (2014: 177-178) argued that "for Taylor, the basic unit of analysis was the task" and these tasks specified "not only what is to be done but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it". Braverman's critical analysis was also based on the exposition of "ways in which workers' tasks are systematized and standardized enables us to posit a simplified model of the process by which tasks become redesigned to enable them to be converted into the basic modules" (Huws, 2014: 179). The deskillization through atomization and standardization of the work process was already discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, the intention is not to revive it in the same manner. However, it appears that the accomplishment of certain tasks mainly characterizes platform work. In a Eurofound report, one of the features of platform

work is introduced as such: "aim is to conduct specific tasks or solve specific problems" and "break-down of 'jobs' into 'tasks'"(Eurofound, 2018b: 3). The complete sketching of the process leading to the algorithmic management is profoundly explained by Huws:

> In the first stage, workers' tacit knowledge is made explicit and codified. This codification allows for a standardization of tasks, which takes place in the second stage. Third, this in turn makes it possible for outputs to be quantified and measured. Once this has taken place, a fourth stage becomes possible, in which workers can be managed by results. This means that management no longer needs to take place in "real" time and space but can be carried out remotely. This spatial and temporal displacement in turn makes possible a variety of different forms of business disaggregation, in a fifth stage, for the work to be reorganized, either spatially (by relocating it to another site) or contractually (by outsourcing it) or both (Huws, 2014: 180).

The introduction of digital infrastructure in the world scene, therefore, implied that the processes outlined by Huws could now be accomplished by digital algorithms, with precise codifications and thus calculations. The involvement of digital algorithms in this process is called digital Taylorism (Jones, 2022: 104). The concept refers to the accomplishment of basic principles of Taylorism through algorithms. The notion also inherits a remark that, by the introduction of algorithms, the historical crisis of Taylorism, in other words high costs for quality controls, coordination of workforce, and especially tight management, is being resolved. Platform workers, contrary to classical management and along with flexibility, do not have real-time managers now. The new manager, in this case, is the algorithm. The impact of this feature remains to be inquired. Before that, one could say that adding to developments in work status and contracts, the algorithmic management presents itself as another novel feature of platform work. The practical examples will be beneficial in answering why. Before moving on to a few examples of how algorithmic management operates, it is convenient to transfer the definition of the concept as "software algorithms that assume managerial functions and surrounding institutional devices that support algorithms in practice" (Lee et al., 2015, as cited in Cant: 2020).

Algorithmic management has several layers. Firstly, the model operates through what is significantly vital for platforms to survive: data. Yet, the data collected in this

context, as in advertisement platforms, is not only the consumer's data: "the detailed data that the platform providers continuously collect about the performance of their workforce – the knowledge about individual worker's thoroughness, industriousness and error rate" (Schmidt, 2017: 12). Uber, for instance, uses the data of drivers; what they are doing, how they are driving as such, to overcome its competitors. The company also uses data to prevent the drivers from working for other platforms; and uses data on routing algorithms of traffic to determine the most efficient path (Srnicek, 2017: 78-79). Therefore, on this occasion, data implies power. It is used to empower a concept that arguably transformed the platform work profoundly: *gamification*. The concept will also be discussed under the *Wage and Pricing* subheading below. Yet, gamification performs through management techniques, especially with rating systems as such. The rating of employees, with reference to symbols such as 'medals' is not new. What appears new is that this is now accomplished by the track of data, or, for instance, 'consumer ratings' (Schmidt, 2017: 12). On contrary to what the concept implies, this is not simply a game; according to the ratings got either from costumers or company: "the independent contractors are algorithmically rejected from future jobs… this is done by blocking their account or by making certain jobs invisible to them at the front-end of the platform interface" (Schmidt, 2017: 11-12). In most cases, contractors have no specific protection mechanism in the rating system. Also, it appears that, contrary to the reference system, these ratings are mostly not transferrable (Schmidt, 2017). Slee argues that, contrary to neutrality claims, this reputation algorithm should be perceived as "a substitute for a company management structure…A reputation system is the boss from hell: an erratic, bad-tempered and unaccountable manager that may fire you at any time, on a whim, with no appeal" (Slee, as cited in ETUC, 2018: 12).

The algorithmic management is a concept that has particular effects on almost each of the subheadings intended to be discussed here, especially, *Wage and Pricing*, and *Workplace*. Yet, the specific importance it carries is not restricted to rating systems. The management extends toward one of the significant goals defined by Tayloristic management and what Braverman detected critically; the exclusion of the worker units from the information of the total labor process. It was emphasized above that one of the significant features of the platform work is that it is mostly task-based, which could

be detected as the primary reason for the exclusion. Eurofound (2018b: 3) detects seven components to show how this process functions:

1: Identification of Needs: The client materializes a need for skills or resources (a demand for a task) for worker or workers could supply.
2. Initiation: Worker or client advertises the needed skill. In client case, some platforms allow clients to directly access and invite a worker group for specified task. In worker's case, workers advertise their skills on platform.
3. Response: One of both sides responds to the specified offer or required task.
4. Evaluation: One of both actors evaluate the offer with provided information.
5. Selection: The client decides who is chosen to accomplish the given task. There are cases that worker or platform does the selection on real basis or algorithmically.
6. Delivery: The task is being done by the worker.
7. Finalisation: After the task is delivered, payment takes place. It could be through platform or between two parties. Parties rate each other (mostly clients) which builds up a portfolio or reputation system (Eurofound 2018b: 3).

The seven-layered structure provides a transparent scheme for how the accomplishment of tasks proceeds. There could be practical differences in the classification of the platform. For instance, on remote work and contest-based platforms, the value of the initiation process could be different than a location-based cleaning platform work. Precisely for this reason, a few examples from location-based will be given, both to exhibit the exclusion from knowledge of labor by algorithmic management and to avoid getting lost in detail. A delivery platform, Deliveroo, works on identical principles. For instance, the details of a journey are provided to the workers one step at a time, which "prevents workers making an informed choice about which deliveries to accept, making it impossible to reject those that cover further distances" (Woodcock, 2021: 72). Further, it is argued that "the use of GPS mapping also prevents the worker from deciding on the optimum route, which reduces the choice of how to complete the delivery" (Woodcock, 2021: 72). Also, when the independent contractors show up for work, "they are usually bound to follow rules and guidelines set out by platforms and apps and, in some cases, also to accept a certain percentage of jobs coming through the app" (De Stefano, 2016: 7-8).

Followingly, the case of delivery presents itself as an 'appealing' one. Since the rating system mentioned the paragraph before, which could be resulted by the closure of

incoming slots, could affect the power worker possess on Response and Evaluation meanwhile, the lack of information and use of GPS to show the optimum route puts worker's autonomy in the Selection process in a controversial status. The platforms also continue "to 'encode workers' knowledge into bits and consequently transform bits into numbers for economic planning" (Pasquinelli, 2011, as cited in Woodcock, 2012: 73). More than economic planning, the data collected allows companies to invent ways to figure out how to convince the workers, in this case, couriers to accepts offers, in other words, "shape and constrain workers' choices'" (Doorn, 2020: 13). Cant (2020: 146) also carries out a discussion related to this, by referring to the concept used by Pasquale (2015), that platform carry 'black box' characteristics. Scholar's inquiry on Deliveroo couriers leads him to concluding that the workers' information on how labor process takes place and the instructions are constructed is highly restricted (Cant, 2020: 146). The argument proceeds with depictions that the management logic is hidden from workers: "The only direction workers receive is a depersonalized sequence of repetitive commands" (Cant, 2020: 146). This does not only imply that workers are in lack of control over this black box, but the black box has considerable control over workers. Couriers, in this context, struggle to make sense of the operation of management leads them meanwhile "the black box uses a constant stream of location, speed and time data to maintain control of the labour process" which allows systems such as machine learning to "make decisions on the (re)design and (re)organisation of the labour process" (Cant, 146: 2020).

As pointed out above, the techniques invented by Algorithmic Management are not restricted to the mentioned practices thus far. They are also related to *Wage and Pricing* and the *Workplace*, which will be identified under these subheadings. Yet, before moving on, a few concluding notes will be helpful. In the previous chapter, digitalization, automation, and standardization of labor are discussed, and the creation of deskilled labor force was detected in relation to management techniques, especially Taylorism. These management techniques were intended to be understood under the framework of the concept named technological fix, which meant: "efforts to deal with the crises of profitability and labor control by introducing major changes in the organization of production and labor process" (Silver, 2003: 39). Consequently, platforms appeared as novel operational structures, where the profitability crisis was

attempted to solve by the extraction of data. However, as highlighted under the *Contract and Status* title, the effects of platforms extended beyond and had novel impacts on work and working conditions. It was stated that platforms are novel in the sense that they reshaped outsourcing, thus reducing labor costs by introducing independent contractor status and new types of 'contracts.' This title is intended to deal with the management question by following the same sequence. Consequently, the crisis of Taylorism was mentioned. It was then underlined how the platform work operates on task providing basis. This, later on, necessitated a discussion on the operation of platforms and its relationship with basic principles of Tayloristic management, which consists of, As Braverman reminded: "dissociation of the labor process from the skills of the workers," "separation of conception from execution," and "use of this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labor process and its mode of execution" (Braverman, 1998: 28). Later, the aim was to show how each of these principles prevailed, but this time, in digital context, which was named as digital Taylorism. The concept implied that the new management technique appeared with the use of algorithms. Seven phrases of how a task is provided on a platform are mentioned to make sense of the operation of the algorithmic management better. Finally, it is discussed how, in line with Braverman's argument, the labor process is divided into pieces, which allows "capital to deskill and degrade work on the basis of management's control of information" (Woodcock, 2021: 72). Subsequently, it is implicated that, while retaining basic principles of Tayloristic management, algorithmic management differs, in the sense that there is no longer "white-coated Taylorist scientific manager watching over the shoulder of the worker"; instead, the process is "integrated into the smartphones, software, and GPS tracking" (Woodcock, 2021: 72). All in all, the working structure of algorithmic management platforms could be counted as a 'novel' one. This implies that platforms are products of technological fix since they could be used to: deal with the crisis of profitability by extraction of data; reduce labor costs by presenting new outsourcing practices related to status and contracts, and cause drastic changes in the organization of labor process by introduction of Algorithmic Management.

The aim to use each subheading as an operational tool for the analysis of case of digital platform couriers in Turkey remains. Therefore, in line with the framework given,

under the case analysis chapter related to this section, the aim will be to understand (I) How techniques of Algorithmic Management (rating system, punishment system) operates, (II) What are the practical differences -if there are- from theoretical information given here, (III) If the seven layers detected by Eurofound on how a task is fulfilled applies or not (Eurofound, 2018b), and (IV) Related to the third component, the level of control workers possess on labor process and its relation to algorithm.

5.3. Wage and Pricing

The term wage occupies a crucial position at a universal level. The definitions could affect the functionality of the term while explaining practical matters. In Marxian perspective, wage represents for workers "full payment for the time they work in production when, in fact, their wages cover only the 'necessary labor time' that is required to meet their own needs" meanwhile, "during 'surplus' or 'unpaid' labor time, workers produce 'surplus value' that enables the capitalists who hire them to make a profit" (Spencer, 2014: 29). Wage and work, in this sense, "are bound together as one under capital. This is not only of ontological interest; it has a vital political valence, for the coherence between worker and wage is the ground from which so much struggle against capital has emerged" (Jones, 2021: 70). This implies that wage has its share of a struggle between labor and capital and shifts in the history of capitalism. Yet, the intention here is not to lay out the economic history of the concept but to capture the transformation it underwent to align with the flexibilization, gigs, and, most importantly, platformization. The transformation of labor markets related to these concepts corresponds to a shift in the character of wage too. Thereby: "[u]nder post-Fordist conditions, the wage itself has become something of a speculative proposition" with "unspecified hours of unpaid work readiness" and "conditional on the achievement of performance indicators" (Cooper, 2012: 646, as cited in Doorn, 2020: 11). Following, it could be stated that the diffusion of rigidness in categories such as occupation, job, and working hours presents itself in wage as well. The division of jobs into tasks and the rise of gig work supports the idea of wage transforming into a prize for the achievement of performance.

As platforms conferred novel characteristics thus far on the transformation of work and management, it is expected that they would also impact the concept of wage. In the direction towards depicting, if they did or not, one of the differences they bear should be emphasized. Platforms or on-demand companies do not conceive their workers as sellers, but rather perceive them as buyers. Put differently: "to the firm, on demand workers are not selling their labor… workers have a demand for work on the platform, just as customers have a need for the services those workers provide" (Shapiro, 2019: 9). These buyers, or independent contractors, get paid by task providing. For some, the vanishing of worker status implies that, in platform work, wage becomes 'wager' (Jones, 2021; Doorn, 2020). Contrary to the one worker achieving certain goals under a given time, the term wager implicates a labor process restricted to completing a gig, a specified task, and getting paid for only that task. This process could be supported by, as with rating and reference systems in algorithmic management, the concept of gamification. It could be said that the old adverb: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" (Bratton, 2020:50) is in a way reversed in platform work; now, the work process is degraded into the rules of a game. In other words, with "brightly gamified compliance regimes"; "play now equals pay" (Jones, 2021: 65). The operation of this process could differ from platform to platform. For instance, especially in microwork, wage could become calculated by 'tokens' or 'rewards' (Jones, 2021: 65). The word reward could be the one that characterizes the concept of the wager. Because when completing a gig or task is rewarded, the whole labor process consists of completing a task could be easily perceived as a gamble (Jones, 2021: 69). The wage, in that sense, "is no longer just an incentive but also becomes an object of prediction and experimentation; a constantly changing figure and shifting target appearing on a gig worker's phone as a peculiar form of clickbait" (Doorn, 2020: 9).

As in Algorithmic Management section, a platform-based courier job could function as a good example of gamification in the real-time work process. Couriers, in the cases where they can select the in-between appointed deliveries, are in the process of constant evaluation, whereby they almost act like an accountant while delivering services. This evaluation is determined mainly by the dynamics such as distance to go, the price to get from the package, and the possibility of the next delivery. Doorn states

that this process turns platform-based delivery into "into a game-like experience in which couriers are constantly evaluating variable offers (substituting for set wages) intended to incentivise them to work" (Doorn, 2020:13). It is again highlighted in this case that if couriers have a command of labor process. They accept the deal or reject it on the phone screen; but "to what extent are couriers able to determine if an offer is worth their effort – i.e. whether they should stay or go – and what can they do if it isn't?" (Doorn, 2020: 13) stays as a controversial topic. Following, scholar emphasizes that expropriation from labor process in the case where couriers, like a game, operates through the concept of calculative asymmetry. This asymmetry does not only imply access to sheer information. Rather, it indicates an "unequal distribution of access to calculative equipment (e.g., analytics engines) and their inputs (i.e., data), which together minimize the calculative agency of gig workers" (Doorn, 2020: 14). This calculative equipment, as stated, is achieved through the indispensable feature of platforms: gathered and processed data. The data put forward another decisive and novel advantage of platforms: pricing policies.

The price can be conceived as "a productive force, organizing and shaping the relation between markets and persons…" (Doorn, 2020: 11). How it is set under different sectors stands out as a complex question. However, what could be pointed out is the novel feature of platforms in this case. Some platforms often tend to use a technique called dynamic pricing. The concept is not new; it has existed in e-commerce and other sectors, but its "implementation in the world of work is relatively novel and…particularly problematic" (Doorn, 2020: 9). What makes dynamic pricing problematic in the context of work is not limited to calculative asymmetry. As implied above, the platforms could act as 'black boxes'; this could easily be the case in pricing and calculations. Thereby, pricing algorithms turn wages into "a hyper-dependent variable whose process of determination is hidden as a trade secret" (Doorn, 2020: 11). Platform-based gig companies are able to use the analytical tool they possess in real-time pricing. Using data, the platform can detect the specific amount of demand on a particular location; determine the pricing according to the weather conditions or more (Doorn, 2020). In the example of Deliveroo, the platform decides the times of 'surges' when the demand is at peak levels. The couriers are notified when a surge takes place; the reasons could be heavy rain, a busy weekend, etc. At these surge times, "the

bonuses offered by a surge varied, from an extra £0.50 or £1 per delivery to an extra £10 after you completed ten deliveries" (Cant, 2020: 138). Uber can dynamically specify "in real-time how much a ride costs, based on the traffic situation in particular parts of the city" (Schmidt, 2017: 20). The scheme provided thus far implies that, while gig-workers', in this example, couriers', wage depends on constant game-like decisions and calculations; they are mostly devoid of the calculative tools to do so. While on the other hand, platforms possess all the data derived from both clients and workers; they can detect the peak times and can dynamically set the prices without the necessity to share any information; thus, couriers possess no power to discern or change the process.

The novel characteristics platforms offer, dynamic and real-time pricing through data and algorithms are accompanied by 'old' approaches to payment. The task-providing aspect of the labor process that platform-based work offers also allows them to make payments on a 'piece-work' basis. If to continue with the example of food-delivery platforms, two different payment structures is argued to exist: "a piece-based remuneration or an hourly based one" (DeStefano&Aloisi, 2018: 23). In the hourly-based case, couriers are mostly pushed to achieve as many deliveries as possible in an hour. The second payment type operates through the number of packages delivered, implying that each package has a set price. The platforms set the prices and they could be fixed and variable, meaning that dynamic pricing techniques could be applied (DeStefano&Aloisi, 2018). Some cases, such as Deliveroo, offer distance-based fees (Doorn, 2020:14). Differentiating from platform to platform, the piece-work-based payment system could be supported by 'gamified' applications such as bonuses and rewards after certain delivery numbers are accomplished. As an example of pay-per-trip, Uber "cuts the transaction fee after passing certain number of rides" (DeStefano&Aloisi, 2018: 23). This implicates an incentive-based promotional system (DeStefano&Aloisi, 2018), which could boost drivers to stay active. The incentive-based piece-work system thus allows the reformation of wage into, if to paraphrase again, an object of prediction and experimentation (Doorn, 2020: 9). If to stick with the courier example, the data possessed by platforms and per-delivery payments, to put in more profound manner: "afford platform companies a much tighter grip on their flexible labor supply, allowing them to design data-driven financial incentives that

respond to sudden fluctuation of service demand in a more granular and agile manner" (Doorn, 2020: 12). In line with this, the possession of data could imply an easier manipulation of 'wage' by platforms in a dynamic manner. The piece-work system could also function in accordance with gamification. Per-delivery payment system, "with particular 'reward schedules' whose irregular 'hit frequency'" from a behavioral economic approach, is argued to have "a powerful effect on the behaviour of couriers who no can longer count on the security of an hourly wage" (Doorn, 2020: 12). Couriers are unable to guess when the next 'ping' will ring, yet "where the possibility of the next task being paid tempts workers time and again to return for more" (Jones, 2021: 66). Consequently, as underlined above, the wage could turn into a 'wager'. The courier is to evaluate which platform or delivery is better and which one is worthless, as in gambling.

The reshaping of outsourcing practices, which was detected as one of the novel characteristics of platform work, presents itself in the wage case as well. In the case of couriers, the calculation might proceed further from calculating rewards, bonuses, or distance/price dynamics. One of the consequences of platforms is that they do not primarily position themselves as 'employers,' and thus, couriers are classified as independent contractors, and the requirements for getting into the job (or partnership) are considered to be easier than traditional work relationships. At this point, DeStefano and Aloisi (2018: 17) exemplify that delivery platforms mostly require: "being 18 or older, an iPhone 4s…with a tariff scheme including data connection, willingness to work on the weekend, work permit and 'sense of responsibility'". As discussed under *Status and Contract* section, the independent contractor classification makes platform able to offer services without paying costs. This implies that "responsibility for assets, remuneration, insurance and tax, as well as the risks of fluctuating demand, are devolved to individual 'micro-entrepreneurs'" (ETUC, 2018: 11). Therefore, the micro-entrepreneurs, independent contractors or couriers are responsible for maintenance costs of the bike-or a motorcycle, in latter case oil, health insurance, daily needs such as food and more. Subsequently, the wage, in the case of per-delivery, includes all the expenses mentioned since the courier, as the independent contractor, is responsible for them. Concerning Marx's statement on piece-wage: "wages by the piece are nothing else than a converted form of wages by time, just as wages by time

are a converted form of the value or price of labor-power'" (Marx: 1867: 692, as cited in Woodcock 2021: 66), the couriers appear as selling their labor power, but also by paying the costs of the means to achieve the labor process. Consequently, the wage, in this case, includes "'means of subsistence' – the stuff we buy with our wages to reproduce ourselves and our labour-power" (Cant, 2019, as cited in Woodcock, 2021: 67).

In conclusion, this section discusses how platforms transform the concept of wage by applying gamification practices achieved through algorithmic management. Also, it was outlined that the novel characteristic of platforms as data-extractive apparatuses results in another novel feature. The platforms could dynamically determine the work's prices by processing the data. However, on the other hand, in the example of couriers, the process was opaque for contractors, which was depicted as calculative asymmetry. The ability of platforms to determine the 'surges', peak hours of demand, and more allowed them to introduce bonuses and rewards accordingly. The reward structure implicated gamification, thus the transformation of the old practices such as piece-based or hour-based payment schemes. Notably, it was underlined that a piece-work payment structure supported with rewards might imply an incentive for the contractor to return for more. Also, it is suggested that the piece-work and gamified labor process inherits the potential to transform the courier into a sort of accountant or gambler who has to calculate components such as rewards, bonuses, and distance/price dynamics. Further, the novel outsourcing practices introduced by platforms through the independent contractor or micro-entrepreneur status implied that individual now also has to calculate the costs of the tools necessary to work, the taxes, insurance, and more since they are now also included in the concept of wage. In line with the given information thus far, what the characteristics platform work offers in the context of wage and pricing coincides with the argument that they operate as a technological fix: whereby, as a matter of profitability, the labor costs are excluded towards the contractor; the grip on labor process is tightened by using digital algorithms with calculative asymmetry and gamification strategies.

Following the framework provided thus far, under the case analysis in the next chapter, the intentions will be to depict (I) How the process of gamification in digital labor

platforms in Turkey operates, (II) How is it related to payment schemes (piece-work, hour-based, distance-based), and (III) whether or not the outsourcing practices affect wages. Lastly, it will be asked if functional similarities and differences with the structure given here could give insights into further discussions.

5.4. Workplace

As a long-existing phenomenon, the workplace bears excellent importance on societal and individual levels. The workplace could be the common ground where diverse cultural backgrounds meet; it could be an arena where capital and labor struggles happen (Spencer, 2014); it could be a spatial zone where an occupation is learned. Inheriting a vast number of connotations, the term has an important place in understanding the changes in the concept of work since it is the 'place' or zone where work happens. The workplace could operate as a place to discipline a workforce (Harvey, 1990), i.e. to strengthen power on labor control; an also inherited idea in the concept of technological fix, which implies that this aim could be accomplished through innovations. In general, the workplace could become the field where discipline over workforce or labor power for the goals of capital accumulation with "mix of repression", "habituation", "co-optation" and "co-operation" (Harvey, 1990: 122). Therefore, to understand the effects of platformization on work, it appears necessary to understand if changes are occurring with regards to the concept of workplace.

As stated, the concept's usage and functionality might have a massive reach. Consequently, to stick with the usage of the concept as an operational tool to understand the effects of platformization on work, the examples of transportation and delivery workers will be used. By doing so, the inquiry will focus on what workplace meant for workers in general and, what type of transformations are related to platformization. If the workplace is understood as a field where labor process operates, it implicates a structural power that workers possess. This structural power is named workplace bargaining power, which results: "from the strategic location of a particular group of workers within a key industrial sector" (Silver, 13: 2003). Structural power possessed by workers scales up in cases where they are integrated in a strict production process that stoppage of a particular place -the workplace- could cause great

disruptions. The flexibilization and "post-Fordist" transformations in the organization of production and labor process are widely seen as having undermined labor's workplace bargaining power (Silver, 2003: 14). However, there were exceptional examples that were not directly affected by the process, and transportation industry was one of them. One of the reasons behind this was that "transportation industries 'sell change of location' as their product" (Harvey, 1999: 376, as cited in Silver, 2003). This means that some industries depended upon transportation networks, from textile to manufacturing. As Silver puts it clearly, transportation is involved in numerous occasions: "acquisition of inputs… moving intermediate products from one production site to the next, and bringing the final product to the market" (Silver, 97: 2003). The growth in manufacturing, in that sense, was correlated to the fast growth of transportation networks. Subsequently, the transformation workers possess "relatively strong workplace bargaining power" since their workplace is "the entire distribution network" (Silver, 2003: 100). This structural bargaining power possessed by transportation workers is less related to their impact on 'employers' but more on "the upstream/downstream impact of the failure to deliver goods, services…" (Silver, 2003: 100).

As will be exemplified and briefly discussed, it could be said that delivery couriers carry the same characteristic as transportation workers. Despite not delivering people to a certain destination and operating on international levels, the couriers have a broad scope of delivery of goods: from 'essential needs' such as food to market shopping. In this sense, their workplace might also be the distribution network inside cities. The delivery courier, therefore, is linked to the chain as who delivers the product from the market (in this case, virtual platform or e-commerce site) to the consumer. Thus, a smooth functioning transportation system to achieve capital accumulation (Silver, 2003: 101) could apply to the growth strategy of platforms, which depend upon the delivery of goods rapidly. Following the structure provided in the preceding paragraph, it appears that couriers should have the same structural power. Yet, factors such as its occurrence as a low-skill job which points out to a disposable workforce, could make this statement controversial. Also, this argument could be easily criticized by giving examples from courier struggles. Therefore, it should be boldly underlined that the intention here is not to discuss whether couriers possess the same structural bargaining

power as transportation workers. The aim is to highlight the similarities couriers could share with transportation workers related to the workplace concept.

Silver (2003: 101) states that the technological fixes such as dock automations and more have been used as an arsenal by employers to reduce the structural power transportation workers have. In platform work-related delivery couriers' case, the issue shows a more complex character with the introduction of algorithms and the inclusion of warehouses in a particular context. In this sense, "warehouse management systems (WMS) and transport management systems (TMS) perform two distinct sets of key functions" (Nettsträter et al., 2015, as cited in Cant: 2020). Following this, Cant (2020: 145) claims that in the case of Deliveroo, the distinctions between the two disappear. The management system of the platform inherits elements from both:

> from warehouse management comes order processing, release, retrieval and picking. From transport management comes order management, scheduling, transport planning/optimisation, tracking and tracing (Cant, 2020: 145).

Therefore, the platforms are "capable of conceptualising the spatial 'zone' in which it operates as two overlaid layers: as a warehouse and as a transport network" (Cant, 2020: 145). In the case of inquiry carried out by scholar regarding Deliveroo, this operation is led by algorithms, thus linked to algorithmic management. The incident is that delivery platforms, seemingly, do not only operate through the warehouse system, also referred to as dark stores[2] that allow platforms rapid delivery times. Some cases enable individual couriers to work 'alone'; they get to the restaurant or markets that have an agreement with the platform they work for when a delivery request arrives. In these cases, the couriers gather at crowded places or 'zone centers' and wait for packages, i.e., work. These artificial warehouses or waiting points are appointed mainly by the algorithm. A few remarks could be helpful regarding this occasion. It is open to discussion whether or not the warehouses that platforms use could be named as 'workplaces'. Despite this, these physical structures could represent, for instance, a place for gathering, which could result in companionships while waiting for a package.

[2] Dark stores are defined as warehouses in city-centers resembling supermarket goods that are not open to public shopping. For further information: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jul/29/dark-stores-ultra-fast-delivery-app-bad-for-workers-and-communities

Moreover, these stores could offer a place to provide basic needs such as a toilet; or become a shelter under extreme weather conditions. Yet, they could also imply stricter rules and tighter division of labor.

Thus far, the workplace's importance is touched upon by underlining different implications it can carry. It is also pointed out that the perception of the concept in the case where the workers are disciplined for the purposes of capital accumulation faces an exception: transportation workers. Following this, the reasons behind the exceptional features of the transportation industry are explored. Consequently, it occurred that the need for capital to deliver goods shaped the character of the workplace concept of the transportation industry, which implied that their workplace is the distribution network. Then, the similarities between couriers and transportation workers are highlighted briefly. However, the case of platform-related courier jobs presented distinct characteristics by the involvement of algorithms and warehouses in a particular context. Later, it is identified that delivery platforms do not always operate through warehouses. The couriers, without warehouses, could wait for orders in local zones. After depicting this, the possible outcomes of the differences between the two models are briefly questioned.

In conclusion, the following components will be investigated in line with the framework provided thus far by looking at the case of delivery platforms in Turkey. (I) Are warehouses perceived as workplaces (II) The connection between warehouse system and management operation; similarities and differences, and (III) The differences between artificial warehouse system and warehouse system related to management and working conditions.

CHAPTER 6

WHY DELIVERY PLATFORMS

In chapter four, subheading named *Platform Capitalism: What is a Platform and How Does It Operate?* intended to classify the platforms. It is mentioned that along with Srnicek's classifications such as advertising, product, industrial and lean platforms (2017: 50), Schmidt tended to categorize platforms by the way labor operates through them (See, Figure 1.2). After briefly touching upon how the platforms operate in general and practical differences amongst them, it was argued that location and gig work based digital platforms involving accommodation, transportation, and delivery services could have deeper effects on people's daily lives. These platforms were able to reshape the outsourcing practices since they were outsourcing physical assets. Thence, these platforms implied direct impacts on critical notions such as rents, in-city transportation services (such as taxis), and delivery of goods. By attracting the interest of venture capital, these platforms grew relatively quick, and their effects were more and more visible.

Chapter five intended to widely discuss with examples of how platforms could reforge the classical practices related to work. Also, as outlined, digital labor platforms, on a practical basis, had a more direct influence. Therefore, to discuss the consequences of the process of novel features of platform work, the examples were mostly given from delivery platforms. The first reason for that is, even though accommodation platforms have strong impacts, they do not operate by a visible workforce. The transportation platforms do, and the importance of transformation of transportation services was highlighted several times, especially with reference to Uber. However, this study intends to focus on delivery platforms because the operation involves a wide range of dynamics -from food production to logistics; the impacts are also visible. Most importantly, this study inherits the idea that the case of couriers working through

delivery platforms makes it possible to reveal the effects by using operational tools – Contract and Status, Algorithmic Management, Wage and Pricing, and Workplace. In other words, the effects of the delivery platforms are observable under each of those categories, which will be discussed in the following chapter when the interviews with couriers are analyzed. Before moving on, it is necessary to establish the theoretical relation between these platforms and the labor force they are connected to. Then, three Turkish delivery platforms are introduced. After sketching out a very brief history of each company, the presentation involves information on the conditions on which they have arisen, their growth, and their position in the Turkish market. This chapter will form the background on which the empirical case study depends on to analyse the qualitative data collected through interviews with couriers working for/with those three platform companies.

It is a well-known fact that the courier job is not a brand-new practice. On the contrary, it has deep historical roots. The roots date back to the early 20th century when the emergence of "usable and reliable motor vehicles…provided alternative form of public transport technology, which proved more mobile and adaptable" (Cole&Hart, 2018: 567-568). Following this, the introduction of the vehicles represents a rupture from classical customs of transportation for that time. The mobility implied new forms of social interactions that redefined urban life (Cole&Hart, 2018: 567). The features provided by mobility, such as the transaction of ideas, ideas, people, and products, which were mostly limited to the educated elite in the West, were also experienced by transportation workers, who created cosmopolitan cultures among different communities (Cole&Hart, 2018: 570). Despite, for instance, in the US, the motor transport workers were not able to escape regulations by "companies or the state, which provided necessary technology, training, and wages…" the introduction of motor transport technology "also freed many workers from the centralized infrastructure of the railway, taking advantage of the relatively low-cost of vehicles to create their own businesses" (Cole&Hart, 2018: 568).

Compared to the US, the use of motor vehicles in Europe was "less appealing as a form of public transportation, as the dense settlements of more compact European cities and extensive railway infrastructure made motor vehicles not only unnecessary

but, in many cases, impractical" (Cole&Hart, 2018: 570). This, implying that the fate of motor vehicles was not restricted to public transportation, indicated a rupture. The vehicles' drivers were carrying both goods and passengers by linking the rural and the city. They continued to do so in colonial and post-colonial settlements, "where production and circulation was often controlled by small-scale farmers and traders who traveled with their goods" (Cole&Hart, 2018: 570-572). However, a vital separation appeared in time related to the usage of motor vehicles: "distinction between passenger and goods transport that certainly was shared across most Western and industrialized economies..." (Cole&Hart, 2018: 571-572).

As mentioned in first chapter, the technological developments in both areas (transportation and delivery), was labeled as logistics revolution. The developments in the transportation of people, however, is an extensive topic and reaches beyond the scope of this thesis. Thereby, the focus is on delivering goods, which, in its current form, connects to the notion of digital delivery platforms. The delivery of goods, especially food, also dates back to old times: "The first recorded delivery of pizza was to the palace of King Umberto and Queen Margherita in Naples in 1889" (Woodcock, 2021: 59-60). Historically, food delivery is used for much more systematic purposes than fulfilling the needs of kings and queens. For instance, "During the Second World War, the British government briefly tested a system of food delivery for people displaced from their homes" (Woodcock, 2021:60). Again, in first chapter, it was highlighted how consumerism developed in line with historical development of capitalism. At the Welfare State Capitalism stage, the strategy was to orient populations towards mass consumption regarding mass production. At the Platform Capitalism stage, the emphasis shifted towards how production was being reshaped according to consumer choices. Finally, it was underlined how platforms rely on the delivery of services on-demand to consumers. In short, the historical process does not only imply changes in the labor process or work but also changes in consumption. Related to the discussed topic, Woodcock states that:

> With new patterns of mass media consumption – sitting in front of the television – people also changed how they wanted to consume food. Instead of visiting restaurants, many people began to follow the royalty in Naples, albeit much later, having the pizza brought to them. Today, with further shifts in

> media consumption, it is now possible to buy that very same pizza through a smartphone app (Woodcock, 2021:60).

Consequently, the delivery platforms responded to this need, especially in the context of the platform economy, in which the process of delivering food involves several dynamics. As the literal meaning of the concept of delivery platform carries, the core process is to deliver food or goods from a particular place to the customer. The food as a commodity in platform work converges with the delivery driver. The whole process of delivery is subdivided into tasks; the driver has no or significantly less interaction with the restaurant and the customers. In simplest terms, the core subdivision begins with two steps; the restaurant workers make the food, and the courier delivers it (Woodcock, 2021:60). Arguably, this form of labor is not new. Yet, with the introduction of platform capitalism in the context of delivery platforms, the process of labor also gains novel characteristics. The fundamental logic behind the operation of delivery platforms could be understood through Marx's words: "value of a commodity is, in itself, of no interest to the capitalist. What alone interests him, is the surplus-value that dwells in it, and is realisable by sale" (Marx, 1867: 437 cited in Woodcock). It is observed that delivery platforms follow a similar logic; almost none of them are involved in the process of making food. As discussed in Chapter four, the platforms position themselves as mere mediators or arrangers in the case of delivery as well. The platforms' strategy towards distancing themselves from the most fundamental processes is also seen in their relationship with the drivers or couriers. The production of food commodities belongs to restaurants, and the drivers, who deliver this commodity are classified as independent contractors (in most of the cases). Thus, by refraining from direct engagement in two core processes, platforms aim to protect their position as mediators (Woodcock, 2021:61). The mediation of a virtual software platform might seem beneficial practically at first glance since it would fasten the process for each actor involved. However, this mediation is not cost-free. The platform's role could not be simply defined as a facilitator: "Instead, it becomes a mediator that charges the restaurant a fee… charges the customer for delivery… and distributes the work and the payment … to the driver" (Woodcock, 2021: 61).

Thus, it could be stated that in the case of food delivery, it is observed that the platform has a grip on each phase of the labor process. In spite of small differences in due to the operational range of the platforms, Woodcock's trace of how the platforms primarily operate in the case of food delivery appears applicable. First, the platform takes the order from the customer and charges customer the price of food and delivery. Then, platform buys food from the restaurant, either by getting a commission or charging a higher price to the customer. To realize the intended value of the purchase, the delivery should happen in a reasonable time. In conclusion: "The platform is selling commodified food delivery, realising value from the restaurant's food (…allowing the restaurant to realise value from the food being produced) and extracting value from the production of the food delivery" (Woodcock, 2021: 64). The whole process implies that the source of the extraction of value, although couriers produce no physical commodity, happens through charging customer prices more than that paid to the workers. In conventional cases, value extraction could be detected through the value produced by workers and wages paid. Yet, in most cases for couriers, this process is embedded in the piece-work rate paid per delivery. By paying on a piece-rate basis to their independent contractors rather than fully employing them, the platforms are also freed from paying for "unproductive times" between deliveries (Woodcock, 2021: 65). As a both concluding and prospective note regarding this argument, the outcomes of the price-rate model are to be discussed in the Turkish case in comparison to full employment, where both models coexist.

Another vital point is that the platforms, using pricing strategies and advertisement, grow rapidly with "network effects" (Srnicek, 2017, 60). The term suggests that the increase in the number of users is related to the growth; the more data are extracted, the more the platform algorithm gets precise. If one wants to socialize, s/he signs up on Facebook; if one wants to search, Google is to be used in most cases: "this generates a cycle whereby more users beget more users … It also lends platforms a dynamic of ever-increasing access to more activities, and therefore to more data" (Srnicek, 2017: 60-61). The growth in user numbers and usage of data could be essential in a wide range of activities from consumer choices, calculating delivery times, and being able to take more advertisements to dynamic pricing. The same logic could apply to food or groceries delivery platforms. More users order from the platform, and more

restaurants register to it to benefit from the popularity it provides. In this case, it is true that the variety for customers increases. However, it also might indicate a concentration of capital, which could result by "sweeping away the smaller operations of drivers tied to individual restaurants, while attempting to monopolize the market" (Woodcock, 2021: 61). This monopolization could imply flexibility for platforms to devolve into other sectors or provide different services. It could be argued that the Turkish platforms to be introduced could be counted as examples of this.

Yet, before moving on to the presentation of the Turkish platforms included in this study, a few concluding remarks are needed. Thus far, a brief picture of the birth of motor vehicle-based transportation and delivery was drawn. Later, it was underlined that the separation of these two concepts deepened in industrialized cities. Following this, it was argued how the rise in consumerism represented a rupture in the history of delivery. The outcomes of this rupture were related to the emergence of delivery platforms. By focusing on the operation of food delivery platforms, it was intended to depict how these platforms operate, extract value, and what is novel about them. The inquiry on the operation of food delivery platforms showed that these platforms aimed to separate themselves from both core elements of the labor process, which are production of food and the delivery of it. Thereby, it was outlined how platforms can grow by involving in each process but directly engaging with none. Moreover, it was argued that with networking effects, the platforms could grow even at a more rapid pace by outsourcing assets, being devoid of paying unproductive times, making payments on a piece-rate basis, and extracting of a massive amount of data. It was also put forward that the rapid growth may imply a concentration of capital and monopolization, which could result in the involvement of platforms in different service providing sectors. To conclude, the following part aims to discuss three Turkish platforms in line with the conceptual background provided here. By trying to depict the similarities and differences they carry from the theoretical perspective presented so far, the place they occupy regarding the impacts they created is to be inquired. After depicting a few, the study focuses on the impacts the companies had on the actors who conduct the core element of the labor process of delivery operation they all obtain: couriers.

6.1. E-Commerce Environment and Delivery Platforms in Turkey:

In Turkey, the introduction of e-commerce dates back to 1997, when the Supreme Council for Science and Technology decided to establish an electronic commerce network[3]. The sector managed to catch an enormous growth rate in time. By 2016, the market size of the sector in Turkey was already 30.8 billion TL (TUBISAD, 2017: 11). Web-based e-commerce, in time, captured more and more interest of the entrepreneurs since the costs were lower compared to traditional sectors. For example, IKEA, founded in 1943, reached a market value of 42 Billion US dollars in 70 years; meanwhile, the Chinese e-commerce company, Alibaba, reached one million users in two years and 700 Billion US dollars selling record (Deliçay, 2021: 31). The growth in massive amounts is, in simple terms, connected to increase in the number of users signed into the digital marketplace. As pointed out, the quantitative rise in users allows platforms to reach a large amount of data. The data provides a severe advantage to an e-commerce platform in detecting the course of commerce activities and consumer behaviors, which allowed them, in time, to get involved in sectors such as logistics, payment, product development, and more (Deliçay, 2021: 13). The rapid growth, thus, merging with networking effects, could imply an emergence of flexibility and power to reach into various sectors. Currently, 60% of global e-commerce took place through e-marketplaces, which indicates the industry's growth over time (Deliçay, 2021: 33). Nonetheless, the growth-oriented sector displays distinctive features compared to the traditional sector. The main reason for that is that alongside the advantages of assetless growth and network effects, the companies pursue a strategy named winner takes most, or winner takes it all (EU Commission, 2018 cited in Deliçay). Therefore, it could be said that the instant growth of platforms in this context did not only allow them to expand to different sectors but also allowed them to spread into the global market. Giant companies such as Alibaba can make strategic purchases on a global basis regarding e-commerce and software. The main reason behind this is to increase the scale of traders and consumers and to achieve know-how with more data (Deliçay,

[3] https://www.destexdigital.com/blog/turkiyede-e-ticaretin-gelisimi/

2021: 56). Thus, the industry shows a transnational character, which would also expand towards Turkish e-commerce and delivery platforms in due course.

The pandemic accelerated the rapid pace of growth of e-commerce. The COVID-19 pandemic, related to reasons such as restrictions, triggered changes in the customs of consuming culture and oriented people towards shopping online. Turkey was inevitably affected by the worldwide context. In times of pandemic, while several sectors were downsizing, transportation and e-commerce achieved massive growth. The growth of e-commerce worldwide was stated to occur at 50% (ILO, 2022: 10). In Turkey, since the beginning of the pandemic, mobile retail sales increased by 200%; and the demand for national market chains on a digital basis increased by 150% (ILO, 2022: 10). In the first six months of 2020, the value of e-commerce has reached at 90 billion TL. (Figure 2.1)

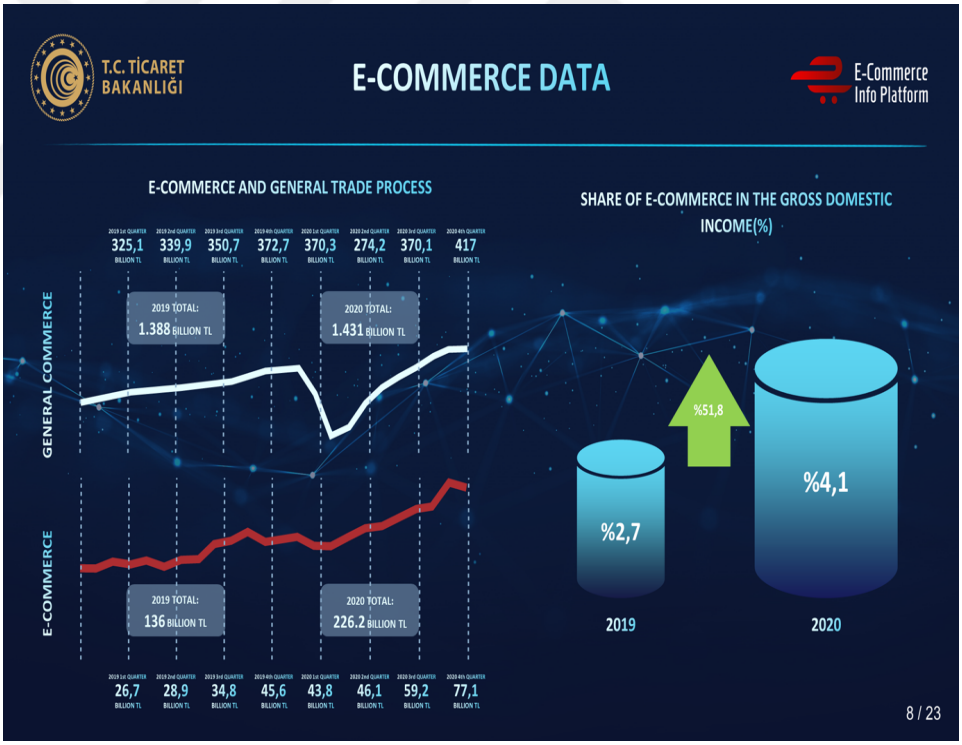


Figure 2.1: Place of e-commerce in General Trade Process and Share of E-Commerce in GDP %

Source: https://www.eticaret.gov.tr/istatistikler

Figure 2.2 suggests that numbers exhibit the growth potential, especially regarding online retail. The massive growth in the Turkish e-commerce platforms, almost inevitably, captured the interest of transnational companies, who, as highlighted, were

interested in expanding towards new markets through global purchases. Figure 2.3 supplements the idea that the platforms are backed by venture capital in the Turkish context. This relation between venture capital activity and three Turkish platforms are to be discussed further below where three platforms are introduced.

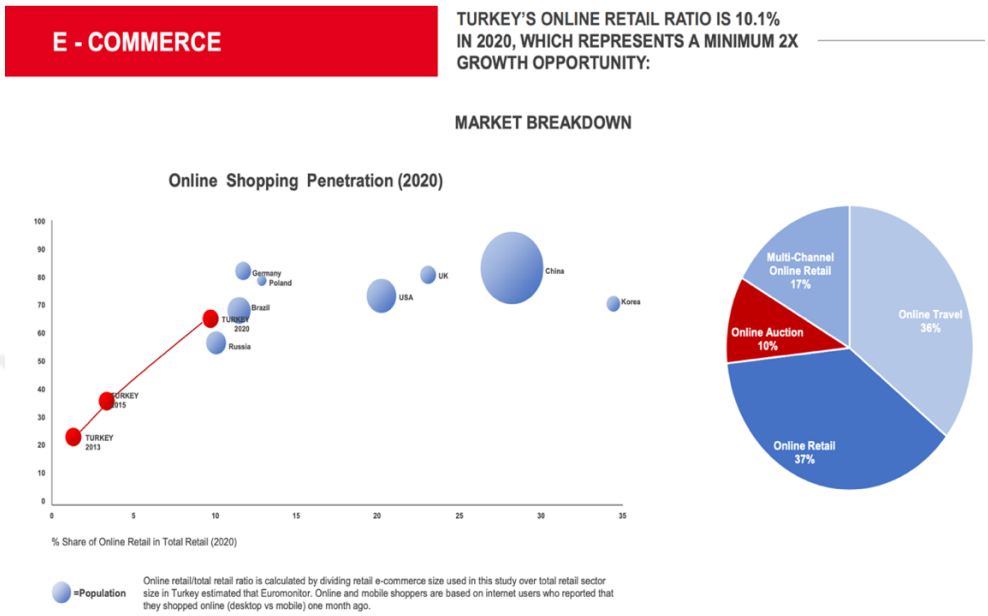


Figure 2.2: Online Shopping Penetration and Growth Opportunity of E-Commerce Sector in Turkey.
Source: Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Investment Office, *Why Invest in Turkey?* ICT Sector, 2021: 27.

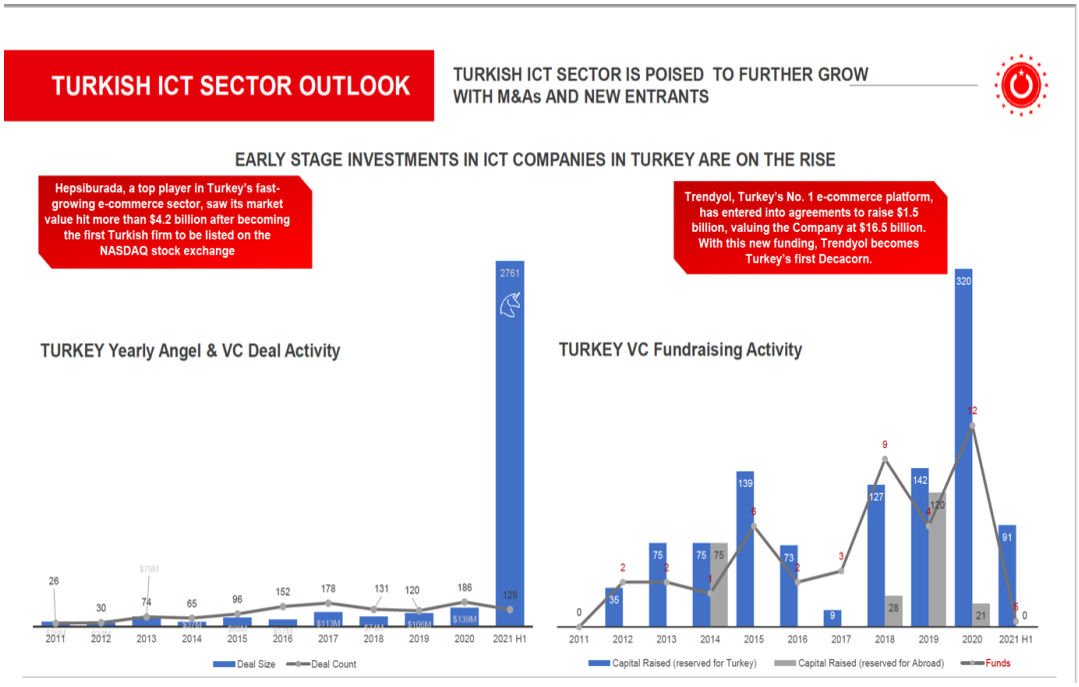


Figure 2.3: Venture Capital Activity Towards Turkish E-Commerce Sector
Source: Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Investment Office, *Why Invest in Turkey?* ICT Sector, 2021: 9.

It is to be depicted at this point that; all three companies exhibited massive growth and attracted venture capital. Along with the number of users they reached, this implies that companies carry a large capacity of network effects and influence labor markets. All three of them are founded in Turkey and operate in Turkish markets. Apart from these, despite also acting as employers in particular cases, companies operate through applications and thus coincide with the triangular model introduced in the fourth chapter. This model included the argument of bringing supply (self-employed workforce) and demand (consumers) together through the platform's interface. Related to this, all the companies meet at the common ground of operating through independent contractors. The financial capacities and network effects imply that all three steps forward as pioneering agencies in Turkish markets.

6.1.1. Yemeksepeti:

Yemeksepeti, which means 'food basket' in English, is a pioneering delivery platform company founded in 2001. The platform is the first in its sector and stands out as one of Turkey's biggest online food delivery companies. It emerged as a corporate garage, similar to tech and startup companies founded with minor operations and in small places. Amazon, Apple, and Google were a few examples found in garages. The visit of the founder of Yemeksepeti to San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and his observations on developments in e-commerce were stated to inspire him to return to Turkey and launch the project.[4] Thus, it is observed that it was nearly inescapable for the Turkish entrepreneurs to explore the ecosystem brought by the digital infrastructure built upon the dot.com balloon.

Despite the challenges of being first in the market, the company showed the potential for fast growth. In 2008, European Funders Fund was a minority partner; in 2012, General Atlantic invested 44 million USD in the company. Yet, the funds kept coming; in 2015, the global delivery platform Delivery Hero declared intentions to get involved

[4] https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/yemeksepeti-589-milyon-dolara-delivery-heroya-satildi-28919228

in the Turkish market and bought Yemeksepeti for 589 million USD. With this acquisition, Yemeksepeti became Turkey's first internet startup to debut with a valuation of TL billion.[5] Especially in the context of the pandemic, the company's rapid growth accelerated; in 2019, the company grew by 54% percent.[6]

According to the information given by company, it has a reach to 60.000 contracted delivery restaurants across Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Also, the platform has more than 20 million registered users, indicating that the company has a strong network effect. In 2019, Yemeksepeti launched a grocery delivery service named Banabi. The claim is that company works with more than 550 brands and operates in 28 cities of Turkey through Yemeksepeti's Application and website. The company classifies itself under Technology, Information, and Internet sectors. The areas of expertise were e-commerce, online food ordering, food delivery, and market service.[7]

The company also affirms that it has business partners in 81 cities of Turkey, thus, having a reach to the whole country. Alongside Banabi (YemekSepeti Market), which operates through warehouses, the company also offers Yemeksepeti Mahalle service, which consumers can order from local shops around their neighborhood. The platform suggests that the usage process is easy: consumers choose the restaurant, add meal to their basket, pay online or at the door, and it promises that the order will be at the consumers' door quickly. Thus, the main motto of the company is: "Yemeksepeti is with you, whatever you have in mind is at your door!"[8]

[5] https://webrazzi.com/2015/05/05/40-metrekarelik-bir-odada-baslayan-yemeksepetinin-basari-hikayesi/

[6] https://webrazzi.com/2020/01/16/yemeksepeti-19-yilinda-yuzde-50-nin-uzerinde-buyudu

[7] https://www.linkedin.com/company/yemeksepeti/about/

[8] https://www.yemeksepeti.com/en/

6.1.2. Getir:

Getir is primarily a technology company whose operation is built on logistics. The platform defines itself as "a technology company that joins the worlds of mobile technology and logistics, providing unprecedented solutions to the delivery of goods in urban areas" and a "10-minute delivery pioneer".[9] The company was founded in 2015 by the founder of the BiTaksi application, which, in simplest terms, is a platform-based mobile taxi calling application. The company's CEO states that Getir is a mixture of logistics, technology, and retail: in his words: 70% technology, 20% retail, and 10% logistics. The founder also strongly emphasizes that the core of the operation mostly relies on the data gathered and processed. With the data, Getir was able to detect the density areas and build warehouses accordingly.[10] This appears as a vital process for the company since the most distinctive feature of the company was its promise to deliver goods in 10 minutes. The founder, again, outlines that the company aims to establish the needs of people who have no time for shopping, and he claims that the company "sells time"[11] and "democratize the right to laziness".[12] Following this, the company's founder advises their competitors to deliver goods in 5 minutes if they wish to compete.

On its own website[13], the company presents the services they give as follows:

> **Delivery within minutes**
> We are at your service with numerous warehouses, vehicles and couriers. We bring your necessities and grocery shopping to your doorstep within minutes.

[9] https://www.linkedin.com/company/getir/about/

[10] https://webrazzi.com/2016/03/09/getirin-hikayesi-eticaret16

[11] https://webrazzi.com/2016/03/09/nazim-salur-getiri-yil-sonuna-kadar-3-ulkeye-acacagiz-ve-nereden-cikti-bu-adamlar-dedirtecegiz

[12] https://www.cnbc.com/2022/05/26/rapid-grocery-delivery-start-ups-getir-gorillas-slash-jobs.html

[13] https://getir.com/en/about/

Live Order Tracking

After placing an order, you can watch the courier's movement on the map. You can also see in how many minutes your order will reach you.

GetirFood

You can order a variety of food including pizza, burger, kebab, deserts and much more through GetirFood. Additionally, by choosing the 'Getir Delivery' option at the check-out, you'll be able to track the location of your courier live from the map while they are bringing your fresh and hot meal.

Digital and Pay on Delivery

We have two payment methods: digital and pay on delivery. For digital payment option, you only have to enter your payment information once. Simply add your payment method and don't deal with cash and physical cards again!...

Day and Night Service

Even if the supermarket is closed, we deliver anywhere at any time.

The company pursued the strategy to expand on a transnational basis since 2016. Platform currently operates in cities like Paris, London, and across Europe and aims to expand in the US market.[14] Behind this capability, there is a historical process of rapid growth. It is witnessed that the on-demand delivery sparked a swift pace of growth, with likely effects of the pandemic. In 2021, the company was invested in 128 million USD and reached 850 million USD value. After only one year, the company acquired a 300 million USD investment and achieved a 2.6 billion USD value, implying that it became a unicorn. In 2022, the company received another 768 million USD investment and is now classified as decacorn.[15]

In Getir's case, the implications of rapid growth are not restricted to expanding warehouses or logistic operations in other cities. The platform, with colossal network and monopolization effects, appears to be a good example of how digital platforms, with assetless and rapid growth advantages, could infiltrate other service-providing sectors. In its current form, the platform does not only promise delivery of food or

[14] https://www.cnbc.com/2021/12/21/getir-rapid-delivery-app-plans-to-expand-across-us-in-2022.html

[15] https://webrazzi.com/2022/03/17/768-milyon-dolar-yatirim-alan-getir-118-milyar-dolar-degerleme-ile-decacorn-oldu

groceries. In Turkey, the application's interface also offers services such as calling a cab with integration to the BiTaksi application, renting a car, direct access for shopping to the e-commerce site n11 and even finding a job. The latest operates by mediator logic all the platforms inherit; mostly, small shop owners share notices that could be applied individually. Except for delivery, most of the services, such as in the example of the job finding interface, do not require specific commissions. Still, it gives the company an advantage of network effects and thus a grip on a massive amount of data of individuals (in 2021, the platform was visited by 14 million users)[16] and workplaces.

6.1.3. Trendyol:

Trendyol is an e-commerce company founded in 2015. Companies' specialities are classified as fashion, online shopping, e-commerce, and technology. However, Trendyol primarily defines itself as a tech company by stating that technology is the driver, e-commerce is the outcome. Arising from a web-based e-commerce service, Trendyol also developed capacities in other areas:

> We continue to grow and create value through our three main divisions: Trendyol Tech, one of the leading R&D centers; Trendyol Express, the fastest growing delivery network; Dolap, the largest second-hand goods platform and Trendyol Go is the local services arm of Trendyol Group with the goal to deliver anything in 30 minutes. To fulfill all daily needs of our users, Trendyol Go connects local merchants, couriers and Trendyol users. We are scaling fast and profitably, expanding into international markets.[17]

The company (which has reached to 36.1 million user number regarding the Application)[18] has its own logistic operation regarding e-commerce sales, named Trendyol Express. Yet, the interface of the Application also includes reaching to services such as the delivery of groceries and food. This operation is carried out under the name of Trendyol Go:

[16] https://webrazzi.com/2021/02/17/son-ceyrekte-internet-kullanici-sayisi-59-milyon-kisiye-ulasti/

[17] https://www.linkedin.com/company/trendyolgroup/about/

[18] https://webrazzi.com/2021/02/17/son-ceyrekte-internet-kullanici-sayisi-59-milyon-kisiye-ulasti/

> Do you want it all? Do you want it now? Then you shall get it. Easy, reliable and fast - our instant grocery and food delivery service, Trendyol Go brings your daily needs on your doorstep within minutes. With our fast-growing delivery platform, we are constantly expanding our network of riders, restaurants, shops and partners.[19]

Therefore, as it is the other two platforms, Trendyol displays flexible characteristics in involving different sectors with the help of network effects and rapid growth. Although not wholly assetless, it could be depicted that the company used the advantage of growth with fewer costs compared to traditional businesses, as in the case of Alibaba. Alibaba made a massive investment of 728 million US dollars to Trendyol,[20] which, with other huge investments, allowed the Turkish company to become the first decacorn in the country's history (Figure 2.3).

6.2 Effects of Growth in E-commerce: The couriers

The effects of expansion in the capacity of online purchasing were also observed in sectors such as logistics and transportation in the Turkish context. The increase in purchases accompanied the need for a workforce delivering them. In this context, motor couriers stepped further as vital actors for e-commerce and retail purchases to reach customers. The job is defined as "delivery of all kinds of food orders, documents, cargo and packages delivered to the recipient address safely at the desired time" (ILO, 2022: 10). Even though the numbers are not precise, since 2017, more than 130 thousand people are employed in the transportation and logistics sector (Kıdak, 2021: 23). ILO report states that suggested numbers, when the informal couriers are counted, could reach to 900 thousand (ILO, 2022: 10). The structure of Turkish labor market back in times of pandemic offers one of the explanations for the increase in numbers. Turkey, back in 2018, was already in a long stagnation process in economic terms. The masses were facing challenges such as the decrease in employment and rising unemployment, vanishing incomes, and high inflation (IPA, 2021: 6). Turkish labor market, which inherits characteristics such as non-insuranced, non-unionized, low/

[19] https://www.trendyol.com/whatwedo

[20] https://webrazzi.com/2018/07/30/alibaba-trendyola-ne-kadar-yatirim-yapti-cevabi-bulduk

average wages, allowed employers to lay the labor law aside and apply flexible working regimes easier (IPA, 2021: 6). Also, the services sector, which covered nearly 60% percentage (IPA, 2021: 6) of employment in the Turkish labor market, faced challenges throughout the pandemic context, due to measures, restrictions and more. Another relevant statistic is the extent of NEETs (not in employment, education or training), that are at highest numbers in Turkey. In the first quarter of 2021, NEET rate was 24.7% (IPA, 2021: 6).

In this context, the courier job stepped further as an alternative, which does not require further skills than having a motorcycle driving license. The couriers were classified in three categories: (I) couriers in retail distribution, working with mobile applications, (II) fast-food, take-away coffee or restaurant couriers, (III) corporate related, long-distance material –medicine, health materials, etc. – carriers (IPA, 2021: 27). Yet, IPA's research carried out with total 600 couriers suggest that the workers who replied to the questionaries mainly were working for platform companies (2021: 31), which points out to a rising trend.

Three platforms, Yemeksepeti, Getir, and Trendyol, introduced above outshine this framework. There are several reasons for these platforms to be examined. First, all the platforms share the common ground of interacting with massive venture capital. Second, they all depend heavily on delivery services; thus, they work with motor couriers. Third, in the operation of delivery services, they all use the practices of outsourcing, which converges to what Srnicek called lean platforms. Despite the fact that the companies have a reach into different operations, the delivery operation is acutely crucial for them. Therefore, these three platforms were chosen not only because they represent a new facet in a rising sector of the Turkish economy and gain massive investments as new tech companies; but also, they are novel in terms of transforming traditional practices in several ways, especially in courier job. It is also well-known that the quality of the labor force of the companies differs from data scientists to designers and customer services to product managers, whose inquiry would require holistic research. Although it is accurate that the companies also rely on data scientists and engineers, who are if to remind the discussion, could be interpreted as members of the internal labor market; this study argues that, even for data to be

produced, the most fundamental phase of the labor process is to be accomplished first: delivery. In that sense, as a rising and relatively new phenomenon in Turkey, the effects of digital platforms on courier job are to be explored. The study aims to accomplish this in the following chapter by operationalizing certain themes presented in fifth chapter.

Thus far, the historical process of motor technology-related transportation and delivery has been mentioned. Then, the focus shifted towards the delivery and its specific history. It was observed that consumerism had particular relations to this historical process, which eventually finalized as on-demand digital delivery platforms. Later, using the example of food delivery platforms, it was discussed how the value extraction process advances and what acts were fundamental for platforms to operate. After depicting these core processes, it was argued that platforms are novel in the ability to separate themselves from them yet continue to grow. What made this growth possible was the extraction of data and network effects. Later, since most platforms are examined under the e-commerce sector, a quick glance at the sector was provided. The concentration was specified towards the general scheme of the Turkish e-commerce sector and its growth, especially related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was marked that several actors came forward globally and nationally. Subsequently, three of the actors, Yemeksepeti, Getir and Trendyol, were selected since they were amongst the ones who captured the interest of the venture capital most and showed rapid growth numbers. After briefly introducing the operations and capabilities of these e-commerce platform companies, it was underlined that the growth of e-commerce and the digital sector did not only imply the growth of several companies but a need for an increase in the number of people who could deliver the purchases. Related to the growth in online shopping and the situation of Turkish labor markets, a considerable rise in the number of people becoming couriers was witnessed. Later, it was emphasized that all three companies heavily depend on delivery operations. Considering the increase in the number of becoming a courier for platforms and the novelty of these three platforms in the Turkish labor market, it was stated that this novelty could also indicate severe changes in the labor process and working conditions of a courier job. In the following chapter, with the help of themes, namely *status and contract*, *wage and pricing*, *algorithmic management,* and *workplace*, the intention is to depict these

changes, if there are any, through the analysis of the qualitative data collected by interviews with couriers who work through those three platforms introduced in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7

LABOR PROCESS IN THE CASE OF DELIVERY COURIERS IN TURKEY

Chapter five provides a conceptual framework with practical examples related to platform-based work in the case of couriers. In line with the conceptual framework, it is possible to identify some themes for the empirical analysis. In the same chapter, these themes were categorized as Contract and Status, Algorithmic Management, Wage and Pricing, and Workplace. For these themes, not only their brief definitions and theoretical implications, but also worldwide pioneering examples of how digital platforms operate were presented. This exercise helped asking questions at the end of each subheading/theme with the intention to guide this empirical analysis chapter and to operationalize each theme in the analysis of interviews made by couriers in this regard.

Later, as a background for the empirical analysis, the Turkish e-commerce sector was briefly presented in its relationship to global developments. Meanwhile, it was witnessed that all the companies presented in that chapter scored massive growth numbers, pioneered in their areas, and relied on a delivery operation. Therefore, couriers from these three companies were chosen to be interviewed since the companies appear to have a strong and influencing position in the Turkish digital market. Accordingly, in this chapter, on the basis of the themes related to digital work/labor, the aim is to understand if the companies are also novel in creating impacts on the courier job and bringing pioneering examples that affected organization of labor processes in the Turkish labor market.

7.1. Contract and Status

The Contract and Status discussion in the fifth chapter consisted of a historical and theoretical discussion related to each concept. Accordingly, it was depicted that contracts evolved into terms and services; whereby independent contractor status occupied a vital place for platforms. Compared to this background, the field study shows that the situation with regards to contract and status in the Turkish context is more complicated. In this section, first the characteristics of the contractual status are presented and then how the issues regarding contact and status eventually affect the work of couriers are analyzed in light of the qualitative data from the interviews. The emerging characteristics of the contract and status are discussed in relation to changing nature of contracts into terms and conditions, insurance regarding factors such as premiums and accidents, entry requirements, social rights, labor costs and more. The first unique feature of the market is observed that companies, regarding couriers, work with two different status classifications simultaneously. These are namely classical employment status which is subjected to Labor Act, and self-employed courier status.

The job (Car, Truck and Motorcycle Drivers) was included into the sector of "Plant and Machine Operators and Installers" in 2014 under the profession code 8321.02[21] defined by the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR). The occupation group is car, van, and motorcycle drivers. Primary school graduation is the lowest education requirement of the job (ILO, 2022: 26). The first classification converges with the traditional employee status, which depends on a contract between employee and employer under Labor Act. The workers with employment contracts with companies are connected to 4A social insurance, which implies that their working conditions and work safety conditions are determined by the 4857 coded Labor Act. This, in simpler

[21] The professional standards of motor courier were created by MYK (Professional Competency Board) and were published in the Official Gazette No. 30255 in 2017 and became officialised. In the National Occupational Standards, the profession of motorcycling is defined under 4 headings: duties, procedures and success criteria, equipment used and attitudes-behaviors. While Duties explains the responsibilities of motorcouriers for work organization, work flow and occupational health and safety; procedures and success criteria defines the he minimum level of professional knowledge couriers should possess. Equipment determines the equipment to be used in the process and last defines the behaviors that motorcouriers should exhibit during business hours (ILO, 2022: 26).

words, means that this group of couriers converges more with the traditional employee status since, in this case, both company and workers are subject to Labor Act. This indicates that the workers can benefit from regulations such as limiting weekly working hours to 45 (ILO, 2022: 27). Although debatable, this provides a ground for employees to have relative assurances and to apply to the courts in times of controversy.

The second case is called *esnaf kurye*, which could hardly be translated as "artisan courier". The term coincides with what was discussed as an independent contractor before. It could be easily guessed that the usage of the term artisanship or tradesmanship in this context implies self-employment. Yet, it is to be mentioned as a side-note that, while 'artisan' carries connotations of 'tradesman, shopkeeper or craft'; self-employed refers to a larger category. In this model, couriers offer invoiced services to businesses as individual entrepreneurs. The incurred tax and insurances are their own responsibility. They work with the code 53.20.09 defined by Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR). This code includes general 'courier activities,' and the workplaces function by this code is classified in the 'less dangerous'[22] category (ILO, 2022: 11). As of 2021, there was no law classifying the *esnaf* courier status (Kıdak, 2021: 64), and as known; currently the situation remains the same. The *esnaf* couriers are not subject to labor law, neither are they classified as worker nor as employees. They can be 'employers' when they hire workers, but this is not observed as the case with the interviewees of this study or as a general observation in the field. The contract of work defined in Turkish Code of Obligations article 470 represents an example of an agreement between an *esnaf* courier and a company. This contract defines the contractor who is responsible for fulfilling a job and the employer as someone paying the price in return for the service (Kıdak, 2021: 67). Meanwhile, the couriers owe the company for fulfilling the job in proper ways, the situation in manners of responsibility is not the same from the company side; in other words, the contractual obligations are not defined in a balanced way. If the courier is found faulty, the company has the right to withdraw from the contract. On the other hand, the company has the right to request

[22] The danger categories are determined by NACE codes (Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the Europen Community)

payment equal to a fault, fulfill the job for free, and ask for compensation. Contrary to all these responsibilities the couriers carry, the only responsibility the company has is to make the payment (Kıdak, 2021: 67). These contractors are included in 4B social insurance[23], in which self-employment is included. This implies that the workers have to pay for their insurance covers.

When the status of the interviewees in this study is concerned, among total of 11 interviewees, only two were involved in a traditional contractual employment relationship. Indeed, the comprehensive study made by ILO (2022: 12) with motor couriers from different sectors shows that the numbers of contracted couriers are still high; this was not the case for this study. Adding to that, TrendyolGo only works with *esnaf* couriers, unlike Getir and Yemeksepeti, who work with both. Four couriers stated that the companies are trying to shift the weight into this model. Kemal, a TrendyolGo courier, expresses this trend as:

> The companies are moving towards the *esnaf* courier model. The reason behind this is that the costs are so much lower for the company than working with a contracted courier. In that case, the company would have to pay all the need of couriers, fuel of the motor, maintenance of the vehicle in general and in case of accident (Kemal, 24).

Kemal's words provide insights about the ground on which independent contractors and *esnaf* or self-employed couriers can meet: outsourcing. It is also observed that outsourcing brings numerous disadvantages in terms of the outcomes of work status. *Esnaf* couriers, just as independent contractors, have to pay all the costs by themselves. Interviews show that the vehicle -motor- is owned by them; the costs of maintenance, fuel, and almost every cost belongs to them, including the food they consume during work time. It is observed that the necessity for workers to provide vehicles create disadvantages for the couriers by putting them in a position of economic dependency until they finish paying the debt of the motor. Within the high inflation Turkish ecosystem, whereby factors such as the price of fuel are on the constant rise; the couriers state that they are not able to shift

[23] The 4B is the type of insurance that covers self-employed who work on their own behalf and/or account.

to other jobs. Bulut, a courier working for Yemeksepeti, says that he bought the motor with the money he borrowed, which "doubled itself in 2 months, because of the economic circumstances" (Bulut, 23). Nonetheless, the dependency and outsourcing practices are not limited to the daily needs of workers or the costs of means of subsistence. The interviews show that in all three companies, the couriers have to buy the required equipment such as coats, vests and delivery bags themselves. Again, TrendyolGo courier Kemal says that "couriers have insider jokes on Trendyol… they say that the company's only strategy to profit is selling equipment to its couriers thus breeding its textile operation" (Kemal, 24). Although couriers make jokes about the situation, the company appears to be quite serious. Equipment such as a bag and a protective jacket is mandatory, otherwise the company can terminate the 'contract'. Moreover, in case of exit and re-entry, the company forces couriers to repurchase the equipment. In the case of Yemeksepeti, the couriers also buy the basic equipment mentioned above, except the vest. Still, from the statements of the interviewed couriers, it is observed that the company is relatively more flexible in equipment usage compared to the other two. Yusuf, who works with Vigo, the company that operates under Getir, states that he had to buy it all; and the company makes it compulsory to wear the platform company outfit "because the outfit has the company's name on it" (Yusuf, 28). The courier also adds that the company can easily terminate the contract if he is spotted while he is not wearing the outfit during working times. Thus, it implies that the company perceives the self-employed business partners as vessels of 'compulsory advertisement' which points to a dependent relation.

The implications of *esnaf* courier status regarding outsourcing practices are also witnessed in the insurance situation. Yet, before moving on to insurance, it seems necessary to mention the position that contracts occupy inside the discussion since the concept is relevant to and determines the dynamics of insurance. Under the fifth chapter, it was noted that the contracts, in a flexible ecosystem, evolved into terms and conditions. The notion of terms and conditions mostly appears on platform's interface, which implies that couriers, on an individual basis, sign up to the application just as the consumer and 'accept' or 'deny' the terms and conditions. However, the situation seems far more complex in the Turkish context.

First, the process of becoming an *esnaf* courier should be briefly mentioned to understand the reasons behind this. The first phase of the process is an application to establish a private company by applying to tax office with relatively low requirements. People under 29 also apply for the 'young entrepreneurship' supply program of KOSGEB.[24] The program includes advantages such as exemption of paying self-employment insurance for a year and exemption from income tax until a certain number of annual incomes, which temporarily makes the courier job attractive for young people. After the acceptance from the tax office, in other words, after official establishment of their own businesses/companies, couriers apply to platform companies. This phase is where controversies emerge on the quality of the contract. For instance, Kemal states that he has an agreement based on a partnership. Yet, he has no profound information on the contract or agreement. The strategies of preparing and presenting the terms and conditions by the platforms, as Schmidt (2017) emphasizes, such as constructing them as long-paged technical contracts, apply in Kemal's case:

> I needed so much money that I did not even have a glance at the contract. I asked them if there was any clause that could be used against me, and they said no. They seemed sincere… They said, 'There are certain rules. If you do not go to work for a certain amount of time, we could terminate the contract, etc.' It was 7-8 pages or something like that. I think they prepared the contract to tire people so they cannot read it… You accept anything given; this is how things work in this country (Kemal, 24).

Many other interviewees confirmed a similar approach. Vigo courier Halit states that they work with a contract, and second Vigo courier Yusuf said he "has no idea what is in it…about the content" and he just "put two signatures" on it (Yusuf, 28). Expect one courier, Musa, who worked for all the companies mentioned here, states that the contents are all the same and it is all a young entrepreneurship contract. Most couriers either do not know the content or do not have precise idea if they are bounded by a contract at all.

However, this is not the only differentiating feature of the case. Another unique development observed was the involvement of subcontractor courier companies in the

[24] Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Development Organization

contracting process. The situation is controversial in terms of clarity for Vigo couriers. Still, even if they are excluded, four of the interviewers (all from Yemeksepeti) have entered the job with the mediation of the subcontractor courier company. Yakup has a one-year contract, and Tolga has a contract with a company which also has contact with other companies included in the sample of this study. In case of termination of the contract with one platform company, the mediator company could offers the courier directly to another company. Even though the *esnaf* courier status allows couriers to work for different companies simultaneously (as observed in this study, too), subcontractors emerged to provide these connections. It appears that the subcontractors have separate contracts, of which the content is vague and unknown by couriers. Since the couriers are also private companies, the subcontractors provide couriers and their personal companies some (technical) services such as an 'individual accountant' who calculates the wages and expenditures. In conclusion, although couriers could establish a company to become *esnaf* couriers on an individual basis, mediator (subcontractor) companies emerged to provide additional service to couriers; the service of becoming a self-employed or young entrepreneur through a mediator company, which appears as a unique phenomenon.

The vague position of contract details does not seem to directly affect the fundamental principles. The couriers are still self-employed, and the insurance they are related to is still defined. As mentioned, self-employed couriers are subjected to 4B insurance, named Bağkur.[25] This implies that couriers are covered within the social security and pension system, yet they are involved in the insurance group of self-employed, which means that they are responsible for paying their own insurance premium each month. There are several implications related to this situation. First, as mentioned above, the young entrepreneurship contract exempts couriers under 29 years of age from insurance payments for the first one year following the establishment of the company. Again, it appears that this leverage captures the interest of young people, especially those looking for favorable jobs to save money or simply make a living. Except for two of the contracted interviewees who have compulsory insurance, five of the couriers reported that they are benefiting from a young entrepreneurship contract. It

[25] Social Security Organization for Artisans and the Self-Employed

was also evident that, among four other interviewees, two of them, Yakup and Halit, pay their insurance monthly and regularly. However, the division in paying insurance does not indicate a division in ideas the couriers have for the quality of insurance. Yusuf, who did not pay the insurance for two months, says that he does not pay the insurance premiums since he is unsure whether he has to pay. Also, he states that he does not intend to pay because of the economic situation, and "the constant increase in prices in this last six months makes me sick of living" (Yusuf, 28). Musa, an *esnaf* courier working for Yemeksepeti, also stated that he does not pay the insurance. He says he cannot even get a medical report from the hospital when he is sick because he is classified as self-employed. He also adds that:

> You already cannot get an appointment from a hospital. If I go to the hospital spontaneously, I cannot find any space to get treated. The insurance is useless; it does not pay for the medicine. It is ridiculous. Rather than paying for this insurance monthly, I prefer to keep that money in my pocket and go to a private hospital in case of sickness (Musa, 28).

When asked whether the colleagues prefer to pay the insurance or not, Musa adds: "No, usually they do not pay. Because it is useless. Bağkur is completely useless. You cannot get an appointment or go to the hospital" (Musa, 28).

Halit, as an example of a payer on a monthly basis, says he was involved in the courier business in 1999; in those times, there were no couriers without insurance. Despite paying the insurance, Halit, with a comparative approach in time periods, strongly emphasizes that:

> When I found out they were starting to apply this system, I talked with couriers and researched around. After, I concluded that this system was entirely set up on favoring companies…the company does not accept any responsibility at all (Halit, 33).

Another implication related to the insurance discussion refers to situations with severe consequences. It is recorded that in 2019, 191 couriers died from accidents (ILO, 2022: 22). The numbers indicate that despite being classified as 'less dangerous,' the couriers are facing the risks of the accident in a consistent manner. The interviews also show that seven of 11 interviewees had an accident before. As in other topics, the relation to

accidents and insurance seems relatively complex. Firstly, almost all couriers expressed that their 'contracts' or agreements do not include any social rights inherited in traditional employment status subjected to the Labor Act. When asked, two of the contracted couriers, Emre and Murat, who work for Yemeksepeti, stated that the insurance covers the payment when reports are presented to the company in case of an accident at work. Moreover, couriers could get paid at times they cannot work. Yet, the situation appears almost opposite in *esnaf* couriers' case. Since they are regarded as self-employed and carry the responsibility of dynamics such as maintenance of their vehicle and insurance payment, the *esnaf* couriers cannot earn anything (or receive any compensations) in case of inoperativeness. When an accident happens, the courier pays for the damage the vehicle absorbed, and the costs could be pretty high depending on the severity of the occasion. Regarding accidents, the couriers expressed compelling experiences. Trendyol Go courier Kemal stated that when his friend had an accident, "he had to rest for a month, and the company did not even bother to contact him" (Kemal, 24). Vigo's couriers Halit's experience appears as being even more clarifying:

> A friend of mine had an accident and broke his leg. Although he had a medical report, they dismissed him…He fell into a pit due to construction full of water that made it invisible. He tumbled down with his motorcycle but did not realize his leg was broken and continued to work; thus, he did not instantly apply for the medical report. He realized the situation at night. Despite continuing to work with a broken leg, the company dismissed him (Halit, 33).

The instance in the quote goes on that the company retrieved the courier later after verbal trade-offs. However, the process was rather informal, and the courier could not earn any income during the injury period. As stated above, some couriers pay the insurance premiums, while others do not prefer to. Therefore, it appears that those who do not desire to pay insurance to 'save money' or for other reasons have no protection in case of an accident since the insurance system does not cover the expenses due to the courier's debt. This indicates that, as in the case of Musa's own experience, they must pay all the medication costs by themselves. Hence, the position of inoperativeness equals to not being able to make any income. Despite his internal organs were damaged, Musa only rested for two weeks and continued to work because he had to "cover the expenses of the motor" (Musa, 28). Expanding the situation beyond the findings of this study, Istanbul Planning Agency's (IPA) research with 600

couriers also suggests that %61.5 of the couriers, who own their motor, work without insurance (IPA, 2021: 37).

Regarding the relationship between accident and insurance, a second option is also evident. It was observed that subcontractor companies, TrendyolGo and Vigo offer their *esnaf* couriers the private health insurance, called 'personal accident insurance.' The couriers, in all cases, cover the costs of the insurance by themselves. Bulut, who just had a minor accident before the interview, says that the health insurance covers "up to 15.000 Turkish Liras" (Bulut, 23), and Yakup, who is also working for Yemeksepeti, confirms the amounts. However, almost all of the couriers meet on the common ground that -despite some of them have private insurances, which they individually pay and that covers damages (health related) up to a certain amount- they are not getting paid during the injury period until they get back to work. At the same time, they also have to cover the costs of the vehicle in a period that they are unpaid, which puts them in a vulnerable situation against contingencies.

The consensus is also constructed on the issue that their status and contracts do not provide them with social rights. Social rights, by ILO, are identified as follows: "sickness (income compensation); sickness (health aid); maternity; work accidents and occupational diseases; senility; disability; unemployment and family insurance" (Kıdak, 2021: 69-70). When particularly asked, it was evident that the couriers with self-employment status had a reach to none of these social rights. It also occurs that the couriers are not only devoid of social rights but also -despite being classified as business partners- they have no protection against possible terminations of their contracts. Tolga's words could be considered to summarize the conditions of *esnaf* courier status regarding precarity: "Whatever you do, you do it for yourself" (Tolga, 23). Compared to self-employment status, there are distinct advantages with regards to social rights for the couriers with employment contracts. As Kıdak notes, being subjected to labor law legislations could ensure some rights: if workers do not work on national holidays, they could still get paid; if they work during times of holidays, they are getting paid; when a worker fulfills a one-year length of seniority, s/he could get annual leave rights (2021: 78-79). Yet, it could be concluded from the words of the contracted courier of Yemeksepeti Emre, that the company attempts to tighten the

reins when it comes to cases such as holiday leaves. Yet, the legislations can provide workers a ground to discuss or defend their rights on a concrete basis. Despite having better access to certain social rights compared to *esnaf* courier status, it was observed from the interviews that being in an employee status does not indicate fully trouble-free working conditions. For instance, it was noted that Yemeksepeti could easily change the sector-related classification of their couriers from transportation workers to office workers. For Emre, this was done due to "the strategy of the company to transform the workforce to subcontracted fully. They are trying to harass us" (Emre, 29). The courier also mentioned that one of the implications of the change in the sector was to block the attempts to get unionized. Moreover, Murat points out that the sector change could result in other consequences; as a valid example, their vaccination time was delayed for 15 days since they were "downgraded to the third category amongst vaccination priority groups". The second problem with the status is that, despite the number of deaths and accidents, the couriers are still considered under the 'less dangerous' category of jobs. Although being subject to the Labor Act might imply benefiting from the compensations and legislations of work-related accidents and occupational diseases (Kıdak, 2021: 74), the couriers request to be classified under "dangerous" jobs (IPA, 2021: 45). The classification might imply better working conditions, regarding the possibility of new regulations.

Final status-related issues are training and job entry requirements. As mentioned in this study several times, the e-commerce share grew significantly in time, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amongst several consequences, the rise in the need for a workforce to deliver goods purchased online and a change in consumer behavior was evident. Therefore, the rapid increase in demand and expansion of digital platforms revealed a need for a vast amount of workforce in the delivery sector (ILO, 2022: 27). Social Security Institution's (SGK) data confirm the situation: 2019 data shows that the decrease in the employment rate was two point thirty seven percent meanwhile increase in the courier employment rate was recorded as six point fifty nine percent (ILO, 2022: 20). IPA report shows that %80 percentage of couriers entered the sector due to being unemployed after pandemic (IPA, 2021: 29). Consequently, IPA report suggests that in times of pandemic, the motor courier job appeared as a 'waiting room', implying that workers with different occupations who were not able to perform

their job anymore, perceived courier job as an economic compensation (IPA, 2021: 29).

The interviews conducted with couriers contribute to this argument by showing that eight of 11 interviewers have different occupational backgrounds. Halit and Murat were chefs, while Musa was a baker; Levent stated that he has worked almost every job in the service sector. This implies that the motor courier job could now carry more connotations than "being a waiting room", since a considerable number of the workforce continues to be employed as couriers. However, the intention here is not to focus on one single implication of absorption of this workforce – or surplus populations- by digital platforms. Another consequence of a sudden need for a vast amount of workforce to deliver goods could be detected as a decrease in expectations of employee qualifications and abilities. ILO report shows that %64 of the *esnaf* couriers did not receive occupational safety training (ILO, 2022: 51). Considering the absorption of people from different sectors who had no previous delivery experience; this might be examined as a result of a desire to reach to an expanding workforce hastily. Kemal explains the situation: "It is like the Hunger Games now. We are joking on the current issue; there are so many couriers now that we might have to put some down with spears on the road to catch more packages to gain more money" (Kemal, 24). Halit states that the training company offers to teach the application is insufficient: "They make a kind of gathering to introduce the job in general terms. Then they ask those who are willing to accept the terms to raise their hands. With people raising hands, they make the contracts" (Halit, 33). Almost all couriers emphasized that there are not many requirements; mostly, a photograph, motor driving license, and criminal record were enough. Regarding trainings, it is evident that either there is no training at all, or there is an "application training" which appears as gatherings with someone presenting the interface of the digital application. The flexibility in entry requirements might breed the perception of the courier job as a temporary economic relief or a relatively new practice of moonlighting for the unemployed workforce. Moreover, it also implies that the companies do not only outsource critical components such as means of work and insurance through *esnaf* courier status. They also, as indicated, can avoid the training costs since the couriers are counted as self-employed.

Under the same subheading, chapter five, the qualities of the couriers with the self-employed status were discussed with court examples around the world. Considering the court decisions, it was observed that the idea of dependency on digital platforms occupied great importance for the courts. While inheriting many factors, the dependency majorly implied a control on the labor process implemented by digital platforms through algorithmic means. It is noticeable that the same controversies apply to Turkish couriers' case. Yet, these factors will be discussed under the subheading of Algorithmic Management which also crosscut other themes in several ways. Both as a final remark for this subheading and paving the way for Algorithmic Management, Halit's and Levent's words are insightful:

> By naming it *esnaf* courier, they tried to give it a connotation of self-employment. The implication is that you are your own boss etc. No such thing exists. They call it a business partnership, yet from restrictions to rules, they define everything; thus, rather than partnership, it works more like 'if you can not stand the heat, keep out of the kitchen' fashion. When the demand is high for the job, they do not care. They have the logic that if one goes, another comes (Levent, 26).

> The courier does the company's job. In formality, you make couriers establish a company, thus, they appear as your business partner, but this has nothing to do with reality. Yet, they treat you as one of their employees. The couriers do not determine their working hours. Since we are business partners, I bill you for a service; I should be able to determine my working conditions (Halit, 33).

Under this title, the interviews conducted with three platforms mentioned in this study were analyzed through the concepts of Contract and Status. Referring to the discussion made in chapter five, similarities and differences are observed. Nonetheless, the overall picture suggested that the Turkish context exhibit more complicated characteristics. The first critical point of the analysis was the differentiation in Statuses. Two different statuses are detected in this context: contracted couriers subjected to Labor Act and independent contractor couriers. A brief introduction of the history of the courier job in Turkish context is followed by the exploration of the implications the two statuses carry. It was observed that the labor costs such as insurance, vehicles, and maintenance are excluded to independent contractors. Moreover, it is detected that the specified equipment is also sold to couriers, which implies another income channel for the platforms. After underlining incentivizing

practices unique to the Turkish case, such as young-entrepreneurship programs, a discussion on the concept of the contract was introduced. It was noticeable that most couriers had no specific knowledge on the content of the contracts. Another unique dynamic offered by the Turkish case was the existence of subcontractor/mediator companies. Although couriers could become private companies by themselves relatively easily, it appeared that some companies could still emerge by providing the service of making people private companies. This did not simply indicate a mediation; it was also evident that these companies could offer their own contracts. Some couriers were bounded by those, yet, as in the total case, they also did not possess knowledge on the contracts. The outsourcing practices regarding the status also implied the courier's strategy to save money by not paying costs such as health insurance, which pointed to more dangerous working conditions. The characteristic of the courier job as an economic compensation due to unemployment also occurred as unique in the Turkish context. It was discussed that concerning the rapid growth of e-commerce and unemployment trends, the job possibly absorbed people from different job backgrounds, thus emerged as a 'waiting room'. The notion was confirmed by the interviews conducted. The outsourcing practices also implied that platforms embrace a possible strategy of assetless growth, displaying lean platform characteristics. In sum, it was evident that the platforms, by introducing novel practices such as *esnaf* couriers and vague contracts, created critical impacts on the organization of labor processes. The effects regarding the status were mostly detectable in outsourcing practices, which also appeared pioneering. The general structure was supported by incentivizing programs and factors such as subcontracting. Lastly, it is to be emphasized that the tendency of platforms to create dependent relations between companies and *esnaf* couriers puts the latter's status in a highly controversial position.

7.2 Algorithmic Management

In chapter five, the ways in which Algorithmic Management operates and its importance for the digital platforms were underlined. Accordingly, a brief historical process of Taylorism was reminded to understand the latest version of the management technique named digital Taylorism. The term inherited the idea of applying Taylorist management techniques, such as downgrading the jobs into tasks and control over the

phases of the labor process using digital technologies and algorithms. Following, the term implied resolutions to historical problems of Taylorism, such as tight control over labor power and high coordination costs. Later, it was pointed out how the digital Taylorism's understanding of management coincides with the platform work since the latter's operation stands on a task-providing basis. It was outlined that human based, real-time management was being replaced by management through algorithms. As a reminder, the definition of the concept was: "software algorithms that assume managerial functions and surrounding institutional devices that support algorithms in practice" (Lee et al., 2015, as cited in Cant: 2020). It was also emphasized that these managerial functions operated in several layers, which can be related to all the other subheadings discussed in this chapter. However, some managerial features could still be specified under the Algorithmic Management.

Therefore, by sticking to the questions asked in chapter five under the title of algorithmic management and analyzing the information provided by couriers through interviews, this sub-section focuses on several aspects of the issue such as gamification of the work through rating systems and its relation to sanctions applied to couriers. Moreover, the inquiry also stresses the power of algorithms in deciding process regarding delivering packages. Subsequently, the aim is to explore how the Applications of platforms has impacted upon the fulfillment of a task, i.e., the labor process of delivery. In connection to all, the relevance of "autonomy" in terms of self-employment is elaborated. Before moving on to the analysis a fundamental issue is to be clarified; all platforms and algorithmic management techniques operate through Applications as software interfaces bring customer, platform and consumer together.

The first aspect to discover is the "algorithm's operation as a manager" due to its role in issues such as working hours and putting sanctions on couriers. Further, the algorithm's ability to restrict certain practices by imposing features such as adaptation scores will be discussed. Later, the impacts of algorithm in completing the task, and thus the labor process itself will be highlighted. The analysis will carry on by depicting the gamification practices. The discussion on the use of management techniques will form the last essential theme of the analysis.

The first issue to highlight is that, contrary to popular wisdom, *esnaf* couriers might have to fulfill specific hours, and Trendyol steps further as a clear example of the situation. Both couriers working with the platform agree that 45 hours a week should be met. Regarding the working hours, it is possible to observe that Trendyol Go couriers face restrictions concerning the issue. For instance, Kemal expresses that he sometimes feels like an employee because when he does not go to work for a week, "the company, the support line reaches to you. People I do not even know…They ask if something happened if I do not appear for a week" (Kemal, 24). One may expect that in cases where the courier work 45 hours a week they may have autonomy for the rest of the hours. Yet, from Levent's profound explanation, it is evident that this is not the case. Trendyol classifies specific hours as 'golden (or rush) hours' with the possible usage of data and networking effects. These hours are, as the interviewed courier iterates, "From Monday to Wednesday seven to ten; on Thursday and Friday from six to ten, and on the weekends it is half past three to ten" (Levent, 26). Considering the possibility of slight misinformation in numbers, it could be calculated that the golden hours, in total, correspond to *approximately* thirty hours in a week. However, it was mentioned that the company makes it compulsory for couriers to fulfill forty-five hours weekly. The second imperative related to working hours is that the courier also must work for twenty-three hours of thirty golden hours. Therefore, despite the couriers choose their time slots, i.e., working hours a week before, if they 'choose' not to work for three days, they would not be able to fulfill the obliged numbers of golden hours since there are only 30 hours classified as such in total. Thus, it could be indicated that despite couriers appear to be free in picking working hours or to work whenever they want; the compulsory work hours system is implemented by the platform with the support of algorithmic detection of golden hours.

On the other hand, the interviews with Vigo couriers (who work with Getir on only a self-employed basis) illustrate that Getir has similarities and differences with Trendyol Go in the operation of delivery work. The first issue to discuss is the work hours related to self-employment. Contrary to Trendyol's system, couriers do not choose half-hour restricted slots. Yusuf states that "I am an *esnaf* courier.. right? So, I normally should be able to choose time slots by myself or have a day off. Here, this is not the case at

all. Every day they send you a shift list. They say you will work 12 hours today" (Yusuf, 28). From the interviews, it is detected that rather than picking slots, the couriers working with Vigo directly pick time shifts already written by the company, which can be eight, 10, or 12 hours. After time the shifts are sent, the courier has to pick one of these and work accordingly. The couriers, theoretically, can 'sign-off' from the Vigo courier Application. Yet, as in the Trendyol case, this action would spark several consequences.

In Yemeksepeti, the scene is no less complex than the other examples in this study. The way algorithm is involved in operation of delivery, as with two other cases examined, exceeds the limits of individualistic relation. This means that the courier cannot just sign in or sign off to the system in an arbitrary fashion. The couriers are able to choose their working times in Yemeksepeti's operation, as in the case of Trendyol. However, the couriers do not pick time 'slots' divided into thirty minutes. They detect their working days and hours a week ago, on Sundays. Therefore, the couriers can pick their shifts rather than working with compulsory and ready-made shifts as in Getir's case. However, the shifts are not flexible in time; the interviews present that they are defined on a 10 to 12 hours basis. The courier can choose not to work three days a week, but it is mostly not possible to work, so to say, 15 days a month and rest in the other 15 days. This, in simpler words, implies that the autonomy provided to the courier here is narrowed down to particular hour-based time shifts and day-based limitations, which is called absenteeism. If the courier is absent for 15 days, the system could shut them down for three days. If the courier picks a shift and does not follow it, the system gives them a warning. In case of repetition, the system either provides another warning or shuts down the courier's system for three days (Tolga, 23).

Nonetheless, the couriers still have the 'freedom' to not to work with a cost. All companies utilize a system named *adaptation score*. In Trendyol's case, several dynamics directly affecting the adaptation score are depicted. First, through algorithm, platform detects if the courier fulfilled the required number of golden hours or not. If not, the courier's score decreases. Second, if couriers pick a time shift and signs off earlier, their adaptation score is negatively affected. Getir does not close the time slots

contrary to Trendyol, instead, the sanction is based on cutting the premiums or bonuses, which are integrated with the adaptation score. In Getir's case, the share of premiums consists of a considerable amount of money the courier gains on a monthly basis which implies that it cannot be easily renounced. Therefore, the self-employed couriers are free to sign off whenever they want if they accept to bear severe consequences. There are different layers the score is used. First, the courier with higher scores gains the right to pick the slots first from the weekly timetable. This implies that the couriers with better scores have the right to pick more beneficial hours, which could mean that the other groups might have to work even more to fulfill the required hours by the platform. Yemeksepeti courier displays how the score system, in total, is affected by the complete labor process:

> The package arrives in the system. We have time limitation to confirm the package. After that, people who work in the warehouses have time for preparing the package. When they confirm that the package is ready, the courier must gather the package immediately. If there is a gap in time for this confirmation, it affects your score. In this system, many buttons are used in the delivery process, such as 'acceptance,' 'delivered,' and more. In each time gap time between pressing the buttons, your score is affected (Emre, 29).

The aspects of algorithmic management such as golden hours and scores implicates what was defined before as *gamification* of the work. Despite necessities, it could be expressed that the process coincides with gaming structures. It was evident in Trendyol's case that the hours are classified according to their profitability and presented as rewards through the use of algorithm. In general, reaching the rewards requires the fulfillment of certain qualities. These qualities are measured by scores, which are used to reach the reward in the end, the best slots, i.e., the work times in Trendyol's system. Yet, Levent states that "there is a common controversy between the couriers on whether delivering the packages fast affects the number of appointed packages to couriers" (Levent, 26). Kemal also does not have precise information on the issue, which implies that couriers are devoid of critical calculative tools that directly affect their labor process. In case of Getir, the couriers have daily points or 'stars', which is one of the primary reasons they desire to deliver food rapidly. As Halit explains: "let's suppose that the delivery arrived late. The food was cold, or something else happened … The customer rates you. When they give you a low rating, it returns

you as a sanction" (Halit, 33). With ratings, a courier could reach an 'elite' status. Becoming an elite courier in Getir implies that the algorithm could appoint short-distance packages to you; thus, the courier could deliver more. The second implication is that company gives 'gift codes' to the couriers every two months. These codes are directly affected by consumer ratings. An alluring observation is that the gift code could only be used in Getir's own warehouses. With the amount code includes, the couriers can purchase goods from the warehouse, which implies that, in Halit's words, "the company circulates its own money inside … to create an impression that they are actually giving people something" (Halit, 33). Couriers are rewarded or punished according to 'stars' they collect and tokens they get -gift codes- related to stars. The reward or punishment system is also applied to more critical issues such as dismissal. The platform (Getir) makes performance evaluations each month. The primary measurement dynamic is the delivery durations. Again, Halit expresses the process: "Up to 10 minutes, you are classified as green. After 10, you are orange. After 20 minutes, you are red. If you exceed 40, you are purple. Your position is critical if you are not green or orange. Your contract is terminated if you are red or purple" (Halit, 33). The process is gamified, again, in a sense that the couriers with the highest scores receive the chance to pick the shifts first, thus rewarded. In Yemeksepeti's case, these couriers, as Tolga expresses, are defined as "diamond couriers… the system depicts it with factors such as if you are active in 'dense' hours or not" (Tolga, 23). As Musa clarifies: "Supposing that two couriers are waiting at the same location. If the second one has better scores than the first, the system appoints the package to the second one" (Musa, 28).

Concerning the last discussion on gamification practices, Doorn illustrates examples of how couriers are drawn into gambling-like practices; while work is in process, couriers ask themselves questions such as: "When I get my next order, how much will they offer me?; If I reject this offer will the next offer be better or worse?" (Doorn, 2020: 13). Scholar, later, relates the couriers' situation with the framework provided by Schüll: "with respect to machine gambling, the most potent behavioral reinforcement can be achieved through schemes in which subjects never know when they will be rewarded, or how much" (Schüll, 2012, as cited in Doorn: 2020: 13). Despite the fact that gamification practices continue as detected above, with respect to

rating systems, or couriers waiting for 'pings' (packages) to arrive, the thesis presents differentiating results. One of the crucial reasons is that the couriers cannot choose between different packages they see on the Application. The packages are simply appointed to couriers by the algorithm, depending on the location of the order and the courier. In Trendyol's example, by paraphrasing Kemal's words, the process involves several steps. First, the algorithm appoints the package to the courier with a code. The courier accepts the package in six minutes. Then, the courier, goes to the groceries shop, supermarket, or restaurant with the code and waits for the order to be prepared; meanwhile, he notifies the algorithm that he is at the receiving spot. When the order is ready, the courier takes a picture of the order with the bill (only for groceries). Later, the courier starts the delivery process, thus delivers the package to the customer. At last, the courier again notifies the algorithm that the package is delivered. Levent also gives a detail on the issue that "sometimes two different couriers might deliver two different packages ordered by the same house… if they got to choose, one of them would go" (Levent, 26). In the case of Trendyol Go, it also appears that couriers can either wait for the new packages to be appointed or move back to the central places, increasing the chances of getting new packages more quickly. In either case, there is no distance (kilometer) limitations, except for grocery deliveries. Since the algorithm appoints the nearest order to the closest courier, the courier can travel from district to district to places he has no idea of. Levent states that "sometimes at night shifts when the number of active couriers is low, the algorithm might send couriers to distant locations" (Levent, 26). However, the algorithm solves the issue by giving four TL bonuses to deliveries that are further than six kilometers. Kemal says that sometimes "they deliver only one order for five kilometers, which they do not prefer, but they have to take" (Kemal, 23).

Vigo couriers also cannot choose whether they want to accept a package or not. Halit states that there is a system called "algorithm… no single one of us could detect how it works. We only can understand it by insights or secondhand information. The algorithm detects the best courier option around the neighborhood and appoints the package to that particular person" (Halit, 33). The algorithm's delivery distance range is relatively far and could be expanded to nine-ten kilometers, which takes a long time for the courier to deliver the goods. To emphasize once more, the couriers have no

choice but to accept the appointed package also in the case of Vigo. If they do not, the adaptation score decreases, and the company prepares a report which could even result in the termination of the contract.

Contrary to Trendyol, Yemeksepeti couriers can only see the restaurant's location first, rather than the whole route. Therefore, Musa, who worked with all three of the companies, states that, despite consequences such as closing down of a slot: "If a Trendyol Go courier has 10 minutes left to end his shift and a distant package is appointed to him, has a chance not to go" (Musa, 28). This implies that Yemeksepeti's algorithm provides route information as one step at a time. However, the couriers working with the company have a relative advantage compared to others: distance limitations. The couriers have defined districts and can only go up to 6 kilometers, which is a rare case. The couriers, thus, enjoy the advantage of being able to cancel the orders farther than their defined distance, contrary to issues where they might have to ride to several districts in a day. Yet, it is also evident that the GPS allows no freedom to the courier as Bulut states, "the navigation functions through bird's eye view" (Bulut, 23), which in some cases indicates that the system cannot navigate couriers towards the shorter ways. Since the algorithm might track the couriers, they cannot change the route. In a case where delivery times might affect the score system with severe advantages, the issue occurs as conflicting for couriers.

The algorithm's management functions regarding organization and control over the labor process is not limited to appointing or specifying the ways in which the units of task are to be accomplished. The algorithmic techniques could function as a structure that can impose sanctions on couriers in specific ways. It is already mentioned in the preceding paragraphs that the couriers could be easily followed by the algorithm and the package is assigned to a courier has to be accepted in a certain amount of time. Kemal states that if the courier does not accept the order in a given time, "they receive an automatic call through the Application" (Kemal, 24), through which the couriers receive a warning saying that they have a package appointed to them. Following this, if the courier still does not confirm the order, the algorithm dismisses the courier from his time slot, i.e., closes one and a half hours of his slot. If this happens once more on the same day, the algorithm can close down the entire work day, or in some cases week

of a courier. Another Trendyol courier, Levent, clarifies that "the courier has three hours of time that he could be dismissed in a day… or the courier can use it by signing into the system late" (Levent, 26).

As another example, it is observed that Getir defines certain times for couriers to fuel charge or maintenance of the vehicle in every shift. If the maintenance process lasts more than one to one and a half hours, the company cuts the fee for the time the courier did not work. Moreover, the courier's activities can easily be tracked through the algorithm. Thereby, the activities of the couriers, even while waiting for the packages, can easily be spotted. Yusuf expresses that:

> the system can detect every movement when I open my location. Where I entered, with which speed I crossed the ramps and stopped… Once, while waiting for an order to be prepared, I entered the mosque and notified the operation that I will be late about five minutes because I will pray. They replied we know; it appears on the map (Yusuf, 28).

The courier also must report immediately in case of delay originating from the restaurant, departure point of the order. If not, the company, again, takes things to the point that could result in the termination of the contract. Concerning safety, Getir's algorithm could also implement speed limitations on couriers. The implications of the limitation could be related to several other aspects of the delivery task. The first of them is that, especially in the case of food delivery, the courier tries to deliver the order in a certain amount of time, since his adaptation scores might be negatively affected in case of long delivery times. Meanwhile, if the couriers exceed the speed limit, they could get reported, which could result in the termination of a contract. Moreover, the courier cannot choose the ways to deliver in line with what Woodcock (2021: 72) depicts: "The use of GPS mapping also prevents the worker from deciding on the optimum route, which reduces the choice of how to complete the delivery". Yusuf supports the claim that they have to follow the route presented by navigation. Yet, this puts the couriers into controversial situation: if they choose the route determined by the algorithm, the food would be cold. If not, to deliver food at a certain period of time, the courier either has to exceed the speed limit or follow a different route, which could result in reporting.

However, the couriers do not only face or deal with the algorithm in the ways mentioned so far. In Trendyol's occasion, the Application also appears an interface where other forces meet. While delivering the order, the algorithm follows the courier's route. If the courier does not arrive at the delivery location in a certain amount of time, "people call you through the system to ask you why you are not there… and remind you that your score could be affected" (Kemal, 24). This implies that a labor force is reachable through the Application that deals with the problems occurring in the field. Levent summarizes this as such:

> There is a button on the Application that you can use to call for help by which we can connect to the customer services. There is an operation department that we usually do not have contact with except for extraordinary cases. There is an accident reporting department, which we can reach in the shortest amount of time, along with the customer services … I am guessing that the customer services department is a subcontractor company … Nonetheless, the first group we can reach into, which is named as 'fleet' has less authorization compared to the operation team (Levent, 26).

From the interviewees' words, it is evident that the Application brings at least three workforces with different tasks together. The human touch is also involved in extreme weather conditions. In such cases, the courier can abandon the packages if the platform agrees and declares that the weather conditions are extreme. If the courier abandons the packages, thirty minutes of slot is closed, rather than one and a half hours. Kemal states that sometimes, "they do not close your slot down at all… sometimes we call the 'support' line to inform" (Kemal, 24).

Getir on the other hand, bears distinctive features regarding the discussion. There is a 'team leader' or an 'operational manager' that company operates through. As inferred from interviews, the manager inherits more of a 'boss' qualities rather than a mere operation organizer whom couriers can easily reach on certain occasions. This operational manager follows the courier activities on the field on an active basis. The words of couriers display that the manager has a wide authority, including the termination of the contract by will and posing strict rules on couriers by not providing flexibility in instances such as breakdown of the vehicle or sickness. In this sense, the

power of the operation manager on couriers should not to be underestimated. In Yusuf's case, the interview for this study was conducted in a coffee shop, one of the places the operation manager was also actively using. The courier was super alert and even demanded to change tables and move to somewhere else in case the manager or people akin to him could hear things during the interview. This implies that the 'human touch' is involved in a stricter manner in this example compared to the case of Trendyol. In conclusion, this could be named a hybrid model, where a single person comments management functions of the algorithm and have a wide range of authorization.

In their operation, Yemeksepeti also relies on team leaders -as some courier's name them as 'chiefs'. In that sense, despite not being included in this study's sample, it was possible to speak with one of the team leaders while interviewing other Yemeksepeti couriers. According to him, the duties of a team leader could be defined as such:

> We are responsible for the field. We intervene in the problems related to restaurants. We can intervene if groceries are falsely delivered. We follow the late sign-ins trying to control absenteeism. Other than these, we do not have much determinant authority. In general, we are trying to keep the operation functioning… If several couriers do not sign in on the same day, the operation is in danger… When some is late, some have a problem with the vehicle; we indicate them in 'technical break'. When some are late for the delivery, we call them if everything is okay, if they had an accident or not… We can see their instant location… details such as the travel time, the time before the delivery, the time when they left the customer, exact time of delivery (Hasan, 28).

Adding to these duties, it was noticeable from the interviews that the team leader can give permissions in case of anomalies such as sickness and accident; can extend the shift if the courier demands to; and, can both allow or reject the courier's demand to sign-off early (Yakup, Musa, Ali). It could be said that Yemeksepeti's hybrid-management model has profoundly distinctive features when compared to Trendyol and Geitr. In Getir's case, it was pointed out that the company also operates through an operation manager. However, it was apparent that the manager, rather than being directly involved in several practical details related to the field, was more in a position to intervene when required or impose sanctions. Trendyol Go's case showed how the Application functions as a place where several workforces could meet and contact

regarding problems in delivery operation. Yemeksepeti's hybrid model shows that the team leader appears as a model in whom the division of labor in Trendyol's algorithm is embodied in. The main reason behind this notion is that the model allows broad scale of authorization to gather in one hand. In other words, the team leader's duties include the duties of customer services, accident reporting department, inspector, and more. Thereby, it could be concluded that in the hybrid management model of the Yemeksepeti platform, the human touch is more included, and the team leader is heavily relied on to keep the operation alive by using the advantages provided by the algorithm.

The last issue to be touched upon is the consumer ratings. The couriers, in all cases, could experience impacts of customer ratings. Yet, they have no noticeable defense mechanism against negative comments or complaints. In Yemeksepeti, the process operates through a team leader, who also has the initiative to intervene when a customer has a problem. Emre states that "the situation could get serious as the courier's contract could be terminated" (Emre, 28). Therefore, against strong complaints, the courier's future depends upon the initiative of authorized people in operation. Yakup states that if the "customer has given me a good rating; the algorithm appoints the same customer to me next time. If s/he rated me low and there are other couriers, the algorithm appoints the order to the others" (Yakup). Again, in all cases, the references or scores the couriers get are not transferable in the case of switching companies, which implies that couriers have to rebuild the performance ratings anew.

7.2.1. General Remarks

One of the most crucial issues associated with Algorithmic Management is the courier's perspective on the issue, which presents itself as a cluster that can be depicted in each case. As pointed out, in the Turkish case, the courier job stepped forward as a 'waiting room', which indicated that the job absorbed people with different sectoral and occupational backgrounds due to increasing demand. It was evident from the interviews of this study that there is a tendency for couriers to compare their old jobs to courier job regarding management styles. In other words, traditional managers, foremen, chiefs, and bosses were compared to, at least in some ways, novel

management systems provided by digital platforms to couriers. This particular issue is not only the interest or topic of this study but also of others. A recent study with 150 couriers in Turkey shows that 'freedom' steps further as one of the positive dynamics for couriers to choose the job (ILO, 2022: 71&91). Meanwhile, the same study suggests that 59.1% of the couriers feel unhappy with the communication built with their manager feel the speed pressure, and 62.5% of the couriers who experiences mobbing in their job feel the pressure of time (ILO, 2022: 15). The statistics imply that two concepts, both freedom and pressure the job offers might coexist.

Shifting the focus back to the findings of this study could help understand one facet of the complex phenomenon. Although only two couriers expressed the primary reason for their entry, it was noticeable that six of the interviewed couriers had strong opinions on regarding the algorithmic management's impact on their job choice. When asked particularly, Kemal, who worked in several jobs before, states that:

> It was a bit about Trendyol's working conditions. You choose the hours. If you want, you can work alone… there is no apparent mobbing… It would be too much to define it as freedom, yet, it offers flexibility. No one questions you by saying, 'you just came back from smoking, do not use a break again'… You do not have direct contact with the boss and customer (Kemal, 24).

Meanwhile, Halit, a Vigo courier, who claimed that he worked as a manager before, expresses that:

> You are not free at all. You choose the job for freedom, not to be shepherded by someone… Nowadays, seditious rule the world… There is hatred, jealousy, and hostility amongst people. Despite being a manager previously, I was getting tired of this working environment… I wished to become more individualized and be alone with myself by choosing the job… Yet I realized I jumped out of the frying pan into the fire… Regardless, you encounter these people for about one minute, which keeps me going (Halit, 33).

Musa, a former pastry chef, confirms his colleagues:

> In other jobs, you work close to people. There are so many egoist people. I am not used to that … If you have no honor, there is no problem. If you have some, you deeply resent their words. I changed a lot of jobs just because of this… Constant stress… But if you are a courier, you have dispute with nobody. You

> are free. It is more dangerous than the other jobs, but you are ten times freer (Musa, 28).

Ali, an old baker, supports the pattern by claiming that "if you are a person who likes to travel… it is way better than working in the restaurant in the summertime for 11 hours" (Ali, 30). Levent also affirms the core idea that "despite not being able to give any future vision and status… mentally it is the best job for me to do concerning not feeling pressure" (Levent, 26). Tolga, a Yemeksepeti courier, joins the others by asserting that "he picked the job for the freedom" (Tolga, 23). It could be depicted that the analysis provided thus far points out to a pattern that inherits coexistence of the idea of freedom and criticism of the job regarding several dynamics such as shifts, GPS tracking, and performance systems. Therefore, it appears that the couriers, in the majority of the case of this study, can detect the dependencies or limitations linked to algorithmic and hybrid-management styles. On the other hand, it was shown that interviewees also highlight the freedom or flexibility the job provides them. However, what is noticeable concerning the usage of freedom is that couriers use the notion to compare courier job to their old jobs or occupational backgrounds. Thus, it could be concluded that since the perception of couriers on the job includes criticism and emphasis on flexibility, the couriers are not simply stating that the job offers them freedom. In other words, the couriers from different job backgrounds emphasize freedom and underline the notion of strict management applications in other sectors. Therefore, it is apparent that the 'waiting room' (IPA's definition of the job; becoming a courier as an economic compensation until returning to original occupation) also served as a 'hiding room' for couriers, a place where they could be devoid of human managerial pressure.

The last remark to be pointed out regarding algorithmic management is the usage applications and the couriers' information regarding it. It was outlined several times that the platforms extract data as their primary strategy. In line with this, couriers were asked about the authorization of the applications they use. When specifically asked, four couriers replied that the application could not record the activities when closed. However, all four couriers' understanding of 'activities' were tracking of location. Thereby, the couriers (Kemal, Yakup, Musa, and Levent) believe that when they close

the location, the application is not capable of tracking them. It was also observed that two couriers who work for Vigo strongly emphasized they are aware that, if to summarize in words with Halit: "If you want to use the Application, you have to give it authorizations. Once you give them, you have no privacy anymore" (Halit, 33). Despite the couriers depict that they give authorizations, they have no further knowledge of what the Application is capable of doing. Except, Yusuf detected one thing as such: "The Application takes over the phone. When there is an order, it rings like a bomb. You cannot decrease the volume. You cannot do anything else on the phone until you accept the order" (Yusuf, 28). On the other hand, Emre developed a more profound interest in the issue. Since the courier is contracted, the company provided him the phone, which he was suspicious about:

> There is a system called MDM *(mobile device management)*. I researched it; it can be used for managing the device remotely. It can also receive ambient sounds, thus working as a voice recorder. Remotely, it can activate my camera… Sometimes we joke around with friends. They say be careful; they might be listening to you right now. They can control everything on the phone (Emre, 29).

After all, it can be concluded that the couriers have no specific information on authorizations and capabilities of applications they use on a daily basis. Therefore, reminding the discussion under the Algorithmic Management title in chapter five, it is observed that the Applications has 'black box' characteristics, which "uses a constant stream of location, speed and time data to maintain control of the labor process" (Cant, 146: 2020) while couriers are devoid of the basic knowledge on how their data is collected and have no specific knowledge on the ways they are used.

Under this subheading, the data collected from the interviews are analyzed around the emergent issues to identify the ways Algorithmic Management operates under each case for three platforms. In this sense, the findings from interviews with couriers pointed out some similarities and differences. It was observed that in the organization of worktimes, Trendyol and Yemeksepeti couriers had relatively more autonomy than Vigo couriers who deliver for Getir. Yet, in this sense, the involvement of the algorithm was more 'active' in Trendyol's case since the workers pick half-hour restricted slots and sign in by only encountering the Application and with no one else.

Secondly, the gamification of labor processes was discussed for each platform company. It appeared that with the use of a system such as adaptation scores, golden hours, and classifications such as diamond courier, all platforms present reward schemes. The determinants of these schemes were related to factors such as delivery speed, timely usage of buttons in the Application, and more. In Getir's case, it was observed that customer ratings were included in the reward schemes using coupons that are valued by the ratings. Yet, with those, couriers could only shop in the company's warehouses. It was also highlighted that the systems such as adaptation scores effectively prioritized couriers to pick work hours and, in Trendyol and Yemeksepeti cases appointing orders. In none of the cases were the couriers able to pick between packages. In all cases, algorithms could impose sanctions on couriers when they reject the appointed package. Moreover, algorithm's other capabilities in controlling each component of the labor process, such as GPS tracking and calculating the picking and delivery times, are highlighted. In the Trendyol Go case, it was observed how the Application also had the function of being an interface that gathers at least three different categories of workforces together. However, in other cases, a more hybrid model was observed. In Yemeksepeti's case, it was detected that the team leader appeared as the embodiment of several workforces with a wide scale of authority. Later, general remarks regarding Algorithmic Management were underlined, focusing majorly on comparing human related or traditional management and algorithmic and hybrid management experiences from the perspective of couriers. It was argued that the emphasis on freedom voiced by the interviewed couriers emerged from the comparisons they made with their old jobs. The study briefly focused on couriers' information on the application they use daily and their capacities. It was evident that except for some couriers being aware of authorizations given, majority have no specific information on how the software operates.

7.3. Wage and Pricing

This section addresses to specific issues related to Wage and Pricing practices brought about by the selected delivery platforms in Turkey. To explore this issue in a more precise manner, the theoretical background given under the chapter five is adopted. The following discussion develops around the arguments and statements from the

interviewees. They aim to question the issues such as speculative character the concept of wage gained, the gamification practices, and their relation to wage and payment schemes. The analysis of each component is based on the data collected from the interviews conducted with couriers from three different platform-based companies. For the analysis, the goal is to depict similarities and differences in light of the theoretical input and the unique occurrence of each component on company levels. Also, the emphasis on similarities is accompanied by the analysis of the implications of different strategies the companies adopt for each component. Since the subheadings in this chapter are not mutually exclusive and have direct or indirect connections to or overlap each other, cross-references to the previous sections, namely *Contract and Status* and *Algorithmic Management* are made. Chiefly, in the discussion of gamification, the usage of algorithms will be reminisced concerning reward schedules and more.

The first dynamic to discuss under the heading of wage and pricing is the character of the concept of "wage" acquired related to the platformization of courier job. It was discussed under the first section that, in accordance with the historical process and the evolution of labor markets into a more flexible character, the concept of wage transformed into "a speculative proposition" with "unspecified hours of unpaid work readiness" and "conditional on the achievement of performance indicators" (Cooper, 2012: 646, as cited in Doorn, 2020: 11). Accordingly, it was implied that platformization of work, i.e., the division of a job into tasks appeared as simultaneous phenomena, since the task-based work also inherited characteristics of what is named as conditional achievement and gig jobs. However, what appeared to be novel in the case of platforms is that the platforms are not conceiving, in this case, couriers as workers but rather as their business partners. In other words: as Shapiro (2019: 9) states "to the firm, on demand workers are not selling their labor, as classic Marxist political economists would have it…workers have a demand for work on the platform, just as customers have a need for the services those workers provide". Hence, the people working for platforms were mostly classified under the status of independent contractor, and in the case of this study as *esnaf* couriers. Under the of Contract and Status section, it is also highlighted that the *esnaf* couriers are classified as self-employed, which implies that they have relations to platforms on service providing the

basis, and their payments, contrary of fix wages, are determined by the services provided.

Amongst several factors to point out as consequences of this, one could be the metamorphosis of the concept of Wage for *esnaf* couriers regarding their employment situation. The categorization of *esnaf* couriers as self-employed indicates that the couriers are responsible for covering most of the labor costs themselves. These were defined as means of work such as vehicles, the maintenance costs of vehicles, vehicle fuel oil expenditures in the work process, insurance and income tax, and more. The costs couriers bear are not restricted to the essential components related to work; couriers are also observed to carry the load of daily expenses such as food. In other words: "the courier appears as selling him/her labor power, but also by paying the costs of the means to achieve the labour process," and thus the concept of wage in this case includes "'means of subsistence' – the stuff we buy with our wages to reproduce ourselves and our labour-power" (Cant, 2019, as cited in Woodcock, 2021: 67). Factors related to the transformation of wage from "full payment for the time they work in production" (Spencer, 2014: 29) to a total of several different dynamics that has to be calculated by the couriers themselves as a self-employed entrepreneur are observed in the case of the platforms included in this study. In that sense, it is grasped that the couriers had to almost think like accountants by calculating every dynamic that could directly affect the 'wages'. One side of the situation crystallizes in Kemal's words:

> It is per kilometer, one TL and eighty cents. We cannot earn from that part, because there was huge raise in oil prices… It is really too much. If you eat outside, you should eat at least two meals. You pay 100 TL only for daily meals, and minimum spend 100 TL for oil. Add 100 TL more for other expenses. You have 300 TL daily expense a day. Thus, you should work accordingly (Kemal, 24).

It was also voiced that the couriers are devoid of calculative tools due to the black box characteristics of platforms. Further, the words of the couriers illustrate how they are compelled to calculate each move in accordance with the notion that they are responsible for every component which will, in the end, form their wage. This, as expressed by Yusuf, could be even calculating minutes to decrease living costs:

> Let's suppose I wish to go home for a meal, and a ten-kilometer package is appointed to you. Going home and coming back takes 25 minutes in total. You have 20 minutes left. It is impossible to eat in 20 minutes, so you have to eat outside. I either eat at home, or there are these one or two restaurants I eat from. Once I was far away from them, I had to spend 110 Turkish liras to get full (Yusuf, 28).

Kemal's word points out the issue that the couriers also appear to be defenseless against contingencies. In the Turkish case, high inflation economic environment and constant raises in prices could be named as common contingencies to which the couriers are exposed. Apart from those, accidents also show up as a feared factor since the consequences for a courier, in terms of expenditures, could be severe. Halit summarizes the situation with his own example as follows:

> If I hit the vehicle, it gets irreversible damage. Then, to continue work, I have to rent a motor, a scooter type, which is not what I am used to riding. With that, I had five other accidents. I have six point five thousand Turkish lira damage for my own motor. The renting price of the scooter, adding the accident costs valued approximately the same. With these costs, I fall behind around three or four months. This kind of stuff troubles you. With that psychology, you are always distracted, calculating in your head, *accounting* (Halit, 33).

Under the *Contract and Status* section, it was already underlined how the couriers without young entrepreneur agreement tended not to pay their health insurances to save money. It was also added that one of the opportunities brought about by the self-employment status was that couriers could work for different companies simultaneously. Adding to these two dynamics, Emre and Tolga tell that there are couriers who also attempt to invent different ways to raise their income. Those ways include working a higher number of hours to save money and to invest the money in buying other vehicles to be rented to those who desire to work as *esnaf* couriers. In sum, it could be argued that the outsourcing of labor costs by platforms to their business partners, to *esnaf* couriers, have several results. One of the most critical consequences of outsourcing in the context of this section is the transformation of the notion of Wage into a speculative preposition, a notion that appears as an 'income' formed by several different components. Concerning this, it was pointed out how couriers could find themselves defenseless against contingencies. Moreover, it was

also argued how implications of self-employment in the sense of being responsible for each component shaping the wage could force couriers to calculate each aspect from food prices to eating minutes or accident costs. In short, the transformation of wage by platformization of work, especially by outsourcing labor costs, in this context appeared to create a form of a courier, who, while fulfilling the most basic dynamic of work (delivery) that each platform in the sample of this study relies upon, also must calculate each cost by their own and thus think as an accountant due to their self-employment status.

The transformation of the notion of Wage regarding the platformization of the courier job is not restricted to the dissolution of it into a cumulative income formed by several components. To understand the transformation more profoundly, it is convenient to analyse payment schemes and their distinctive implications. Despite the majority of the couriers in the sample of this study appear as self-employed, there were also contracted couriers directly employed by the platform, as mentioned already in the preceding sections. Thus, three different major payment schemes are detected from the interviews: (I) Piece-based payment, (II) Hour-based payment, and (III) fixed payments. While the first two were only observed on self-employment occasions, the last scheme is unique to the contracted couriers. The piece-based or package-based payment system are adopted by Trendyol Go and Yemeksepeti, while Getir is paying Vigo couriers based on hours worked. In the sample of this study, Yemeksepeti was also the only company that had contracted couriers. Although it is known that Getir also has a contracted courier workforce with fixed wages, it was not possible to reach them due to the reasons mentioned in the introduction. The interviews with Trendyol Go couriers displayed a compromise; the default starting price per package was detected as eight TL. Levent also adds that company pays one point eight TL per kilometer. Although the compromise is not witnessed in Vigo's case, the numbers given by couriers seem to converge. According to Halit, they are paid 30 TL per hour and six to eight TL per package; meanwhile, for Yusuf, the amount is 35 TL per hour and eight TL per package. In Yemeksepeti's case, both contracted couriers interviewed for this study stated that they agreed to be paid minimum wage, while Murat added that they were getting paid one TL per package. *Esnaf* couriers of Yemeksepeti also gave several different amounts, which converged around 18 TL.

While numbers can be indicators for the analysis of how the transformation of Wage quantitatively takes shape concerning payment schemes, the focus here is rather on other implications. First, it is evident in the *esnaf* couriers of both companies the trend of thinking as an accountant continued. As underlined above, while calculating the costs of several components, from insurance to vehicle maintenance or contingencies, the couriers also have to calculate the number of packages they have to deliver per day to gain a wage that can meet all the costs. In Trendyol Go's case, for Kemal, "considering daily costs…you have to deliver 35 to 40 packages to save the day" (Kemal, 24), while Levent states that "if we have three packages per hour, it is ideal because of decrease in business and abundance of couriers. Yet, it is satisfying to hit four in an hour to make it worth the effort" (Levent, 26). Meantime, *esnaf* couriers of Yemeksepeti appear to have a consensus on similar numbers. Yakup, with identical statements, underlines that they have to deliver at least 35 a day to make it worth the effort, while Bulut and Ali approximately agree on the same numbers. This implies that especially on flexible workdays when the demand is low, the couriers' work hours can go up to 12 to 13 hours in order to fulfill the delivery targets. This could "have a powerful effect on the behaviour of couriers who no can longer count on the security of an hourly wage" (Doorn, 2020: 12). Therefore, it could be stated that while calculating the effects of each component, the courier's 'faith' in piece-based payment scheme is also determined by some changeable factors such as daily demand, which could imply pressure to work more hours. Thus, the connotation of freedom and flexibility inherited in the piece-based *esnaf* couriers' case could also coincide with the words of Marx, who stated that "proletarians are doubly free; flexible to work or flexible to starve" (Marx: 1967, as cited in Cant, 2020: 136).

The hour-based payment schemes exhibit both similarities and differences with the piece-based system. Musa, a current Yemeksepeti courier who worked in all three companies, detects the difference: "In hour-based payment system, you do not speed off, you do not care about it that much" (Musa, 28). Although the courier was pointing out a vital difference, it was also highlighted under the *Algorithmic Management* section that the adaptation scores, determined by factors such as delivery times, were effective. It was also evident that the reduction in scores implied a decrease in income,

a ‘give away’ of reward offered by scores. Although the factors such as delivery time pressure could still be detected for the Vigo courier, it appears that the payment scheme can still shift the major focus from the number of packages delivered to working hours to be fulfilled. As Halit summarizes:

> Lately, the number of couriers increased, hence the number of people to be paid. In accordance, the company adopted the strategy that they send forms to couriers through which the courier notifies the company about the number of hours he wishes to work. You can work 8 hours… Let me tell you; the income you get after 8 hours or 10 hours of work does not compensate for the costs. If you are on this job to gain decent money at the end of the month, you should at least work more than 12 hours antlike without involving in any accidents (Halit, 33).

From the statements of the courier, it could be argued that a similar pressure concerning the self-employed couriers tends to continue in this case as well. Yet, since the major payment scheme differs, the courier’s form of ‘calculation’ also changes. It is evident that, contrary to piece-based paid *esnaf* couriers, the Vigo courier tends to calculate the decent wage he will get at the end of the month on the basis of the hours he should work. Lastly, a difference could also be depicted that, despite Musa’s statement that the hour-based paid couriers might face less speed pressure compared to piece-based paid couriers, there is another distinctive pressure the first type faces. It is evident that, in both cases of Yemeksepeti and Trendyol Go, while piece-based paid couriers are able to choose their working hours in a more flexible fashion, in an hour-based payment system, the company defines the shifts and hours. As also quoted in the Algorithmic Management section, Yusuf represents the situation as: “I am an *esnaf* courier.. right? So, I normally should be able to choose time slots by myself or have a day off. Here, this is not the case at all. Every day they send you a shift list. They say you will work 12 hours today. You will not leave one minute earlier”(Yusuf, 28). In sum, the lack of speed pressure might imply a lack of autonomy in selecting work hours; again, in Yusuf’s words: “they pester the life out of you because they pay on an hour-based system” (Yusuf, 28).

The last payment scheme is a fixed payment given to contracted couriers. It is evident in the contracted couriers’ case, as both of them stated, that they were getting paid a

minimum wage. Emre expresses that, before, the wages were higher, yet they are now fixed to a minimum. When asked, particularly despite earning minimum wage, the courier was delivering "15 packages in eight hours comfortably" (Emre, 29). Moreover, the courier strictly specifies that he is against the *esnaf* courier model because he believes that to meet their objectives, the couriers can "get tired, behave aggressively in traffic and thus result in bad situations such accident" (Emre, 29). Murat, a contracted Yemeksepeti courier, indicates that the minimum wage is not enough. Nonetheless, the courier, comparing the contracted model with the *esnaf* courier model, expresses that:

> *Esnaf* couriers were earning high, but for us, it was not a sustainable model. We both have assurances and fixed incomes… you cannot regulate the *esnaf* courier model since they are classified as private enterprises, which makes them work 15 to 16 hours and is also beneficial for companies… However, after this year, when the oil prices get very high, *esnaf* courier does not occur as a profitable model anymore…They do not gain so little but also not too much. There is no work but a lot of expenditures (Emre, 29).

It is noticeable that while both couriers find the minimum wage insufficient, they are against the *esnaf* courier model because it might pave the way for long working hours. The contracted couriers earn fixed wages defined beforehand. As also touched upon under *Contract and Status* section, what is determined is not only the wages of couriers. Despite getting paid minimum wage, it is evident from Murat's statements that the couriers are freed from the expenses such as the costs of a vehicle, maintenance, oil prices, insurance, and equipment costs. Therefore, despite having other struggles such as trying to meet living expenses with minimum wage, these couriers seem to be relatively more protected against contingencies such as the daily number of orders, accidents, oil prices, and more. Lastly, it could be depicted that the Wage in the context of the contracted courier model converges to a more 'traditional' type, rather than its appearance as a dissolved income made up of several components as inherited in the piece and hour-based payment models. In this sense, if wage and work "are bound together as one under capital… not only of ontological interest; it has a vital political valence, for the coherence between worker and wage is the ground from which so much struggle against capital has emerged" (Jones, 2021: 70), it could be argued that contracted couriers still have a ground to bargain or give rise to a

struggle related to the defined concept of wage, contrary to *esnaf* couriers who are perceived as individual business partners by the platform companies.

Other novel and critical issues related to the transformation of Wage in platformized courier work are the application of algorithmic management techniques and gamification practices. Under the Algorithmic Management section, the notions were discussed with the help of the findings from the interviews. In that sense, it was observed that the Turkish case and each company displayed unique features. Despite common features such as that the couriers could not choose between the appointed packages, it was observed how the application of algorithmic management and the gamification of work differed in detail throughout each company. The gamification practices were mainly linked to notions such as ratings, reward schemes, possible sanctions; classifications of couriers by the names of valuable elements (diamond, bronze) or implying strata (elite). Yet, naturally, possible outcomes of such practices were depicted. The intention here is to follow a similar approach, borrow the conceptual input and findings inherited thus far, and detect the possible outcomes of algorithmic management concerning the discussion on the transformation of Wage and the pricing mechanisms.

The first notion to identify is the level of determination that algorithms and gamification have on wages and pricing differentiates on a company basis. In the case of Vigo and Getir, the reward schemes, ratings, or bonus schemes appear less complicated than in the cases of Trendyol Go and Yemeksepeti. The adaptation scores are the primary algorithmic application that directly affects wage and pricing. It was discussed under *Algorithmic Management* section that adaptation scores are affected by several dynamics such as delivery time and acceptance of the appointed packages, signing off early, or not showing up at all. It was also underlined that the share of premiums and bonusses integrated into the adaptation score system consists of a good amount of the monthly income the courier receives (around 1000-1500 TL as agreed by the interviewed couriers) and thus cannot be easily renounced. Except for the kilometer bonusses and adaptation score premium, the Wage system shows relatively *fixed* characteristics compared to other companies discussed thus far. The phenomenon could be linked to the fact that the company (Getir/Vigo) works on the hour-based

payment system, which again implies a relatively more defined structure of work times and delivery processes. As pointed out, the hour-based payment scheme might indicate less pressure on delivery speed -which was also detected as a controversial argument by pointing out sanctions related to the company's algorithmic management system. In sum, it could be argued that in the case of Getir (Vigo), algorithmic management and gamification techniques are more visible with regards to management rather than payment schemes and wages since the company pays Vigo couriers on an hour-based system. It could also be argued that this could indicate a hybrid situation of traditional (contracted) and novel practices merge. Traditional, in the sense that the couriers work and get paid on an hourly basis, the company determines the time shifts and applies management through algorithms but novel in the sense that the couriers are classified as self-employed.

The examination of interviews conducted by Yemeksepeti's contracted couriers also shows that, despite not entirely, they are relatively less affected by gamification practices and the application of algorithmic management regarding Wage. Although indirectly, this indicates that payment schemes are related to algorithmic techniques. Whereby the payments have relatively more 'defined' characteristics, it appears that the process of 'gaining' income also has more rigid features. Therefore, it is to be underlined that the piece-based system appears the most suitable for detecting algorithms' involvement in specific manners. Following, what is witnessed in interviews with *esnaf* couriers who work with Yemeksepeti and Trendyol Go is that the situation regarding gamification displays a more complex character. Before depicting how, a distinction could be reminded to put forward a more explicit analysis. It was emphasized in the Algorithmic Management section that the gamification differs in the case of this study from the ones that offer "…a game-like experience in which couriers are constantly evaluating variable offers (substituting for set wages) intended to incentivise them to work" (Doorn, 2020:13). One vital difference was that in all cases included in this study, the couriers were not able to choose or evaluate variable offers, especially in case of packages. Rather, the couriers had to assess the monthly costs, the numbers of packages to be delivered, or the hours to be worked to meet those. The involvement of gamification or algorithmic techniques to incentivize

couriers to work also differentiates because the incentivization process, since couriers mostly cannot evaluate variable offers, operates more on bonus structures.

In Trendyol Go's case, Kemal states that there are weekly campaigns that could "raise per package price from eight to 22 TL" (Kemal, 24). The company also has extra kilometers and extra kilogram bonusses. As again in Kemal's words: "If you deliver a big order, you get two TL. I carried 500 TL valued order the last day… After six kilometers, you can get four TL…, and people with bigger bags get paid one TL more per package" (Kemal, 24). However, the picture appears much more complicated than that the courier draws. Levent's words straightforwardly show the 'extraordinary' bonus system that company adopts:

> The company gave 500 TL oil support to those who fulfilled 45 hours. Apart from that, we have daily bonuses integrated into the number of packages we deliver… The number of packages you get the bonusses are: 14, 18, 22, 27, 32, 37, 43, 49, 55, and 65. When you reach one of the numbers, the system notifies you. For instance, at 27, you have 155 TL bonuses. At 32, it raises to 200 TL… the longer you work, the more you earn…the bonusses increases with the number of packages you deliver. The graph goes upwards enduringly (Levent, 26).

Exponentially growing bonuses per package are not the only incentivizing attempt to make couriers work more. It was mentioned that the platform adopted a "golden hours" system when the demand was at peak levels, coinciding with approximately 30 hours a week. It was also underlined it was compulsory for couriers to fulfill 23 hours of 30 golden hours a week. The platform embraces a monetary incentive strategy to motivate couriers even more: "The golden hours have extra weekly bonusses. If you deliver packages within these 30 hours, suppose you delivered 40, you get a 60 TL bonus. For 55, you get 100 TL; for 70, you get 260 TL; for 81, you get 350 TL; for 100, you get 450 TL, and for 115, you get 500 TL" (Levent, 26).

The constantly growing character of bonuses confirms that the piece-based payment system suits better for the involvement of algorithm. It does, in a sense, that the company can divide the process into its tiniest component: the package. Following, it could be argued that this act of division makes it relatively easier for platforms to

operate calculative agencies of algorithms and thus implement the results by adding value or bonuses to each package accordingly. The detection of golden hours, i.e., surges by platform and adding extra bonuses that are distinctive from casual bonus structure could represent a good example of the process. Moreover, when the bonuses are classified under 'reward schemes', it brings the system closer to gamification. The courier, as observed in Levent's case, evaluates, and calculates all the possible rewards related to work. It is to be reminded that, in Trendyol Go's case, the couriers with better scores are able to pick the slots first, and the scores are affected by factors such as fast delivery. Therefore, it can be argued that the couriers could try to deliver faster and most packages as possible in a day to pick the best working hours, which are, as implied by the company, golden hours. The ones with the best 'scores' get to choose more of the golden hours (first reward) and thus possibly more bonuses (second reward) point to a highly gamified structure. Musa, a recent Yemeksepeti and old Trendyol Go courier, briefly confirms this: "In Trendyol, scores are highly important, which is a problem. In Getir, it is not that much of a deal since you get paid hourly. In Yemeksepeti, they are also important, but it is more important to be closer to the location" (Musa, 28).

The case of Yemeksepeti's *esnaf* couriers who get paid on a piece-based basis displays a similar structure. The first thing to remind could be the score system. It was also evident in the case of Yemeksepeti that couriers were subjected to a score system that was affected by factors such as signing in and off, delivery, and delivery acceptance times. Apart from algorithms' choice to assign the package to a courier with a better score, which could increase the chances of that courier to deliver more in a day, it is noticeable that the gamification and algorithmic applications also have a direct impact on the prices that couriers get per delivery. When asked particularly, Berat formulates the situation as:

> The money you get per package depends on your performance. There are diamond and golden couriers. Diamonds can get up to 21 TL per package. There are also weekly bonuses…they have the same system in Trendyol as well… Yemeksepeti also notifies you by saying that you can get an additional three TL per package at weekends when there is a campaign (Tolga, 23).

The courier also specifies that the prices accompany the decrease in scores. Yakup also points out that: "you have stars…for instance, sign-in time affects it. If you sign-in at the exact time you selected before, you can get an extra 40%. If you are classified under 1 star, you get one point two TL per package. If you are in the two-star category, you get zero point eight TL, and in three, you get zero point five TL more" (Yakup). In conclusion, a familiar structure for pricing is also observed in Yemeksepeti. The couriers are incentivized by bonusses. Further, adaptation scores that affect the assignment of packages by the algorithm and classification of couriers under stars and diamonds also imply a gamified work structure. This motivates couriers to attempt to reach reward schemes through algorithm by fulfilling specific requirements and become 'better' than other competitors.

In respect to novelties the platforms represent, another vital constituent related to the Wage discussion in light of the conceptual input in chapter five, is the pricing mechanisms. It is also conceptually mentioned that in the context of platformization, pricing algorithms turn wages "into a hyper-dependent variable whose process of determination is hidden as a trade secret" (Doorn, 2020: 11). To exhibit the novel feature of platforms regarding pricing, the concept of dynamic pricing was stressed in chapter five. Its practice was exemplified in the cases of Uber and Deliveroo. In Uber's case, it was outlined how the company can dynamically determine "in real-time how much a ride costs, based on the traffic situation in particular parts of the city" (Schmidt, 2017: 20) on the basis of data. In Deliveroo's case, the platform could detect the times of 'surges' when demand reaches peak levels. The surges might include heavy rain, a busy weekend, and more. At those times, "the bonuses offered by a surge varied, from an extra £0.50 or £1 per delivery to an extra £10 after you completed ten deliveries" (Cant, 2020: 138). In this line, interviews for this study intended to detect if Turkish delivery platform companies adopt similar strategies.

Above, Tolga mentioned a similar example to Deliveroo's case, where Yemeksepeti notifies the courier for an addition three TL per package at weekends in times of a promotional campaign; and Trendyol could also offer bonuses in 'golden hours' identified by the company. However, it observed that district-based and event-based (rain, etc.), real-time pricing is relatively less popular in the case of Turkish delivery

platofrms. In fact, apart from Emre, who also works for Trendyol to make a living, expresses that "Trendyol has weather condition bonuses. When it rains, the price per package raises from eight TL to nine point five TL" (Emre, 29). However, the words of two other couriers represent a controversy. Levent states that "there is no change in prices at any given circumstance" (Levent, 26), which Kemal also confirms. Yusuf expresses that Getir also has no such policy. Meanwhile, Yemeksepeti couriers Yakup and Berat clarify that the company does not change the prices on real-time bases on such occasions. In addition, almost all couriers agreed that none of the companies have district-based pricing policies. Except for two couriers, Tolga and Kemal were 'suspicious of' some companies might have offered better prices in Beşiktaş since the area is densely populated. Yet, this relies on no further evidence. In conclusion, contrary to examples such as Uber, there was no dynamic and real-time pricing detected for the companies examined in this study. Instead, it occurred that factors such as 'surges' were also observable in the case of Trendyol Go and Yemeksepeti. Yet, as depicted in Trendyol's example, instead of applying real-time pricing regarding surges, the company defines the hours in advance and thus operates with a more fixed strategy. From financial to managerial, there could be several aspects to answer the question of why platforms involved in this study do not apply dynamic pricing. Yet, one factor could be observed from the interviews. In the Deliveroo example, it is witnessed that dynamic pricing is primarily used to incentivize workers. Levent and Tolga state that the number of packages to be delivered increases in case of heavy weather conditions such as rain. It was also outlined several times that the growth in the sector resulted from the growth in the number of couriers. Tolga states that "the rainy weather serves us well. The demand is high while the number of couriers is low" (Tolga, 23). The words of the courier point out to a reverse fashion. While in the case of Deliveroo, the company calculates the prices and makes offerings, in the latter, the courier evaluates the situation as an advantage since. This might imply that the abundance in the number of couriers gives companies no apparent reason to 'incentivize' couriers under extreme circumstances whereby there could be some who are already willing to work and further perceive the situation as an 'advantage'.

The last point to mention regarding wage and pricing is the reach of couriers to calculative tools. Doorn states that "unequal distribution of access to calculative

equipment (e.g., analytics engines) and their inputs (i.e., data), which together minimize the calculative agency of gig workers trying to figure out whether a delivery or trip is worth their while" (2020: 14). Yet, it was emphasized several times that the packages are assigned to the couriers in all cases of this study, meaning that they had no access to an evaluation process related to the delivery of a package. Despite this, the interviewees were still asked if they had ideas about how the prices were calculated. Amongst 11, three of the couriers expressed that they had no idea, while seven others focused on wages. For instance, Musa stated that they are fixed to inflation, while Yakup said the company determines them. Bulut, an economics student, was interested in how the prices are calculated. He pointed out that "No, I do not know how the prices are calculated. Yet, I am curious of how much the company makes a profit; how the particular amount of money I earn from one package is calculated" (Bulut, 23).

In conclusion, the chapter explored the answer to questions specifically related to the operation of Wage and Pricing mechanisms in Turkish delivery platforms. By doing so, the framework provided in chapter five under the topic of wage and pricing was used. Consequently, how the concept of Wage transformed into a speculative proposition was analyzed. In that sense, on the basis of the field work for this study, it was analyzed how the notion of Wage turned into an income consisting of several components. Related to that, it was also discussed how each of these components is to be calculated by self-employed couriers as a result of outsourcing practices which paved the way for *esnaf* couriers to think as accountants simultaneously. Later, it was argued that it is convenient to examine payment structures to understand the transformation of Wage in given conceptual baggage. Following, the payment structures of companies were provided, and implications were outlined. It was seen that contracted and hourly paid couriers appeared more secure against contingencies. Whereby this implied that the hour-based payment appeared closer to traditional or contracted work on the basis of control despite the couriers remain self-employed. Then, it was portrayed that the couriers getting paid on a piece-based basis were more open to being exposed to algorithmic management and gamification practices. Accordingly, it was highlighted how *esnaf* couriers are affected by the reward schemes, namely bonus structures in the Turkish case. It was also evident that the

reward schemes were closely related to gamification practices such as collecting scores. Later, the pricing mechanisms, in contrast to examples of Uber and Deliveroo, were observed that the Turkish delivery platforms included in this study chose not to implement real-time or dynamic price techniques. Regarding this, it was underlined that one of the reasons could be the abundance couriers which might imply the nonexistence of the need for platforms to incentivize the couriers to work under 'surges' or extreme conditions. The last notion to briefly point out was the calculative agencies, which was observed that most couriers either have different ideas or none.

7.4. Workplace

The concept of the Workplace inherits a wide scale of connotations and thus could easily become a difficult concept to deal with. By underlining this critical restriction, in chapter five, the intention was to point out at least one or few facets of the transformation the concept altered. By taking the limits of this study into consideration, the transportation workers were shown as examples who sell change of location "as their product" (Harvey, 1999: 376, as cited in Silver, 2003). Moreover, it was added that these workers could occupy a unique place in the context intended to be discussed under the workplace topic since their workplace could be "the entire distribution network" (Silver, 2003: 100). By sticking to the same understanding, it was later argued that the delivery workers could have the same characteristics as transportation workers, since, as discussed under chapter five, the rise of e-commerce implied the rapid delivery of sold commodities. Therefore, the platforms also needed a smoothly functioning delivery system to achieve capital accumulation (Silver, 2003: 101). Thus far, the involvement of platformization in courier job was discussed under related but distinctive themes namely *Contract and Status*, *Algorithmic Management*, *Wage, and Pricing*. The factors stated above imply that despite converging the 'unique' example of transportation workers rather than a traditional practices, the platformization of work could still be inquired through the concept of Workplace in the case of delivery workers. What could be detected as a 'workplace' in that sense could be the warehouses. Therefore, by examining the findings from interviews conducted with couriers, this chapter attempts to detect the involvement or absence of

the workplace in the case of Turkish delivery platform couriers, and its implications on the couriers' working conditions and labor process.

From the field research, two majorly different schemes can be observed. While Trendyol Go and Vigo couriers who work for Getir, mentioned that they do not have any warehouses, Yemeksepeti operates through a warehouse. It should also be underlined that Getir functions in both ways, however, for the interviews it was not possible to reach the couriers who work in connection to warehouses. One of the impacts related to the warehouse appeared as the patterns of *socialization of couriers*. Apparently, non-existence of warehouse could imply a sense of loneliness for couriers. Vigo courier Yusuf complains that they are on the street for the entire time, around 12 hours, and even in some cases, restaurants keep them waiting outside, and Trendyol Go courier Kemal states that:

> There is no sociability inherited in the job's character. You are on your own, alone. If you have an intercom, you can listen to music. Or else you can bluster or say ridiculous stuff out loud. I, for instance, as a talkative person, get bored. I cannot speak much during work time. I have no chance of relief, resulting in an accumulation of huge energy inside. It evolves into ridiculous stuff afterward (Kemal, 24).

The courier's statements imply that the lack of a warehouse negatively impacts the courier's sociality. In the case where the couriers have a warehouse, namely for Yemeksepeti, the opposite of those feelings are confirmed. While Bulut expresses that "he is happy with the warehouse" (Bulut, 23) since he is in communication with people and does not feel alone, Ali also confirms him by saying that they can "gather around and have a chat when the demands are low" (Ali, 30).

The positive and negative effects of the warehouse on working conditions are not limited to opportunities to socialize. It appears that the socialization of couriers and the existence of warehouse have impacts on *solidarity practices* related to the work process. Musa, a recent courier of Yemeksepeti who worked for all three companies, states that: "If I fall down or make an accident, I have a lot of friends…If something happens to me, everyone is close" (Musa, 28). Meanwhile, Yusuf, a Vigo courier who experienced an accident first-hand, shares that when he had the accident: "Someone

was supposed to come. We are 200 people, and not one of them appeared. When I was working in the restaurant with 10 other couriers, if I had made an accident, seven of them were immediately able to help you. Here, we are 200, and not even one person arrived" (Yusuf, 28). The courier's comparison with restaurant work experience, which might also imply a 'workplace' appears insightful. However, it should also be remembered that the reason the couriers did not arrive for the help of Yusuf, other than 'lack of social connection' might be directly related to Algorithmic Management techniques since couriers when on active delivery, are tracked through the algorithm. Regarding the effects of a warehouse on working conditions with regards to sociality and solidarity, it was noticeable the Trendyol Go couriers found a compensation: Whatsapp groups. Kemal says, "We have our own Whatsapp groups, and we warn each other on those groups…At this location, the road is slippery, be careful. For your information, this location is dense; you can get more packages, come, etc., etc." (Kemal, 24). Meanwhile, another Trendyol Go courier, Levent, profoundly expresses that "a warehouse could have positive effects mentally since you can spend time or have fun there… we have a Whatsapp group with 15 to 20 people. Think it as in our minds, that group is the warehouse" (Levent, 26). Levent's words imply that the dissolution of the workplace in the platformization of work in delivery couriers' case could lead couriers to compensate digital or virtual places for the real ones.

The effects of the involvement of warehouses on the working conditions of couriers are also experienced on a more daily basis. In that sense, the existence of a warehouse could imply a safe place for couriers. Kemal points out that the conditions can get very harsh in winter, even if they are fully clothed. Under bad weather conditions such as rain and snow, the couriers working without a warehouse system do not have any place to use as a shelter or, to paraphrase Yusuf, use the toilet in need, eat, and more. Yakup and Ali stress that they have tea, coffee, and toilet provided inside the warehouses, while Musa adds that if you are a courier with no warehouse, "they won't allow you to use the toilet. Under bad weather circumstances, you have no place to go. Socially you have nothing…you cannot warm up when it is cold. If you get wet, you have no place to dry up, change, drink a tea" (Musa, 28). Although Emre makes statements on the problems of maintenance of warehouses, it appears that warehouses still give couriers relative advantages.

Subsequently, another advantage in this regard could be depicted in relation to *kilometer limitations*. In Trendyol Go's case, the couriers can either wait at crowded 'gathering points' for the chance to get a package, or they individually choose a place to wait for the next package. As stated in chapter five under Algorithmic Management subheading, since the algorithm assigns the orders to the nearest couriers; the couriers can change districts without limitations as they are not connected to one particular point. In Vigo's case, Halit states that the system detects a 'warehouse' for you that you can wait around. Yusuf expresses his experience with this virtual warehouse as such:

> I thought it was a real place like an office. They give you a number on the street. You go there and change your status to 'available' in the Application. When I went to the place the system assigned, I asked people from the building where the office is… They answered me that there was no physical office or warehouse there. I pulled someone from the street to ask and clarify the situation later. He said the warehouse is the beginning of the street itself, and that is it (Halit, 35)

As implied for the transportation workers, the workplace of delivery couriers was also close to what Silver defined as "the entire distribution network" (Silver, 2003: 100). It is also noticeable that couriers are actively moving according to algorithm's assignments within delivery times. The absence of warehouses, or the existence of virtual warehouses as in Vigo and Trendyol's case, therefore, might coincide with what Marx defined as "the annihilation of space by time" (Marx, 1973: 524 as cited in Moody, 2019), since the workplace of the couriers is defined by their mobility and time. Yet, despite Yemeksepeti's *esnaf* couriers can go to assigned places without having to return to the warehouse, the involvement of a 'real' place offers a distinctive feature of kilometer limitations. Again, Musa's words, who worked for all three companies, thus who can detect differences in this sense, might be helpful:

> My district is defined. I cannot go somewhere else. If something happens to me, everyone is close; I can get help, and I can even return to the warehouse by pushing the motorcycle in case of accident. For Trendyol, since you do not have any warehouses, you also do not have any districts. It is unknown where you will end up with or if you will become stranded. When the weather is bad, you might not be able to call any help (Musa, 28).

Nonetheless, the involvement of warehouses does not only suggest restrictions in kilometers. A warehouse could also imply a set of *boundaries linked to management*. The linkage between the warehouse and algorithmic management was discussed previously, referring to Cant's inspiring work. The scholar, while discussing the application of Algorithmic Management related to the workplace in food delivery case, argues that: "The form of organisation of labor that predominates in non-platform courier work involves human dispatchers operating from a central depot and co-ordinating a fleet of couriers through radio communications" (Bossen, 2012 cited in Cant, 143: 2020:). It is essential to remind that scholar also appeals to another helpful distinction between "warehouse management systems (WMS) and transport management systems (TMS)" (Nettsträter et al., 2015 as cited in Cant: 2020). By following the distinction, Cant claimed that in Deliveroo's case, the distinguishing features between the two management systems disappeared. Thus, the algorithms' involvement implied a new system inherited elements from both "from warehouse management comes order processing, release, retrieval and picking. From transport management comes order management, scheduling, transport planning/optimisation, tracking and tracing" (Cant, 145: 2020). Adding to the consecutive arguments, scholar also emphasizes the "co-management of warehousing and transport is no longer human-led, but algorithmic" (Cant, 145: 2020). Here, the intention is to inquire if 'the human dispatchers' exist in any of the cases of this study and try to underline if any cases converge to the new model where two systems of management related to the workplace come together through the involvement of the algorithm.

Kemal's words could serve as a convenient starting point for the exploration. The courier, despite boldly underlining the disadvantages of not having any warehouse, stresses that he is not sure if "the couriers want to have a warehouse or not…You are more relaxed in this system. You are on the street. If you want to meet someone, you can go meet them. *Warehouse means responsibility*. Someone has to be responsible for it" (Kemal, 24). As discussed in the *Algorithmic Management* section, the courier's words are accurate; Yemeksepeti, the only company in this study with Warehouses, has team leaders to lead the operation of the workplaces. As also strongly emphasized, contrary to Trendyol Go's case, it was seen that the team leaders appeared as an

embodiment of a wide scale of authority contrary to other companies. These authorities included solving problems related to restaurants; following late sign-ins and absenteeism; shortening or extension of work shifts through the application; dealing with accidents; tracking the couriers' location and calling them in case of delay; giving 'a technical break' to the couriers if there is a problem with the vehicle. To paraphrase the information provided by Emre, the team leaders mostly spend their time at warehouses or somewhere close. Murat transfer that in some cases, the team leader can put speed pressure on couriers, yet it is controversial whether or not the case could be generalized. If to discuss the matter with the framework Cant provides, several factors could be pointed out. It is noticeable in the case of Yemeksepeti that the two management systems related to the workplace are co-managed. However, it is highly controversial if this co-management is no longer human-led but algorithmic. In Yemeksepeti's case, it is perceived that the team leaders occupy a place as a figure who carries authority on both warehouse management (order processing, picking) and transport management (tracking and tracing). Despite the fact that it is true that all of the co-management processes happen through the algorithm, it is also clearly observable that the team leader has an initiative in the usage of algorithm as extending shifts and giving breaks to couriers through the Application. Therefore, it could be concluded that the algorithm, in this unique case, did not entirely bypass the human-dispatchers operating from a central depot and coordinate a fleet of couriers through radio communications; yet transformed in its character. It was stated under the *Algorithmic Management* section that it was possible to speak with a team leader, who was not included in the study's sample. During this conversation, it was observed that the team-leaders phone did not stop ringing, not even for a second. This implies that rather than a dispatcher, the team leader appears as an organizer who coordinates a fleet of couriers. The co-ordination, contrary to what Cant states, does not process through radio communication, but through the Application. In conclusion, it could be argued that in the unique case of Yemeksepeti, the co-management does not operate merely through the algorithm but through a team leader who appears as a transformed version of 'the human dispatcher' by the involvement of the algorithm. The co-ordination practice also involves a workforce who works inside and fulfills the picking action, yet these employees are beyond the boundaries of this study.

The other two platforms do not operate through a warehouse system. In Vigo's case, it was evident that there was a supervisor. Yet, rather than being responsible for one or several warehouses, the supervisors were responsible for certain districts, which differed from the team leader's case regarding reachability and involvement levels. In Trendyol Go's case, it was observed that the algorithm was also functioning as a 'virtual place' where several workforces could come together. Since the warehouse is absent in both cases, one cannot detect a co-management practice. The absence of warehouse-related co-management practices and a human mediator as a unique case of team-leader in Yemeksepeti might imply the involvement of algorithm more in these two cases. Apart from all, Levent, a Trendyol Go courier, touches upon a compelling issue that:

> When companies such as Yemeksepeti and Getir open warehouses, it affects the small business owners. Trendyol is a mere mediator… This allows an income for both small business owners and couriers. In that sense, the warehouse is a move that broke the chains on a social level (Levent, 26).

The words of the courier imply that further research could be necessary on the effects of warehouses on the Turkish economy, considering the growth of delivery platforms and their financial capabilities to invest in or affect several different areas.

In this chapter, the attempt was to discover the effects of the involvement of workplaces, i.e., warehouses, on platform-based courier job. The first question to inquire was to see if the workplaces had any impact on the socialization practices of couriers. It appeared that the couriers working through warehouse system had a more positive approach to the workplace regarding sociality; meanwhile, the couriers without warehouses could suffer from adverse effects such as loneliness. Nonetheless, the negative effects were not only emotional. It was noticeable that a warehouse implied a 'safe place' for couriers in extreme weather conditions. It was also apparent that related the factors such as the strengthening effect of the workplace on the connection between couriers and closeness by distance implied safety for couriers in case of emergencies such as accidents. Since the direct interaction in the workplace could indicate the share of information on work process (road situations, dense areas with more packages, etc.), it was noticeable that Trendyol Go couriers used Whatsapp

groups as compensation. These groups served as 'virtual warehouses' to share knowledge and build connections. Moreover, it appeared in Vigo, thus Getir's case, that the company actually assigns pseudo, digital warehouses to the couriers on actual streets. The two cases were linked to what Marx stated as "the annihilation of space by time" (Marx, 1973: 524, as cited in Moody, 2019) in the sense that the mobility of couriers, thus the distribution network, appeared as the defining workplace practice of couriers rather than real places such as warehouses. Later, it was underlined that the restrictions offered by warehouses included kilometer limits, which could also be advantageous for couriers. The relative advantages of delivering packages in a restricted area were availability to master the district and accessibleness in situations such as accidents. Contrary to the case a warehouse is involved, it was noticed that in Trendyol Go's case, couriers could go long distances where they possess no knowledge of the streets, or in Vigo's case, nobody appeared for help case of an emergency situation such as an accident. Following the limitations, another discussion was presented: the involvement of human based management in the warehouse. In that sense, it was depicted how the platformization of the courier job transformed the 'human dispatcher' into the team leader who operates through algorithm. It was also evident that the team leader had a strong initiative and broad authority despite the fundamental components of the delivery process happening through the algorithm. Later, it was argued that the absence of warehouses in the other two cases might imply the involvement of algorithm more in delivery operation, and Trendyol Go's Application was shown as a virtual place where several workforces could gather. Lastly, by following Levent's words, it was pointed out that the warehouses could also have effects on small business owners. Regarding the financial capacity of delivery platforms and their ability to impact several sectors, it was underlined that the results of warehouses on the Turkish economy might necessitate further research.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to inquire the effects of platformization on the labor process and working conditions of the courier job. One of the main ideas that sparked the inquiry was the importance of the concept of delivery. The early forms of the concept displayed why the delivery workers, as the ones connecting trade routes and delivering goods were always in demand (Cole&Hart, 2018: 558-560). It is also well-known that concepts of transportation and delivery could carry many connotations in different contexts. Amongst these, the metamorphosis of the practice as a job bore particular importance. The courier job, as one of the last shapes the delivery work gained alongside the historical process, is chosen to specify the border of the study. This highlighted a critical point that the concept is integrated into labor processes and labor markets. Consequently, the argument is followed by the premise that both concepts are related to the historical development of capitalism and its accumulation strategies. Finally, the study embraced the perception that the concept of delivery could not be understood without the historical progress of capitalism since it is integrated into the system profoundly, especially in the context of platform capitalism.

Subsequently, to make a better sense of the platformization of the courier job, the historical and conducive periodization of Huws (2014), which consists of four stages, was borrowed. These periods were discussed under three subheadings: *The Welfare State Capitalism, The Collapse,* and the *Emergence of Platform Capitalism*. The first period was marked by the Fordist strategy, which relied on both mass production and consumption (Harvey, 1990: 126). Achieving this strategy required the involvement of regulation to set rules between labor and capital. During this era, the character of the labor markets was defined as rigid in the sense of certainty in job structure, working hours, waged labor, and trade unionism (Harvey, 1990). It was also emphasized that

the mass consumption depended upon "new transportation and communication networks for the distribution of goods and the acquisition of raw materials" (Riddle, 1986; Hartwell, 1973 as cited in Silver, 2003: 97). This indicated that the transportation and delivery workers occupied an important place in the era of Welfare Capitalism. Nonetheless, the descension of US based manufacturing system entailed trends such as deindustrialization and marked the end of this era. More importantly, capitalism, which is a growth-based system (Harvey, 1990: 165), paved the way for the abandonment of preceding strategies inherited by Fordism, which started to appear as non-profitable. The capital's movement to expand to more profitable areas resulted with factors such as the birth of multi-national companies, the dissolution of rigid labor markets (thus related dynamics such as trade unionism and more), deregulation, and relocation of labor centers into places where labor costs are lower. The relocation of production centers also implied the displacement of workers from manufacturing (Harvey, 1990: 141) into a new rising paradigm named services. In the 1990s, upon the collapse of both the Soviet Union and the welfare state, the trends of deregulation and seeking new ways for profitability continued. Cutting labor costs was one of the prominent strategies of the era, which entailed implementing control over labor forces and processes. The ways this occurred were widely discussed in the second chapter. Another turning point in this historical process was the shift from mass production strategy to on-demand or need-based production. Dispersion of welfare state and flexibilization lead to "logistics revolution", which has emerged on the basis of "chronic problem of the capitalist system, namely, the disjuncture between production and distribution, or supply and demand" (Bonanich&Wilson, 2008: 3). In an ecosystem where factors such as the expansion of capital and trade and a more individualized production gained pace, logistics, constant and quicker circulation, and delivery of goods continued to occupy a vital place for capitalist growth. The ever-changing character of production indicated a power shift from manufacturing to retail since the latter was in reach to more knowledge of consumer needs. The power held by the retail sector is reflected as quick production and delivery related to demand. Considering the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the following period led to possibilities of rapid growth and thus the emergence of new multinational companies. The use of new technologies in production and rapid deliveries pioneered by Walmart built the ground for other incoming tech companies

such as Amazon. This new capitalist formation had considerable impacts on labor markets and was later associated with the birth of platform capitalism.

Yet, before drawing a detailed sketch of platform capitalism, it was also necessary to profoundly depict the shifts in labor markets and processes. The background provided in the previous chapter displayed that capitalism is a growth and profit-oriented system. Yet, the ways in which the system develops strategies against the crises it faces differed. Subsequently, the involvement of technology in labor processes and markets stepped further for the framework this study aims to discuss. Silver (2003) named three other strategies, or fixes observed other than technological fix: spatial, product, and financial. Although all four fixes could be linked in a more holistic approach; the technological fix offered a more helpful approach analytical wise. The definition of the concept as "efforts to deal with the crises of profitability and labor control by introducing major changes in the organization of production and labor process" (Silver, 2003: 39) provides possibilities for a more complete analysis of platforms rather than dealing with them as mere technological products. In other words, the concept offers an exit door from understanding technological developments such as platforms in an isolated sense. Instead, it offers an approach related to profitability, labor control, and changes in organization of labor process. These three themes were constituent elements to understand the platformization of the courier job later under the third chapter, where the attempt was to make sense of how each occurred in platform related courier job by presenting novelties. Nonetheless, before this examination, it was necessary to develop a deeper theoretical framework to detect the historical roots of the ground digital platforms operate. Accordingly, Harry Braverman's coinciding approach with what the concept of technological fix offered to capture was the reason that several fundamental arguments of theoretician were inherited. Following, the historical progress of division of labor processes into tiny calculatable components was sketched. Chiefly, as Braverman (1998) argued, Taylorism's role was vital in the process. Later, referring back to this discussion, it is also illustrated how digital platforms used Tayloristic techniques with the involvement of digital technologies. The Tayloristic techniques, in that sense, resulted in the standardization of labor. This indicated that the improvements in 'scientific management' techniques and participation of technology resulted in the deskillization

of labor. The deskillization of labor hinted at the disposable character of a massive labor force, which accompanied the growth of what Marx (1998) defined as the surplus populations. Later, the process of the displacement and replacement, thus the absorption of these populations from 'dying' sector into new profitable ones was emphasized. Relatedly, the study argued that, especially in Turkish context, platform-based courier job was the last chain of this absorption process. In simpler words, the process provided strong insights for the argument that the operation of platforms relies on 'on demand' deskilled populations. Successively, it was underlined that the deskillization progress was also accompanied by upskilling trends, which created segmentations between labor markets named internal and external. While the upskilled workforces that meet the needs of the skill requirements of rising sectors were defined as 'internal; deskilled surplus populations could be depicted as the latter. Arguably, this was also detected as one of the basic components of the operation of platforms. They can hire a few 'core workers' and outsource other processes which require less skill to the 'external' workforce such as couriers. The womb of outsourcing practices was the standardization of labor which allowed remote control of labor processes and assignment of each tiny component to different workforces. The outsourcing practices further signified an erosion and intertwining of several sectors and, as Huws (2014) argued, allowed multinational companies to provide services on an outsourcing basis. All in all, the standardization, atomization, and codification of labor processes implied a reconstructing of the concept of work itself inside a new ecosystem, namely platform capitalism.

After determining the theoretical and historical basis, the discussion continued with the exploration of business model the thesis intended to discuss as a primary goal. *The Rise of Platforms* chapter, thus, intends to draw a wide portray of the novel historical phenomenon. For that purpose, a glance at early historical events that directly impacted the emergence of platforms was taken. The rise and the burst of the dot.com balloon stepped forward as the most crucial event since it left behind a powerful digital infrastructure. The chain of events also suggests a crisis in capitalist development, a crisis that forced the system to find new profitable areas or tools. The new raw material, namely data, indicated a shift in the business model - rather than just selling a product, seizing the information on how it is used gained importance inside a context

where recording activities were relatively easy and costless. The new raw material also carried the characteristics that it could be used in almost any sector with a wide scale of utilization. Inside this context, "The platform has emerged as a new business model, capable of extracting and controlling immense amounts of data" (Srnicek, 2017: 11-12). The emergence of the new model pointed to a rising trend in economics that had been named in several ways but popularly is called platform economy or platform capitalism. Yet, the scheme the concept offered was quite complex since the usage of platforms differed on a sectoral or operational basis. Despite the differences, a common feature was observed: platforms operated on a triangular basis consisting of supply, demand (users or contractors), and platform as an interface. The triangular business model allowed platforms to function with the claim of neutrality. Platforms, while presenting themselves as mediators with the form of software interface were now able to extract data from both sides. The mediator argument allowed platforms to pioneer new outsourcing practices by engaging with a portion of workforce as business partners or independent contractors. The neutrality, outsourcing, and low costs also suggested rapid growth. Although the triangular model was detected as a common operational aspect, platforms differentiated significantly amongst themselves. While web-based platforms relied on cloud work, location-based platforms mostly functioned by gig work. Nonetheless, it was argued that one of the most crucial aspects of platform work was its task based character. The division of jobs into tiny components named tasks was apparent in all examples, despite the skills required for those tasks could differ. The classification of platforms was also made on other layers. The lean platforms appeared as one which aimed at rapid growth by outsourcing every component and remaining assetless. With the examples of Uber and Airbnb, it was underlined how effective this model could be and show up as pioneering examples also for delivery platforms in Turkey. These platforms were backed by venture capital financially, which indicated a novel growth strategy and remained examples of costless growth. Following the classifications, it was argued that gig work and location-based platforms were the most effective for certain reasons. The operation of these platforms on real life basis with the requirement for a person to show up pointed out that their effects on labor markets could be much more visible compared to web-based counterparts.

The argument, later, proceeds to the point that delivery platforms possess more means to create visible impacts compared to other location-based platforms based on accommodation and personal services. Delivery platforms have the capacity to function in different sectors from technology to logistics, manufacturing to e-commerce. Further, it is argued that the constant circulation and delivery of goods occupies a vital place in the historical development of capitalism and the system's current strategy, which also operates through platforms. In that sense, delivery platforms represented the last chain of this development by offering on-demand delivery services to their consumers. The case also provides opportunities to conduct the research on the issue that if platforms, apart from being profit tools that extract data, also create severe impacts on labor processes. In that sense, the platform-based delivery courier workforce was the ideal agency to inquire on since they were assigned to accomplish only a specific component of the process, delivery of goods as task providing. Even though the workforce possibly fulfills the most fundamental element of the complete operation, they appear to be devoid of information on the operation of the other components of labor process; meanwhile, the platforms could possess all the knowledge but still distance themselves from the process by outsourcing practices. Furthermore, the delivery platforms displayed a fine example of rapid growth with a high number of users, thus having a grip on a considerable amount of data.

In the Turkish context, the COVID-19 pandemic context stood out as a milestone by sparking massive growth in the e-commerce sector. The advancement of numbers in online purchasing implied a need for a workforce to deliver purchased goods which reflected itself in the growth of employment numbers in courier job. Regarding the factors such as rapid growth by attracting venture capital, size of delivery operation, and creating pioneering practices in the Turkish labor market in relation to the digital economy, three platforms are identified as the context for the study's research sample: Yemeksepeti, Getir, and Trendyol. After introducing each company's brief history, it is stated that each company relies acutely on delivery operations. Moreover, platforms meet at the common ground of reshaping labor processes and organization of labor concerning courier job for the sake of profit, thus exhibiting suitable features to be examined.

To detect the real time effects and the novelties of delivery based platform work, several components are identified from the literature review to be used as operational tools. Each component is depicted to deepen the discussion on the argument that platforms are not solely a solution to capitalism's historical profitability crisis as new business model that data is extracted. Platforms are also novel in transforming and organizing the component related to the labor processes as the concept of technological fix argues. In other words, they also represent pioneering practices on "labor control by introducing major changes in the organization of production and labor process" (Silver, 2003: 39). Therefore, the themes are detected with the assumption that they stand out as the most explanatory ones for the novelties displayed by platforms with regards to the changes in the organization of labor processes related to profitability and growth. These themes are *Contract and Status*, *Algorithmic Management*, *Wage and Pricing*, and *Workplace*.

Under the theme of *Contract and Status*, a brief historical journey of the notion of the contract was presented. This showed that contracts have changed in shape along with the involvement of the trend of the flexibility into labor markets. Moreover, it is witnessed that instead of flexible contracts which could still include particular legal and work related boundaries, the platforms brought in and attempted to use the 'terms and conditions' which only define the borders between the platform and individual partaker. It is highly controversial if terms and conditions could be defined as contracts since they merely operate on 'agree or deny' basis, mostly ticked through the platform interface. The given examples showed that the terms and conditions differ from the contracts in the sense that the partakers are not considered as employees by the platforms, but they are classified as independent contractors. Compared to the examples given worldwide, the analysis regarding contract and status indicated that the Turkish context portrays more complex characteristics. The first finding was that Turkish context and the sample of the thesis included both contracted and independent contractor statuses, which steps further as a unique feature. The status and working conditions of contracted couriers converge more to 'traditional' employment classification since they are subjected to the Labor Act which the latter, self-employed couriers, are not bounded with. When compared, it is observed that couriers with fixed contracts possess a better legal ground to operate on and more regulated working

conditions. Another unique finding is that the courier job, particularly after the pandemic, functioned as a 'waiting room'. The notion implies that people from diverse job backgrounds have chosen courier job as economic compensation as a rising trend since the entry requirements are very low. Apart from few examples, it is observed that the job backgrounds of couriers included in this study do not require specific occupational training. Therefore, the rise in courier job suggests that, in line with the displacement and replacement process, the platform-based delivery work in Turkey absorbs deskilled, surplus labor populations. With reference to the discussion on segmentation in labor markets, it could also be asserted that one of the growth strategies of the platforms is to operate with a core workforce while outsourcing the delivery practice to these populations. Turkish context appears to be also unique in phenomenon of the emergence of mediator companies. Despite the process could be achieved individually, there are 'subcontractor' companies providing services to individuals who desire to become self-employed couriers. The emergence of these companies could be depicted as the result of the massive displacement of workforce from different jobs to courier work. Mediator companies offer effortless and quick entry to the job by providing basic services to the couriers, which allows them to become popular easily and get in touch with considerable potential courier population. Thereby, they also offer a quick reach to a self-employed workforce for delivery platforms, which makes both parties apply to mediator companies. The mass formation of relatively new courier workforce could also shed a light on the issue of contracts. The mass absorption implies mostly ready-made, self-employment 'contracts' which appear to carry biased characteristics. While the terms and conditions connotates 'individual partaking through the application', the self-employment agreements in Turkish context are perceived as just another flexible contract by the workforce. Therefore, it is evident that self-employed couriers possess either little knowledge on the content of contracts or they have not read it at all. This unwillingness points out to the fact that the involvement to the platform-based delivery job in Turkey happens almost in 'compulsory' fashion rather than individual choices. Besides, the couriers sign physical contracts rather than 'agreeing' terms on Application, which also might refer to continuation of traditional practices in Turkish platforms case. Finally, platforms' attempt to distinguish themselves from labor costs by outsourcing almost every means and component of labor process proves their intention to operate on an

assetless basis. The scheme in total indicates that all three platforms seek to grow and profit by outsourcing practices, and for that purpose, the self-employment status is popularly preferred. The status is also open to debate since examples from several court decisions around the world highlighted that the platforms tend to create dependencies and implement control as employers. To conclude, platforms generate severe impacts on the organization of labor processes by reshaping fundamental components such as *Contract and Status*. The reshaping processes could also open a path to relatively costless and rapid growth by easing outsourcing practices oriented to deskilled and mostly unemployed workforce. The novelties platforms offer regarding the discussion mostly occur as continuation of the flexibilization trend in labor markets, which results in more precarious working conditions and thus asymmetrically creates benefits to one side.

The second theme, *Algorithmic Management*, stepped forward as the most comprehensive one, along with the fact that the function of platforms depends upon algorithmic methods. The evaluation was on how platforms can direct or manipulate their contractors with the introduction of digital capabilities. It appeared that the use of digital methods indicated control over complete labor process through practices such as real time tracking, providing workers only necessary information one step at a time and more. It was evident that couriers were tracked by the platforms most of the time, and including the delivery routes, they had no particular control over the labor process. In Turkish context, it is depicted that the use of algorithmic techniques occurs in more strict and organized fashion. The packages are assigned to the couriers by algorithm in each case, and contrary to examples given in chapter five, the couriers mostly have no choice but to accept the assigned packages. This, in line with the basic principles of Taylorism, points out to the standardization of labor processes and degradation of couriers into mere task providers. It is observed that apart from contracted couriers that work with defined hours, self-employed couriers have a relative freedom in cases of Yemeksepeti and Trendyol, while Vigo's shifts are defined and recommended by the company. Couriers theoretically can sign in or off by their will, but they have to consider certain risks, i.e., possible sanctions. This points out to the fact that the delivery platforms, by tracking real time activities, delivery times and shifts of couriers, use algorithms to impose sanctions on couriers. In other words,

algorithm's management functions could include imposing sanctions by blocking slot times, cutting bonuses, and even terminating contracts. Also in relation to this function, structures such as adaptation scores determined by factors such as picking time, return time, consumer ratings also indicate a high level of algorithmic control. These phenomena underline the power asymmetry between parties. The power asymmetry exhibits that the platforms do not operate simply as mediators. On the contrary, they tend to create dependent relations with the contractors, or their business partners with the involvement of digital techniques. It was observable that the gamification practices also served the very purpose. Ratings and medal systems provided important insights of the scale of the effects caused by algorithmic control. It is underlined that the most prominent of these effects were being able to choose the best working hours and assignment of the packages first to the couriers with the best ratings. This put platform contractors into the condition of an accountant who must calculate each move while providing tasks. Further, it also implies pressure of fast delivery times and a possible race between couriers, which could create drastic consequences.

The analysis regarding involvement of algorithm revealed another unique feature of Turkish context. Firstly, it is witnessed that the levels of involvement differ in each company. Trendyol's operation appeared more open to exposure to algorithms, and the company's application operated as a virtual place that gathers several workforces together. Meanwhile, Getir's operation leaned towards the fixed shift-based structure, the company still had supervisors inspecting the field. Yemeksepeti's case is the most hybrid model since the company works with team leaders who are directly reachable by couriers and possess broad operational authority. This suggest that platforms are not willing to abandon human management practices at once while dealing with a massive workforce with different occupational backgrounds. Another finding was related to the perception of freedom regarding being managed. When particularly asked, it was observed that most of the couriers felt more freedom in delivery work. Couriers, however, were also able to depict dependencies of the platform-based courier job present. This implied that the job does not simply provide freedom to couriers, but provide more autonomy compared to their old jobs. By referring to the concept of 'waiting room' which indicated the selection of courier job as economic

compensation; this relative freedom was named as 'hiding room' where couriers hide from the human management applications they experienced in their old jobs. The concept of hiding room, therefore, points out to strict management applications in Turkish labor markets. The last point focused on the authorizations that the Applications have. It was noticeable that, except for a few, most of the couriers had no specific knowledge on if the applications were able to track them in their daily lives or which data they were capable of extracting. Nonetheless, the information given by a few couriers pointed out that applications have a wide range of authority from blocking other phones' activities when a package is assigned to recording ambient sounds. This suggests that couriers as a workforce who fulfill one of the most essential parts of the process, do not possess the knowledge on another fundamental component of the operation: collection of the data. In summary, the findings related to algorithmic management indicated that Turkish delivery platforms present novel management techniques operating through algorithms. However, it was also observed that platforms offer a more restricted structure to their contracted and independent couriers regarding selecting shifts and packages. What appears as distinctive in the Turkish case is the control implemented over couriers is quite high, especially compared to the examples given in chapter five. This indicates that platforms, while outsourcing labor costs by operating through self-employed status, can also impose high level of control over the labor process as in traditional employment relations by also using algorithmic and hybrid management methods together.

Thirdly, the focus was shifted towards the historical path the concept of *Wage* followed. Similar to the discussion on contract, it appeared that flexibilities also transformed the notion of wage to a more speculative form. To understand the changes in Wage's characteristics, first, the analysis of each company's payment schemes was presented. The schemes showed that hourly-based and fixed payments (although they could result in tighter controls) can provide a relatively safe ground for couriers compared to piece-based payment, in which couriers have to calculate the number of packages they deliver per day to earn a decent income. This also implied that piece-based payment schemes are more open to exposure of gamification techniques since platforms, could easily calculate on and change prices of the tiniest component, named packages. By collecting tokens, the platform contractor collects income sources by

providing each task and calculating each cost and risk included in the labor process. Gamification practices operated through algorithmic techniques, whereas couriers with the best ratings or star classifications could get assigned to the packages first, pick the golden hours when they can deliver more, and earn extra money per package. The gamification of labor processes along with piece-based payment structure further indicate that couriers, almost as accountants, are responsible of calculation of each cost included in work whereby inquiry showed that the couriers are devoid of calculative agencies on how their incomes or per package delivery prices are determined. This by causing choices such as not paying health insurances, could easily put couriers in defenseless position against contingent factors such as accidents. Therefore, these practices could result in breeding flexible and precarious working conditions and creation of more deregulated job practice. Along with gamification practices, it was also observed that algorithmic applications encourage contractors to work more. The pricing mechanisms and bonus structures were the major component of this strategy. Companies such as Yemeksepeti and Trendyol might change pricing mechanisms according to surge hours to incentivize couriers more. Nonetheless, it was detected that the companies mostly do not use dynamic-pricing mechanisms, as seen in Uber's case. Turkish delivery platforms do not offer real time determined extra Turkish Liras per package in extreme weather conditions or orient couriers to districts where demand is low. It could be asserted that this is linked to mass and precarious character of courier job in Turkey, where platforms would be able to find couriers to deliver packages under almost any circumstance. Some couriers' perception towards extreme conditions as an advantageous situation to deliver more packages supports the argument. In total, the analysis on wage and pricing displayed that the platforms are able to mobilize a workforce with self-employed status while imposing high levels of control over them through algorithm, exclude labor costs -which form the 'wage'- and responsibilities to couriers, and introduce stimulating pricing practices at the same time.

The last theme, *Workplace*, bears a vast number of connotations. Thereby, the discussion is primarily restricted to the workers whose workplaces are the distribution network. As one of the cases, in the instance of delivery couriers, it was observed that the involvement of warehouses could imply severe changes in the organization of labor

processes. First, the couriers with warehouses were able to construct stronger social relations, which could result in high levels of solidarity in extreme conditions. It was also noticeable that the warehouses served as safe places where couriers could take shelter under extreme weather conditions. The lack of warehouses resulted in virtual communication networks or artificial warehouses where couriers could gather and share information on work. The involvement of warehouses also meant a limitation in the kilometer range that couriers could deliver; thus, the existence of warehouses meant certain districts and kilometer restraints. The feature presented a relative advantage for the couriers of delivering in a known area. The limitations inherited by the involvement of a warehouse were also apparent in changes in management techniques. A warehouse is led and organized by a team leader with broad authority and the capability to use the Application on his own initiative. In that sense, it is observed that Yemeksepeti's case evolved the idea of a human dispatcher into the team leader regarding the platform work. When compared, it could be also argued that the disappearance of the workplace and emphasis on mobility was an apparent feature of platforms operating without warehouses, while cases with warehouses meant more regulated labor processes and involvement of human related management applications. To conclude, it is argued that platformization of the courier job could mean the destruction of the concept of the workplace, transformation of it into virtual software, and thus transformation of it completely to the distribution networks. In the case where warehouses are included, it is also observed that platformization implied a change in characteristics of it from "a central depot and co-ordinating a fleet of couriers through radio communications" (Bossen, 2012, as cited in Cant, 2020: 143) to several warehouses with determined districts and team leaders who operate in accordance with the algorithm. Despite the differences, both cases imply drastic changes in labor processes and organizations.

All those findings bring together some recommendations for further research, which could also refer to some limitations of this present study. Both delivery job and platform economy are broad concepts that could be studied in different areas with various perspectives. This notion was confirmed through interviews since couriers provided information on several dynamics that extend beyond this study's scope and require ***further research:***

- The workforce is highly *gendered*. In this study, it was not possible to reach a female courier. As also suggested in the ILO report(2022), the job does not occur prevalently among women, and there is no specific data on women couriers.
- *Migration*. Although digital platforms included in this study do not work with migrants, it is suggested in the interviews that immigrant labor is becoming increasingly popular in delivery work and could be applied by digital platforms in the future.
- *Social Discrimination*. In almost all the interviews, couriers complained highly about getting inferior treatment. It was also evident that the pandemic impacted on the perspective since they were also regarded as virus carriers. In that sense, social perspective on couriers might require further examinations.
- *Unemployment*. In the first quarter of 2021, Turkey is a country with highest the numbers of NEETs (IPA, 2021: 7), coinciding nearly with the period when courier job appeared as an economic compensation. Thus, the relation between unemployment and courier job deserves more attention.
- *Warehouses*. Companies with strong financial capacities, such as Yemeksepeti and Getir, use warehouses with groceries inside. Considering the financial power and pricing capacity, the effects of warehouses on the Turkish economy and retail sector remain to be explored.
- *Socio-Psychological Factors*. Adding to ILO's comprehensive study (2022); this study also detected that couriers are on the road for a high number of hours which could affect social and brain activities; they have little social life and cannot foresee any future which could be examined in a detailed manner.

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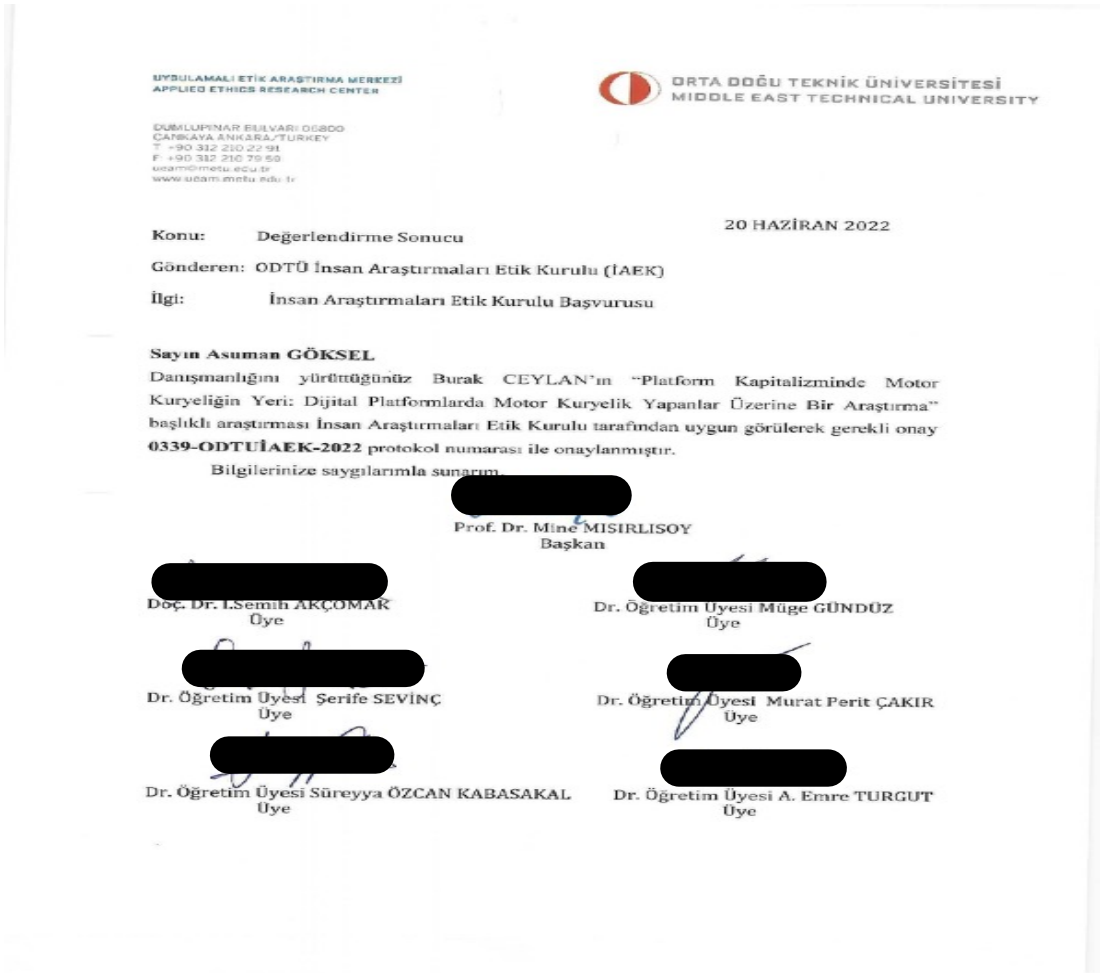
APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE



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MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

20 HAZİRAN 2022

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Asuman GÖKSEL

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Burak CEYLAN'ın "Platform Kapitalizminde Motor Kuryeliğin Yeri: Dijital Platformlarda Motor Kuryelik Yapanlar Üzerine Bir Araştırma" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay **0339-ODTÜİAEK-2022** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

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B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın ana amacı, kuryelik özelinde emek süreçlerinin ve çalışma koşullarının platformize oluşunu incelemek. Teslimat kavramının taşıdığı önem, araştırmayı teşvik eden ana hususlardan biri olmuştur. Kavramın erken kullanımları, ticaret rotalarını birbirine bağlama ve ürün teslimi niteliklerinden ötürü teslimat işçilerine her daim talep olduğunun ispatı niteliğindedir. Teslimat kavramının farklı koşullarda farklı anlamlar içerebileceği de bir gerçek. Bu anlamlar arasında, teslimat pratiğinin bir iş olarak dönüşümü öne çıkıyor. Bu bağlamda kuryelik işi de teslimat pratiğinin tarihsel yolculuğunda aldığı son formlardan biri olarak bu tezin çalışma konusunu oluşturuyor. Bir iş olarak teslimat, onun emek süreçlerine ve emek piyasalarına tabii oluşuna da işaret ediyor. Her iki kavramın da kapitalizmin tarihsel gelişimi ve birikim stratejileriyle ilişkili olduğu öncülüden hareketle çalışma, özellikle platform kapitalizmi bağlamında teslimat pratiğinin kapitalizmin tarihine bakılmadan anlaşılamayacağını savunuyor.

Bu bağlamda çalışma, kurye işinin platformize oluşunu daha iyi anlamlandırmak adına, Huws'un (2014) dört aşamadan oluşan tarihselleştirme girişimini ödünç alıyor. Bu dönemler çalışmada üç başlık altında inceleniyor: *Refah Kapitalizmi*, *Çöküş* ve *Platform Kapitalizminin Doğuşu*. İlk dönemin karakteristik stratejisinin kitlesel üretim ve tüketime dayanan Fordizm olduğu gözlemlenirken (Harvey, 1990: 126) bu dönemde emek piyasalarının daha katı bir karaktere sahip olduğu da tartışılıyor. Kitlesel üretim ve tüketim stratejisinin, ürünlerin dağıtımı ve alımı noktasında yeni ağlara işaret ettiği, bunun da refah kapitalizmi döneminde teslimat işçilerinin önemli bir yere sahip olduğu anlamına geldiği belirtiliyor. ABD merkezli imalat sektörünün çöküşü sonucu sanayisizleşme gibi eğilimlerin ortaya çıkışı, büyüme odaklı bir sistem olan kapitalizmin, Fordizmin artık kârlı gözükmeyen stratejilerini terk edeceği anlamına geliyordu. Bu bağlamda sermayenin daha kârlı alanlara yönelik hareketi, beraberinde uluslararası şirketlerin doğuşu, katı emek piyasalarının çözünmesi, serbestleşme ve üretim merkezlerinin emek maliyetlerinin daha az olduğu bölgelere

taşınması gibi bir dizi sonucu beraberinde getirdi. Bu yer değişikliği, aynı zamanda işgücünün de imalattan yeni doğmakta olan hizmet sektörüne geçişini de ima ediyor. Sovyetler Birliği ve refah devletinin çöküşü gibi gelişmelerle birlikte sermayenin serbestleşmeye ve yeni kâr odakları bulmaya yönelik girişimleri devam etti. Bu girişimleri takiben emek maliyetlerinde azalmaya gitme çabası, bu dönemin belirgin stratejilerinden biri olarak öne çıkıyor. Bu çabayı emek süreçleri üzerindeki kontrolü arttırma girişimleri izliyor.

Kitlesel üretim, stratejisinden talep ve ihtiyaç bazlı üretime geçiş, tarihsel süreçte önemli bir eşik olarak önümüze çıkıyor. Sermayenin genişlemesi, ticaret, bireyselleşmiş üretim gibi faktörlerin öne çıktığı bir bağlamda lojistik, ürünlerin hızlı dağılımı ve teslimatı, kapitalist büyüme adına önemli yer işgal etmeye devam etti. Perakende sektörünün tüketici ihtiyaçlarının bilgisine erişmeye yönelik yaptığı hamle ve bunu gerçekleştirmek adına bilişim ve iletişim teknolojilerine başvurması, imalattan bu sektöre doğru bir eksen kaymasına işaret ediyordu. Bunun sonucu olarak, üretim ve hızlı teslimat konularında Walmart gibi şirketlerin öncülük ettiği teknoloji kullanımı, Amazon gibi uluslararası şirketlerin ve ileride platform kapitalizmi olarak anılacak fenomenin doğuşuna öncülük etti.

Platform kapitalizminin detaylı analizi, emek piyasaları ve emek süreçlerindeki değişimi anlamlandırabilecek teorik bir çerçeveyi gerekli kılmıştır. Kapitalizmin büyüme odaklı karakteri, onun büyüme ve kârlılık krizlerine aynı reaksiyonu vereceği anlamına gelmiyordu. Bu çalışmanın amaçlarından biri, bahsi geçen bağlamda teknolojinin emek süreçlerine ve piyasalarına dahiliyetini incelemek. Bunu analitik bir kurgu içinde gerçekleştirmek amacıyla çalışma, Silver'ın sunduğu (2003) teorik çerçeve içerisinden "teknolojik müdahale" kavramını ödünç alıyor. Kavram, kapitalizmin krizlere verdiği olası reaksiyonlardan biri. Çalışmanın analitik kurgusu açısından, muadilleri arasından -mekânsal, ürünsel ve finansal- seçilmesinin sebebi kavramın tanımında yatıyor: "üretim ve emek sürecinin organizasyonunda büyük değişiklikler getirerek kârlılık ve emek kontrolü krizleriyle başa çıkma girişimleri" (Silver, 2003: 39). Kavram, tanımı itibariyle teknolojik gelişmeyi izole bir anlayışla kavrayan yaklaşımlara karşı bir alternatif teşkil ediyor ve tartışmaya kârlılık, emek kontrolü ve emek sürecinin organizasyonunda temel değişiklikler gibi yaklaşımlar

kazandırıyor. Çalışma, teknolojik müdahale kavramıyla birliktelik teşkil edebilmesi ve teorik tartışmayı derinleştirmesi adına Harry Braverman'ın belirli argümanlarına da başvuruyor. Bunlardan emek süreçlerinin ufak, hesaplanabilir bileşenlere ayrıldığı ve Taylorizmin bu süreçte başat rol oynadığı argümanı öne çıkanlardan biri. Bu hattı takiben Braverman, Taylorizmin uygulamalarının emek süreçlerinin standartlaşmasıyla ve teknolojinin emek kontrolü bağlamında kullanımının emek gücünün niteliksizleşmesiyle sonuçlandığını iddia ediyor. Bu niteliksizleşme onu aynı zamanda değiştirilebilir kılan etmenlerden biri olarak tanımlanmış ve Marx'ın (1998) artık nüfuslar olarak tanımladığı popülasyonun büyümesiyle sonuçlanmıştır. Takiben çalışma, bu artık emek gücünün ölmekte olan sektörlerden kârlılık teşkil eden yeni sektörlere doğru hareketini tespit ediyor. Çalışma, bu tartışmayı referans alarak Türkiye bağlamında platform bazlı teslimat işinin bu hareketin son aşamasını temsil ettiğini iddia ediyor. Daha basit bir ifadeyle çalışma, platformların operasyonlarının bahsi geçen niteliksizleştirilmiş, 'hazırda' bekleyen emek gücüne bağlı olduğu argümanından besleniyor. Takiben, niteliksizleştirme eğilimine beceri kazandırma eğiliminin de eşlik ettiğini, bunun da emek piyasalarında yarılmalar yarattığını tespit edip, bu yarılmaları içsel ve dışsal olarak ifade ediyor. İçsel emek piyasalarına, sermayenin yeni ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda becerilere sahip işgücü dahilken, dışsal emek piyasasının artık emek gücünden oluştuğu tartışması, çalışmaya platformların işleyiş mekanizmasını anlama noktasında kavrayış sağlıyor. Buradan hareketle platformların çekirdek bir işgücünü koruyarak, kuryelik örneğinde olduğu üzere geriye kalan süreçleri dışarıya mal etme eğilimi olduğu tespit ediliyor. Dış kaynak kullanımı uygulamalarının çıkış noktası, emek süreçlerinin uzaktan kontrolüne ve her küçük bileşenin farklı işgücüne atanmasına izin veren emeğin standartlaştırılması olarak belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, emek süreçlerinin standardizasyonu, atomizasyonu ve kodlanması, iş kavramının kendisinin, yeni bir ekosistem, platform kapitalizmi içinde yeniden yapılandırılmasına işaret etmiştir.

Teorik ve tarihsel temeller belirlendikten sonra tartışma, tezin öncelikli hedef olarak ele almayı amaçladığı iş modeli olan platformları keşfetme girişiminde bulunuyor. Bu niyetle çalışma, platformların ortaya çıkışını doğrudan etkileyen erken tarihsel olaylara göz gezdiriyor. Bunlardan dot.com balonunun yükselişi ve patlayışı, geride bıraktığı güçlü dijital altyapıdan ötürü en önemli olaylardan biri olarak öne çıkıyor.

Olaylar zinciri aynı zamanda kapitalist gelişimde sistemi yeni kârlı alanlar veya araçlar bulmaya zorlayan bir krize işaret ediyor. Bu tarihsel bağlamda yeni hammadde olarak belirlen veri, iş modelinde bir değişime işaret ediyor; zira artık sadece bir ürünü satmaktan ziyade, nasıl kullanıldığına dair bilgilere hâkim olmanın da önem kazandığı ve bu bilgilerin kaydedilmesinin nispeten kolay ve maliyetsiz olduğu iddia ediliyor. Yeni hammadde olarak veri, aynı zamanda geniş bir kullanım skalası ile hemen her sektörde kullanılabilecek özellikler taşıyordu. Bu bağlamda "Platform, muazzam miktarda veriyi çıkarabilen ve kontrol edebilen yeni bir iş modeli olarak ortaya çıkmıştır" (Srnicek, 2017: 11-12). Yeni modelin ortaya çıkışı, çeşitli kavramlarla tanımlanan ancak popüler olarak platform ekonomisi veya platform kapitalizmi olarak adlandırılan bir eğilime işaret etti. Ancak, platformların kullanımı sektörel veya operasyonel bazda farklılık gösterdiğinden, bu yeni modelin ortaya koyduğu çerçeve oldukça karmaşıktı. Farklılıklara rağmen platformların: arz, talep (kullanıcı veya yüklenici) ve ara yüz olarak platform üçgen modelini kullandığı tespit edildi. Bu model, platformların kendilerini yalnızca bir yazılım ara yüzü, arz ve talebin bir araya geldiği dijital alan olarak sunabilmelerine, dolayısıyla da tarafsızlık iddiasıyla çalışmalarına izin verdi (Schmidt, 2017). Bu esnada platformlar, her iki taraftan da veri çekebilme avantajını ellerinde tuttular. Aracı argümanı, platformların işgücünün bir kısmıyla iş ortaklığı paydasında buluşmasına olanak sağlayarak onlara dışa mal etme pratiklerinde öncü bir karakter kazandırdı. Bu bağlamda tarafsızlık, dışa mal etme ve dolayısıyla düşük emek maliyetleri, hızlı büyümeyle eş anlama geldi. Üçgen model bütün platformların ortak çalışma mekanizması olarak tespit edildiyse de aslen platformların kendi içlerinde önemli ayrımlara sahip oldukları tespit edildi. Web tabanlı platformlar bulut çalışmasına dayanırken, konum tabanlı platformlar çoğunlukla gig çalışmasıyla karakterize edilmektedir. Platform işinin en önemli yanlarından birinin onun görev tabanlı olduğu karakteri olduğu saptandı. İşlerin küçük görevlere bölünmesi, görevlerin bitirilmesi için gereken kabiliyet seviyeleri farklı olsa da bütün örneklerde kendini gösteren bir olgu olarak öne çıktı. Platformların farklı biçimlerde sınıflandırılabileceğine de örnek olarak gösterilen 'yalın platform' kavramının, iş maliyetlerini dışarı aktararak varlıksız büyüme stratejilerini benimsemeleri bakımından Türkiye bağlamındaki platformları anlamak adına kavrayış sağladıkları iddia edildi.

Yapılan platform sınıflandırmaları arasından konum ve gig işi temelli platformların etkilerinin, web temelli muadillerine göre daha fazla olduğu öne sürüldü. Bunun ana sebebi, bu platformların, maddi kişi ve varlıklarla faaliyet göstermelerinden ötürü etkilerinin 'gerçek' yaşamda daha gözlenebilir oluşudur. Bu argümanı takiben, konum bazlı platformlar arasından teslimat platformları tezin örneklemi olarak seçildi. Teslimat platformlarının çeşitli sektörlerle ilişki içinde faaliyet gösterebilmesi, teslimat pratiğinin kapitalizm tarihindeki yeri ve sistemin güncel stratejisinde taşıdığı önem, bu seçimin arkasındaki ana sebepler olarak öne çıkıyor. Vaka, platformların 'veri çıkaran ve toplayan kâr araçları' olmalarının yanı sıra emek süreçleri üzerinde de ciddi etkiler yarattığı iddiasına yönelik araştırma olanakları sunuyor. Platformların dışarı mal etme stratejisiyle emek sürecinin bütün sorumluluk ve maliyetinden sıyrıldığı, buna rağmen sürece en hâkim özne olarak öne çıktığı durumda kurye işgücü, operasyonun muhtemelen en temel unsuru olan teslimat faaliyetini yerine getirse de emek sürecinin diğer bileşenlerinin işleyişi hakkında bilgiden yoksun görünmektedir. Kurye işgücünün bu yapısı, teslimat platformlarının veriye ulaşma gücü ve yukarıda bahsedilen sebepler çalışmanın odağını platform bazlı teslimat şirketlerindeki kuryelik faaliyetine yöneltmiştir.

Türkiye bağlamında COVİD-19 pandemisinin e-ticaret sektöründe devasa büyümelere yol açtığı gözlemlenmektedir. Satın alma oranlarındaki artışın, satılan ürünlerin teslimini gerçekleştirecek bir işgücü gerektirdiği, buna binaen de kuryelik mesleğinde artış yaşandığı tespit edilmiştir. Risk sermayesi aracılığıyla hızlı büyüme kaydetme, teslimat operasyonlarının büyüklüğü ve Türkiye emek piyasasında dijitalleşmeye bağlı öncü pratikler yaratabilme gibi faktörleri göz önüne alarak çalışma, üç şirket örneklem olarak belirlemiştir. Bu şirketler Yemeksepeti, Getir ve Trendyol'dur. Her şirketin tarihçesine yapılan kısa bir gezintinin sonunda üç şirketin de hayati olarak teslimat operasyonlarına bağlı olduğu, dahası, bu platformların kurye işi bağlamında emek süreçlerinin organizasyonunu yeniden şekillendirme ortak noktasında buluştuğu tespit edilmiştir.

Bahsi geçen biçim verme sürecinin etkilerini ve bu süreçte platformların sunduğu özgün pratikleri tespit etmek amacıyla, literatür taramasının da yardımıyla çeşitli bileşenler seçilmiştir. Her bileşen, platformların yalnızca kapitalizmin tarihsel krizi

sonucu ortaya çıkan, data işleme ve kâr odaklı iş modelleri değil, aynı zamanda, teknolojik müdahale kavramının da içerdiği üzere emek sürecini değiştiren ve dönüştüren oluşumlar olduğuna yönelik argümanı derinleştirmek amacıyla da seçilmiştir. Dolayısıyla bileşenler, büyüme ve kâr odaklı yapılar olan platformların emek süreçlerinde yol açtığı yenilikleri ve değişimleri tespit edebilmek amacıyla seçilmiş açıklayıcı araçlardır. Saha analizi bu bileşenler aracılığıyla yapılmış ve dört ana başlık altında toplanmıştır. Bunlar sırayla*: Sözleşme ve Statü*, *Algoritmik Yönetim*, *Ücret ve Fiyatlandırma* ve *İşyeri*'dir.

Sözleşme ve Statü teması altında bahsi geçen sözleşme kavramının kısa tarihsel yolculuğu, kavramın emek piyasalarındaki esneklik eğilimiyle birlikte yeniden şekillendiğini gösterdi. Platformların, esnek karakterlerine rağmen işle ve yasal hususlarla ilgili sınırlar içerebilen sözleşmelerin yerine, platform ve bireysel katılımcı arasında belirli sınırlar çizmekle yetinen hükümler ve koşulları *[terms and conditions]* getirdiği gözlemlenmiştir. Platform ara yüzü aracılığıyla işaretlenen ve 'kabul veya reddet' temeline dayanan hüküm ve koşulların birer sözleşme olarak adlandırılıp adlandırılamayacağı oldukça tartışmalıdır. Verilen örnekler, katılımcıların çalışan statüsünde değil bağımsız yüklenici statüsünde gözükmesi, dolayısıyla platformların da işveren statüsünde gözükmemesi bağlamında bu 'anlaşmaların' sözleşmelerden farklı olduğunu ima etmektedir. Dünya çapında verilen örneklerle karşılaştırıldığında, sözleşme ve statü analizi, Türkiye örneğinin daha karmaşık özelliklere sahip olduğunu gösterdi. Buna yönelik ilk bulgu olan platformların hem sözleşmeli hem de bağımsız yüklenici statülerini içermesi, Türkiye bağlamının benzersiz bir konum teşkil etmesine sebebiyet vermektedir. Sözleşmeli kuryelerin statü ve çalışma koşullarının İş Yasasına tabii olmasından kaynaklı 'geleneksel' teamüllere yakınsadığını, ikinci statü olan bağımsız yükleniciler için ise bu tabiiyetin geçerli olmadığı görüldü. Karşılaştırıldığında, sabit sözleşmeli kuryelerin daha sağlam bir yasal zemine ve daha düzenli çalışma koşullarına sahip olduğu tespit edilebilmektedir. Türkiye örneğinde öne çıkan bir başka bulgu ise özellikle pandemi sonrası kurye işinin bir 'bekleme odası' işlevini görmesidir. Kavram, farklı iş geçmişlerine sahip kişilerin ekonomik telafi amacıyla giriş koşulları düşük olan kuryelik işini tercih etmelerine atıfta bulunuyor. Birkaç örnek haricinde tezin saha çalışması kısmına dahil edilen kuryelerin iş geçmişlerinin özel bir mesleki eğitim gerektirmediği tespit edilmiştir. Bu, kuryelik

işindeki artışın, Türkiye bağlamında platformların, yukarıda bahsi geçen niteliksiz ve artık emek gücünün kârlı sektörlere doğru hareketiyle uyumlu olarak artık emek gücünü emdiğine işaret eder. Yine teorik çerçeveden hareketle platformların büyüme stratejilerinden birinin çekirdek bir işgücünü istihdam ederken teslimat pratiğini bahsi geçen emek gücüne mal etme olduğu söylenebilir. Türkiye bağlamının eşsiz bir diğer özelliği, aracı şirketlerin ortaya çıkışıdır. Süreç bireysel olarak gerçekleştirilebilmesine rağmen, esnaf kurye olmak isteyen bireylere hizmet veren 'taşeron' şirketler bulunmaktadır. Bu şirketlerin ortaya çıkışı, işgücünün farklı işlerden kurye işine büyük ölçeklerde kaymasının bir sonucu olarak tasvir edilebilir. Aracı firmalar, kuryelere temel hizmetler sunarak işe zahmetsiz ve hızlı giriş yapmalarını sağlamakta, bu durum onların kolayca popüler olmalarına ve hatırı sayılır ölçüde potansiyel kurye popülasyonu ile temasa geçmelerine yol açmaktadır. Bu, teslimat firmaları için de esnaf kurye adaylarına hızlı ulaşım olanağı anlamına geldiğinden, iki tarafın da aracı firmalara başvurduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Nispeten yeni oluşmuş kurye işgücünün kitlesel karakteri, sözleşme tartışmasına da ışık tutabilir. Kitlesel emilim, yanlı özellikler taşıdığı görünen, hazır 'serbest meslek anlaşmalarına' işaret ediyor. Hüküm ve koşullar anlaşması 'bireylerin Uygulama aracılığıyla katılımı' düzleminde gerçekleşirken, Türkiye bağlamındaki serbest meslek sözleşmeleri, işgücü tarafından bir başka esnek sözleşme olarak algılanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, kendi hesabına çalışan kuryelerin sözleşmelerin içeriği hakkında ya çok az bilgiye sahip oldukları ya da hiç okumadıkları gözlemlenmiştir. Bu isteksizlik, Türkiye'de platform bazlı teslimat işine katılımın bireysel tercihlerden ziyade neredeyse 'zorunlu' bir şekilde gerçekleştiğine işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca kuryelerin Uygulama üzerinden hükümleri 'kabul etmek' yerine fiziksel sözleşmeler imzalamaları, geleneksel pratiklerin Türkiye'deki platformlar örneğinde devamı olarak okunabilir. Son olarak, emek sürecinin neredeyse bütün bileşen ve araçlarını dışarı mal ederek emek maliyetlerinden kurtulma girişimleri, platformların varlıksız büyüme niyetlerini doğrulamıştır. Ortaya konulan şema, üç platformun da teslimat pratiğini dışarıya yaptırarak büyümek ve kâr etmek istediğini, buradan hareketle de esnaf kurye statüsünün popüler olarak tercih edildiğini gösteriyor. Dünyadan çeşitli mahkeme kararlarından alınan örneklerin de gösterdiği üzere, platformların işverenler olarak bağımlılık yaratma ve kontrol uygulama eğiliminde olduğu ortadadır. Bu, bağımsız çalışan statün kendisini tartışmalı hale getirmektedir. Sonuç olarak platformların, Sözleşme ve Statü gibi temel bileşenleri

yeniden şekillendirdiği gözlemlenmiştir. Yeniden şekillendirme süreçleri, vasıfsız ve çoğunlukla işsiz işgücüne yönelik dış kaynak kullanımı uygulamalarını kolaylaştırarak nispeten maliyetsiz ve hızlı büyümenin yolunu açabilir. Platformların tartışmaya ilişkin sunduğu yenilikler, çoğunlukla emek piyasalarındaki esnekleşme eğiliminin devamı olarak ortaya çıkmakta, bu da daha güvencesiz çalışma koşullarıyla sonuçlanmakta ve dolayısıyla bir fayda asimetrisine işaret etmektedir.

İkinci bileşen, Algoritmik Yönetim, bütün platformlar algoritmik uygulamaları kullandığı ölçüde en kapsayıcı bileşen olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu bölümdeki değerlendirme platformların yüklenicilerini dijital teknolojiler aracılığıyla yönlendirebilme kapasitesini temel almıştır. Bu bağlamda dijital yöntemlerin gerçek zamanlı takip, çalışanlara süreçle ilgili adım adım bilgi verme gibi uygulamalar özelinde emek süreci üzerinde kontrol sağlama amaçlı kullanıldığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Kuryelerin çoğu zaman platformlar tarafından takip edildiği ve teslimat yolları da dahil olmak üzere emek süreci üzerinde herhangi bir kontrolleri olmadığı açıktır. Türkiye bağlamında algoritmik tekniklerin kullanımının daha katı ve organize bir tarza işaret ettiği gösterildi. Paketlerin her koşulda kuryelere algoritma yoluyla atandığı ve beşinci bölümde verilen örneklerin aksine, kuryelerin çoğunlukla atanan paketleri kabul etmekten başka seçeneğinin olmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu, Taylorizmin temel ilkeleriyle uyumlu olarak, emek süreçlerinin standartlaşmasına ve kuryelerin görev sağlayıcılara indirgenmesine işaret etmektedir. Belirli saatlerde çalışan anlaşmalı kuryeler dışında, Yemeksepeti ve Trendyol örneklerinde esnaf kuryelerin göreli bir özgürlüğe sahip olduğu, Vigo'nun vardiyalarının ise firma tarafından belirlendiği ve tavsiye edildiği görülmektedir. Kuryeler, teorik olarak kendi istekleriyle oturum açıp kapatabilirler, ancak bunu yaparken belirli riskleri, yani olası yaptırımları göz önünde bulundurmaları gerekir. Bu, teslimat platformlarının kuryelerin gerçek zamanlı aktivitelerini, teslimat sürelerini ve vardiyalarını takip ederek algoritmayı kuryelere yaptırım amacıyla kullandığına işaret ediyor. Bir başka deyişle, algoritmanın yönetim işlevleri, slotarı bloke etme, ikramiyeleri kesme ve hatta sözleşmeleri feshetme gibi yaptırımları içerebilir. Yine bununla ilintili olarak, toplama süresi, geri dönüş süresi, tüketici puanları gibi faktörlerin belirlediği adaptasyon puanları da yüksek düzeyde algoritmik kontrole işaret etmektedir. Bu olgular, taraflar arasındaki güç asimetrisinin altını çizmektedir. Bu güç asimetrisi, platformların sadece aracı olarak faaliyet

göstermediklerini, aksine, dijital teknolojilerin kullanımı aracılığıyla yükleniciler ile bağımlı ilişkiler geliştirme eğiliminde olduklarını doğrulamaktadır. Oyunlaştırma pratiklerinin de bu amaca hizmet ettiği görülmüştür. Derecelendirme ve madalya sistemleri, algoritmik yönetimin yol açtığı etkilerin ölçeği konusunda önemli fikirler vermektedir. Bu etkilerden öne çıkanlarının en iyi çalışma saatlerini seçebilmek ve paketleri ilk olarak en iyi puana sahip kuryelere atamak olduğu görülmüştür. Bu uygulamaların kuryeleri teslimat esnasında her hareketi hesaplamaya ittiği; teslimat süresi baskısı ve kuryeler arasında olası yarış gibi ciddi sonuçları olabilecek durumlara yol açabileceği söylenebilir.

Algoritmanın kullanımına ilişkin analiz, Türkiye bağlamının bir başka benzersiz özelliğini ortaya koydu. Öncelikle her şirkette kullanım düzeylerinin farklılık gösterdiğine tanıklık edildi. Trendyol'un teslimat operasyonun, algoritmik uygulamalara daha açık göründüğü ve dolayısıyla şirketin uygulamasının, birkaç iş gücünü bir araya getiren sanal bir alan olarak fonksiyon gösterdiği tespit edilirken, Getir'in operasyonunun daha sabit vardiyalara dayalı olduğu ve şirketin saha denetçisi gibi insan temelli uygulamalara başvurduğu gözlemlendi. Yemeksepeti örneğinin, kuryelerin doğrudan ulaşabileceği ve geniş operasyonel yetkilere sahip takım liderleriyle çalıştığı için en hibrit model olduğu iddia edildi. Bu, platformların farklı mesleki geçmişlere sahip kitlesel bir işgücüyle başa çıkma noktasında insan temelli yönetim uygulamalarını bir kerede terk etmeye istekli olmadığını gösteriyor. Bir diğer bulgu ise yönetilme olgusuyla ilişik olarak oluşan özgürlük algısına yöneliktir. Konuya ilişkin yöneltilen cevaplarda kuryelerin çoğunun teslimat işinde daha özgür hissettikleri görüldü. Bununla birlikte kuryeler, mevcut platform tabanlı kurye işinin yol açtığı bağımlılıkları da gösterebildiler. Bu, işin kuryelere basitçe özgürlük sağlamadığı fakat eski işlerine kıyasla daha fazla özerklik sağladığı anlamına geliyor. Bu göreli özgürlüğe, kuryelerin eski işlerinde deneyimledikleri insan temelli yönetim uygulamalarından saklanma amacıyla da bu işi tercih ettikleri iddiasından hareketle, kurye işinin seçimini ekonomik bir telafi olarak gösteren 'bekleme odası' kavramına atıfta bulunarak 'saklanma odası' adı verildi. Buna binaen saklanma odası kavramı, Türk işgücü piyasalarında katı yönetim uygulamalarına işaret etmektedir. Algoritmik yönetim bağlamında yürütülen tartışmada vurgulanan son nokta, dijital Uygulamaların sahip olduğu yetki skalasıdır. Birkaçı dışında kuryelerin çoğunun, uygulamaların

günlük yaşamlarını takip edip edemedikleri ya da ne tür verileri edinebilecekleri konusunda bilgi sahibi olmadığı gözlemlendi. Bununla birlikte, bazı kuryeler tarafından verilen bilgiler, uygulamaların ortam sesi kaydetmekten paket atandığında telefonun diğer faaliyetlerini engellemeye kadar geniş bir yetki skalasına sahip olduğunu gösteriyor. Bu, sürecin en önemli kısımlarından birini yerine getiren işgücü olarak kuryelerin, operasyonun bir diğer temel bileşeni olan veri toplama hakkında bilgiye sahip olmadıklarına işaret etmektedir. Özetle, algoritmik yönetimle ilgili bulgular, tezin örneklemine dahil edilen platformlarının algoritmalar aracılığıyla yeni yönetim teknikleri uyguladığını ortaya koymuştur. Bununla birlikte platformların sözleşmeli ve esnaf kuryelerine paket ve mesai seçme gibi hususlarda daha kısıtlı bir çerçeve sunduğu da gözlemlendi. Buradan hareketle Türkiye örneğinde ayırt edici gözüken durum, özellikle beşinci bölümde verilen örneklerle karşılaştırıldığında, kuryeler üzerinde uygulanan kontrolün oldukça yüksek olmasıdır. Bu, platformların bağımsız çalışan statüsü aracılığıyla teslimat faaliyetini dışarı mal edip emek maliyetlerinden kurtulurken, hibrit ve algoritmik yönetim teknikleri aracılığıyla da geleneksel işçi işveren ilişkisine yakınsayan düzeyde bir kontrol ilişkisi kurabileceğini göstermektedir.

Çalışma, üçüncü bileşen olarak seçilen ücret ve fiyatlandırmaya odaklanarak analize devam eder. Sözleşme tartışmasına benzer olarak esnekleşmenin ücret teması üzerinde de önemli etkileri olduğu görülmüş, bu bağlamda ücretin spekülatif bir biçim kazandığı iddia edilmiştir. Ücret kavramı özelinde yaşanan değişiklikleri anlamak için önce her şirketin ödeme planlarının analizi sunuldu. Planlar, saatlik ve sabit ödemelerin (her ne kadar daha sıkı kontrollerle sonuçlanabilseler de) kuryeler için, makul bir gelir kazanmak adına günde teslim edilen paket sayısını hesaplamak zorunda kaldıkları parça bazlı ödemeye kıyasla nispeten güvenli bir zemin sağlayabileceğini gösterdi. Bu durum, platformların, kuryelik işinde paket olarak beliren, emek sürecinin en küçük bileşenin fiyatını kolayca hesaplayabildiği ve değiştirebildiği ölçüde, parça başı ödemenin oyunlaştırma tekniklerinin maruziyetine daha açık olduğunu da gösterdi. Bu, platform yüklenicisinin, 'jeton toplayıp' görev bitirdiği ve emek sürecine dahil olan her maliyet ve riski hesaplayarak gelir kaynağını oluşturduğu bir durumu ortaya çıkardı. Oyunlaştırma uygulamaları algoritmik tekniklerle yürütülürken, en iyi puanlara veya yıldız sınıflandırmasına sahip kuryeler paketlere atanma ve daha fazla

teslimat yapıp paket başına ekstra para kazanabilecekleri altın saatleri seçme önceliğine sahip olabiliyorlar. Emek süreçlerinin parça başı ödeme aracılığıyla oyunlaştırılması, kuryelerin, hesaplama araçlarından mahrumken emek sürecine yönelik her maliyeti, neredeyse bir muhasebeci niteliğiyle hesaplamaya mahrum bırakıldıklarını göstermiştir. Bu durum sağlık sigortası ödememek gibi tercihlere neden olarak kuryeleri kaza gibi olası etkenlere karşı kolayca savunmasız bırakabilir. Ayrıca bu uygulamalar, esnek ve güvencesiz çalışma koşullarının oluşmasına ve düzenlenmemiş çalışma pratiklerinin doğmasına sebep olabilir. Oyunlaştırma uygulamalarının yanı sıra farklı algoritmik uygulamaların kuryeleri daha fazla çalışmaya teşvik ettiği de gözlemlendi. Fiyatlandırma ve bonus mekanizmaları bu stratejinin ana bileşeni olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Yemeksepeti ve Trendyol gibi şirketlerin kuryeleri daha fazla çalışmaya teşvik etmek için fiyat mekanizmalarını talebin arttığı saat ve günlerde değiştirebildiği gözlemlendi. Bununla birlikte şirketlerin, Uber örneğinde karşımıza çıkan dinamik fiyatlandırma tekniğini uygulamadığı tespit edildi. Buna binaen Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren teslimat platformlarının, ekstrem hava koşullarında paket başına ücrete gerçek zamanlı müdahale etme veya talebin düşük olduğu ilçelere kuryeleri yönlendirme gibi uygulamalara başvurmadığı saptandı. Bu durumun sebebinin, platformların hemen hemen her koşulda paketleri teslim etmek için kurye bulabileceği Türkiye'de kurye işinin kitlesel ve güvencesiz karakteri olduğu söylenebilir. Bazı kuryelerin ekstrem hava koşullarını daha fazla paket teslim etmek için bir fırsat olarak algılaması bu argümanı desteklemektedir. Sonuç olarak ücret ve fiyatlandırmaya ilişkin analiz, platformların serbest çalışan statüsündeki işgücünü yüksek seviyede algoritmik kontrol uygulamalarıyla mobilize edip, bu iş biçiminde yeni ücret olarak beliren emek maliyetlerini kuryelere dışsallaştırırken kuryeleri çeşitli uygulamalarla daha fazla çalışma noktasında da teşvik edebildiğini göstermiştir.

Son bileşen olan karşımıza çıkan İşyeri kavramının kendisi çok sayıda çağrışıma sahiptir. Bu nedenle tartışma öncelikle işyerleri dağıtım ağı olarak tanımlanan işçilerle sınırlanmıştır. Tanımın içerdiği vakalardan biri olarak teslimat kuryeleri örneği, depo kavramının dahiliyetinin emek süreçlerinin organizasyonunda ciddi değişikliklere yol açabileceğini göstermiştir. İlk olarak, depoları olan kuryelerin daha güçlü sosyal ilişkiler kurabildiği ve bunun da ekstrem koşullarda dayanışma örnekleriyle

sonuçlandığı gözlemlendi. Depoların, kuryelerin ekstrem hava koşullarında sığınabilecekleri güvenli yerler olarak algılanması da dikkat çeken etmenlerden biriydi. Depoların olmadığı vakalarda, kuryelerin iş hakkında bilgi toplayıp paylaşabileceği sanal iletişim ağları veya 'yapay depolar' ortaya çıktığı gözlemlendi. Depoların dahiliyetinin kuryelerin teslimat alanını kısıtladığı da saptandı. Bu durumun, sınırlı ve bilindik bir bölgede teslimat faaliyeti anlamına geldiğinden kuryelere görece bir avantaj sağladığı iddia edilebilir. Deponun varlığının sadece bölge sınırlamalarına değil, yönetim bazlı sınırlamalara da işaret ettiği tespit edildi. Bu bağlamda depo, geniş yetkilere ve şirket Uygulamasını kendi inisiyatifiyle kullanma becerisine sahip bir ekip lideri tarafından yönetilir ve düzenlenir. Buradan hareketle Yemeksepeti örneğinin, teslimatı yönlendiren ve çalışanları belirli görevlere sevk eden 'sorumlu memur' kavramını, platform işinin de bir sonucu olarak ekip liderine dönüştürdüğü gözlemleniyor. Karşılaştırma yapıldığında işyerinin kayboluşu ve harekete yönelik vurgu deposu olmayan platformların özelliği olarak öne çıkarken, deponun olduğu örneklerin daha düzenlenmiş emek süreçleri ve insan temelli yönetimin varlığıyla sonuçlandığı saptanabilir. Sonuç olarak, kurye işinin platformizasyonun, işyeri kavramının yok edilmesi, onun sanal bir yazılıma dönüştürülmesi ve dolayısıyla tamamen dağıtım ağlarına dönüştürülmesi anlamına gelebileceği ileri sürülmektedir. Depoların dahil olduğu durumlarda ise platformizasyonun, merkezi depolar ve telsiz iletişimi yoluyla teslimat filosunun koordine edilmesi anlayışından, çeşitli odak bölgelerde ortaya çıkan depolara ve algoritmayla uyumlu çalışan takım liderlerine geçişe işaret ettiği görülmüştür. Farklılıklara rağmen her iki durumun da emek süreci ve organizasyonlarında ciddi değişikliklere işaret ettiği ortadadır.

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): LABOR PROCESS AND WORK IN PLATFORM CAPITALISM: A STUDY ON MOTOR COURIERS OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN ISTANBUL

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