

Planning for Inclusive Platforms: Lessons from Uber Workers

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Inclusiveness in the Context of Uncertainty

Platforms have emerged as a common form of employment, yet the rights and responsibilities of workers on platforms are under intense legal debate (Palagashvili, 2018).

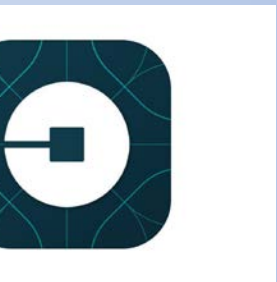
Given this uncertainty in the workplace and government policy, what are drivers doing to improve their own working conditions and potential for earnings? And what lessons can municipalities and civil society actors draw to encourage a more inclusive platform economy?

What Platform is a Ride-hailing Platform?

Labour platforms (Farrell & Greig, 2016)

“Lean” platforms (Srnicek, 2018; Sundararajan, 2016)

“Geographically-sticky” platforms (Graham & Anwar, 2018)



Pros and Cons: Flexibility, Security and Bias

Resilience Economy? Flexible options for households with unstable incomes.

(Hannagan & Morduch, 2016; Farrell & Greig, 2016)

RISKS: Insurance risk, Vehicle access risk, Maintenance risk, Safety

BIAS: Locational bias (Thebault-Speiker et al., 2017)

Cultural bias (Dillahunt & Malone, 2015)

Racial bias (Edelman & Luca, 2014)

Gender bias (Cook et al., 2017)

Class bias (Schor 2017)

How much autonomy do drivers have to improve their own work conditions and potential for earnings?

“Algorithmic Management”
(Mohlmann & Zalmanson, 2017; Lee, Kusbit, Metsky, Dabbish, 2015)

Platforms create game-like conditions to manage populations of drivers.



CHARACTERISTICS OF POWER IN NETWORKS (Benkler, 2011)

1. **OPENNESS**: Capacity for participants to move between platforms.
2. **COMPLETENESS**: Capacity for participants to modify one's own actions on platforms.
3. **CONFIGURATION**: Pathways for influencing or avoiding change.

DRIVER STRATEGIES

Market Actions

Strategic Actions

Political/Lobbying
Actions

Method: User-generated videographic data

Accounts of rideshare diarists posting opinions and streaming their experiences as rideshare drivers on the YouTube Platform.

- 151 N.A. rideshare diarists identified
- 30 diarists sampled
- Conducted log of content and composition
- Noted themes that identify driver goals, vulnerabilities, and worker counterpower



Drive Girl Drive

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb-UXTERk16ChLcVNYuoig>



Paul Yeo

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN5W7raK-0M4qlaQ4a2J86w>



Paulette Martinez

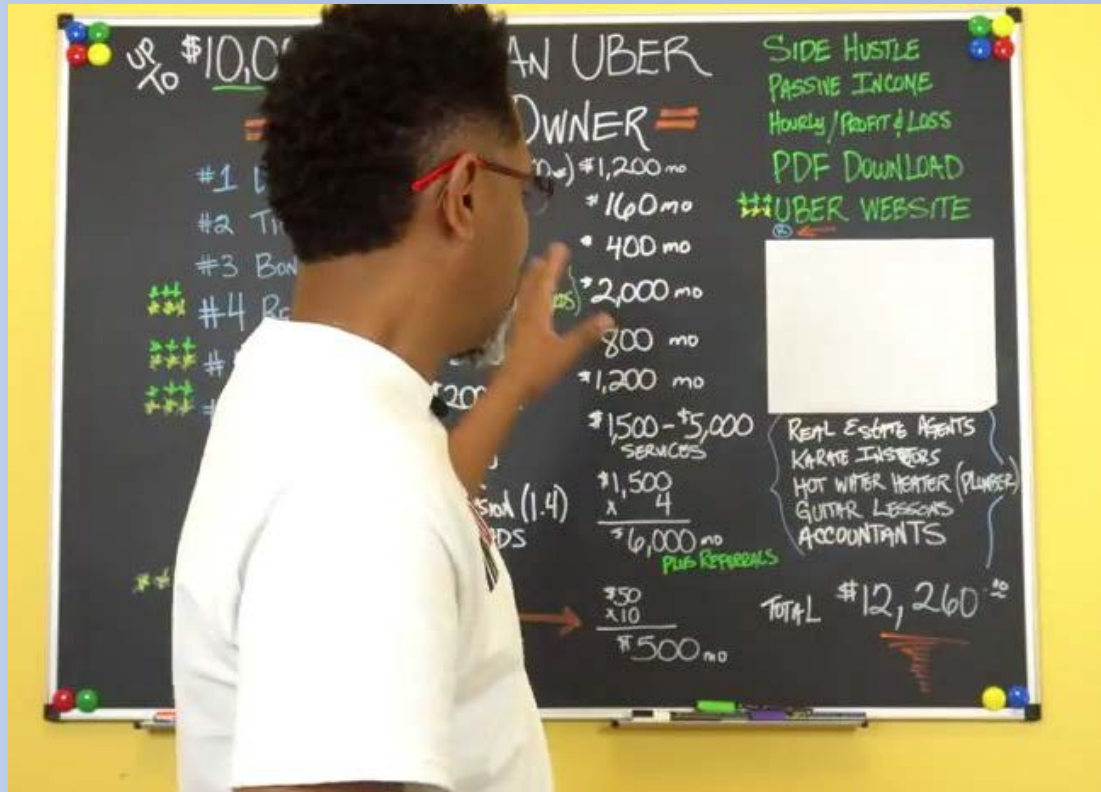
<https://www.youtube.com/user/paulettmart>



Nick Corona

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4crOhBBkUMtUOxLojg-7IA>

Context of Videos



The Simple Driver

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5KiAuWvgpontNkGV-nposg>

Rideshare diarists are not representative of drivers on ride-hailing platforms in general.

These are key informants, who are actively integrating the perspective of platforms and workers.

Next stage in research involves interviews with drivers that aims for a more representative sample.

Driver Goals and Vulnerabilities

GOALS:

1. Income supplementation,
2. Schedule flexibility
3. “No boss”
4. Social networking

VULNERABILITIES:

1. Low earnings rates for drivers,
2. Financial risk,
3. Discipline from the platform
4. Safety

Strategic Actions

Strategic positioning/timing,

Over-the-top rideshare
management applications,

Access to cost certainty,

and, Off-app work.



“[Mystro is] supposed to snatch up surge rides... it’s going to push the button for you... it is definitely worth it. It's definitely worth the money because imagine if you're going to run both your apps [Lyft and Uber] on one phone. [With Mystro] You don't have to worry about touching the phone at all” (Jevan Newcomb, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdvNOi4f16s&feature=youtu.be>).

“Every time you take cash you don’t have to pay commission or tax on the cash, so I understand the motivation to want to do that ...

... [but] you can’t take cash rides. Don’t do it... If you don’t have commercial insurance and you take cash rides, no one is going to be legally covered under insurance, and if you get in an accident, especially if there is some kind of medical problems, it’s like being uninsured, which could send you to jail one, but more importantly that means no one is going to be treated or they’ll have to go into medical bankruptcy” (Your Personal Driver, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nEwSvvxeG4>).

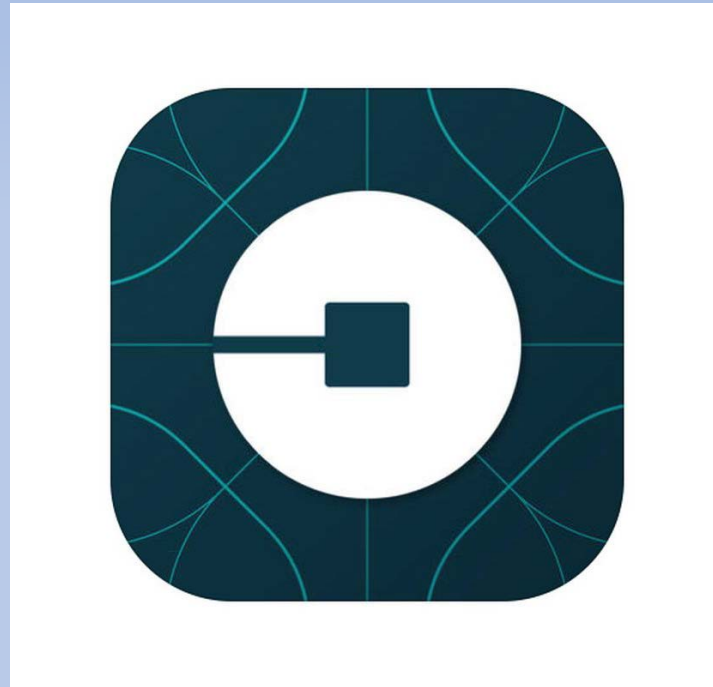
Vs.

“If you have commercial insurance now you can have your own little rideshare business, if you have the clientele” (The Rideshare Guy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6U-c7e7avY>)

Market Actions

Competition between ride-hailing platforms.

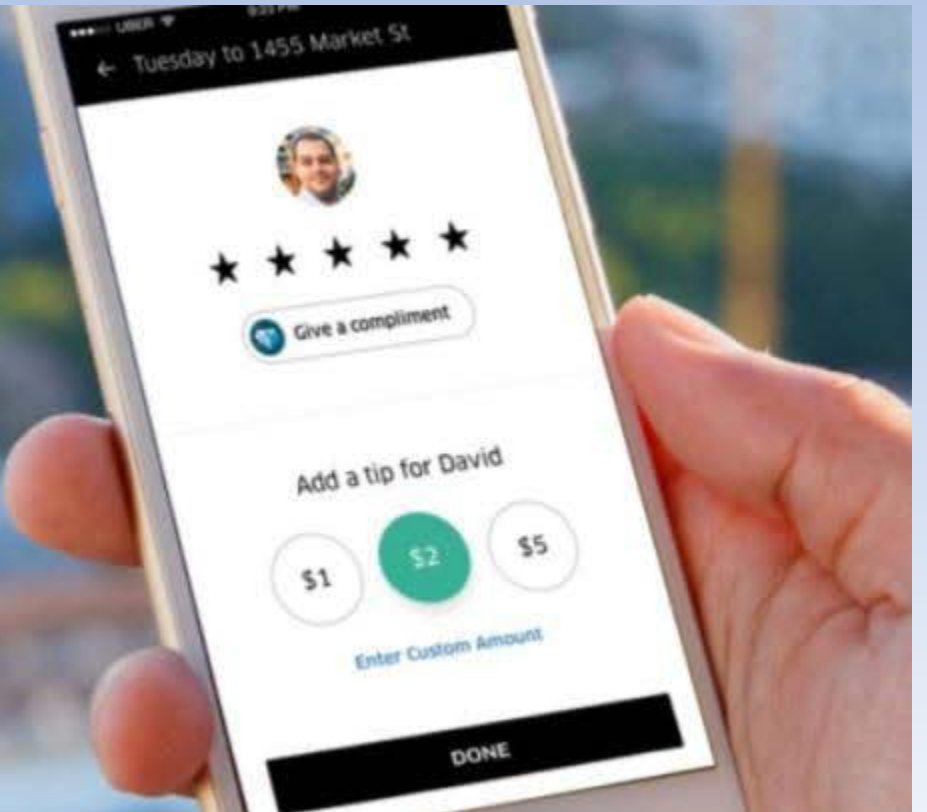
Additional platforms for workers to leverage car access for income.



“Having moved to California the rates for rideshare are lower \$0.93 [per mile]. And delivery is about \$1.15 per mile, which seems to be the minimum you need to make profit. So delivery there is like a 1.4 surge”
(Your Personal Driver,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GsTx947X8g&t=62s>).

Lobbying the Platform

Least successful form of gaining decision making power.



Finally

Tipping is coming

Great service deserves to be rewarded. Tipping is now available in Seattle, Minneapolis and Houston. We'll be adding more cities over the next few weeks, and will make tips available to all U.S. drivers, by the end of July 2017.

[LEARN MORE →](#)

Tuesday to 1455 Market St

Give a compliment

Add a tip for David

\$1 \$2 \$5

Enter Custom Amount

DONE

“Uber is finally, after all these years and all the complaints from drivers, bringing a tipping option to the Uber experience” (Nicholas Wehr, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiSOOP9p0i0&t=14s>).

Expanding Driver Strategies for More Inclusive Platforms?

Concern: Can these strategies help drivers without ample personal resources to draw from? How are these strategies used in communities facing bias?

1. Supporting a political voice for drivers.
2. Providing the tools for a competitive platform marketplace.
3. Support capabilities of drivers to pursue strategic actions with proper resources and knowledge.

THANK YOU

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