Special Issue

New forms of Work:
precarious, informal and migrant
Part 2

Numéro thématique

Nouvelles formes de travail–
précaire, informel et migrant
Partie 2

TRAVAIL, capital et société
une revue sur le Tiers-Monde

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SPECIAL ISSUE
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NUMÉRO THÉMATIQUE
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Volume 49, Numéro/Number 2, 2019

Women working in the informal market, Chauk, Myanmar

Photographer Adam Cohn (adamcohn@gmail.com)

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SOMMAIRE/CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE / NOTE DE LA REDACTRICE

Suzanne Dansereau

This is the Part 2 of the Special Issue on *New Forms of Labour: Precarious, Informal and Migrant, Volume 49,* prompted by the changing forms of work and the debates around the future of work. While the journal has usually focused on work and workers in the global south, with some exceptions, the growing similarities in precarious forms of work between north and south prompted us to engage the debate more universally.

Part 1 revealed the increasing numbers of workers engaged in various forms of precarious employment, especially within the growing informal sector and the export processing zones. Migration is integral to this as large numbers of workers are migrating to jobs in other countries, often on a temporary or circular basis as they move between work and home, with little chance of accessing permanent residence and gaining the full rights of citizenship.

This issue was finalized in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has revealed national and global inequalities on an unprecedented scale — and perhaps even the limits of a globalized economy. It has also revealed weakened government capacity to respond after years of austerity programmes. As a result there have been deep cuts in social programmes, especially in the areas of public health. In spite of the hardships felt by most during the pandemic, the poor and marginalized are less able to protect themselves from the virus in contrast to those who have been able to stay safer by self-isolating in their homes and even maintaining their employment. Many are more vulnerable as they lack adequate housing and clean water, especially those who are precariously employed.

The growing awareness of these inequalities has been a contributing factor to the widespread unrest around police

brutality and racial injustice. Massive demonstrations began in the U.S. in reaction to the brutal killing of George Floyd, then spread around the country with demands for racial justice. Several countries took up the demand for racial justice in their own countries, extending it further to address injustices linked to European colonialism.

The pandemic has also revealed the crucial role played by low-waged precarious and migrant workers in most economies, especially in essential services including in the health care sector, food distribution and agricultural production, among others. Working conditions for precarious workers have been further deteriorated as many now face more dangerous working conditions as they are on the front line of the fight against the pandemic. For those working in sectors deemed non-essential, they were the first to be retrenched or to lose their status as foreign workers. Workers in informal markets and workshops have been denied their livelihood activities, making them unable to meet their basic needs as markets closed and street vendors were chased away. Millions have been left unemployed in both the formal and informal sectors, and now face troubled economies.

The articles in this issue were written before the pandemic. They provide a set of case studies revealing significant issues around new forms of work. All represent precarious workers in the informal and gig economies, and some deal with the additional complication of migration for work. They are:

Loubere and his colleagues examine the large number of Chinese informal gold miners in Ghana, asking whether they represent a neo-colonial activity or contribute to a kind of beneficial developmentalism.

Crispen Chinguno explores changing labour relations and worker organizing in the gig taxi industry in South Africa.

Leda Perez engages in a gendered analysis of low-income urban women in the informal sector in Lima, Peru, and the way they provide for their reproductive needs in the absence of state services.

Johannes Machinya explores the precarity of Zimbabwean migrants working in South Africa whose insecure immigration status leaves them in fear of deportation.

It is with sadness that we note the passing of Peter Waterman (1936-2017), a longtime valued contributor to the journal. He taught at the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague and his commitment to international labour studies led him to support not only this journal but others, including the South Africa Labour Bulletin. Rosalind Boyd, founding editor of Labour, Capital and Society remembers his early involvement with the journal with great fondness for his unusual style and unwavering commitment to the struggles of working people. You can read about his life and work in an article by Ronald Munk. 2018. Peter Waterman (1936-2017): Labor Historian and Activist, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, May. Available through ResearchGate.

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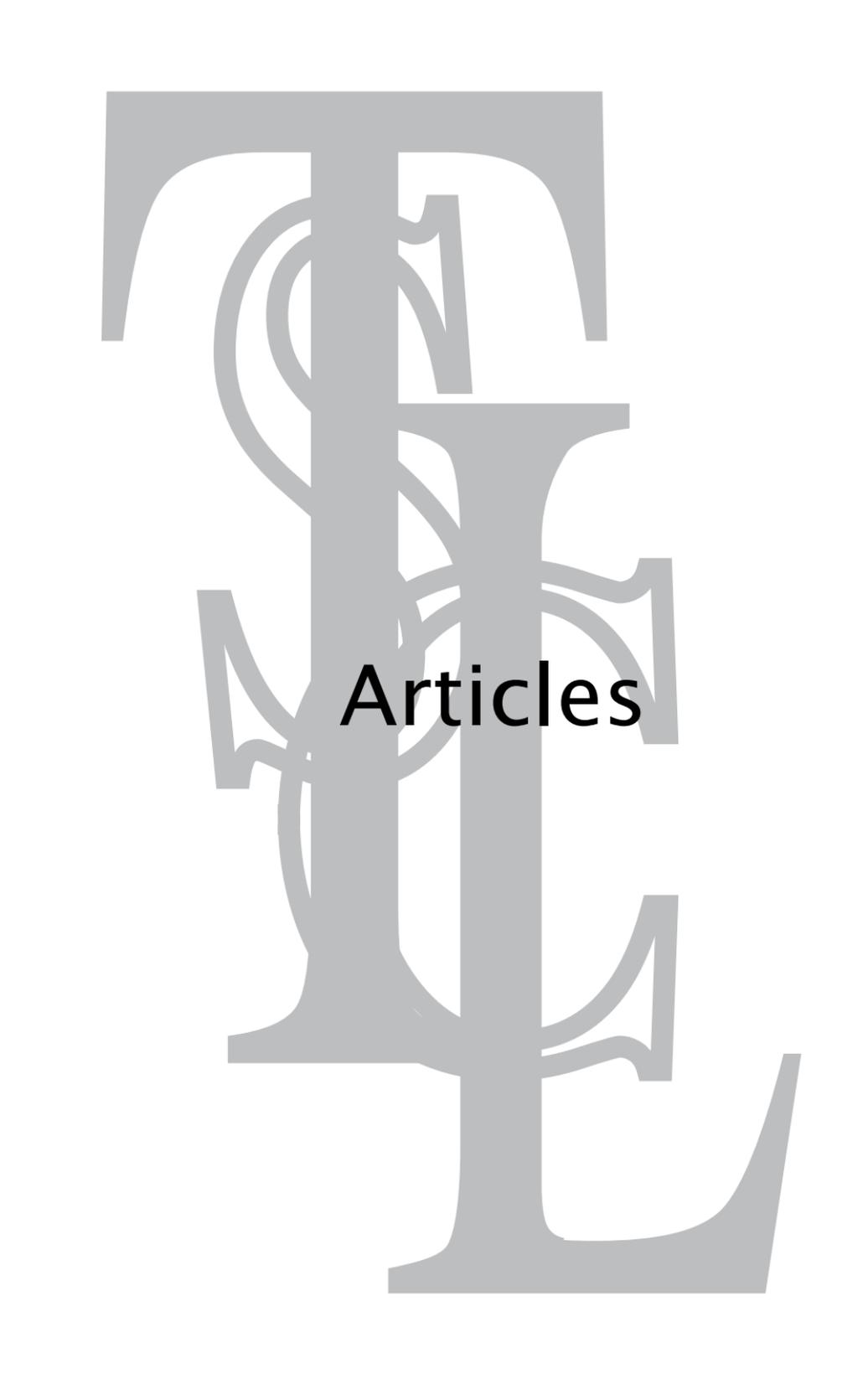
Articles

Extractions inégales : Reconceptualiser le mineur chinois au Ghana

Nicholas Loubere, Jixia Lu, Gordon Crawford, Gabriel Botchwey

Résumé

Au cours de la dernière décennie, la migration chinoise vers l'Afrique a rapidement augmenté au fil de l'engagement économique croissant de la Chine avec le continent. L'arrivée de nouvelles formes d'industrie chinoise, d'aide, de commerce et d'exploration des ressources a été transformatrice, provoquant des débats à savoir si la présence chinoise en Afrique serait mieux décrite comme néo-colonialiste ou comme une nouvelle forme de développement bénéfique. L'un des exemples les plus dramatiques de migration chinoise vers un pays africain (et de participation économique à ce pays) est la récente ruée vers l'or au Ghana. Commencée au milieu des années 2000 avec l'arrivée de dizaines de milliers de travailleurs miniers œuvrant dans l'extraction aurifère à petite échelle venus d'un seul comté pauvre et rural en Chine, elle se poursuit à ce jour mais les travailleurs sont moins nombreux. Cet article présente un examen critique de la façon dont les mineurs chinois ont été dépeints, dans les discours publics, médiatiques et académiques, comme un groupe homogène, qui bénéficie de l'extraction de l'or ghanéen et qui agit sur son environnement de manière généralement uniforme. Nous appuyant sur des recherches de terrain approfondies Ghana et en Chine, nous soutenons que cette représentation omet de souligner la diversité des expériences des mineurs et la segmentation qui existe au sein du groupe, composé aussi bien de gagnants que de perdants.

Unequal Extractions: Reconceptualizing the Chinese Miner in Ghana

Nicholas Loubere, Jixia Lu, Gordon Crawford, Gabriel Botchwey[1]

Abstract

Over the past decade, Chinese migration to Africa has increased rapidly alongside the expansion of Chinese economic engagement with the continent. The entrance of new forms of Chinese industry, aid, commerce and resource exploration has been transformative, prompting debates over whether China in Africa is better described as neo-colonialism or a new form of beneficial developmentalism. One of the most dramatic examples of Chinese migration to—and economic engagement with—an African country is the recent gold rush in Ghana, which started in the mid-2000s with the rapid influx of tens of thousands of Chinese small-scale gold miners from a single poor rural county in China, and continues to this day, albeit on a smaller scale. This paper presents a critical examination of how the Chinese miners have been depicted in public, media and academic discourses as a homogenous group, both benefiting from Ghanaian gold extraction and impacting their surroundings in generally uniform ways. Drawing on in-depth fieldwork in both Ghana and China, we argue that this portrayal neglects to highlight the differentiated experiences of the miners and the segmentation that exists within the miner group, which consists of both winners and losers.

Introduction

In recent years China's expanded economic engagement with Africa has provoked widespread debate over the nature of Chinese investment in, and migration to, the continent—with some depicting China as a new colonizer and others arguing that China represents a new beneficial developmental model (Mohan, 2008). The majority of research and public discourse has focused on China's top-down investment by the government and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Africa, notably "infrastructure-for-resource loans" (Alden and Alves, 2015: 250), along with the labour migration of Chinese nationals associated with these projects. In these discussions China

is frequently depicted monolithically as a new colonial power exploiting African resources and feeding into corruption, much like Western countries and companies before it (Kolstad and Wiig, 2011; Michel, 2009; Hess and Aidoo, 2014). The Chinese government's signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—aimed at creating trade and investment linkages across the globe—has increasingly provoked consternation in some quarters, with observers describing some projects as "debt trap diplomacy" (Kuo and Kommenda, 2018; Fernholz, 2018). There has been a particularly vigorous critique of China's role in the extractive industries, such as mining, with accusations that China is instigating a race to the bottom in labour standards (Dynamic, 2017).

Nevertheless, while the discourse of China in Africa is routinely framed in negative terms, there exist some counter narratives. Academic research in particular has sought to nuance and historicize claims of neo-colonialism, showing how depictions of Chinese engagement in Africa are racialized (Yan and Sautman, 2013; Sautman and Yan, 2016) and examining how Chinese capital operates in fundamentally different ways to that of Western governments and international corporations (Lee, 2017). Both the Chinese and African governments have also pushed back against the characterization of China in Africa as neo-colonial, framing the relationship as a win-win in the language of "south-south cooperation" (Lu, 2017; GhanaWeb, 2018; Alden and Large, 2011), and researchers have pointed to the ways in which Chinese engagement in Africa has, at times, promoted different forms of beneficial development (Brautigam, 2009; Monson, 2009).

While these debates paint a bifurcated picture of China's involvement in African countries, they also point to limitations in the dominant focus on top-down and coordinated action. In reality, Chinese engagement in Africa goes far beyond just government and SOE investments, with small uncoordinated projects and fragmented patterns of migration abounding, resulting in complicated and often contradictory manifestations of China in Africa (French, 2014). From petty entrepreneurs to farmers, from established migrant communities to new entrants, Chinese irregular migration to the continent is both increasing and increasingly complex—with migrants frequently having little or no connection to the Chinese state or even to each other (Xiao, 2015; Cook et al., 2016; Lam, 2015).

One of the most striking instances of such Chinese engagement in Africa has come in the form of the bottom-up Chinese migration to undertake artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), with the most dramatic example being the rush into Ghana's informal alluvial gold mining sector. Since the mid-2000s, tens of thousands of Chinese citizens from a single rural poverty-stricken county in the country's southern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region have been migrating to Ghana in order to engage in ASM. The Chinese miners rented farmland in rural areas, often near rivers, and imported their own machinery and mining equipment, including for river dredging, which is illegal in Ghana. This allowed them to rapidly scale-up the extraction of alluvial gold (Loubere and Crawford, 2017). This mass migration event has created new forms of cooperation between Chinese miners and local Ghanaians, but has also resulted in substantial environmental degradation and some violent conflict. Moreover, foreign involvement in small-scale mining is formally illegal. In mid-2013 the Ghanaian government initiated a nation-wide crackdown on illegal mining activities, implemented by a military task force, deporting nearly 5,000 Chinese miners (Botchwey et al., 2019). This was followed in April 2017 by a complete moratorium on ASM in the country for locals and foreigners alike, which continued until the ban was lifted on 17 December 2018 (Nyavor, 2018). This was justified by the Ghanaian government mainly on environmental grounds, due to perceived degradation of land and water bodies by intensified ASM.

The Chinese presence in the Ghanaian ASM sector has been widely covered in the domestic and international media. There is also a small but growing body of academic literature examining this event and its outcomes. However, with some notable exceptions, the vast majority of the political, media and academic discourses surrounding the event have been framed in the same dichotomous terms as the wider China-in-Africa debate discussed above. The Chinese gold rush has been overwhelmingly depicted in a negative light, and the Chinese miners have been depicted as a homogenous and monolithic group having a uniform impact on the local society, economy and environment in Ghana (see Depiction of Chinese Miners below).

This paper questions the validity of this sweeping depiction of the gold rush event and the homogenization of the Chinese miners, including their motivations, experiences and impacts. Drawing on

in-depth fieldwork in mining sites in Ghana and Shanglin County in China, where the majority of miners are from and itself a gold mining area, this paper seeks to bring the voices of those involved in, and impacted by, Chinese involvement in ASM in Ghana to the fore. It is the first study to focus primarily on the narratives of the Chinese miners and their families in China, based on detailed fieldwork rather than secondary sources. Fieldwork was conducted in Shanglin County in 2017 and 2018, utilizing the Systematic and Reflexive Interviewing and Reporting (SRIR) Method, alongside more traditional participant observation and the collection of documentary data (Loubere, 2017). Fieldwork also took place in Ghana in mid-2014 in Dunkwa-on-Offin in the Central Region, a main location of Chinese involvement, with some follow-up research undertaken in mid-2018. Fieldwork in both places took an inherently grounded approach to data collection, allowing themes to emerge organically and adopting an open disposition permitting new information to guide the research direction (Chambers and Loubere, 2017). The information presented below draws on the data collected during this fieldwork. Specific interviews are cited only when direct quotations are used.

Rather than adopting a theoretical position or clearly defining a research question at the outset, we instead aimed to give voice to the miners and other local actors, allowing them to represent their own experiences in their own ways. This rich data set challenges the prevalent depiction of the homogenous miner. Instead, what emerges is a picture of the Chinese miners as being highly segmented. They have had diverse experiences and outcomes, but they have also impacted the people and places in Ghana in different ways. Our fieldwork nuances the oft-told story of the successful Chinese miner extracting wealth from Ghana to send back to China and instead paints a picture of a heavily textured and segmented labour landscape marked by instances of audacious wealth creation on the one hand, and widening inequalities and new forms of precarious existence on the other, alongside the ever-present spectre of environmental destruction.

Depictions of the Chinese Miners

The ongoing Chinese gold rush in Ghana is a dramatic event characterized by the movement of large numbers of people and resources, as well as the transformation of physical, political

and economic landscapes. It is, therefore, no surprise that it has sparked heated discussions, both in Ghana and elsewhere. However, as we outline below, the public, media and academic discourses surrounding the event have been largely two-dimensional in their depiction of the miners, framing them as a monolithic group extracting resources at the expense of locals and having a uniformly negative impact on the country and people. This tends to mirror the binary framing of the wider debate over the implications of China's increased presence on the African continent, discussed above.

The homogenous framing of the Chinese miners can be clearly seen in media representations, which have consistently "othered" the miners, depicting them as a threatening uniform mass. Analyzing the discourse of 87 articles about the gold rush published on the news website Modern Ghana, Abid et al. found that the Chinese are depicted "as a critical menace that needs to be eradicated from Ghana… [and] that the Chinese miners are aggregated and presented as a horde rather than being individualised" (Abid, Manan and Amir, 2013: 46). These kinds of depictions have been present across the domestic media landscape. For instance, on 15 March 2013 the Graphic Online, one of the most widely read news websites in the country, published an editorial on illegal mining calling on the government to act: "The Daily Graphic calls on the government to deal decisively with lawless elements in the country, so that law-abiding citizens can operate in a peaceful environment." The editorial goes on to frame foreign miners, notably from China, as an invasion force of wealthy powerful people: "As in the retail trade, the foreigners have virtually taken over small-scale mining in the country. These groups of people come into businesses reserved for Ghanaians in full vim because of their economic power and in no time they take over the entire sector" (Frimpong, 2013).

International reporting has also tended to reproduce discourses that homogenize the Chinese miners and their impacts on local areas and people. Frequently, miners are depicted as uniformly becoming enriched through (illicitly) extracting wealth from Ghana. International news stories on the gold rush invariably have a passage about the tremendous wealth of the miners. For instance, in the South China Morning Post it was reported that: "Villagers in Shanglin love to repeat tales of the fortunes made in Ghana: one miner returned home with a gold bar as a gift for a relative; another ordered a Ferrari over the phone from Hong Kong airport while transferring

to a flight home" (He, 2013); while the International Business Times wrote: "In 2005, there was talk of a man from Shanglin who took five million yuan ($813,535) to Ghana and turned it into 100 million yuan ($16.27 million) in three years. As the story spread, hordes of people rushed to Ghana" (Song, 2013). In these reports the miners become rushing hordes. They represent a "mass exodus" that is streaming into Ghana uncontrollably (Quartey, 2013). The frequently used moniker of the "Shanglin Gang" also serves to paper over the individuality and autonomy of the miners, implicitly framing them as agentless foot soldiers in a criminal conspiracy. This ties into other common representations of the miners as a corrupting influence:

> *Chinese miners have also been accused of worsening corruption, with several high-profile cases of police and immigration officials being involved in extortion and bribe-taking linked to illegal Chinese mining having been exposed recently (He, 2013);*

and a national security threat:

> *In West Africa, security threats have linkages: illegal mining can lead to arms trafficking and other kinds of trafficking (drugs, fake medicine, etc.). Not acting on illegal mining… could undermine the entire country's security (Kane, 2013).*

All in all, media coverage domestically and internationally has reflected and reinforced the homogenizing government discourse, depicting the Chinese miners

> *as an out-group or "the other", perpetuating stereotypes of invaders, offenders, and perpetrators… Such broad-sweeping stereotyping seemed to pursue one overarching goal—the devaluation of foreign miners that infringed on local livelihoods and resources, justifying the actions of an authoritative government under pressure (Tschakert, 2016: 125).*

This reflects the wider popular trope, prevalent in

reporting on China in Africa, of "a monolithic Chinese dragon in an unvariegated African bush stripped of historical and political content" (Large, 2008: 46).

While more nuanced and less explicit in its characterizations, the small but growing body of academic literature also tends to implicitly frame the miners and their impacts as relatively uniform. This is primarily because the existing research mainly focuses on the gold rush from the Ghanaian perspective. This work has provided valuable insights into the motivations and perspectives of Ghanaian actors (Botchwey and Crawford, 2018; Hausermann and Ferring, 2018; Luning and Pijpers, 2018); the varied impacts that the event has had on different segments of Ghanaian society, politics and economy (Crawford and Botchwey, 2018; Aryee, 2015; Crawford et al., 2015; Crawford and Botchwey, 2016); technological transformation and implications for the natural environment (Rodríguez and Oevelen, 2018; CSIR - Water Research Institute, 2013); and the inherent informality of the Ghanaian ASM sector that has enabled Chinese involvement (Hilson, Hilson and Adu-Darko, 2014). Nevertheless, as the primary focus of these studies is not the Chinese miners themselves, they necessarily fail to fully represent the diversity within the miner group. The only study that focuses explicitly on the Chinese actors relies entirely on secondary sources in English— an approach that has obvious limitations (Hess and Aidoo, 2016). Additionally, there are also examples of academic literature that explicitly feeds into the demonization of the Chinese miners, calling them "foreign invaders" and attempting to identify gaps in policies aimed at keeping foreigners out of the ASM sector (Armah et al., 2013). In contrast, an article in the Ghana Mining Journal notes: "There is enormous bad press about the migrant miners, thus, objective literature about their impact on the host nation is limited and insufficient" (Agyei, 2016: 21).

The above analysis does not mean to suggest that the examples of negative public, media and academic discourses are entirely incorrect, or that the Chinese miners are victims of a concerted conspiracy to defame them. The problems that have been identified with the gold rush, particularly with regard to violence, environmental degradation and political corruption are undoubtedly real, as we have ourselves written elsewhere (Botchwey et al., 2019; Crawford and Botchwey, 2016). Moreover, there have been notable exceptions to the homogenizing depictions of the Chinese miners in

the academic literature—for instance, the media discourse analysis of Abid et al. and their conclusion that the miners are vilified (Abid, Manan, and Amir, 2013), and Petra Tschakert's findings that the miners have been "rendered both invisible and wholly othered… [and] produced as less-than-human mining subjects" (Tschakert, 2016: 123). And some recent studies have called for more research analyzing the patterns of segmentation that characterize the miners in order to better understand them as a complex set of differentiated actors (see, for example, Botchwey et al., 2019; Loubere and Crawford, 2017).

It is important to disentangle the miners and present their own experiences and perspectives, especially as the Ghanaian gold rush is, in many ways, emblematic of much Chinese engagement with Africa. As mentioned in the introduction, recent research on Chinese migration to Africa has noted that, far from being a primarily top-down and coordinated affair, the Chinese presence in the continent is increasingly characterized by bottom-up entrepreneurial activity with little or no connection to the Chinese government (Kuang, 2008; Park, 2009; Cardenal and Araujo, 2014; French, 2014; Cook et al., 2016; Gu, 2011; Mung, 2008; Hess and Aidoo, 2014). Studies have also shown that, despite their depiction as a monolithic mass, entrepreneurial Chinese migrants are rarely unified. Instead, migrants frequently create groups that compete with each other and form relationships with local actors. In this sense, Chinese migrants become integrated into the social, economic and political fabric of their destinations (Lam, 2015). For this reason, the popular and media discourse of demonization does not actually indicate the existence of a homogenous anti-Chinese sentiment, as local perspectives of the Chinese in Africa are varied, complex and highly dependent on the types of interactions and relationships formed in different contexts (Haugen and Carling, 2005; Sautman and Yan, 2009; Wang and Elliot, 2014).

Our fieldwork in both Ghana and China reinforces the findings in this emerging literature pointing to the complex and fragmented nature of irregular Chinese migration to Africa. We found that the Chinese miners are far from a homogenous group, despite the fact that the vast majority of them originated from just three neighbouring townships in a single county. In the following sections we will outline the differentiated receptions and perceptions of the miners, the ways in which they have been socioeconomically

segmented and the varied impacts that they have had on the localities and people that they have engaged with.

Divergent Reception and Perceptions

While popular media and academic discourses tend to depict the Ghanaian reception to the Chinese miners in broadly negative terms, in reality the miners have been perceived in very different ways by local groups and individuals. Mirroring findings in other African countries (Esteban, 2010), our research found that elites and others able to capitalize on the migrants have more accommodating views, whereas those local people entering into direct competition with—or negatively impacted by—the miners tend to hold more negative views.

Those Ghanaians who have benefited from the presence of the Chinese miners fall into two distinct categories, with very different motivations, attitudes and social positions. The first comprises Ghanaian small-scale miners and local traders whose livelihoods have benefited from the Chinese presence. The second group are those Ghanaian officials in gatekeeper roles who have been able to engage in rent-seeking behaviour. We look at the responses of these two groups in turn.

Many Ghanaian artisanal miners—both registered and unregistered—collaborated closely with groups of Chinese miners, benefiting from the capital, equipment and know-how of the Shanglin miners. In particular the miners from Shanglin introduced specialist equipment from China—trommels (wash plants), crushing machines (known as *changfa*) and water platforms for river dredging—as well heavy machinery (excavators and bulldozers), enabling an intensification of production. According to our interviews, a common practice by licensed Ghanaian miners was to form a partnership with Chinese miners, to whom they (unlawfully) sub-let their concessions, taking between 10 and 15 per cent of the value of the gold produced, while the Chinese who financed and undertook the mining activities took 85–90 per cent. Due to mechanized production, this relatively small percentage often amounted to much higher incomes than ever imaginable before—we were told that a 15 per cent stake amounted to an income of 15,000 to 25,000 Ghanaian cedis per week (approximately USD 6,000 to USD 10,000 per week in 2013). The gold rush associated with the incoming Chinese miners also led to a boom in local trade, with soaring demand for fuel, food

items and rental accommodation. Business was commonly described as "booming" in Dunkwa. Indeed, our research revealed that local traders had been upset when the government's task force chased away the Chinese miners, with the consequent decline in sales. This confirmed the study by Liu (2013), who undertook interviews in Dunkwa at the time of the task force operations in June 2013. Local respondents reported loss of employment, for instance as cooks or laundry women at mining sites, while local market women stated that "we want them [the Chinese miners] to come back" (Liu, 2013: 14).

The second group of beneficiaries comprise both traditional authorities and state officials. A range of respondents noted that local chiefs sold land to the incoming miners (often dispossessing marginal local farmers) for large sums, despite not having the right to sell customary land. At times this practice has caused intra-community strife, with community members accusing chiefs of taking money from the Chinese miners, thus allowing their farms to be destroyed in illegal mining operations, but not sharing any of the money with community members as compensation. There is also evidence from our interviews with both Ghanaian and Chinese respondents that the Chinese miners have had the covert and illicit support of people throughout the government bureaucracy for purposes of private gain, effectively enabling and protecting the Chinese miners, despite the fact that their involvement in small-scale mining is illegal. It is reported that this extended from immigration officials providing visas and bogus work permits for a fee, all the way to the highest levels of government, including state-level ministers and members of parliament, with the latter requiring funds for their election campaigns. While such extortion and corruption is obviously difficult to verify, some Ghanaian respondents noted that the Chinese miners were above the law due to high-level connections. One Ghanaian small-scale miner in Upper Denkyira East Municipality said: "People here in Dunkwa can never arrest Chinese people as they have top guys supporting them; they just need to make a phone call." This view was corroborated by the personal experience of one municipal administration official that the Chinese miners had connections with "big shots in government", stating that he had personally been foiled in attempts to formally register Chinese businesses related to mining for local taxation purposes, being threatened by people at higher levels of government to "lay off the Chinese".

Such evidence indicates how the (illicit) Chinese mining operations were facilitated and indeed protected by both traditional and state authorities. However, there were also pockets of officialdom, for instance the above-mentioned municipal administration official, that were unhappy with the situation and saw the Chinese miners as feeding into, and exacerbating, political corruption in the country. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has also been critical of this state of affairs and its adverse consequences, with a senior official speaking of the "culture of impunity" that has led to environmental destruction, and another noting that it was necessary to "make the law bite". This echoes statements made by Charles Wereko, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, in 2013: "Illegal mining in Ghana has assumed alarming proportions and has got to the point where it is threatening the survival of our water bodies" (Kaiman and Hirsch, 2013). Additionally, local people—particularly local miners, farmers and more marginalized groups—often hold negative views of the influx of Chinese miners. For instance, one local gold trader was quoted in the media saying that the mining "doesn't help us at all… Now our drinking water is all polluted, the farms [are] all gone and we haven't had any benefit from that" (Hirsch, 2013).

At the same time, the Chinese miners themselves have divergent views on how they have been received in Ghana and their positions within the Ghanaian socioeconomic landscape. In general, the returned Chinese miners we interviewed in Shanglin County spoke about "local people" (i.e., most Ghanaians they interacted with at the mining sites) in positive—albeit racialized—terms. Locals were described as "overall good", but also "simple, underdeveloped and not as hard-working as the Chinese". Some miners also reported good relationships with the locals they employed, saying things like: "Regular local people welcome us miners from Shanglin because we employ them and they have a chance to earn a salary. This salary is much higher than they would earn otherwise."

However, other returned miners described continuous conflict with local people, necessitating the purchase of guns and the constant paying out of bribes to different groups to avoid being violently robbed. Particularly those Shanglin miners who owned machinery—and were thus the investors rather than labourers— complained about being targeted by corrupt police and officials, and needing to keep a certain amount of cash on hand to quickly pay

bribes when confronted. This confirms the picture of extortion by corrupt Ghanaian officials noted above.

The miners also brought an internalized marginal identity with them from Shanglin to Ghana. In China, the Shanglin miners are marginalized both due to their ruralness (and being from a poor part of the country) and because of their ethnicity—the miners are Zhuang (rather than the majority Han), a minority group mainly found in the south and southwest provinces. As such, in the popular imagination the Shanglin miners represent a "backward" existence compared to those living in the cosmopolitan urban centres, such as Shanghai and Beijing. Frequently the miners in Shanglin have internalized such perceptions, with returned miners referring to themselves as "low quality" (*suzhi di*). Indeed, one miner said that problems encountered by the Shanglin miners in Ghana were due to their "uncivilized" behaviour and "not knowing how to behave, since they had no training on how to act and did not care about their behaviour or reputation". In this way, the miners at times reproduced imagined socioeconomic hierarchies, attributing their tribulations in Ghana to their own "underdeveloped" nature.

Success and Failure

As discussed above, in popular discourse the Chinese miners have been depicted as uniformly striking it rich—extracting Ghanaian resources and returning to Shanglin with unimaginable wealth. However, our research has found that the Chinese miners experience a wide range of outcomes, with some becoming extremely wealthy, while others did not do well. In this way, the Chinese gold rush in Ghana follows established boom/bust, feast/famine patterns common to gold rushes historically. At the same time, the depiction of the Chinese miners as an organized, homogenous group benefiting uniformly at the expense of local populations is one that parallels historical depictions of Chinese miners in gold rushes from the United States to Australia and New Zealand—where the Chinese were "objects of Euro-American racism and xenophobia", ultimately resulting in policies excluding Chinese citizens from these countries (Ngai, 2015: 1083).

The Chinese miners are also frequently depicted in the media as successful, jubilant and even carefree. They are returning home with great wealth, smuggling gold bars in their luggage or ordering expensive cars from the airport (He, 2013). This obscures

the fact that the search for gold is a stressful and dangerous activity. Returned miners we interviewed spoke of the hardships and risks involved in mining. Going to Ghana necessitates long (often unpredictably so) periods away from home and family, and large expenses to pay for travel and equipment (often on credit). This results in substantial pressure for many miners, both personally and economically. Indeed, we spoke with the family of a miner who had been in hiding in Ghana since one of the crackdowns, and he had never even met his nearly two-year-old daughter. However, many miners had little choice but to leave Shanglin to earn a livelihood. Most households in the county have very small plots of farmland, making it impossible to survive by agricultural activity alone. There is some seasonal wage labour available on large-scale farms paying approximately RMB 70 (USD 10.50) per day, but this is also not enough to support a family. As such, households that do not have at least one member migrating out to earn money are extremely poor. While some Shanglin residents opt to do less risky migrant work in factories domestically, mining for gold has the potential to be much more lucrative and is the established mode of "going out" for young men. Mining is where both the expertise and connections are, making this type of migration the norm, and following established patterns of labour migration in contemporary China, where localities tend to specialize in a specific type of labour.

Nevertheless, while there was a nearly uniform pattern of young men from Shanglin going out to mine for gold, the outcomes for the miners themselves were far from uniform. Instead, outcomes were influenced by a number of factors, frequently reflecting local hierarchies and inequalities in Shanglin. The most obvious predictor of success was related to ownership of the means of production. The first movers in the wave of mining migration to Ghana—from 2006 to 2008—were richer Shanglin households who were able to mobilize larger sums of capital to invest in mining machinery and pay for travel/expenses. Excavators are a major investment—costing around RMB 1,000,000 (USD 150,000) and RMB 20,000 (USD 3,000) for shipping. Initially, only members of the local elite class were able to gather the necessary resources and take the substantial financial risk necessary to engage in mining. These investors would then hire wage labourers, both from Shanglin and local Ghanaians. In these early years, Chinese miners were paid RMB 6,000 (USD 880) per month and 2 per cent of the earnings

(substantially more than factory work in China). Local Ghanaian labourers were only paid RMB 600 (USD 88) per month, or one-tenth the amount of their Chinese counterparts. As reported by more than one interviewee, the owner of a machine, on the other hand, could earn as much as RMB 3,000,000 (USD 450,000) *per day* on a good site. Such levels of income are quite extraordinary and almost impossible to comprehend, although it is not clear how common this was, nor for how long these levels of extraction were maintained.

In more recent years, many of those who initially went to Ghana as labourers have been able to save their wages, organize into small cooperative groups of six to ten people, borrow additional funds and purchase machines themselves. This has meant that more Shanglin miners had the chance to gain wealth through mining, but also that a larger segment of the population was exposed to financial risk. At the same time, when these former labourers were finally able to take the means of production into their own hands—usually in the early 2010s—with the purchase of a machine, the environmental and political landscapes had changed. After years of intensive mining, much of the gold had already been extracted from the more obvious sites, making the search more difficult. Moreover, the miners were facing increasing animosity from the media, who repeatedly framed the Chinese miners in negative terms from late 2012 onwards. They were also targeted by some high-level politicians— notably the Minister for Land and Natural Resources, the Hon. Inusah Fuseini—which ultimately resulted in the first crackdown and mass deportations in mid-2013.

By the time of the 2013 crackdown, many early movers had been in Ghana for years and had already amassed substantial wealth, much of which had been safely reinvested in China. They had also diversified their operations and started mining in other nearby countries, such as Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Some cooperative groups who were able to invest relatively early—i.e., 2010 or 2011—were also able to weather the crackdowns, frequently by finding a place to hide out with machinery until the military task force left the areas where they were operating. One miner told us how he and some family members invested in an excavator in 2010 but then got caught up in the crackdown and their machine was destroyed. They lost money, but had already saved enough to reinvest in two new machines, one in Ghana and one in Cameroon, after the situation calmed down.

Others, however, were ruined by the crackdown. One miner we spoke to had just managed to invest in a machine with partners a few months before the crackdown began, at which point they lost their entire investment and found themselves in debt. He was also traumatized by the ordeal, as he was involved in gun violence and was arrested and detained in a small room with 40 people filled with mosquitos for days before being deported. He has since returned to Shanglin and tried to start a pig feed business to pay off his debts, as he no longer wants to mine for gold. His partners tried their luck in Guyana, but were unsuccessful in finding gold there, so they now must return to wage labour or find some other ways to pay off their debts. During fieldwork, we heard numerous stories about Shanglin miners who had not been able to strike it rich in Ghana and/or suffered losses during the crackdowns, but who had remained in Ghana in a precarious situation with little or no means of securing a livelihood, let alone becoming wealthy.

Our interviews with returned miners and their families in Shanglin uncovered how local social stratification had been reinforced and intensified through the Ghanaian mining experience. A general estimate made by the miners themselves was that "30 per cent get richer, 40 per cent are just OK, and 30 per cent lose". The winners, mainly the local elite, have often become extremely rich and can invest in expensive urban properties, purchase luxury cars and send their children to good schools so they can find good jobs in China rather than engaging in future migration to dangerous mining environments like their parents. Those that lose are generally already the poorer households in Shanglin with little room for error. After encountering failure in Ghana, their attempts to improve their livelihoods through migration are in ruins, and instead they are faced with overwhelming debt.

Differentiated Impact

As the above indicates, rather than being a uniform phenomenon, Chinese mining in Ghana has actually had varied impacts—transforming the socioeconomic contexts in both Ghana and Shanglin in a variety of ways. While the miners have had a number of easily observable impacts on Ghanaian politics (e.g., feeding into corruption) and the physical environment (e.g., destruction of waterways and farmland), they have also entered into local communities and transformed the socioeconomic dynamics in

more indirect and less easily observable ways. At the same time, the mass exodus of young men from Shanglin to far away Ghana, and the resources that have been acquired through this migration, has resulted in major shifts in their home county. As such, assessing the role of the Chinese miners in Ghana and China requires us to step back and view the situation through a broad holistic lens.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Chinese miners themselves generally perceived their own impact on Ghanaian people, society and the environment in positive ways. Frequently, the miners saw their impact in economic terms. One group of returned miners in Shanglin said that they were playing an important role in developing Ghana and providing employment. They told us that each mining project employs 20 to 40 local people who earn RMB 50 (USD 7) per day, which is generally higher than they could earn elsewhere. The miners also saw themselves as contributing to local economies in other ways. For instance, we were told that successful miners and other Chinese businesspeople had invested in businesses in the mining areas—restaurants, supermarkets, trading companies and even agricultural production. However, it was admitted that most of the profits earned from the mining were not re-invested in Ghana-based, non-mining businesses, but rather sent to China or used to expand mining activities.

Additionally, most miners did not see a problem with their use of local land and tended to minimize the degree of environmental degradation. We were told by returned miners that large sums—as much as USD 100,000 for 50 acres—were paid to rent unproductive farmland and that this provided local people with far more money than they could have earned otherwise. This was framed as a benefit to the economies and people where mining was taking place, and the local people involved were described by the miners as being "happy to rent out the land" and also "happy to receive a good regular salary". The miners told us that it is the Ghanaian government that is worried about environmental destruction, not the local people, and that the concerns about environmental destruction are exaggerated. One returned miner told us that the Shanglin miners are just small-scale and do not use heavy metals like large mining companies. In his words, they are "just digging in the mud".

However, despite the Chinese miners' assertion that their activities only caused minor and temporary environmental degradation, there is mounting evidence that the rapid expansion

of mechanized informal mining has produced serious and hard-to-remedy ecological problems (Armah et al., 2013; CSIR - Water Research Institute, 2013). In terms of land, it is probably a misrepresentation to say that the Chinese miners "rent" the land from locals, as the mining itself often renders the land unusable for future agricultural purposes. One Ghanaian informant stated how local farmers, including his father, sold their cocoa farms to Chinese miners for between 20,000 to 50,000 Ghana cedi (approximately USD 3,700 to USD 10,000) from 2009 onwards. They were attracted by the instant money, but the land was destroyed through "the soil being turned upside down" by excavators and no longer usable for farming. Regarding water supply, a recent study of 12 communities in mining areas in the Western and Central regions revealed that over 20 water bodies (rivers and streams) had been heavily polluted and were no longer suitable for domestic or agricultural purposes, while 25 no longer exist or only mud remains (Botchwey, 2018). In addition, a four-fold increase in chemicals was required at water treatment plants in order to make the water suitable for human consumption, and there was a 50 per cent loss of water available for treatment over just ten years, from 2008 to 2018. Botchwey's (2018) study also found that the degree of pollution in many rivers means that fish no longer survive or are inedible.

Such evidence all indicates that the consequences of mechanized small-scale mining—initially due to Chinese involvement—on the ecology have been severe, leaving the state to remedy the damage at a significant cost. However, it has to be noted that the Chinese mostly worked together with local miners to undertake the mining activities that have resulted in such consequences. As such, framing this as solely a Chinese phenomenon is a mischaracterization.

The returned miners also characterized the impact in Shanglin in positive economic terms. For instance, the son of one of the early and most successful miners showed us his family's Gold Mining Theme Park (*taojin leyuan*)—a large area of land that has been contracted from local farmers in order to build an homage to the gold mining legacy of Shanglin, including buildings in a pseudo African style. The Park also serves a dual use as a fruit tree plantation. The miner's son told us that the Park promotes economic development and has created 30 jobs in the township where it is located, including seasonal labourers on the plantation, who can earn

RMB 70 (USD 10) per day. In our interviews, the production of the dredging machines was also identified by local people as a source of economic development. The Shanglin miners have developed their own dredging technology and produce the machines in two workshops located in the county. The machines are then sold both to local miners—who ship them around the world—and, increasingly, to international customers who have encountered the technology through interactions with the Chinese miners. However, the evidence of the ecological damage from river dredging in Ghana is incontrovertible (CSIR - Water Research Institute, 2013; Botchwey, 2018).

It is also undeniable that the gold rush has resulted in large sums of money flowing into Shanglin County—with estimates being as high as RMB 10 billion (USD 1.5 billion) in the boom years (Botchwey et al., 2019). On the ground, this translated into tangible improvements for some, while also increasing inequality. In the villages and townships where the miners are originally from, money from the gold rush was being used to build new housing and buy expensive cars. One of the townships had even been given the moniker "small Hong Kong" (*xiao xianggang*) because property and living expenses had increased—a form of rural gentrification. Additionally, some of the returned miners have invested in scaled-up agriculture by renting land from others—particularly for the cultivation of orange groves.

Nevertheless, the money invested in the rural areas has been limited, as even large houses are not expensive to build (approximately RMB 500,000 or USD 72,500) and agriculture also does not represent a large expense in comparison with the amounts earned. There is also evidence from our interviews that the Ghanaian gold rush has had an economic impact on the wider county itself, with miners telling us that they invested in county businesses and properties. This was confirmed in an interview with an employee of a county real estate company, who said that miners were purchasing apartments in the county at a price of approximately RMB 3,000 (USD 440) per square metre. However, most of the money earned by the miners has been invested in Chinese cities, particularly Nanchang (the provincial capital and located a few hours from Shanglin by car), Guangzhou and Shanghai. This is unsurprising, as urban real estate is the most lucrative—and widely seen as the most secure—form of investment in contemporary China. As such, the media stories

of dramatic and obvious wealth accumulation in Shanglin County presented in Section 1 are exaggerated—the county, townships and villages are not distinguishable from other similar areas that receive flows of remittances from residents engaging in migrant work in China's urban areas.

Discussion: Reconceptualizing the Chinese Miner

The exploration of the Chinese miners' lived realities presented above complicates the dominant homogenizing narrative prevalent in media, academic and public discourses, which depict the miners as experiencing the gold rush and impacting on local areas in uniform ways. Instead, it becomes clear that the Chinese miners themselves are highly differentiated in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds; are perceived in different ways by different local populations; are heavily segmented in terms of how they benefit (or not) from the gold rush; and have a range of impacts on local populations, economies and landscapes. As such, it is necessary to identify different theoretical tools to help us better understand the Chinese gold rush in Ghana.

A useful place to turn—and as yet under-utilized in the discussion on the Shanglin miners—is the rich body of literature on Chinese labour migration domestically since the initiation of market reforms in the late 1970s. Over the past four decades China's rural areas—including counties, townships and villages—have been fundamentally reshaped by the largest mass migration in human history. At the end of the 2000s it was estimated that 230 million rural people were engaging in migrant work in Chinese cities, constituting a massive floating population (Ye et al., 2013). This migration has followed patterns similar to the Shanglin miners, with communities specializing in specific occupations and utilizing local kin and friendship networks to forge migration pathways from one place to another. For instance, people from one township in Jiangxi province may travel to work in specific textile factories in urban areas of Zhejiang province (Loubere, 2019). As such, migration is not random but structured around traditions and trajectories, which ultimately become local identities. The Shanglin miners fit this mould—they migrate for a specific purpose to specific places and have taken on a migration identity that has come to shape aspirations and even define the people of the county more broadly in popular discourse.

China's domestic migration shares other useful points of comparison with the Ghanaian gold rush. For one, as in Shanglin, China's mass migration has produced new forms of rural wealth and played a key role in China's poverty reduction "miracle", with hundreds of millions of rural people escaping from absolute poverty in the decades since the market reforms were initiated (Yao, 2000). However, the imperative to migrate to earn a livelihood and support family in the countryside has had myriad other impacts on rural society and the lives of those involved. As in Shanglin, across China left-behind populations of elderly and children now inhabit "hollow" villages surviving on remittances from family members. This has fundamentally restructured rural society, having negative outcomes for children and the elderly and straining family relations, even as material wellbeing has improved for many (Driessen, 2018; Jacka, 2018; Lin, Yin and Loubere, 2014). Additionally, as with the remittances from the miners, China's broader domestic migration has resulted in remittances that have been invested—in limited ways—in rural areas, but mainly used for consumption (De Brauw and Rozelle, 2008). This has fuelled inequality within rural areas, and points to the fact made clear by the Shanglin miners' choice to invest primarily in urban real estate rather than the countryside— the nexus of China's current political economy of development resides in the city rather than the village, meaning that capital will necessarily accumulate in the urban centres, regardless of where it is acquired (Peng and Swider, 2017; Loubere, 2018).

Finally, much like the Shanglin miners, Chinese migrant workers have been systematically marginalized in a number of ways. They have been institutionally marginalized through the country's "household registration system" (*hukou*), which restricts their rights in urban areas, designating them as semi- or non-citizens existing in a legal grey zone. They have also been marginalized in the popular imagination and shunned from urban society. Depicted as being low class and not having good "human quality" (*suzhi*), migrants are often framed as a scourge rather than acknowledged for their contributions to urban development (Zavoretti, 2017). As such, rural-urban migrants have been constructed as a subaltern population, with the policy and popular discourse lumping all migrants together into a homogenous group and defining them by what they lack, rather than engaging with them on their own terms or examining the class relations that produce these subordinate subjects in the first

place (Sun, 2014). This mirrors the socio-political construction of the Shanglin miners in media, academic and popular discourses, and the rich body of academic literature elaborating on the social lives, representations and experiences of China's domestic migrants presents a potentially illuminating avenue of inquiry to disentangle and better understand the Chinese gold rush in Ghana.

Conclusion

Future research on the Shanglin miners needs to draw inspiration from the detailed investigations that have been done into the workings of China's mass domestic migration. This will allow for the creation of conceptual frameworks that are suitable for analyzing the experiences, identities and outcomes of the miners. More broadly, starting from the processes underpinning domestic migration and extrapolating outwards will provide new insights into the complex formations that emerge from an increasingly global China.

In particular, domestic Chinese migration provides an indispensable lens for viewing: 1) China's rise and presence in the global south; 2) new patterns of migration, entrepreneurship and resource extraction under globalized capitalism; and 3) the associated new forms of exploitation, subjugation and environmental destruction. Identifying and developing nuanced and holistic understandings of these phenomena is exceedingly important as we aim to honestly and completely depict the complex forms of interaction that are occurring around the world without falling into tired xenophobic tropes and inadvertent "othering". This is of particular relevance in the present context with Chinese migration increasing alongside global south-south migration. We would also do well to look to the past, to other eras when Chinese gold miners fanned out across the globe, and the resultant raft of anti-immigration policies that shaped racial segregation and inequality over the past nearly two centuries (Ngai, 2015). The story of Chinese miners during gold rushes is a story of a particular type of actor operating in a particular type of extractive capitalist context, but it has resonances and parallels with many of the processes that define our current moment, allowing us to more clearly see potential futures.

Endnote

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Dynamiques de pouvoir au sein de l'économie à la demande : les plateformes de taxi Uber et Bolt à Johannesburg en Afrique du Sud

Crispen Chinguno

Résumé

Les changements technologiques survenus dans le secteur du transport public ont introduit de nouvelles formes de services de transport à partir d'applications et de plateformes. Ces nouveaux services et ces nouvelles façons de générer de la valeur culminent avec la (re)constitution du processus de travail et des relations qui le composent, forgeant de nouveaux espaces de contrôle et de résistance. Se fondant sur l'expérience des chauffeurs de taxi commandés par appli à Johannesburg, en Afrique du Sud, cet article révèle les relations de pouvoir émergeantes et la façon dont elles sont (re)configurées ou (re)négociées en fonction des nouvelles offres de transport public dictées par la technologie numérique. L'article souligne la nature paradoxale de ces relations de travail émergentes. D'une part, les plateformes de taxi à la demande amplifient le contrôle du processus de travail par les employés, tout en obscurcissant la véritable nature des relations d'emploi et de pouvoir. D'autre part, elles forgent de nouveaux espaces virtuels permettant d'organiser la résistance et la solidarité. L'article suggère que le travail commandé par appli ne disperse pas la capacité d'agir et l'organisation collective des travailleurs, mais les reconstruit. La nouvelle technologie numérique déloge les vieilles formes de résistance tout en faisant une nouvelle place à l'innovation, et en créant de nouveaux répertoires pour l'organisation et la négociation collective. Par contre, ces répertoires sont habituellement des adaptations d'expériences, d'habitudes et de conceptions antérieures de justice sociale. Les changements ne se manifestent qu'en marge des répertoires établis (Tilly 1986) et sont difficiles à maintenir.

Power Dynamics in the Gig/Share Economy: Uber and Bolt Taxi Platforms in Johannesburg, South Africa

Crispen Chinguno[1]

Abstract

The changes in technology in the public transport sector have seen the introduction of new forms of transport service using app technology and platforms. This is bringing to the fore new services and ways of generating value. It is culminating in the (re)constitution of the labour process and its constituent labour relations, forging new spaces of control and resistance. Drawing from the experience of app taxi work in Johannesburg, South Africa, this paper unpacks emerging power relations — how they are being (re)configured or (re)negotiated as a result of new ways of providing public transport driven by digital technology. The paper highlights the paradoxical nature of these emerging power relations. On the one hand, the taxi platforms are enhancing employers' control of the labour process while obscuring the true nature of the employment and power relations. Conversely, they are forging new virtual spaces for organizing resistance and solidarity. The paper suggests that app work does not disperse workers' agency and collective organization and voice but reconstructs it. New digital technology dislodges old forms of resistance while opening new space(s) for innovation and new repertoires of organizing and collective bargaining. However, these repertoires are usually adaptations from previous experiences, routines and conceptions of social justice. Changes only manifest on the margins of established repertoires (Tilly 1986) and are difficult to sustain.

Introduction

The changes in technology and work have affected the ways we interact and relate to others and how work and society are organized. This has effects on many facets of life, including the provision and use of public transport. The public transport system is critical to our everyday life and is responsive to changes in digital

technology. Changes in technology in the public transport sector have brought new modes of transport services and delivery. They have also created new spaces and means of generating surplus value. For example, the introduction of taxi platforms, through intermediary digital platforms, links a service provider performing a task for fee-paying customers in a new way. The digital platform company creates value primarily by facilitating observable, direct interaction between two or more users affiliated to the platform. In the taxi industry, the platform company facilitates interaction between the taxi service provider (driver) and a client (rider) in need of transport through mobile phones connected to the platform. The platform company provides the technology and retains a per centage of the exchange from the service provided. The application is a software program that can be downloaded onto a smartphone and is designed to perform a specific task directly for the user. This is what characterizes app work and is a revolutionary way of transforming the means of production. Karl Marx credited this to the bourgeoisie and the role they played in the transformation and development of modern society.

According to Duggan, Sherman, Carbery and McDonnell, app work is where "traditional work activities are performed through apps controlled by an intermediary digital platform company that intervenes in setting minimum quality standards of service and in the selection and management of individuals who perform the work." (2019:118) This new form of work in the platform economy (re)configures the means of providing public transport, the labour market and the nature of the work experience through the intervention of new technology. This creates new opportunities and directly contributes to resolving the unemployment problem.

In a neoliberal context, capital is under constant pressure to improve productivity and maximize surplus value extraction. This may be attained by reorganizing production and upscaling technology. Production may be reorganized by work restructuring, which may involve adoption of new technology. Upscaling technology increases the pace and quality of production. Increasing the pace of production exerts pressure on the workers to increase the speed of production. This is designed to improve performance, which in turn affects the worker's experience. The pressure to innovate new technology and increase the pace of production is part of capital's revolving survival strategy and regime of control,

which conversely produce various forms of resistance. The pressure to upscale technology is an inherent element of (liberal) capitalism and part of its survival strategy and how it organizes work and the production process.

In trying to understand the impact of technological innovation, Schumpeter (2013) saw it as characterized by a paradox. He postulated this as constructive destruction, or alternatively, disruptive innovation. Schumpeter saw technological innovation as having a double effect. On one hand, he argues, it results in the decline and/or destruction of old industries, while on the other hand, this leads to the establishment of new ways of doing things. It generates new industries, business models, jobs and economic values. This means that technological innovation may culminate in the decline or destruction of jobs tied to the traditional ways of doing things, while at the same time new jobs and more efficient means of producing goods and services emerge. Schumpeter's perspective is critical in understanding the impact of digital innovation on the power relations between capital and labour in the share economy.

Foucault (1977) developed a theory of power that challenges the notion that power may be possessed and be wielded by a person or a group. He argued that power is everywhere and that we are all producers of power. Power, according to Foucault (1977), is an everyday socialized and embodied phenomenon. Foucault further argued that there are a number of ways in which power may be resisted. According to his argument, resistance and power are co-extensive; i.e., where there is power there is resistance. As soon as there is a power relation there is bound to be resistance. Resistance, according to Foucault, is always possible no matter how oppressive or manipulative the system may be. I draw from this perspective to understand how the power relations and resistance play out in the taxi share economy. This is applied here in trying to understand the power relations in the matrix involving the platform companies, partners and drivers in the share economy.

The urban public transport sector is not insulated from changes in digital technology and the associated new ways of doing business. The introduction of new ways of providing transport services, such as the app taxi service, has transformed our everyday life experience and how the market and society are organized. The way work is performed and customer expectations and experiences have been transformed and redefined through the creation of new

values and customer behaviour. In South Africa, for example, the introduction of new technology in the urban public transport sector has been disruptive and is reshaping the way the economy and society are organized and the general everyday life experience. App taxi services emerged in South Africa, driven partly by the need to transform and improve the public transport system and as a new space for generating surplus value for capital (global capital). This new flexibility posed a number of challenges, including raising questions on what work is and the boundaries between work and home/leisure time, i.e., the distinction between the spaces of production and reproduction. The introduction of new technology in the sector is not a new phenomenon but has been profound in recent years. The division between what traditionally was viewed as space for production and reproduction is being reconfigured and becoming more blurred. This has indeed been disruptive but is also presenting new opportunities.

The taxi industry in South Africa is characterized by weak regulations, precarious working arrangements, weak worker collective voice, informality and exploitative labour relations. It is part of the informal sector, which in the African context is critical as it accounts for nearly 400,000 jobs (directly and indirectly) (Fourie, 2018; Khosa, 1994; Barrett, 2003). The introduction of new digital technology came with the new experience of accessing public transport, which is a critical component of our everyday life and modernization of human experience. This comes with new conditions which affect how labour and capital relate and how the labour process is organized.

The paper examines how the power relations are changing or being (re)negotiated as a result of the changes and new ways of providing public transport. It draws from the experience of participants in Gauteng metropole conurbation (also referred to as Greater Johannesburg) in South Africa. The aim is to understand how the change in technology is creating new space for generating value and shaping the labour processes and power relations. It explores resistance, the exercise and practice of power by the different players, its field of application and its effects. It questions the notion of control and resistance within the realm of the share economy, which imposes new structural forces. The study explores how the players are able to exercise their agency and autonomy conditioned by the structural forces imposed by digital technological innovation.

Collecting the Empirical Evidence

The empirical evidence for this paper was drawn from an in-depth study of app taxi work in Gauteng province, which covers the area previously known as Pretoria–Witwatersrand–Vereeniging (PWV). The area is divided into many different local government authorities and is an important economic hub as it accounts for 10 per cent of Africa's industrial production capacity. However, a registered app taxi may work in any part of this metropole conurbation without any restrictions. The study draws from the subjective experiences of the participants interviewed and from observations conducted over a period of three years, from 2017 to 2019.

I was one of the first riders to use the app taxi service when it was introduced in Johannesburg in 2013. At the time I was a postgraduate student and public transport was critical for my everyday life experience. At the time I typically finished work very late, long after public transport's normal operating hours. The introduction of Uber as the first app taxi service at the time was an important turn as it allowed many of us to work late. As someone who has an interest in understanding how work changes, since that time whenever opportunity has arisen I have engaged in numerous conversations with the people involved in the sector in an attempt to understand the nature of work and working conditions and how it is evolving. I developed a special interest in understanding this new way of providing public transport and its impact on our everyday life experience and on capital and labour power relations. I have also used the app taxi service when I visited other countries and cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, Nairobi and Perth.

Johannesburg has more than 9000 app taxi drivers, divided between Uber and Bolt, which are the only two platforms providing taxi service in Johannesburg. The drivers on these platforms have a number of WhatsApp groups meant for sharing information on issues of common interest. For example, some of the groups emerged out of sharing information on where the drivers can get bargains for services such as car cleaning, tyre repairs and replacement and others. I identified a car washing service in Randburg[2] which is popular amongst Uber and Bolt drivers from across Johannesburg. I came to know about this from an Uber taxi driver who once gave me a ride and is one of the WhatsApp group members. I introduced myself to the car cleaning service provider and explained the objectives of

my study. I was granted permission to use the space for conducting the study. I met most of my participants and conducted interviews at this car cleaning service. Three interviews were conducted with platform managers and another three with partners who own vehicles but are not drivers on any of the platforms. I also conducted some unstructured interviews with app taxi drivers on the various trips in Johannesburg during the period I conducted this study. This enabled me to have a first-hand, deeper interpretation and understanding of the context and experience of the drivers in situ. Individual consent was sought from each of the participants interviewed, and some of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality throughout the research process. A total of 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with participants drawn from Uber and Bolt.

Furthermore, I attended a workshop organized by Fairwork Foundation in 2019 which targeted and invited stakeholders within the share economy. This was attended by various platform managers, partners, researchers and others. Fairwork Foundation has been advocating for and working on developing fair working conditions for platform workers, especially given that many of them do not qualify for protection under traditional employment laws in South Africa, such as the Labour Relations Act and the Basic Employment Condition Act (Fairwork 2019). This stakeholders workshop discussed and proposed the setting up of a decent work index for each of the platform sectors in South Africa; this has now been set up and is widely advertised. I attended this workshop as a researcher with a special interest in understanding how and why work changes. This workshop presented an opportunity for me to interact with stakeholders from various platforms, including the platform managers and organizations representing various interests within the share economy.

App Taxi Work in Johannesburg

The Gauteng conurbation covers the area previously referred to as Pretoria–Witwatersrand–Vereeniging (PWV), which includes South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, and Pretoria, the administrative capital. The area accounts for more than 10 per cent of Africa's GDP and extends to Vereeniging in the south. It has an estimated population of about 15 million and is the most populous province of South Africa. It is the country's economic hub, which

emerged out of a history of mining capitalism, organized through apartheid and colonialism grounded in racial spatiality. Black people were initially not designated as urban citizens, but some temporary sojourners were permitted in the designated whites-only urban areas when required to service white employers. They were required to live in the designated rural reserves and only permitted in white areas when issued a pass, which directed them where they were required by the white capitalist system. This constituted part of the migrant labour policy, which was designed as the conduit that connected the black workers from the rural reserves when required to service capital (Wolpe 1972). However, over time the rural economy declined and more black people became urbanized and proletarianized but confined in reserved black townships, often located in the periphery, far from the main economic activities (Khosa 1994).

Most African towns have a history of poor public transport and this is not an exception in South Africa. This is often tied to colonial and apartheid geography, which saw black communities being located far from or in the periphery of the city's economic hubs. The post-apartheid spatial planning is reproducing this phenomenon. For example, in Johannesburg, the majority of blacks live in townships such as Soweto, far away from the economic hub because of apartheid geography, which demarcated settlements according to race. This created a spatial mismatch between black people, who are the majority but live far from where they can find work (Khosa, 1994). Moreover, blacks have to deal with the problems of poor service delivery, lack of guaranteed safety, unreliable transport service, violence and price fluctuation, which adds another burden to an already strained household income. As a result, affordable and efficient urban transport service is critical for any South African town.

There were two main forms of taxi service in South Africa's urban areas before the entry of app taxi services: the metered taxi and the minibus taxi. The minibus taxi service is the most common servicing the black townships, and it has a long history dating back to the period of apartheid and colonialism. It emerged in the 1970s as part of the informal sector response to poor transport services in black townships and represents black entrepreneurship and is part of the apartheid geography of capitalism. It represents black people's agency to deal with the problem of urban transport and to close the gap left by the state in the provision of public transport

in black townships. It soon became the domain of black business entrepreneurs (Barrett, 2003). Work in the taxi industry has been characterized by poor and precarious working conditions, and in many cases it's run as a family business. A significant proportion of the workers are close family members and/or associates, which brings the problems of kinship and paternalism and the lack of a structured relationship between employers and employees.

Over the years the minibus taxi service has evolved to become the most used form of public transport in South Africa, accounting for over 65 per cent of daily commuter trips (Barrets, 2003). Minibus taxis are registered by the local municipality and licensed to operate in a particular transport corridor. The service does not follow a timetable but is controlled by rank marshals, who ensure there is a fair distribution of trips amongst the drivers. A minibus taxi normally has a carrying capacity of 10–15 passengers and there are currently over 127,000 licensed public taxis in South Africa. Most of the taxis are not owner-driven and the employment relationship is informal and most of the drivers have no formal contracts. The fares for the various commuter corridors are set by the taxi associations of the respective corridor and depend on distance. A taxi that covers a long corridor usually charges different rates depending on the distance within the corridor. The public taxi service is often characterized by various forms of violence, driven by contestation of various drivers' and owners' factions wrestling to control the sector in a particular area. It was designed to cater for the poor urban black working class, and there has not been much change to this mode of public transport since its inception.

The metered taxis are privately owned vehicles which are operated as a public transport business for hire on demand. They are based at designated areas in the city or suburbia and provide service to customers for a fee based on the distance travelled, calculated through a meter. However, although most of them have a meter, as required by law, most of the drivers do not use the meters but negotiate the price with the client or at times arbitrarily declare a charge at the end of the trip. Most of them are marked as taxis and registered for a maximum capacity of four passengers. In many of the cases, metered taxis are old and their charges may be arbitrary and expensive. In order to operate legally, such businesses must be registered with the local municipality. In Johannesburg the sector is controlled by several taxi owners' associations, who regulate entry.

Before the introduction of the platform-based taxi service, there were over 3000 metered taxis in greater Johannesburg. Many of the people in the middle and upper classes eschew metered taxis because of a plethora of problems, including poor efficiency, safety and arbitrary service fee.

App taxi services emerged as a third mode of public taxi service in Johannesburg when Uber was launched in the city in 2013. It is facilitated through a smartphone application that allows interaction between a passenger and a driver, who provides the transport service for a pre-determined fee. This has an effect on social and power relations. The cost for the service is calculated through GPS, considering the distance and time it will take. This model is grounded in the use of digital technology based on a platform that mediates the interaction between a transport service provider and a client through a cell phone app. Uber at its inception was presented as not being in competition with the pre-existing modes of public transport but rather was to complement them. Uber emerged to close a gap and service the middle and upper classes, who in many cases have personal cars but want to enjoy the convenience of not driving. This change in the organization of work affects the labour process and labour relations. Moreover, it produces particular social relations and experiences (Burawoy, 1982) and new landscapes and power relations which may undermine working conditions.

South Africa, currently has two app taxi platforms, Uber and Bolt, both operated by global multinationals. Uber BV was established in San Francisco in 2009 and has operations in at least 500 cities and 70 countries around the world. It started operating in Johannesburg in 2013 and is now the main platform in South Africa, with a 70 per cent market share of the app taxi service. It started with less than 500 drivers on its system in Johannesburg, and by 2019 it had over 6000 drivers. Uber BV uses the service of a third party, Uber South Africa, as a proxy for testing drivers' competency and background screening before registration onto its platform. However, the approval is done by Uber BV, which is also responsible for boarding the drivers onto the system once the registration is verified. Once registered on any of the two platforms, a driver may work anywhere within the PWV conurbation. Bolt (formerly Taxify) was launched in 2017. It was initially established in the city of Tallim in Estonia in 2013, and by December 2019, it operated in 150 cities, with 30 million clients and 1 million drivers

on its platform.

The app taxi service is organized around an intricate multi-party interaction involving three or, at times, up to four parties: platform company (Uber), partner (vehicle owner) and driver and the client (rider). This creates a complex matrix which amongst others challenges the traditional organization of work and labour processes. The platform company provides and runs the technology (platform), which facilitates the interaction of the transport service provider and the client. Through the app, the platform company has control over the allocation of work and how the service is delivered. The rider makes use of the service on demand for a fee by prompting the app on a cell phone to initiate a request. The partners are those who own the vehicles registered on the platform and are contracted by Uber BV or Bolt as service providers.

Drivers working on a platform have to be registered before they may be boarded and able to work on the system. There are three types of drivers: owner driver (self-employed); employed by a partner (wage employed); and working as an independent contractor on a hired vehicle. All the drivers provide the same service but occupy different positions of power. A driver who does not own a vehicle is required to enter into an agreement with a partner who owns a vehicle registered on the platform either as an employee or as an independent contractor. The driver is required to meet Uber BV standard contract requirements before being activated. This includes possession of both valid South African driver's and professional driver's licences and a clean criminal record.

A significant number of the platform drivers are migrants from Zimbabwe, Somalia, Malawi and Nigeria. One of the drivers explained:

> *Uber driving here my brother is dominated by us Somalis and Zimbabweans. I would say it's Zimbabweans who are in the majority and we the Somalis come second. For example, my madam boss has six cars on Uber and all her drivers are from Somalia. (Interview 8)*

Of the 20 drivers interviewed, 11 are originally from Zimbabwe, 6 are from Somalia and 3 are local. The majority of those from Somalia are refugees or on asylum, which allows them to work legally in South Africa. The drivers from Zimbabwe usually have

a special dispensation work permit, but some were said to have no proper documentation to work legally in South Africa. The greater number of migrants employed as drivers on a number of platforms is because of a large presence of foreigners in Johannesburg. Moreover, this is informed by the exploitative nature of the sector, which is designed to maximize the extraction of surplus value. Migrants are perceived to be unresponsive to trade unions and collective resistance and can accommodate the exploitative nature of work in the sector.

Partners may own one or more vehicles registered on the platform but do not necessarily have to be the driver of the vehicle. A driver may be hired by a partner for a fixed salary with a clear employment relationship, or in some cases the relationship may be governed by a car hire contract which has nothing to do with Uber BV or Bolt. Most app drivers in Johannesburg are on car hire agreements and work as independent contractors. This means that they are not covered by employment laws and do not enjoy the basic rights that come with employment, for example, entitlement to sick leave. Their relationship is governed by a business contract. They are under persistent pressure to work excessive hours to maximize profit and to keep their contracts going, which in turn exposes them to fatigue and susceptibility to accidents.

Drivers prefer a car hire contract to an employment relationship as this gives them the opportunity to work independently and get rewards for hard work. The car is hired from a partner for a fixed fee per week. For example, for a Toyota Corolla on Uber X, most partners in Johannesburg charge a fee of about R2,500 per week or R10,000 per month. The parties in the contract share responsibilities. The driver takes responsibility for the day-to-day cost of running the vehicle, such as traffic tickets, fuelling and minor breakdowns, e.g., tyre punctures. The partner assumes responsibility over major servicing of the car, which usually must be done after every 15,000 kilometres. The partners have no direct control of how drivers organize and conduct their work.

However, the platform companies have control over the allocation of work and charge a service fee (commission) for all the vehicles registered on their platform, deducted from the fee paid for each trip, organized through the app technology. For example, the current service fee for Uber is 20 per cent of the fare for drivers registered before 2017, and 25 per cent for those registered

thereafter. For Bolt, the service fee is 15 per cent. The commission charged by the platforms covers the road accident fund and vehicle comprehensive insurance, which in 2019 was about R1,800 per month.

Platforms may manipulate the pay models to lower costs and flood markets with competition to regulate supply and demand. Uber calls this dynamic pricing and claims that it is all regulated by technology and that it has no direct control on the price fluctuation. Uber argues that this is designed to encourage more drivers to come onto the platform by giving them an incentive for providing their service. For example, some riders were charged over R1,000 for a trip that ordinarily costs R200 during a surge in demand after a late night Global Citizen Festival at Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg in 2018. Uber argued that the clients were reminded of the dynamic pricing and had the option not to take the ride. The price only gets back to normal when supply and demand are in line. This rent-seeking behaviour means the app taxis are at times more expensive than the traditional metered taxis.

Uber and Bolt define their work as intermediaries facilitating the interaction between a driver, who provides transport service to customers paying a fee for service. They are explicit that they are not in the transport business. The general terms of the Bolt agreement emphasize to the driver that:

> *You hereby acknowledge and agree that we provide an information society service and do not provide Transportation Services. By providing the Bolt Platform and Bolt Services, we act as a marketplace connecting Passengers with Drivers to help them move around cities more efficiently. You acknowledge that you are providing the Transportation Services on the basis of a contract for carriage of passengers and that you provide the Transportation Services either independently or via a company as an economic and professional activity. (Bolt website[3])*

The organizing model adopted by platform companies is designed to obscure and disguise the true nature and relationship with the partners and drivers. Most of the drivers interviewed highlighted that they are entirely dependent on the app work for their income

and have no other job or skills that can provide alternative income. They are defined as independent contractors but in reality are fully dependent on the platform for their livelihood. The relationship is thus characterized by asymmetric power relations, and there is no recourse in case of a dispute between them and the platform company. A driver may be deactivated from the platform without any prior warning in the case of an alleged breach. Drivers are under constant fear of being deactivated from the platform, and this works as a way of discipline and control.

Taxi platforms enhance flexibility for consumers and operators. For consumers it comes with unprecedented safety, convenience and efficiency. It is available to the client 24 hours a day at the click of a button. For the operator and driver, it comes with unprecedented freedom and flexibility, for example, the choice of when to work. The app taxi service is presented as an opportunity to make money when you want without any nagging from the boss. This model of business and interaction guarantees independence and empowerment to both the operator and the consumer. However, I argue that the freedom proclaimed here is paradoxical. Although the platform companies claim that they are not in the transport business, they directly control the process and how drivers execute their duty. Moreover, drivers cannot be said to be free when they do not have any other means of livelihood and no choice not to conform.

Uber is divided into Uber South Africa and Uber BV, incorporated in the Netherlands, and the two are treated as separate entities. Uber South Africa is registered in South Africa and its operations are not linked to Uber BV, which owns and operates the smartphone application. Uber South Africa does not own or operate a platform despite its direct involvement. Uber BV owns the platform in South Africa and is the contracting company for all the operations. This means that all drivers and partners in South Africa are contracted directly by Uber BV in the Netherlands. Uber South Africa only provides minimum support services on behalf of Uber BV. Although the contract with Uber is clear that partners are independent contractors and the agreement is between them and Uber BV, most of the drivers who were interviewed were not aware of this separation. This affects how they understand their relationship and their expectations. For example, in Cape Town, seven drivers took Uber South Africa to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), claiming their relationship should be

declared an employment relationship. This claim was affirmed by the CCMA. This, however, was turned down on appeal at the labour court, which clarified the matter after the ruling against the drivers. The highest court of appeal declared that there is no employment relationship between platform drivers and Uber. Furthermore, Uber claims that it is not a transport service provider but a technology company that facilitates the interaction of drivers and their clients for a fee (see website). Its role in this case is presented as a catalyst that brings the two actors together. However, this is not always very clear and is often contested.

As noted earlier, since long before the introduction of the platform economy, the taxi industry has been characterized by poor working conditions, weak regulation and a history of informality. According to some drivers, returns were very high when the platforms were commissioned because there were fewer operators and work arrangements were more lucrative and flexible. However, as more operators were uploaded onto the platforms it became more difficult for available drivers to get assignments. The decline in business is making life difficult for the drivers and clients as most of the vehicles were procured on credit or through hire purchase, which must be serviced monthly. Many platform drivers have seen a drop in their income as the market has become flooded following the entry of Bolt in 2016 and increases in fuel prices and other costs. Since 2018, Uber, for example, has stopped signing up new drivers on their platform. However, Bolt is still open for new drivers.

In response to the squeeze, most of the drivers interviewed highlighted that they are inventing various forms of resistance at both the individual and collective levels. Many of them indicated they work on the platforms but find various means to get trips offline. For example, when in need of instant cash some drivers negotiate with the clients after an app request to cancel the trip and buy it offline at a discounted rate. Some of the drivers working in busy areas, such as the airport and universities, provide services on the app but at the end of each trip they give the clients their private contact numbers and promise a discounted rate if they call them off the platform. Working off the platform enables the drivers to make more money because there is no commission involved. This represents a form of agency and resistance by the drivers.

All the payments for platform taxi services initially went through a credit or debit card. After realizing that the context was

different, Uber reviewed its business model and included the option for cash payments. This was designed to expand its market and embrace clients from the low working class. However, this comes with a number of security challenges. The move escalated tensions and pushback by the metered taxi drivers, who feel they are being elbowed out. According to the drivers interviewed, clients may register on the platform using their cell phone numbers and are not obliged to include a profile picture. The drivers feel that this compromises security as some unscrupulous clients may use fraudulent numbers and get onto the system. The security requirements vary between platforms. Uber is viewed by most drivers as having higher security standards. Its app provides the driver's profile picture and that of the rider at the time of the request. This is not the case with Bolt, which is viewed as being more susceptible to violence and crime.

Uber has faced resistance and a number of other challenges in many parts of the world, and it expected this when it was launched in South Africa. Its business model and clientele were presented as different from the conventional taxis. Its service was presented as for the middle class to high-end market consumers, who are usually expected to pay through a debit or credit card. This prerequisite excludes the majority, especially in a context where many have no access to a bank account. The claim that Uber was for the middle and upper classes did not prevent tension and resistance from those who felt threatened by its model of business.

Uber faced its greatest opposition from the metered taxi drivers. Resistance and clashes between the two became an issue mainly at transport interchanges such as the O.R. Tambo International Airport and the Gautrain stations and other hot spots across the conurbation. A number of Uber drivers have been attacked within such precincts. A number of vehicles have been torched and a driver was killed in these clashes in Johannesburg. Metered taxi drivers closed the highway to O.R. Tambo more than once, protesting against the app taxi services, which they claimed were taking away their jobs. A representative of the metered taxis argued that violence was driven by desperation to defend their jobs. They took the issue to the Minister of Transport and demanded that the app taxis must be disbanded because the work model was too exploitative and divisive.

I observed that the experience of being an app taxi driver in the South African context is not homogeneous. There is a difference in the experience between those who are owner drivers when

compared to those hired as workers or on contract. Information on the ownership of the vehicles on the platforms is not easily accessible. Both Uber and Bolt keep this closely guarded. However, some of the drivers who have been working in the sector since inception estimated that on both Uber and Bolt platforms, less than 20 per cent of the drivers own the vehicles that they drive. A Toyota Corolla, which is the standard app taxi vehicle, costs a monthly instalment of about R4,000 through bank vehicle finance. Many of the drivers cannot afford this. Uber has minimum standards for a vehicle to be eligible. On Uber X, for example the vehicle must be a sedan, less than five years old and with a mileage of not more than 100,000 kilometres. In addition, it must have comprehensive passenger insurance coverage, and insurance premiums have more than doubled since 2015. Most of the drivers cannot afford to have their own vehicles on the platform. They are engaged as third parties by rent-seeking partners, who charge them a fee for hiring the vehicle or hire them as employees. The vehicle ownership model in the app sector in South Africa makes it impossible for the drivers to make any meaningful profit from their service. The app taxi business model was conceived in the global north, where the ride-share service may work well for drivers who own and use their vehicles for a living or to make extra income. In that context the majority of the drivers are better positioned to make money and have more bargaining power. In South Africa, owner drivers are an exception and have different experience from contract drivers. Drivers who own the vehicles are in a better position to negotiate with the platforms.

One way that the platforms can break this ceiling is to promote driver entrepreneurship by supporting them to become partners and owners of the vehicles they drive. This, however, is not happening as platforms are driven by the motive to maximize profit. They are not so keen to stimulate a culture that promotes driver entrepreneurship. As a result, most of the vehicles on the platforms are owned by partners from a middle-class background who can afford new vehicles or have access to and capacity to service vehicle finance credit. Uber encourages drivers to work with people who have the capacity to purchase new vehicles. Some of the rent-seeking, middle-class fleet owners in Johannesburg have up to 50 vehicles which they hire to drivers registered on the platform. This arrangement constrains the driver's income and is reproducing the apartheid hierarchies, characterized by exploitation and inequality.

As a result, the system is sustaining predatory capital. This conforms to the historical structural factors that created racialized social hierarchy and inequality. In this case digital technology is reshaping the South African labour market in a different way from the global north experience and is forging a particular set of socio-economic and political relations and experience.

By 2019 Uber and Bolt accounted for more than 9,000 drivers in Johannesburg. Platform taxi services have the capacity to create many jobs and the potential to be one of the means of resolving the problem of unemployment. They create low skill level jobs, such as drivers, compatible with the local job market. However, app taxi services have also destroyed many jobs. In Durban, for example, a popular metered taxi company, Mozzie, closed shop because of competition from Uber, and more than 20 jobs were lost.

The Exercise and Practice of Power within App Taxi Work

Panoptic control and management

App work in the taxi industry depends heavily on the use of high-end digital technology in monitoring, management and control of the work relations and production process. Platforms set the criteria on who can come on board as drivers and partners and the quality and type of vehicle models. Drivers registered on the Uber platform are required to have no criminal record and must own a smartphone compatible with the app. All drivers are trained on the expected conduct and handling of clients before they may be signed up. The riders have to be registered and must provide their details, including cell phone number and banking details. Uber drivers do not have a uniform or form of identity that links them to the platform. However, they are expected to be presentable and maintain a certain level of cleanliness and handle customers in prescribed way.

Platform drivers have the freedom to choose where and when to work and the time to start and finish work. However, work assignments are managed through the app and monitored through algorithms, which represents a form of panoptic control. The driver's activities are monitored in real time through the app. The app allows work to be managed through the use of algorithms which fragment work into tasks that are closely monitored, and this may be linked to the compensation. For example, Uber is able to monitor the position of the vehicle through the real time GPS system and

what the driver would be doing at a specific period. The app can track driver GPS location and has acceleration sensors built into the driver's version of the app to detect heavy braking and speeding (Prassl, 2018). In Johannesburg, for example, drivers are also alerted about areas where there may a surge in demand. Uber has security intelligence on the ground for hot spot surveillance. Drivers may decline a pickup if they feel that security may be compromised. Certain areas are known to be of high security risk, for example, the CBD of Johannesburg. Some drivers decline picking up riders on cash payment at night for security reasons. This usually depends on the location of the potential rider. For example, some drivers do not accept pickups from Soweto or Hillbrow suburbs in the evening because they are security hot spots. Uber uses its digital technology to monitor security hot spots which drivers must avoid.

In addition to monitoring job performance such as speed and heavy braking, the driver's performance may also be monitored through facial recognition on the app and GPS. When there is a customer requiring a taxi service, the platform company allocates the work by requesting available drivers within an 8 kilometre radius from the point of request. The driver is expected to accept the request. However, the algorithms also record cases when a driver declines a request. It is not clear how the technology companies make use of the data on declines. However, drivers interviewed feared that those who have a high record of declines may be discriminated against or temporarily deactivated from the platform as a form of punishment. As a result, most of the drivers try to ensure that they accept all requests.

The platform constantly monitors moves by the drivers. Riders can also monitor the moves by the driver from the point when their request has been accepted. The drivers are conscious of the technology-based observation and surveillance, and this has effect on how they perform their duties. The management of the driver's performance through algorithms represents a form of Foucauldian panoptic control. The panoptic form of control, as argued by Foucault (1977) drawing from Bentham, is tied to a central tower that can observe occupants without their knowledge of being watched. The platform drivers are mindful that they are being constantly watched and observed and this configures their performance. The app renders the exercise of power unnecessary because the driver is conscious of the constant gaze, which in turn controls their performance. The app

48

become part of the modern discipline for the workers.

Rating the experience

Platforms are able to determine, manage and monitor the quality of service provided and received through an anonymous customer rating system. Platforms solicit feedback from both the driver and the rider on the quality of service and experience at the end of each trip on a scale of one to five, with provisions to elaborate the feedback. The scale is based on a continuum measuring the quality of service. A score of one represents a very low level of satisfaction whilst five represents the best and highest possible level. This data is used cumulatively to rate the driver and rider. The platform computes the average score for each driver and rider, and this is displayed on the app for prospective riders when a request for service is prompted. The driver's performance is computed based on the ratings and reviews by customers, and this is often used to compare with other drivers and to monitor and control the quality of the service. This is a measure of the quality and level of productivity. A prospective customer when making a request has the discretion to decline if not happy with the driver's average rating. Moreover, the rider and the operator (partner) are able to constantly monitor and observe the movements of the driver through the app.

Uber uses the ratings and reviews to quantify the quality of performance by drivers and for changing the algorithm that assigns tasks. It claims that its rating system serves three critical purposes: (1) incentivization of high quality service; (2) establishment of accountability; and (3) promotion of courteous conduct and mitigation of the discrimination that is all too common in traditional for-hire transportation (Uber 2015: 5). Furthermore, the rating system is used to monitor and control the performance of drivers. Drivers with a score rating less than the average may be removed from the platform. A regular user of the app taxi service in Johannesburg explained some of the factors that informs how she rate drivers:

> *Uber and Bolt are all an extreme sport. If I give a driver a bad rating that is because I actually don't want to match with him in the future. From terrible navigation, to endless conversations, car quality to loud music. I imagine passengers are a nightmare but so can drivers. Now add the safety factor to that mix. (Interview 16)*

The interview above captures some of the possible factors informing how riders evaluate their experience. The rating system quantifies the experience and computes it into a number. This, however, may be arbitrary. The client's negative experience may be a result of cultural differences between the driver and the rider. For example, in many African contexts, when meeting someone for the first time you are expected to greet them. In the African culture and custom this is part of expressing hospitality. However, from the interview above, this may earn the driver a negative rating. Uber, for example, trains and expects all its drivers to handle customers in a particular universal way, paying lip service to variation and differences in the cultural context. Platforms such as Uber presume that there is a universal culture out there that is ideal for their business. This, however, ignores that the way the drivers respond and handle customers is conditioned by both society and work structural factors, including a culture which may be heterogeneous and specific to a particular context.

The app taxi work not only distorts the employer–employee relationship; it also transfigures the role of the rider to that of the manager. Platforms give both the driver and the rider options to rate their respective experiences at the end of every trip. As a result, drivers with a low rating risk getting deactivated. This works as a form of control which enables the quality of the service to be quantified and compared. For example, Uber drivers scoring an average rating below 4 out of 5 are warned of the poor feedback. Those with an average score below 3 may be deactivated. This represents a form of discipline and control and pressure exerted on the drivers to improve performance. This ostensibly turns the role of the client (rider) into that of management. The customer assumes a critical role in the surveillance and disciplining of the driver, which conventionally is a preserve of management.

Many riders are not accustomed to how the rating system works. Unlike the drivers, they are not trained on how the rating system works and how to give feedback. At the end of the trip the rider is not obliged to respond to the request to rate the service and experience. Uber claims that its customer may be deactivated because of a low rating. It is difficult to know if this is ever effected. Nevertheless, this serves to disguise the riders and drivers as if they are in the same position of power and equally accountable.

However, the power relations in this case is asymmetrical; the rider has more power and is the one always listened to. The rating system as a mode of control is primarily focused on disciplining the driver. Furthermore, it clandestinely turns the role of the rider into a critical position to monitor the driver through panoptic surveillance. This represents a new way of organizing control and the labour process.

The monitoring through algorithm management is presented as reliable and an objective truth without giving space to any form of subjective bias. There is no room for any human interpretation of some of the problems and specific contexts. For example, when a driver declines to pick up a client it's just recorded as any other decline without accounting for the underlying reason. Furthermore, algorithm-based management represents the highest level of alienation as it removes the interpersonal and empathetic ways of managing labour relations and processes.

Many of the drivers interviewed highlighted that they adopt various ways to counter the surveillance and solicit positive feedback from riders. Part of this involves emotional labour. Horchschild (1983) argues that emotional labour involves the expectation that the worker manipulates their actual feelings or appearance in the process of performing their work. Uber drivers modulate their feelings as a ploy to influence the positive experience of their clients. Platform drivers are conscious that they are working under constant technology-based surveillance. This pushes them to deploy emotional labour. The driver is always conscious that at the end of the trip the rider will be prompted to rate the experience, which in a way is also about their performance. The effect of this is that every interaction between the driver and rider becomes a theatre show driven by digital technology and algorithm management. A driver interviewed highlighted that in order to guarantee positive feedback from riders he goes out of his way to ensure that he provides the best customer service. This includes asking the customer preferred car temperature, music and/or radio station, opening the door for the customers, greeting and helping in packing luggage. This becomes a performance and presents the problem of alienation of emotions and inner feelings of the drivers each time when on duty.

Governance

The app taxi work presents new ways of organizing work and the labour process. The platforms occupy an intermediary

position linking the service providers (drivers) and the consumers (riders) through app-based digital technology. This new way of organizing work and production demands the reconfiguration of how work is governed. In the South African context employment law is designed to regulate the relationship between employers and employees. Section 213 of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 defines an employee as excluding an independent contractor. Similar definitions are given in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, which are the other principal employment laws. These laws presume a clear distinction between the roles of the employer and employee. An employment relationship confers rights and obligations for the employer and employee, and this comes with a cost to business. This is not the case in the share economy, where the distinction between the two is often obscured and contested. The app taxi sector creates new relations and work arrangements that do not necessarily fit well into the traditional employer and employee binary. Platforms explicitly evade the employment contract, displacing it with a business contract. Bolt's general driver's agreement declares that:

> *You acknowledge that no employment agreement nor an employment relationship has been or will be established between you and us. You also acknowledge that no joint venture or partnership exists between you and us. You may not act as an employee, agent or representative of us nor bind any contract on behalf of us. If due to the implication of mandatory laws or otherwise, you shall be deemed an employee of us, you hereby agree to waive any claims against us that may arise as a result of such implied employment relationship.*

In the app taxi sector the employment relationship is substituted by a business contract, which implies a particular set of obligations and expectations. Uber and Bolt, as owners of the platforms, control the technology and how the service is delivered but present themselves as technology companies and claim non-involvement in the transport business. They elect to be known as technology companies that facilitate the interaction between drivers, who provide transport services, and clients (riders), who request and pay for the services. They generate value by facilitating the

interaction between drivers and riders through digital technology. Bolt, for example, claims that it acts as a "marketplace connecting passengers with drivers to help them move around cities more efficiently"[4]. The Minister of Transport was forced into the debate and clarified that:

> *Uber and Taxify*[56] *are not transport operators. What they operate is the act; it is their partners who are operators. We urge them that their operators should apply for licences through the provincial regulatory entity. (Minister of Transport*[7]*)*

However, the distinction here is not so clear cut. App taxi work presents a complex relationship which does not clearly fit into the traditional employer–employee relationship. The platform links the taxi service providers to their clients. They manage the payment system and keep part of the payment for the service as a fee. As a result, this often creates a vacuum in the regulation and governance of the sector. The regulatory framework is not in sync with the changing context and realities on the ground. New and sometimes murky relationships are emerging or are socially constructed outside the conventional regulatory framework. The new arrangements provide space for the platforms to control the labour process and how work is organized, excluding obligations tied to that right.

On Worker Collective Voice

Trade unions and the collective bargaining process constitute part of the institutionalization of the employment relationship. They represent the contradictions in the employment relationship and the means of managing it. Workers come together as leverage when engaging their employer on issues of common interest. Instead of leaving issues to the arbitrary decision of the employer, trade unions often emerge as the collective voice for workers. The employer and union engagement often take form as collective bargaining. The transformation of work and organization of production in the share economy makes it difficult for such traditional institutions of industrial relations to emerge and thrive.

Trade unions may only be constituted and work legally where there is an employment relationship. The share economy distorts and makes it very difficult to have a clear and structured relationship

between employer and employees. Uber and Bolt have a zero tolerance for trade unions, collective bargaining or any structured relationship with the drivers as a collective. This is informed by a number of factors. Uber drivers in Johannesburg have attempted to organize collectively and enforce collective bargaining and articulate their voice in setting the terms and conditions that affect their work. This, however, has received backlash from the platforms. This has turned into a classification struggle, raising questions about the app taxi business model and whether an employment relationship exists between the drivers and the platforms. The response by the platforms to the drivers who have attempted to organize has been vindictive. Uber and Bolt deactivates without warning any driver suspected of being associated with any form of trade unionism or collective organization. According to one of the drivers:

> *If you are seen or believed to be aligned to a union, or even an informal drivers' committee, you will be deactivated without any warning. You will lose your job with no explanation, no hearing nothing, just like that. (Interview 9)*

The refusal to sanction participation of drivers in trade union activities or any form of collective organization constitutes part of the regimes of control and silencing by the platforms. This leaves the drivers in a constant state of fear, and they do not even trust each other. This fear makes it difficult for them to build any form of collective solidarity. A manager explained why Uber is strongly opposed to the unionization of the drivers:

> *Representation for the drivers should not come as a union. A union comes with some legal implications. It would mean beyond doubt that there is an employment relationship and this comes with other legal obligations such as UIF etc. A union makes this like an employment relationship and thus more overt more visible, which is not the case. (Interview 14)*

The platforms are not open to any form of collective organization by drivers. Conceding to this would imply accepting that the relationship between them and the drivers is an employment

relationship. A manager with one of the platforms explained that as business organizations they tolerate other forms of collective organizations for drivers and partners as long they do not claim an employment relationship. He argued:

> *We want them to have a voice but not in the form of a union. They can have an association. A union complicates things as it implies that we employ them … yet there is no employment relationship. If there is a union, then the law deems them as employees. (Interview 14)*

Drawing from the above, it clear that the platform companies seek to control and direct how the collective voice for the drivers should be constituted and presented. This is part of the manoeuvre to win the employer–employee classification struggle in the app taxi sector. The resistance by the platforms against the classification of drivers as employees is designed to absolve them from employer responsibility. The demand for collective bargaining rights and union recognition for the drivers poses a direct challenge to the platforms and how they organize the labour and production process.

On Collective Action

The gig economy is organized around change, innovation and adoption of digital technology, which results in the reconfiguration of production processes and work relations. It transforms the way work is performed and the roles of the parties The intervention of technology in the gig economy makes it very difficult for workers to have any direct physical interaction, shared work experience and collective solidarity. Each worker's experience is disconnected and isolated from others. However, empirical evidence drawn from this study suggests that the displacement of direct physical interaction by workers does always dispense worker collective resistance and solidarity.

Most Uber drivers in Johannesburg are hired as independent contractors and perceive themselves as entrepreneurs and their fellows as competitors. The nature of their work makes it complex to organize collectively and forge solidarity. As a result, trade unions and collective organizations are an exception for platform drivers. Those who are known to be associated with trade unions or any form of collective organization are victimized. However, Johannesburg

experienced a number of strikes organized collectively by app taxi drivers outside the traditional institutions of industrial relations between 2013 and 2018.

I highlighted earlier how Uber and Bolt drivers in Johannesburg are informally organized into various WhatsApp groups. These groups emerged out of the need to share information of collective interest. Some of the groups are made of members from across different platforms. These groups create a virtual collective outside the control of the platforms. A series of events in South Africa before July 2018 threatened the viability of the app taxi economy. There were successive fuel price increases because of weakening domestic currency. Uber increased its commission per trip from 20 to 25 per cent, and this adversely affected drivers' incomes. In some cases, the net income for drivers decreased from R3,500 to R500 per week.

Some of the affected drivers shared the grievance on the WhatsApp groups. This prompted many of them to realize that they were all facing common problems, particularly those related to increasing operating costs. Many of them were feeling the squeeze and failing to absorb the escalation of the operating costs; yet they were suffering in isolation despite the fact that this was a common problem affecting them all. The capacity of app taxi drivers to absorb the rising costs was further undermined by the fact that most of the app taxi drivers do not own the cars they drive. They hire from partners who are fleet owners predominantly from a middle-class background. This common experience ignited a sense of collective consciousness and solidarity which propelled the drivers to organize collectively, and this was overwhelmingly supported by many drivers across various WhatsApp groups.

The collective action was organized virtually through social media, a space accessible to most of the drivers. However, this evolved into real action with foot soldiers on the ground. As the collective action evolved, the drivers constituted a structure to coordinate the action. A committee which the drivers constituted to advance their collective interests prepared a memorandum which was to be presented to Uber and Bolt outlining the following demands:

- That Uber should reduce its commission from 25 per cent to 20 per cent.
- Increase of the base price to R50.

- Operators should have representatives on the companies' boards of directors.
- Uber should stop new entrants to the cab hailing applications market, as they claimed these platforms were "saturated".

These demands were of general interest and supported by most platform drivers. The collective action kicked off on Tuesday, 3 July 2018, initially as "a go slow". A mass meeting of platform drivers was organized on Friday, 6 July 2018, to review the action and map a way forward. The plan was for the drivers to first assemble and march to Uber and Bolt head offices to handover the memorandum. The drivers lamented Uber's unilateral decision to increase the commission to 25 per cent and described it as "theft". They demanded its immediate reduction. The drivers assembled at the Johannesburg Zoo lake before the march to the Uber office in Kramerville. At least 400 drivers attended the mass meeting. Another collective grievance relates to the fact that the drivers felt they were being left out of discussions regarding policy making that directly affects their work. Some of the drivers described their working experience as "technological slavery". They claimed that both Uber and Bolt maintained the charges for the riders despite several increases in fuel price and as a result they were being squeezed out of business. In an effort to diffuse the imminent collective action, Uber made a public announcement in the media that it had introduced a fuel incentive in June 2018 to cushion the drivers from fuel price increases. In addition, during certain hours of the day Uber promised to ensure that the driver's fare earnings were guaranteed and, if not, it was to cover the difference. One of the drivers, elected as the committee spokesperson, highlighted that they were not consulted and unaware of the fuel incentives claimed in the public media by Uber. He argued that the earning guarantees should have been applied to cover all periods of the day. The two parties were in a way talking to each other through the media.

Some drivers were reluctant to participate in the protest for fear of victimization. To counter this, the drivers in support of the action organized "flying pickets" targeting key Uber and Bolt main pick-up points across the city aimed at politically "convincing" their fellow drivers to support the collective action. All the platform drivers passing the march were stopped and their cell phones confiscated, and they were commandeered to join or if they had a

client were instructed to drop them at their destination and return to the march. For example, some of the drivers who were on strike blocked some of their fellow drivers early in the morning who were using alternative routes to provide service to passengers from the popular pick-up points in Rosebank, Sandton and Park station. This was meant to force their colleagues to join the strike. The march caused congestion in Johannesburg CBD. Part of the protest included a slow convoy that blocked traffic in the busy N1 road around Corlett Drive and Sandton areas, which is the way leading to Uber Johannesburg head office. When the drivers arrived at the Uber head office the general manager was said to be not present to receive the memorandum. In the end two drivers were allowed into the premises and presented the memorandum to the senior Uber representative who was present. Since the drivers were organized across the two platform companies, a similar memorandum was later handed over to Bolt management in Braynston.

The organization of labour in South Africa in sectors such as mining was dependent on subverting the migrant and hostel system by making space for organizing black workers' resistance. The migrant and hostel system constituted part of the regimes of control for the colonial and apartheid regimes which was overturned by workers into a space of resistance and organizing (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu, 2011). In a similar way, the platform business model is designed to undermine worker's collective agency through fragmentation of work and isolation using digital technology. This, however, is being subverted by the workers. In this context technology is, on one hand, a means to isolate and individualize workers and to extinguish any potential sense of collective consciousness and solidarity. However, on the other hand, it is opening new modes of communication between workers which allows collective organization and mobilization in virtual space regardless of geographical location (spatiality) and resource challenges. This provides open space for the innovation of new repertoires of organizing for platform workers. Innovation in communication technology allows instantaneous communication amongst many people at the same time in different geographical spaces. This becomes a virtual space for organizing. The nature of the work for Uber drivers limits physical interaction and association amongst drivers but on the other hand technology opens up a new space for organizing and collective association through social media as a virtual space. This overturned digital technology from being an

instrument of control to an instrument of resistance. Uber and Bolt fear that accepting trade unions for drivers or any form of collective organization would imply an employment relationship. The recent strikes by Uber and Bolt workers in Johannesburg suggest that technology may work as a form of disruptive innovation. It suggests that workers' collective voice and collective bargaining in the share economy do not always disappear despite hostile and concerted effort by capital to extinguish them. In this case study, the drivers were able to organize and gain leverage and concessions from a hostile and reluctant capital.

South Africa emerged from a history of protracted struggle against colonialism and apartheid. The collective action by the platform drivers discussed here drew a lot from previous struggle repertoires. Tilly (2005) views repertoires as sets of learned behaviour which collective action groups can draw upon at specific situations in the course of their struggle (Tilly, 2005). These are limited sets of behaviours learned, shared and acted through deliberate processes of action drawn from past experience as successful. People know the rules of the game and they vary performance to meet the purpose at hand. For example, the platform drivers in the strike elected representatives, organized an assembly, drafted a memorandum and organized a march and the associated violence. These are some of the repertoires of protest tied to South Africa's history against apartheid and colonialism. Tilly (2005) further argues that repertoires change as an adaptation but are linked to previous experiences, actors' daily routines and conceptions of justice. Changes to the repertoires may result from deliberate innovation and strenuous bargaining at the margins of established repertoires and succeed only occasionally (Tilly, 2005). In this protest, for example, new repertoires of organizing linked to social media as a virtual space and new communication technology emerged and became critical in forging new forms of collective resistance. WhatsApp groups became crucial virtual spaces of organizing resistance against the platforms.

At the centre of the struggle by platform workers were informal collective organizations that adopted a social movement unionism tradition. This is a form of unionism where workers link their struggle to that of the broader society (Von Holdt, 2002). A number of the platform workers were able to make links between South Africa's problem of inequality and the exploitative

relationship that characterized their relationship with the app technology companies. Apartheid created a social hierarchy that still informs how the South African society is organized. In the strike, the drivers claimed that the platforms were perpetuating the legacies of apartheid of exploitation and inequality. They thus appealed to the government to disband the platforms.

The drivers organized a mass meeting and assembled at the Johannesburg Zoo lake as part of the preparation for the march. The assembly point and mass meeting became an important space in organizing collective resistance. It symbolized a place of assembly where workers converge when in a crisis to map way forward. The mass meetings were addressed by an informal committee constituted by the drivers. Collective decisions passed at the mass meetings were binding to all, including those who may have had dissenting views and/or may not have attended the meeting. For example, after the assembly, the drivers passed a decision collectively that the strike action should continue and some of the drivers proceeded on to block their colleagues who were not part of the strike. Mass meetings constitute part of the collective protest repertoire and an important part of the process of building consensus (Chinguno, 2015). The drivers in this case showed how collective resistance against the platforms remained critical despite the structural challenges presented by this new form of work arrangement.

Fair Work for South African Platforms

In comparison with other contexts, work in the share economy in Africa is still low but increasingly becoming significant. This is viewed as a space for expanding employment opportunities and addressing the problem of unemployment. South Africa faces a serious unemployment challenge and app work is viewed as one of the means of expanding employment opportunities. According to Fairwork Foundation, of the 53 per cent of the South Africans with access to the internet, 6 per cent do app-based work. Of these, work on the taxi platforms is the most common. Uber, for example, has more than 6000 registered drivers on its PWV conurbation platform.

However, as noted earlier, work in the platform economy is precarious and exploitative. Ensuring fair and decent work in the share economy is an important issue requiring careful consideration and support. A major concern is that given South Africa's context of high

unemployment there is high risk that platform work has potential to be more harmful and expose workers to detrimental labour practices in the long run. To address this, Fairwork Foundation has been undertaking action research in South Africa in collaboration with the private sector, workers, civil society organizations, government and other stakeholders aimed at measuring the fairness of working conditions on each platform and laying a basis for appropriate regulation. Fairwork embarked on a project designed to develop a decent work index for all the platform economy businesses in South Africa. The project run by the Oxford Internet Institute is funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany) in collaborations with IIIT-Bangalore, University of Cape Town, University of Western Cape and University of Manchester. Fairwork Foundation is committed to highlighting best and worst practices in the emerging platform economy (see website). The rationale behind this initiative, which is philanthropic in nature, is to ensure that platforms take responsibility for fair conditions and protect vulnerable workers. Fairwork Initiative developed and published its first decent work index in 2019 in South Africa regarding five principles of fairness – fair pay, fair conditions, fair contracts, fair management and fair representation – rated out of ten. In 2020 Uber scored 4 out of 10 points, whilst Bolt only scored 1 point out of 10 on the Fairwork Foundation initiative index.

The Fairwork Foundation initiative in this context is important in raising questions about the working conditions in the share economy in South Africa and beyond. However, some of the participants interviewed argued that the project is driven by global capital interests more concerned about how society should adapt and manage change in digital technology. Furthermore, the initiative ignores that digital technology is not politically neutral but is part and parcel of the established global political order and inequality. Technological innovation reproduces the current existing social order and hierarchy unless mediated or conditioned. The response by the Fairwork Foundation is thus paradoxical as, on one hand, it may be viewed as a form of socializing the broader society to accept the new form of order mediated by technology whilst entrenching existing exploitative relationships. On the other hand, this may be viewed as a form of incubating and supporting the sense of consciousness and resistance by those short changed by technological innovation.

Conclusion

South Africa's Gauteng conurbation is following global trends in adopting new ways of providing public transport by embracing digital technology. This has culminated in the introduction of app taxi services, which come with new customer services and experiences and (re)organization of the labour processes and relations. App taxi work presents complex work arrangements and labour processes that subvert the traditional employment relations and work model. Drawing from the experience of app taxi work in Johannesburg, South Africa, this paper unpacks emerging power relations, ways in which they are being (re)configured or (re)negotiated as a result of the changes and new ways of providing public transport driven by digital technology. It explores the exercise and practice of power, its field of application and effects and how different players are able to exercise their agency and autonomy conditioned by the structural forces imposed by digital innovation.

The article shows how app taxi work enhances control by capital through the reconstruction of the labour processes and relations enhanced by the adoption of digital technology. In the case study highlighted, app taxi drivers are presented in disguise as self-employed independent contractors. The platforms retain the privilege to allocate work and control how it is executed. This is facilitated by algorithmic management and panoptic control. Digital technology allows platforms to subvert the traditional work arrangement, labour process and obligations. At the end of each trip the driver and client are requested to evaluate their experience. This rating system transfigures the role of the client into that of a manager. The client assumes the critical role of surveillance and disciplining of drivers. Drivers are conscious that they are working under constant surveillance and this has an effect on their performance.

The effect of digital technology on app work is presented in this paper as paradoxical. This article shows how app work fragments and makes it difficult for the drivers to share their lived experience and forge collective resistance. However, the drivers in the case presented were able to subvert this and exercise their agency and autonomy conditioned by the structural forces imposed by technological innovation. Whilst technological innovation is designed to enhance surveillance and control, it conversely presents new spaces for organizing collective resistance and individual agency. On one hand, it may be adopted to control the organization

of production and labour process and to obscure the true nature of the power relations. Conversely, it may present new virtual space(s) for organizing collective resistance (social media). The study highlights how app taxi drivers appropriated social media as a new space for organizing collective resistance and worker solidarity. The app drivers are able to organize and sustain formidable strikes through use of social media as a new virtual space of resistance.

The paper concludes that the share economy, and in particular digital technology, does not displace worker agency but may (re)configure it. New digital technology opens new sources of power and spaces that may support innovation of new repertoires of collective bargaining and action for platform workers. The new sources of power in this context may be drawn from publicity, reputation and consumer power; a typical example highlighted in this study relates to the push for the adoption of platform decent work indicators advanced by the Fairwork Foundation initiative. However, these repertoires are usually adaptations drawn from previous experience, routine and conceptions of social justice. Changes only manifest on the margins of established repertoires (Tilly 1986) and are difficult to sustain.

Endnotes

1. Crispen Chinguno, Senior Lecturer at Sol Plaatje University, Kimberley South Africa and research associate at SWOP Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Article received May 3, 2020.
2. A suburb within Johannesburg.
3. https://bolt.eu/en/legal/terms-for-drivers/
4. See website
5. https://businesstech.co.za/news/mobile/197990/7000-uber-cars-are-flooding-joburg-routes-taxi-owner/
6. Taxify rebranded to Bolt in 2019.

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Une chaîne de précarité sexospécifique : les employeuses à faible revenu et leurs travailleuses domestiques adolescentes dans le secteur informel de Lima

Leda M. Pérez

Résumé

La participation croissante des femmes au marché du travail dans un contexte de développement capitaliste se fait au détriment d'autres femmes et filles au sein de l'économie de service informelle, particulièrement pour celles qui fournissent des services domestiques. La littérature féministe s'est penchée sur ce problème chez les femmes de classe moyenne ou supérieure. Mais on en sait moins sur la façon dont les citadines à faible revenu répondent aux besoins de leur maisonnée lorsque les services sociaux sont inexistants ou inadéquats, surtout pour les enfants et les personnes âgées. Cet article examine la relation entre les femmes défavorisées, chefs de famille et employées précaires du secteur informel de Lima au Pérou, et les jeunes filles, majoritairement adolescentes, qu'elles emploient comme travailleuses domestiques. Je soutiens que les services ménagers fournis par ces jeunes filles renforcent la sexospécifité du travail précaire. J'ai constaté que les travailleuses de moins de 16 ans sont classées comme des aides domestiques, sont généralement employées par des membres de leur famille, et ne reçoivent souvent aucun salaire. Celles qui ont plus de 16 ans sont habituellement considérées comme des travailleuses et n'ont pas de liens familiaux avec leurs employeuses, mais reçoivent des salaires peu élevés. Dans les deux cas, la relation travailleuse-employeuse est asymétrique et basée sur une précarité mutuelle.

Low-income "Employers" and Adolescent Domestic Workers: A Gendered Chain of Precarity in Lima's Informal Sector

Leda M. Pérez[1]

Abstract

Women's increased participation in the workforce in a context of capitalist-led development is happening at the expense of other women and girls in the informal service economy, particularly those who provide support in domestic services. Feminist literature has examined this issue among middle- and upper-class women, yet less is known about how low-income urban women meet their household reproduction needs in economies that provide limited state-run social services, especially around child and elder care. This paper examines the relationship between impoverished urban female heads of household precariously engaged in the informal sector in Lima, Peru, and the mostly adolescent girls they employ as domestic workers. I argue that the household services provided by young girls reinforce gendered labour in precarious work. I found that workers below the age of 16 become classified as "helpers" and are usually employed by family members and generally do not receive wages. Those aged 16 or older, however, are usually viewed as workers and do not have a family relationship with their employers but receive low wages. In both cases, the worker-employer relationship is asymmetrical and based on mutual precariousness.

Introduction

On a hot summer day in January 2018, my research assistant and I travelled, first on a "combi"[2] and later, on foot, to a small market in the San Genaro neighbourhood within the Chorrillos district of urban Lima. Located in one of the area's most impoverished shantytowns, the "market" where Isabel (born in Apurimac in 1968) asked us to meet her was not to be found on Google Maps! With the help of our local guide, we made our way to Isabel's market stall atop a dusty hill. Here, she proffered us a couple of wobbly stools in her tiny space, an enclosure filled with canned goods, rice and other food staples. This being the first of our interviews with low-income

female heads of household, we sought to understand how working women in some of Lima's poorest urban neighbourhoods meet their household and care needs. Isabel's testimony was revealing.

A mother of four children — aged 28, 23, 20 and 18 — as well as grandmother to two five-year-old boys, Isabel recounted how her niece had arrived from the Peruvian southern highlands in Apurimac six months before to live with her and "help" at home. While two of her children had their own families elsewhere, Isabel shared her home with her other two children and a grandchild. The older of her children at home, the mother of the grandchild, worked long hours as a waitress. Isabel's youngest child, a boy, had recently finished high school and, as she noted, "sleeps all day." Isabel explained that her 15-year-old niece was instrumental in allowing her small business to function. She noted: "Without Mari, I would have to close my place in the market and go home to cook." Furthermore, she explained that without Mari's support, she would be forced to bring at least one of her grandchildren to work. Clearly, without Mari's help, business would suffer; Isabel would have insufficient time to sell her products, and some items would surely spoil.

Our conversation with Isabel laid bare that neither her partner nor her adult children provide much support. Charged additionally with caring for her grandchildren while their mothers work outside the home, Isabel relies on the services of an adolescent niece, who helps her with the children, as well as with some cooking and washing. In the summer months, given Isabel's schedule, we estimate that this would mean at least a 10-12 hour workday for the girl. In exchange, Isabel provides a home and the intention of sending her to school, as well as the occasional "tip" so that "Mari can recharge her cell phone."

Isabel's case is a powerful illustration of how household and care needs are being met by some very low-income women in one of Latin America's urban capitals. Despite a global context in which women work outside of the home and female-headed households are on the rise, we know little about how poor, urban women in Latin America — often internal migrants employed as paid domestic workers in third party homes or working in other informal, precarious jobs — attend to their own household needs. My ongoing research in Peru suggests that paid domestic service is utilized not only by the middle and upper classes but is also employed by low-income families to address household reproduction needs in a context in

which neoliberalist policies ensure limited state services, including childcare and eldercare (Pérez, 2020).

National statistical data reveals that the penetration of social programs in poor, urban Lima neighbourhoods is quite low (ENAHO, 2016). Qali Warma, a program that aims to cover the dietary needs of low-income children who attend state schools, provides the most coverage. However, this represents only 16.48 per cent of those surveyed nationally who classify in the lowest income bracket. The situation for childcare and eldercare is even worse. For example, Cuna Más, which provides early childhood care for 0-2-year-olds, and Pensión 65, a non-contributory state stipend for adults who are 65 and older — both national social programs meant to serve the extreme poor in both rural and urban areas of the country — maintain an abysmally low presence in Lima's urban low-income populations. Cuna Más's presence in Lima is only 0.23 per cent among the lowest income groups; Pensión 65, is even more negligible — only 0.07 per cent of lower income urban Lima households surveyed declare receiving support from this program. Thus, state-led support for both children and older adults in urban Lima is limited at best.

In this context, approximately 64% of women in Peru are working; 76% of whom are employed in the informal sector. When we consider all working women in both the informal and formal economies, three categories stand out: 36.7% are self-employed, 16.2% are engaged in unpaid family work and 5.2% are paid domestic workers in third party homes (INEI, 2018a). Thus, at least 20% of these women – in all likelihood more, due to the high rate of informality -- are working in some kind of precarious employment with no benefits. Given this and the lack of state support, as suggested above, the only source of support is often another underpaid — sometimes unpaid — young woman or girl.

The reliance on cheap domestic labour is not new to Latin America. Much has been written about how the middle and upper classes rely on paid domestic and/or care workers for their household needs (Bernardino-Costa, 2014; Blofield, 2012; Chaney and García, 1989; Gorbán and Tizziani, 2014; Kuznesof, 1989; Lautier, 2003; Stefoni, 2009), with some agreement among international feminist scholars about the importance of this labour for the reproduction of these social classes. (Bakker, 2007; Federici, 2012; Fraser, 2016; Fudge and Owens, 2006), some suggesting that these workers serve

as a subsidy to other social classes (Blofield, 2012; Salazar Parreñas, 2001; Vosko, 2010; Young, 2001). Likewise, the research on global care chains (GCC) has also been important in terms of elucidating how capitalism is upheld on the foundation of a complex network of migrant women who support others through domestic and care work across national boundaries, those with less resources attracted by richer countries to serve middle-class professionals (Hochschild, 2000). Here, too, Sassen (2000) has observed female GCC as the "feminization of survival."

However, GCC literature has focused mainly on poor-to-rich country migration; we know comparatively less about how national, internal migration serves the social reproduction needs of poor, female-headed families. I argue that in this situation, women employers and female adolescent workers are each other's lifeline, with an asymmetrical reciprocity being a key currency in the absence of other state supports, such as early childhood care and elder services in urban areas. The research shared here thus provides a closer look at how Peru's commitment to neoliberalism, including labour flexibilization (Cavero, 2018; Gonzales de Olarte, 1998; 2015; Manky, 2017), is accomplished at the expense of women and girls who work in precarious domestic labour and service jobs (Adrianzén, 2018).

My primary concern in this article is to illustrate how women workers (henceforth, employers) transfer household reproductive chores to other poorly paid, or unpaid, young women (henceforth, workers). Here, the domestic support that these workers provide is a necessary input for employers' own labour power.[3] I discuss two key findings. First, children below the age of 16 are classified as "helpers"; they usually members of the family and generally do not receive wages. Second, those 16 and older are viewed as workers and are not usually blood relatives; they may receive a modest wage. In both cases, the helper/worker relationship with the low-income employer, like that of domestic workers with middle- and upper-class patrons, is asymmetrical and justifies the employers' transfer of home services to the worker/helper at low or nonexistent wages. But, in contrast to middle- and upper- class employers, the relationship between employer and helper/worker is also one of mutual precariousness. It is precisely this precarity that fuels — or "powers" — other work. On one hand, this is done through the cheap labour that impoverished women provide to other households and/

or informal, poorly remunerated work. On the other, the sometimes unpaid, or low-paid, support that these women obtain at home is what allows them to step out to work.

Because care is generally a private matter and relegated to women — much like in other parts of Latin America — for traditional middle and upper classes, domestic and care services are obtained by employing cheap labour, usually provided by poor, internal migrant women of either indigenous or Afro-Peruvian origin. But as women's participation in the labour market grows for all social classes, on what — or whom — does this participation depend in a context in which state-sponsored services are largely absent and informal and precarious labour is dominant? Based on the findings resulting from 18 interviews with the female employers of mostly adolescent female domestic workers in low-income, metropolitan Lima districts in 2018, this paper seeks to begin to answer this question.

Raw Material for Precarious Labour: A Female Domestic Work Chain

Globally, women's increased participation in the workforce, including some women's gains in the labour market, have come at the expense of less fortunate women and girls in the informal service economy (see Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Wright, 2006; Young, 2001). This is particularly poignant in the developing world, as female workers under capitalism "evolve into a living state of worthlessness" (Wright: 1-2). As this idea is normalized, "the third world woman's path of destruction also leads the way to the capitalist development that heralds modern progress" (Wright: 6). Likewise, domestic and care workers — a significant labour force in Latin America composed mostly of women — experience a similar trajectory (Blofield, 2009; 2012; Razavi, 2011). Despite providing a service that allows for household reproduction, capitalism ensures that this sector remains undervalued and a source of cheap labour (see Blofield and Martinez, 2014; Fraser, 2016; Wright, 2006), its workers frequently subjected to intersectional discrimination and abuse (see Erlich, 2000; Hooks, 1984; Jokela, 2015; Razavi 2011).

At the same time, on a global scale in the wider labour market, both lower and middle classes are struggling for decent wages against a backdrop of generalized labour precarization

(Standing, 2011). In this context, poor paying jobs with reduced or nonexistent benefits, coupled with increasingly female-headed households, presents a "crisis of care." The inherent contradiction of capitalism is that it destroys the very input that sustains it (Fraser 2016: 99), and women represent that casualty (see Federici, 2004; Folbre, 2012; Wright, 2006). At a minimum, they are the gender that pays for this model of development through its unrecognized and undervalued contributions made from the domestic sphere (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa, 1998). The result is that as women step out to work, particularly in countries in which there is little or no publicly provided support for the care of children and dependent adults, household and care support derives from the private sphere. Those who cannot pay, but who must step out to work regardless, turn to other options ranging from bartered, reciprocal agreements, to leaving children in the care of other children or alone (Anderson and Hughes, 2015; Razavi, 2011).

While much has been written about the price that middle-class women pay to work (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa, 1998; Fraser, 2016; Hochschild, 2002; Mies, 2014) — either through the employment of another woman in domestic and care duties and/or through her own double shift — less is known about how low-income women — often employed by middle-class women — mitigate domestic chores and responsibilities against their need to work. Research has recognized the role which family members — grandmothers, particularly — play in caring for the home and children of women who have migrated to work in other countries (Salazar Parreñas, 2015; Hochschild, 2002). Yet, a knowledge gap persists in relation to the strategies used by low-income urban female heads of household — such as the employment of adolescent girls or children — that enable their work outside of the home in contexts where labour informality and flexibilization are prevalent and social services limited.

The literature on how care chains support informal, precarious work is important here. While research on GCC has done much to shore up transnational care chains composed of women who cross borders to provide domestic and care services (Hochschild, 2002; Razavi, 2011; Salazar Parreñas, 2001; Yeates, 2012), the Peruvian case illustrates how the same phenomenon occurs with low-income urban women through a reliance on "nationally based domestic labour chains." Here, we will find that the centre of the

gravitational force is an internal migrant-woman-employer who is the provider of both shelter and support to another young female worker who, in turn, allows for the employer to work in precarious informality — sometimes in domestic and/or care work in a third-party home. The rest of this paper explores these ideas in greater detail.

Methods

The data provided here is derived from a qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with employers of household helpers/workers between January and March of 2018. I also refer to Peru's national household survey (ENAHO) to elucidate our interviewees' income levels as well as to pinpoint the presence of social services in Lima.

Interviews were conducted with 18 of metropolitan Lima's poorest women (employers) to learn about how they organize their household care needs. The established filters were that the interviewee be a woman who worked outside her home and whose household income was within the lowest income bracket; that she had at least one child and/or a dependent adult in her care; and that she retained the paid or unpaid labour of someone to aid her in her domestic and care work. Names used herein are pseudonyms.

A Word About the Women Interviewed
Profile and Access to State-Sponsored Services

Averaging 38 years of age, the women interviewed for this study resided in marginal, low-income, urban Lima neighbourhoods, including San Juan de Lurigancho, Vitarte, Rimac, Comas and San Genaro, an especially impoverished area of the Chorrillos district in Lima. Thirteen fell within the lowest income bracket, with a maximum earning of S/.2189 per month (roughly $670). Additionally, most women reported being in a relationship (married or sharing a home) with a man; all but one had at least one child and/or an older adult in her care; and most (14) were employers of a household worker.

Half of the women interviewed were migrants who arrived in Lima as children or adolescents. Of these, five came to Lima specifically as child workers. The other half were Lima residents, born to migrant parents. Eleven of the women employed family members; one employed an adolescent boy from the neighbourhood

who worked for tips and support with school; and two others employed adult female neighbours who earned monthly salaries.

Six of these helpers/workers were children 15 years old or younger, the youngest two were a boy of 9 years and a girl of 10 (most of the helpers/workers were girls). Finally, most of the helpers/ workers were local to the area where they were employed. The older the child, the more responsibility was given. However, all helped with household chores, including cleaning and household errands, cooking, washing and the care of younger children. We found that youth aged 12-19 worked between 6 and 12 hours a day.

Employers experienced stressful work-life situations. One part of the group worked in the informal economy, either self-employed in street/market-vending or in domestic work; the other was formally employed by a cleaning services company, a very low-wage earning sector. Compounding the economic picture, all lived in periphery neighbourhoods with limited, if any, social services. For those who travelled outside of their vicinities to work, this could involve more than an hour each way via Lima's fractured and chaotic transportation options. For these women, work days were long; they rose daily as early as 3:30 a.m. to organize things at home prior to leaving for their jobs. Moreover, privacy was scarce and family responsibilities plentiful.

Of the 18 women interviewed, 17 had others living with them — at least 2 other people and as many as 11. They insisted that they did most of the work at home (i.e., cooking, organizing) so that the family member who supported them while they went to work was only left with the bare minimum chores. However, the "bare minimum" varied from person to person — from help with dishwashing to a full gamut of services. As noted previously, the age of the helper might be a predictor of responsibility, in which longer days and chores that combined both housekeeping and watching other children could start as young as 15 years.

At the same time, all expressed need for the help of a third party. Given that most of the women interviewed had a man in their life, such a comment suggests that even in cases where there is a partner, he cannot — or will not — provide additional household support, or, if the partner is able and willing to help, it is insufficient. Though we heard specific testimonies about partner abuse, neglect and abandonment, in most cases, it was not clear to what degree the partner was fully present. What is evident, by contrast, is that

for most of the employers interviewed, stepping out to work was a matter of need. All experienced a double shift, regardless of whether they also employed some form of help at home.

Key Differences Within the Group Interviewed

There were a few key differences among those interviewed based on the migrant status of the employer, her own history with child labour and her familial relationship to the worker. First, work-life conditions appear to be worse for those employers who are both internal migrants and employers of children 15 years old or under. Having been child workers themselves in some cases and employed in low-quality and/or highly precarious work, these employers' monthly earnings fell within the lowest range of the income bracket, between S/.850 and S/.2,000 a month. In these cases, the child workers they employed were found within their extended family, including a combination of nieces, cousins and, in one case, a grandson. Arrangements are highly informal: children are provided only with food and shelter, the possibility of going to school and/or occasional tips.

Second, and in in contrast to the above, those who employed adolescents and adults aged 16 years and older generally provided regular payment, even if it was a small amount; in these cases, the person employed was not a family relation**.** Most of these employers were not migrants and generally enjoyed a comparatively higher income, though still low. In this group we found employers who represented the second generation of their family residing in Lima; they also hired the oldest workers and paid the highest wages.

Findings and Discussion

Interviews reveal three key findings, discussed below. First, as suggested briefly above, age determines whether work is defined as "help" or as work and remunerated. Second, I found that in most cases, helpers are female adolescents who are part of a family-based domestic labour chain. Third, and related to the first two findings, this chain allows for the employer to step out to work in precarious and informal labour.

Age as a Determinant of Labour Characterisation and Wages

For children below the age of 16, their services were characterised as "help," and payments — if any — were not constant.

About half of those interviewed only provided an occasional "tip," and in those cases, all but one of the "helpers" was a minor. By contrast, those aged 16 years and older received some form of regular wages.

This is consistent with my research on domestic workers' first labour experiences (Pérez 2020; Pérez and Freier) and Lima-based data.[4] That is, children may work in exchange for something — not necessarily a monetary payment — and, in fact, their work is not seen as such (either by the employer or by the child worker). I can share at least three reasons for this based on the interviewee responses and my own observation.

First, the work provided by the child is viewed as a learning experience, a rite of passage within the extended family. In some cases, the work may be tantamount to minor chores. In other cases, such as some of those described in further detail below, the work might involve more than simple errands and may include dangerous work, including cooking, cleaning and caring for smaller children. The ILO defines hazardous work for children as activities that are likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. Hazards could be being exposed to dangerous tools such as sharp implements or, other hazards less apparent, such as abuse. In domestic work, for example, children may be exposed to hazards such as long work hours and living in isolation away from their family or peers, which can provide opportunities for sexual exploitation and/or inhibit social development. Other hazards are also present as domestic chores involve carrying heavy loads, being exposed to hot stoves and using sharp knives (ILO: 28).

Second, family employers have also been child workers and this history may obfuscate the view of inappropriate child work. Finally, in this study I found that because employers had limited resources — both economic and social — one of the few options for household support came from someone else — in the cases analyzed here, a child or adolescent. According to the employers with whom I spoke, the child also benefitted from economic and/or emotional sustenance, including food and housing and/or some minor monetary compensation.

The idea that the employer is providing a service to that child was a common theme among the group interviewed. As Leinaweaver (2005) noted in an earlier study in Peru, there is the suggestion that the employer is helping the worker to *superar* (overcome), creating

a sort of stepping stone — or a link — to a better existence through the lessons obtained in this living-working experience. For example, Maribel (born in 1979 in Tarapoto) employs her partner's niece, a ten-year-old girl, three times per week to help at home, washing dishes, two hours every time. The explanation that Maribel provided is that she and her partner are "helping because she [the child] is humble … helping her to learn how to do things so that she might have something." Maribel described a situation in which the child lived in a dysfunctional family, often responsible for the care of her two younger siblings. The opportunity to help in her aunt and uncle's home offered the child the possibility of a brief escape that might include some minor monetary and emotional reward. This case might suggest the first kind of relationship, in which this child provides a minor service with no observable danger to her.

By contrast, Catalina (born in 1975 in Ancash), referring to her 10-year-old niece and sister who live with her family, remarked: "I leave her at home with instructions. I do it to help my sister who was putting up with abuse from her ex-partner. We try to give our niece incentives. We give her a tip and we say to her: 'You see, if you help, we give you something, we go to the movies. But you must do your part. These are your obligations.' " Here, Catalina referred to chores in the home, including cooking, which might present more of a danger for a child of 10 years. Likewise, our interview with Dariana (born in 1976 in Ancash) revealed that her orphaned niece arrived in her home at the age of 9. The child has since then provided domestic services there and now, at 15, is the one responsible for caring for Dariana's six-month-old infant.

In all three cases mentioned above we can observe an exchange. In the first, the child receives a small tip, and in the last two, there is room and board and the opportunity to go to school, though regular payment is not a practice. Moreover, I found that where the worker is a child, the theme that the employer is providing a service seemed to override the fact that the child may be providing more than a simple chore, as was the case for Catalina's and Dariana's nieces.

In this scenario, then, the service provided by the adolescent or child is not viewed as work. It is possible that those interviewed characterized the relationship in this way because child labour is illegal in Peru below the age of 14, and they did not want to recognize these services as work in the presence of strangers**. As

noted above, it may also be because they do not consider this help as work, particularly as many of these same employers had been child workers themselves. For example, Isabel, mentioned at the outset of this paper, travelled with her older sister from the highlands of Apurimac to begin work in Lima when she was only seven years old. In our interview, she suggested that her niece feels safer working for her because she knows how to care for and guide her. She said: "Because I have gone through this, I must now look out for her." Indeed, migrant women in the lowest income bracket and with histories of child labour, like Isabel, were the most common type of employer interviewed in this cohort.

Conversely, I found that for those employing adolescents and women aged 16 or older, the work takes on the quality of a job. Regardless of the remuneration (mostly low and without full benefits, as might be suspected, given the informal nature of the work and the income levels of the group interviewed), there is some regularity in the payment and in the consideration that this is work and not "help." Of note is that the only two employers who were second-generation Limeñas fell within a higher income bracket and worked for formal, private institutions. These revealed that they provided better payments (S/.700 a month for 8 hours a day and S/.1000 a month for up to 12 hours a day, respectively) and some level of effort to comply with the few legal rights that these workers enjoy.

It may be possible that in these cases the idea of familial networks that provide support in daily survival are less strong and/or that a couple of the women employed in these cases were adults with prior experiences in this work and, thus, a better knowledge of their rights. This differentiation might also suggest that migrant status and the length of time one's family has been in the country's capital may be factors that determine the profile of the household worker. In this case, it seems to have resulted in older workers and a more formalized employer-employee relationship within an otherwise informal sector.

A Family-Based, Domestic Labour Chain Comprising Mostly Girls
Isabel maintained a household of at least three adults and two children, including the niece who helps her in the market. Similarly, Dariana's home included no less than nine people, mostly adolescents and an infant whose father had recently abandoned the

family. Like Isabel, she had also been a migrant child worker in Lima and, at the time of our interview, was her home's main breadwinner. Both cases provide key illustrations of a family-based domestic labour chain and its role in ensuring that the family's main earner is able to step out to work.

As Isabel's case suggests, taking in a family member is done as part of a larger family chain or network. Moreover, as a former child worker, she relayed a sense of responsibility for supporting her niece and family in this way.

Likewise, however, I found that the provision of some level of assistance — pecuniary or otherwise — in exchange for "help" with the chores, is a direct result of the employers' economic limitations. In other words, for most of the female heads of households interviewed, it is the services, including some level of childcare, provided through this kinship relation that makes working outside of the home possible. Isabel's case illustrates the value placed on family ties to resolve household care needs. Without the help of her young niece, her livelihood would suffer. Her income would decrease because the domestic chores, including the care of her grandson, would fall mostly to her.

Yet, consistent with literature on the undervaluation of domestic and care work, the same middle- and upper-class minimization and devaluation of this labour also occurs among urban women in the lowest income group interviewed here and the youth they employ. I encountered a condescending attitude towards the helper/worker, not unlike that described by White (2000) in her study on kinship and reciprocity among family workers in Istanbul.

For example, despite the knowledge that the helper/worker is an important source of support, employers also maintained that they were the ones helping the family member. As Isabel described, because her niece was in a "rebellious teenage phase," the child's mother thought it best that she should migrate to Lima to work and attend school. This is a common theme among most of our interviews — while recognizing the help from the young family member, the employer underscores that she is providing a service by taking the adolescent into her home and/or sending her to school. Yet other research suggests that the end result of this family domestic labour chain may not serve the long-term interests of the adolescent worker regarding social upward mobility. Rather it may limit her to similar precarious work in the future (Anderson, 2009; Pérez, 2017; Pérez

2020; Pérez and Freier).

Nevertheless, other employers interviewed expressed similar sentiments as those shared by Isabel. For example, when speaking about her orphaned 15-year-old niece who has lived with her since the time she was 9 and who helps her at home, Dariana said: "She goes to high school in the morning and later she helps me in the afternoon. I give her a tip; I buy her uniform, school supplies and clothes. I provide for all her needs. I leave my baby with her, not with my daughter." Likewise, Camila (born in 1979 in Lima), referring to her son's girlfriend, told us: "She also helps my sons with their homework. She is 19 years old and since she was not working, I offered her S/.20 a day to care for my boys. She's been with my son for three years and she has no intention of furthering her studies." For her part, Teresa (born in 1985 in Lima) pointed out that it was her 15-year-old niece who sought out the possibility of taking care of her child because it afforded her the use of her family's computer. Although, as Teresa noted, she did not directly request this help, she is supportive nonetheless, giving occasional presents or by helping her niece's mother (Teresa's sister) whenever she can. As she remarked: "Because it was within my means, I gave them my television … and [things] like that." In this way she acknowledges her niece's "help."

Though comments such as those shared above surfaced in most of the interviews, they were most prevalent in those cases that involved the employment of a child or adolescent family member. Half of those interviewed were explicit about the importance of the help they were giving to the helper/worker — the idea that the employer had stepped up to the responsibility of taking in this child. At the same time, they also conceded that the child provided a service and, as Dariana suggested, she only leaves her baby with her niece. That is, the girl enjoys both economic support and her aunt's confidence that she can care for the six-month-old infant. Dariana also makes the point that she provides the girl something in return. Ultimately, as expressed above, the sense that the family employers convey is that they are filling an important void for these family-workers. And they are doing so under quite difficult circumstances.

Based on observation and the group's testimonies, despite the economic hardship that the employer faces, she accepts one more responsibility in taking in the worker. This is a double-edged sword. While helping another person entirely, or partially, is certainly an

expense and responsibility, the home and/or space to work provided by the employer is not free — everyone must pull their weight so that both household chores and work outside of the home are possible for the employer. As noted, this perspective is tied to the idea of family reciprocity; the notion that you do for others as others have done for you.

No one interviewed suggested that child or adolescents work was inappropriate. As former child workers themselves in most cases, they did not view these chores as work but as a rite of passage in which adults obtain domestic and/or care services for which they are willing to provide a home and access to school for their junior female relatives in some cases, and perhaps a tip or gift in others. Moreover, the reliance on kinship-based networks is further enhanced by cynicism regarding state-run programs.

Interview responses suggest a distrust of state services and the conviction that one should take care of one's own children, or at least employ family support, a much safer option. Also, as noted previously, the Cuna Más presence is highly limited in Lima. When specifically asked about early childhood services through Cuna Más, knowledge was limited. Six women indicated that they had used the Ministry of Education's programs for their children (like, but distinct, from Cuna Más). Only one had used Cuna Más. Thus, what I found here are women who need to support their families, often under very precarious circumstances, and given limited state services, their distrust of the same and their cultural expectations of themselves as women, they turn to mostly young female kin for household support.

This situation is reminiscent of Hochschild's idea that "mothering" is passed down a hierarchy where each woman becomes a provider and must hire a "wife" (Hochschild: 137). What I found in the case presented here are two phenomena that are linked. First, there is the notion that care and domestic work is to be done by women or girls. Regardless of whether they need to step out to work, they are responsible for maintaining the home front. Second, in a context in which state supports are virtually absent, domestic and care responsibilities roll down to the next most vulnerable person in the chain. In this case, most were female adolescents.

A Foundation for Informal and Precarious Labour

These youth thus make it possible for their employers to provide cheap labour elsewhere. The situation on the whole underscores the feminization of poverty — and survival (Sassen, 2000) — through their own role as part of the foundational structure that allows their employers' precarious work outside of the home. As noted, reciprocity is key in this relationship. While there is a body of work that has studied this among women in rural settings in Peru (Bloom Lobo, 1976; Leinaweaver, 2005; Wilhoit, 2017), little is known about how the same unfolds in the relationship between urban women and adolescents.

In her recent research on rural women in the Andes, Wilhoit observed that "reciprocal work in childrearing and tasks of household reproduction enabled them to engage in a precarious labour market and provided a mutually supportive environment that many had lacked in marriage" (2017:7). Unlike Wilhoit's assertion that the reciprocity she observed in her rural community study provided for a "mutually supportive environment," the same is not readily apparent in the present case. Rather, the urban cases I examined are more akin to a "feminization of survival" by both employer and worker (Sassen, 2000). On one hand, the employer needs the helper/worker in order to step out to work. The helper/worker needs the employer for varying degrees of support, ranging from a roof over her head, meals, a tip or wages and/or emotional sustenance (Pérez, 2017; 2020; Pérez and Freier).

A larger concern in this study is that the makeshift work arrangements observed do little to improve work-life conditions for women and girls. Rather, the domestic labour chain fortifies a status quo in which the poorest women remain in historically gendered domestic and care work services and/or other precarious labour. For example, Jessica (born in 1992 in Huanuco) — the youngest of those who employs children and one of those in the cohort who works for a cleaning company, among the lowest monthly income earners — told us that she paid each of her migrant cousins a small amount per week (approximately S/.25 each) to help with her children. Jessica's situation was especially difficult.

When her partner and father of her children nearly killed her in a domestic dispute, she was forced to flee her home in Lima, a housing arrangement in which her parents lived only metres away. On the advice of the government ministry she consulted, Jessica left

her home because she was told that she could not be protected in her neighbourhood. Given the state's clear message that she was "on her own," she left her home and the support of her parents to live with other family. There, she employed the help of her cousins — children themselves — to care for her young boys.

For Jessica this support is extremely important so that she might go to work. For the cousins, the weekly "tip" is certainly more than they would make otherwise. Ultimately, however, what these efforts amount to is that Jessica works in a highly gendered and low paying sector. Her cousins attend school but are also on their own and live in precarious circumstances; the little support available to them is through the possibility of the domestic/care work they provide for Jessica's sons.

In Jessica's case, as in several others in the cohort, we can see the family chain. Given the precarity of the living situation, often in subpar housing, poor incomes in low quality jobs, highly feminized work in private homes or office cleaning services, and having small children, it is necessary to find support, likely from some family member(s). On one hand, the belief is that these kin — particularly if the person is a child or adolescent — is benefitting from whatever resources the employer is providing. On the other hand, the employer is able to pay a small sum or provide some other support that enables her to step out to work, most probably in very low-quality employment.

Though Jessica's testimony is particularly extreme due to the violence involved, others shared similarly complicated histories of working hard to make ends meet, often in the face of absentee partners, numerous family members who depended on them in Lima or elsewhere and/or unstable, precarious jobs. The needed support tended to come from adolescents or children, suggesting in a several cases in this cohort their own experiences as child workers was repeated in their employment of young family members.

But it also makes evident the state's neoliberal position, which includes its limited role in citizen service provision. Peru maintains one of the highest rates of employment informality, low wages and nearly absent social protections in Latin America. The result is that domestic and care support continue to trickle down to women — and as this case suggests, to girls and adolescents in the poorest sectors as their employers step out to work in similarly precarious situations.

Conclusion

This study has sought to contribute to research on informal and precarious female labour and the feminization of survival in at least two ways. First, it has broadened the perspective that suggests that women in domestic and care work provide a subsidy to the middle class through their unregulated services (Blofield, 2012; Young, 2001). I examine this relationship among low-income, urban women of the same social class and ethnic background, a subject less studied. Second, I argue that the women and girls studied engage in a national domestic labour chain that, while providing some mutual support, ultimately serves to maintain highly feminized, precarious labour, meeting capitalism's demand for cheap labour (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa, 1998; Federici, 2004; and Fraser, 2016).

I have shown here that as more women work outside of the home; as state sponsored services are mostly absent; and as gender stereotypes persist relative to the primary roles of women and girls in the domestic sphere, for those Peruvian women in the poorest income brackets, often internal migrants, it appears that the most accessible support is derived from a family relation, another woman and, often, an adolescent girl. Moreover, the labour power provided by these girls, especially, is not ascribed a unique value. Rather, at best, there is a recognition by employers of a reciprocal relationship, and at worst, the helper/worker's services are constructed as "payback" for the provision of shelter, food and the possibility of going to school.

What is evident in most of the group's responses — even in cases where the workers were older — is a general vulnerability for employers and employees alike because choices for household care are limited, at best, and nonexistent, at worst. Thus, historical gender, social and labour discriminations keep these women in a highly precarious state. Another woman — often an adolescent or girl — assures that the other can go out to work, usually in informality and/or in service to others in a home far away from her own.

Further research is required to unravel how gender, ethnicity, poverty, internal migration and limited state support combine to ensure that the price to pay for household reproduction and work outside of the home for low-income women is predicated on female child and/or adolescent labour.

Endnotes

1. Leda M. Pérez, Professor and Researcher, Department of Social and Political Sciences, Universidad del Pacífico, Lima, Peru. The author thanks Yamilé Guibert and Nícola Espinosa for their valuable research assistance. Article received February 17, 2020.
2. In Peru, combis are small, privately owned mini-buses that provide transportation in most of the country's urban centres.
3. According to Marx, labour-power is the "mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description" Joohuyn Lee, 2017. The consequences of labour power as a commodity. Social Theory (blog), UBC, September 24, 2017, http://blogs.ubc.ca/socialtheory/2017/09/24/the-consequences-of-labour-power-as-a-commodity/
4. Asociación Grupo de Trabajo Redes (AGTR)/La Casa de Panchita (Lima-based NGO in the service of domestic workers). Database, 2018, personally looked at during a visit in January 2018.

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Les Zimbabweens sans papiers en Afrique du sud: travailler dans la crainte constante de l'arrestation et la déportation.

Johannes Machinya

Résumé

Depuis quelques années, la réaction de l'Afrique du Sud à la migration « illégale » est exagérément restrictive, axée sur l'exclusion et le contrôle. Son approche consiste à arrêter, détenir et déporter les migrants sans papiers. Des recherches extérieures démontrent cependant que l'application intensifiée de la loi sur l'immigration, plutôt que d'atteindre son but présumé de déportation massive, soumet un grand nombre de personnes passibles d'exclusion à la menace ou possibilité de déportation – soit à la déportabilité. Selon ce concept de déportabilité, l'État exerce un plus grand pouvoir sur les travailleurs étrangers en accentuant la menace ou possibilité de déportation qu'en déportant réellement les migrants « illégaux ». Se basant sur l'étude ethnographique des migrants zimbabwéens sans papiers à eMalahleni, en Afrique du Sud, cet article examine comment le contrôle de la migration instaure la possibilité (et la peur) d'être arrêté et déporté comme réalité quotidienne pour les migrants sans papiers, affectant de façon négative leur expérience de travail. L'article souligne que la déportabilité soumet les migrants sans papiers et les transforme en travailleurs plus politiquement dociles et économiquement exploitables.

Undocumented Zimbabweans in South Africa: Working in a Constant Fear of Arrest and Deportation

Johannes Machinya[1]

Abstract

For the past several years, South Africa's response to "illegal" migration has been overly restrictive, exclusionary and control-oriented. Its approach has focused on arresting, detaining and deporting undocumented migrants. However, research from elsewhere shows that intensified immigration enforcement hardly achieves the presumed goal of mass deportation; instead, it subjects a great mass of deportable people to the threat/possibility of deportation – i.e., they experience "deportability." The concept of deportability holds that the state exercises power on outsiders much more by making the threat/possibility of deportation more perceptible rather than by actually deporting "illegal" migrants. Based on ethnography with undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in eMalahleni, South Africa, this article examines how migration control makes the possibility of arrest and deportation, and the fear thereof, an everyday reality for undocumented migrants that adversely affects their work experiences. The article underscores that deportability disciplines and fashions undocumented migrant workers into more politically docile and economically exploitable workers.

Introduction

Previous studies on South Africa's post-apartheid immigration policy and practice show more continuities than discontinuities with the country's apartheid past: immigration policy and enforcement practice have remained highly restrictive, exclusionary and control-oriented (Aglotsson & Klaaren, 2003; Crush, 1997; Klaaren & Ramji, 2001; Klotz, 2013 and 2000; Peberdy, 2001; Vigneswaran, 2011). The immigration policy's selective and skills-based focus provides very limited opportunities for so-called "less skilled" migrants to reside and work legally in South Africa, forcing large numbers of such migrants to do so "illegally".

As in many other migrant-receiving countries in the world, "illegal" migration in South Africa is conceptualized as a "problem" in that "illegal" migrants are blamed for the numerous challenges the country is facing (Maharaj & Rajkumar, 1997). In response to this "problem", government has been arresting, detaining and deporting undocumented migrants. This was despite senior government officials expressing doubt over the effectiveness of such a restrictive and control-oriented policy stance to stem the "problem" (Vigneswaran, 2011).

Studies from elsewhere suggest that intensified immigration law enforcement hardly achieves the presumed goal of mass deportation (see De Genova, 2002); instead, it subjects a great number of deportable people to the threat/possibility of deportation. De Genova (2002) calls this "deportability", which is the ever-present possibility of deportation, and not deportation per se. If deportation rarely achieves its presumed goal of expelling all deportable migrants, then it becomes essential to interrogate the function and effect of deportability on deportable people. The concept of deportability holds that the state exercises its sovereign power on outsiders much more by making the threat/possibility of deportation more perceptible rather than by actually deporting "illegal" migrants. The state institutes violence on deportable migrants by escalating the threat/possibility of arrest and deportation. This creates an atmosphere of fear and anxiety over the potential materialization of arrest and deportation, which adversely affects the protection and exercise of undocumented migrants' labour rights.

South Africa's labour law regime protects the rights of undocumented migrant workers. For example, the country's Constitution (section 23(1)) and the Labour Relations Act (LRA) (section 185) guarantee fair labour practices to "every employee". The Labour Court has confirmed that foreigners working "illegally" in South Africa can be regarded as employees for the purposes of the LRA (Bosch, 2006). My main submission is that while the labour rights of undocumented migrant workers are enshrined, guaranteed and protected in South Africa's labour law regime, immigration law enforcement and deportability, and the resultant fear over the possibility of deportation, make labour-rights claiming and protection, at best, less attainable for undocumented migrant workers and, at worst, non-existent, leaving them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. I demonstrate this by showing how

migrant "illegality" and the threat and fear of deportation constrain the positioning and participation of undocumented migrant workers in the labour market. I underscore that the possibility and fear of deportation serve to discipline and fashion undocumented migrant workers into politically docile and economically exploitable workers.

I am cognizant of the fact that worker exploitation in South Africa is not uncommon; it is widespread. I am also aware that to simply state that undocumented migrant workers are exploited is a given; a number of scholars have written on that (Bloch, 2008; Fine, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2006, 2007; Klaaren & Ramji, 2001; Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh & Singh, 2005; Rutherford & Addison, 2007). However, the existing literature on the exploitation of undocumented migrant workers mainly talks about how they are sequestered in certain jobs and segments of the labour market that are characterized by long working hours, low pay and insecure employment. There has not been much interrogation on the intersectional effect of migrant "illegality" and deportability and the subsequent anxiety over possible materialization of arrest and deportation and how they exacerbate the exploitation of undocumented migrant workers.

The article draws on ethnography and in-depth interviews conducted with undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in eMalahleni, a mining town in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The study participants included men and women between the ages of 20 and 50 who were working as domestic workers, private security guards and casual workers in the construction sector, as well as daily-wage workers who were doing any job for money.

I carried out the fieldwork between June 2015 and December 2016. This extended contact with the research participants had a profound impact on my research, most of which was unambiguously good. I was able to generate and interpret rich ethnographic data from the undocumented Zimbabwean migrants' day-to-day life as it was lived or felt or made sense of. The methodological tools of ethnography enabled me not only to ask questions, but also to capture the mundane aspects of the social and economic lives of these migrants through observing how the awareness of their "illegal" status and the fear of arrest and deportation shaped their everyday life and work experiences.

This paper is not so much about whether deportation

happened or not, as it is about the effect of living (and working) knowing that deportation is an ever-present but indeterminate possibility. The article is organized as follows: First, I situate migration to South Africa and the country's immigration policy and practice within broader debates on migration control. I then examine how immigration law enforcement generates an awareness of being "illegal" and an anticipatory anxiety over possible arrest and deportation. I further demonstrate how the indeterminacy of and anxiety over possible arrest and deportation shape undocumented migrant workers' work experiences, particularly by making them more docile and exploitable.

Migrant "Illegality", Migration Control and Deportability

The increased movement of people across national boundaries has motivated several governments to intensify their efforts in regulating the movement of migrants into, within and out of national territories (Cornelius et al., 2004; Walters, 2002). The most common responses have been the militarization of mobility control around border areas and within interior spaces (Nevins, 2001; Fassin, 2011), tightening of restrictions on the employment and access to other services for unauthorized migrants (Perea, 1997) and imposition of harsher sanctions on those who defy immigration regulations (Campbell, 2006). Arresting, detaining and deporting migrants found contravening immigration laws have also become a normalized practice of migration control (Bloch & Schuster, 2005). These restrictive measures increase migrants' chances of encountering everyday mechanisms of surveillance and control and are meant to deter the unregulated movement of "illegal" migrants and remove them from state territory.

South Africa attracts large numbers of migrants from both across Africa and other countries outside of Africa seeking political and economic refuge. However, a 2011 study by the Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP) found that accurate information on the figures for South Africa's migrants is hard to obtain "partly because of the phenomenon of irregular migration and partly because of inadequate data collection systems" (Crush, 2011:3). According to Segatti and Landau (2011), work done by SAMP and the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand using internationally accepted demographic methods estimated the total number of foreigners in South Africa, documented

and undocumented, to be around 3 million (though these figures may have increased by now).

Zimbabweans are the largest group of foreigners in South Africa. Much of Zimbabweans' migration to South Africa has been induced by different political and economic crises. For instance, between 2000 and 2009, growing political intolerance and the country's free-falling economy uprooted a lot of Zimbabweans, and many trekked down south in search of both political refuge and economic opportunities.

South Africa became the most likely destination for a large population of Zimbabweans due to its proximity and relatively well-performing economy. But the country's restrictive and exclusionary immigration policy remained an obstacle for formal migration, which resulted in many entering and residing in the country "illegally". As a result, the question of how many Zimbabweans are in South Africa remains a sticking issue as no precise figures exist (Segatti & Landau, 2011). This leaves the numbers open to manipulation and wild guesstimates particularly by those with vested interests in exaggerating immigrant numbers. The 2010 Zimbabwean Documentation Project (ZDP), a special legalization programme for Zimbabweans who had been in South Africa "illegally" after seeking political and economic refuge as their country's political and economic fortunes waned in 2008, illustrates the South African government's use of grossly inflated figures. Several official statements projected the number of undocumented Zimbabweans in South Africa to be between 800,000 and 1 million. However, by the time the ZDP was completed in December 2010, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) had received fewer than 266,000 applications, which refutes claims that there were around 1 million undocumented Zimbabweans in South Africa (Segatti & Landau, 2011).

Responding to the presence of undocumented migrants, South Africa's government intensified its measures to detect, arrest, detain and deport undocumented migrants (Hiropoulos, 2017; Vigneswaran, 2011; Vigneswaran, et al. 2010). Between 1995 and 2010, South Africa deported more than 150,000 people every year (DHA Annual Reports, 1980-2010; Vigneswaran, 2011). Zimbabweans are by far the largest group of nationals deported from South Africa. From April 2009, deportations plummeted following the DHA's declaration of a moratorium on the deportation of Zimbabweans and launch of the ZDP in 2010. The moratorium

ended in July 2011, and deportations rose to over 130,000 in the 2013/14 reporting year (DHA Annual Report, 2014).

State officials involved in controlling migration in South Africa tacitly accept systems that create and legitimize parallel systems of migration control that involve exceptional, often extra-legal practices in policing foreigners (Landau, 2005; Sutton & Vigneswaran, 2011; Vigneswaran, et al. 2010). Landau (2005) laments that given the presumed link between "illegal" foreigners and criminality, such extra-legal practices of migration control often license the targeting and restraining of "illegal" foreign nationals by whatever means state officials (and citizens) deem appropriate.

The South African police, who are the *de facto* immigration law enforcers at the local level, institute different mechanisms of control, such as spot checks, immigration sweeps in residential areas suspected to be populated by undocumented migrants and workplace raids. A certain senior police commissioner confirmed this in an interview with Vigneswaran when he stated that detecting, arresting and deporting "illegal" foreigners gave the police "a reason to get up in the morning" (Vigneswaran, 2011:111). In Gauteng Province, which is a major destination for many migrants, police officers spend more than a quarter of their working time searching for, arresting and deporting foreigners (Vigneswaran & Duponchel, 2009). In eMalahleni, the police also invest a lot of time and resources in detecting and arresting undocumented migrants, and the magistrate court often deals with such cases (Nkuna, 2017). While some of the measures employed by the state officials to control migration may be lawful, most are not (Crush, 1997; Vigneswaran, et al. 2010). More frequently, the enforcement practices of many state officials generate a range of institutional points at which violence may be instituted against "illegal" migrants.

Besides the local level policing methods, there have also been nationwide approaches to controlling migration. A more recent example is Operation Fiela, a nationwide crime-fighting blitz launched in April 2015. The police, accompanied by the military and immigration officials, launched numerous raids across the country in places suspected of harbouring criminals. However, civil society groups condemned the operation as "state-sponsored xenophobia" after noting that it primarily targeted "illegal" foreigners as the most likely perpetrators of crime (Velapi, 2015). The numbers behind Operation Fiela corroborated these observations: 1,123 of the 2,908

arrests made on 30 and 31 July countrywide were undocumented migrants; between April and July 2015, government deported over 15,000 people who were in South Africa "illegally" (Maromo, 2015). Civil society organizations recorded several cases where foreigners were rounded up in pre-dawn raids, denied access to legal representation or deported without due process (Allison, 2015). While these mechanisms of immigration control such as Operation Fiela have a temporal duration and may be infrequent, they are potentially repetitive.

Intensified immigration enforcement makes undocumented migrants more conscious of their "illegality" and unwantedness (Chavez, 1992; Coutin, 2000) and ever-present vulnerability to apprehension and deportation (De Genova, 2002). Deportability provokes an anticipatory anxiety over the potential materialization of arrest and deportation. While deportability engenders a sense that deportation is an ultimate possibility, what is more depressing for undocumented migrants is that they are unable to determine with certainty *when* this will happen. This indeterminacy and ever-present sense of vulnerability are strongly imprinted onto the everyday lives of undocumented migrants (Coutin, 2000; Dreby, 2015) and are central to the exercise of power by the state over deportable migrants. In light of this, De Genova notes that the function (and effect) of immigration law enforcement is not so much about completely removing undocumented migrants from national territory, but to achieve a socio-political process where undocumented migrants live under "imposed conditions of enforced and protracted vulnerability" (De Genova, 2002: 249). This has huge disciplinary consequences on undocumented migrants and effectively makes them highly exploitable.

Fear as an Everyday Experience

I began my fieldwork during the days of Operation Fiela in 2015. All my research informants reported that fear was persistent in their everyday lives. What were they afraid of, and why were they afraid? These were the questions I asked my interlocutors whenever they raised the issue of fear. And most of them pointed to three things in their responses: the police, arrest and deportation — as revealed by Precious during our conversation:

As someone with no papers, I always live in fear, always wondering: When are they [the police] coming again? When they come, where will I go? What if I get caught? What if they arrest me?

Precious was working as a live-out domestic worker. She was staying in Elandeni, an informal settlement where most of the undocumented migrants I interacted with in eMalahleni were living. The police's intensified policing of migrants, which made them a "ghostly presence" (Machinya 2019) in the lives of undocumented migrants, caused much fear for Precious. This ghostly presence is about how the undocumented migrants incessantly feared and felt as if they were being surveilled by the police even when the police were not there. The South African police have integrated policing the illegal movement of persons as a major part of their everyday policing duties and have taken the enforcement of immigration laws as a potentially useful method of dealing with certain categories of criminals (Vigneswaran, 2011). This has resulted in them maintaining what Lugo (2000) refers to as an ''inescapable presence'' (pp. 354) in the lives of undocumented migrants.

This belief that they are constantly under the gaze of the police caused my interlocutors to be more vigilant when they were in public spaces. They would always look out for any sight of the police, looking over their shoulders and ever ready to "disappear" whenever they felt the risk of detection. I witnessed this one Friday afternoon in August 2016. I had accompanied Beulah, my niece who assisted me in locating undocumented Zimbabwean migrants, to eMalahleni town for her grocery shopping. After her shopping and with both of us carrying large plastic bags, I led the way to a local taxi rank so that we could get a taxi back to Elandeni where she stayed. However, Beulah protested saying:

No uncle, we cannot go to the taxi rank. Today is Friday, the police are likely to be at the taxi rank looking for people with no papers. Let's walk to Bon Village and we will get the taxi from there.

Bon Village, a residential area on the outskirts of eMalahleni town, is about a twenty-minute walk. On our way, Beulah was always looking over her shoulders. She told me that the police do

more spot checks on Fridays looking for undocumented migrants because they knew that many people get paid fortnightly on Fridays.

The threat and fear of deportation was re-enacted in the lives of undocumented migrants whenever someone with "no papers" was arrested or rumours about such cases spread. Zimbabwean undocumented migrants often imagined and perceived their own susceptibility to arrest and deportation by interpreting the experiences of other undocumented migrants. Rumbidzai, a live-out domestic worker, told me that she had not encountered the police before in eMalahleni, but nevertheless, she lived in fear of arrest and deportation because she knew some people who had experienced it:

> *Bhudhi (brother), I know about this [deportation]; it is something that happened to others who did not have papers like me. Therefore, if it happened to them it can also happen to me.*

The arrest and deportation of other undocumented migrants implanted a more perceptible sense of vulnerability to deportation among those who were not yet deported. Rumbidzai, like many other undocumented migrants, logically mapped her own susceptibility to deportation by drawing on or relating to the experiences of other people who shared the same status as her. She imagined: "If someone without papers like me was arrested and deported, then I can also be arrested and deported." Basically, when undocumented migrants heard of someone's arrest and deportation, they inevitably began to imagine themselves in the same situation: "This could be me." The arrest and eventual deportation of other undocumented migrants was a constant reminder to those who remained that their time in South Africa was ephemeral and terminable.

Knowing that deportation was an impending possibility made many undocumented Zimbabwean migrants fear the police even without coming into real contact with them. However, previous encounters with the police or the deportation regime had lasting impressions on undocumented migrants' consciousness of their vulnerability to deportation. Patience, who once doubled as a domestic worker and a shop attendant for her employers, was arrested and deported after a wage dispute with her employers in June 2015. Her employers called in the police and she was arrested. Her offence: because "[she] did not have papers." After her court

appearance, the magistrate sent her to the Lindela Repatriation Centre, which is South Africa's largest holding camp for the detention of undocumented migrants awaiting deportation. She stayed there for three months before her eventual deportation in September 2015. She managed to sneak back into South Africa but her previous experience of arrest and deportation left her more apprehensive of her deportability because deportation had become a reality for her:

> *Tsuro haiponi rutsva kaviri (A hare does not escape a veld fire twice). Since the days I was arrested and deported, I am always living in fear. I don't want a repeat of what happened to me before.*

Patience used a popular ChiShona proverb to underscore how her previous experience of arrest and deportation deeply engraved fear in her everyday life. The proverb, "A hare does not escape a veld fire twice," warns one against tempting fate again after an initial escape as continuous indulgence in risky behaviour would eventually result in one being caught and facing severe consequences. Because she had been previously arrested and deported, even though she managed to sneak back into South Africa, Patience was now living in fear that if she were to be caught again, the punishment would be severe.

As vulnerability to, and the fear of, arrest and deportation became more pronounced in the lives of the undocumented Zimbabwean migrants, flying under the radar and concealing one's status became some of the most pertinent responses to staying out of trouble. However, the way some undocumented migrants had experienced immigration enforcement left an impression that fetishized migrant "illegality" as an objective and discernible "thing in itself". Such migrants often imagined their "illegality" as easily identifiable, and this was a reason to be more afraid of the police. The way they had been previously stopped by the police left them thinking and worrying that they had visible marks of "illegality" written on their bodies. Earnest, a daily-wage worker who was arrested together with his two friends, was shocked by the way the police stopped them and, without even ascertaining whether they were South African or not, demanded to see their passports. He also told me of a similar incident in which the police randomly stopped him in Johannesburg, and once again demanded to see his passport

without confirming his nationality. Reflecting on these two incidents, Earnest lamented, "It's as if I have a sign on my forehead written, 'I am illegal'."

Violence and the Indeterminacy of Deportation

While not all my respondents had directly encountered the police, there was a general sentiment that the police use some degree of violence when policing "illegal" migrants. This was observed in previous research in which scholars noted that undocumented migrants experience violence and abuse at the hands of the police either during arrest or when in detention (Landau, 2005; Sutton & Vigneswaran, 2011; Vigneswaran et al., 2010). To some of my respondents, like Rutendo, a mother of two who was once arrested while sitting outside her house in Elandeni, the police's determination to use violence on "people with no papers" was evident in the resources and energy they invest in policing undocumented migrants. Rutendo said, "If you [saw] them coming here you [would] think that they [were] going to war, yet they [were] just looking for people with no papers." This militarized approach to policing undocumented migrants is reminiscent of the declaration of "war against illegal immigration" by the United States and some countries in Europe (Green & Grewcock, 2002). Rutendo was worried that such militarized policing would consolidate the stereotype that associates undocumented migrants with crime (Crush & Williams, 2003).

The weapons used by police were weapons of war and violence. During immigration sweeps in Elandeni, the police would always descend in a convoy with guns. Rutendo was worried that the police would use the guns on undocumented migrants, "[because] they come here with those terrifying weapons, it means they can use them, and they can use them on us [undocumented migrants]." The sight of the weapons that the police carried when policing "people with no papers" sent chills down the spines of many like Rutendo. Her fear of violence from the police as they enforced immigration laws was not unfounded. There have been cases where the police used enormous violence against undocumented migrants, sometimes leading to grievous bodily harm or even death. A prominent case is that of Mido Macia, a 27-year-old Mozambican man who was killed after five policemen manhandled and handcuffed him onto a police van before dragging him. He later died while in police custody

(Newling, 2013). This evidence corroborates concerns raised by Landau (2005) over the use of extra-legal practices by the police when policing migrants, which he laments licensed the targeting and restraining of "illegal" foreigners by whatever means state officials deem appropriate.

A defining feature of deportability, which was central to the exercise of power by state officials, was its indeterminacy (see Griffiths, 2014; Reeves, 2015), which handicapped undocumented migrants from determining with certainty what might (or might not) happen to them in their encounters with state officials, whether they would be arrested and deported. Zerubavel (1981) calls such a state temporal irregularity, which denotes a dearth of a "highly reliable repertoire of what is expected, likely or unlikely to take place within certain temporal boundaries… [and this] contributes considerably to the development of a strong sense of uncertainty" (p. 12). Whereas undocumented migrants considered arrest and deportation as an imminent and inevitable possibility, they were simultaneously uncertain about *when* that would happen. Tambu, a live-out domestic worker who was once stopped by the police on her way from work, was uncertain about how long she would remain undeported given the intensified policing of migrants:

> *I don't know. To tell the truth, I don't know. I may be here now, but I don't know what will happen if I go outside. I might meet the police on my way to work and they say, "We want to see your passport", and you will be surprised to hear tomorrow that I [was arrested and] am in police custody.*

That undocumented migrants considered deportation as an ultimate possibility meant that its actual materialization would jeopardize their ability to accomplish their personal projects in their home country or other plans they may have had. Tsitsi was worried that if she were to be deported, she would not be able to look after and pay school fees for her child. As I will show below, this understanding and fear that their time was terminable any day was instrumental in shaping undocumented migrants' work experiences.

Taking Any Job That Comes

Now, I turn to the question of how the ever-present sense

of vulnerability to, and the indeterminacy and fear of, arrest and deportation shaped undocumented Zimbabwean migrant workers' positioning and participation in the labour market in ways that made them politically docile and economically more exploitable.

The undocumented migrants in this study placed huge emphasis on working, as explained by Raymond, who, at the time of the interview, was working as a security guard:

[I] came here to work and [therefore] [I] have to work, [I] have to be always doing something. If [I am] not working, why then [am I] here? Even if the job is bad, [I] just have to do it, [I] have to do something.

The migrants gave special value to working, or in the words of Raymond, "always doing something". I found that this zeal to want to work, and to work harder, was driven by undocumented migrants' understanding that deportability rendered their time in South Africa terminable at any moment. This understanding and the resultant anxiety over the possible materialization of arrest and deportation had huge implications on undocumented migrants' positioning and participation in the labour market. Several of my interlocutors admitted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find job opportunities in South Africa. So, how then did the undocumented migrants reconcile this unavailability of jobs with their understanding that their time in South Africa could be terminated abruptly and the desire to want to work all the time? The fear and unpredictability of deportation imposed a time restraint on undocumented migrants' ability to freely choose which jobs to do. This fear and the desire to work prompted many of my respondents to take any job that was available, as the responses below show:

Because if police officials are hunting for [people with no papers], you don't know the day they will arrest you, so you don't want to be caught without having worked (Raymond).

Another respondent, Pardon, who was working in construction, echoed the same sentiments as Raymond:

For some of us, we feel like we are running against time, as people who are always being hunted by the police, always running away from the police, you don't want to be caught without having worked.

With the knowledge that they could be deported at any time, it was undesirable for the undocumented migrants to experience deportation without having worked long enough and with nothing to show in Zimbabwe that they had been to South Africa. Back in Zimbabwe, people ridicule those migrants who return home from "*marimuka*" (diaspora) "*vakangobata maoko chete*" (with nothing to show). As such, the pressure of shame if one were to be deported without any tangible investments back home, such as building a house in the rural areas, buying cattle, paying school fees for children or sending grocery money, deprived many the freedom to choose better jobs. Eventual deportation would potentially expose undocumented migrants to the stigma associated with unsuccessful migration because "home" is the place where their status as migrant workers is acknowledged, valued and defined (Galvin 2015), mainly through the tangible things that could be seen as the fruits of their toiling away from home. As a result, the desire to want to utilize their time in South Africa and accumulate to prove their migration exploits back home compelled many to waste no time by being selective about jobs; instead, they were forced to take any jobs that came.

Besides finding work through referrals, the undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in this study also used the "asking strategy" (Van Nieuwenhuyze, 2009) to find work; they moved around asking for job opportunities or stood at strategic points, like shopping malls or road intersections, marketing themselves to passersby. The increased presence of the police enforcing immigration laws made the risks and costs of being in public spaces and being mobile significantly high for undocumented migrants as it increased their chances of encountering the police. This was a cause for anxiety for many. The resultant fear of encountering the police placed the undocumented migrants into enforced "entrapment" (Núñez & Heyman, 2007; Talavera, Núñez-Mchiri & Heyman, 2010). This entrapment is less about migrants being absolutely nailed to the ground but more about how they were constricted by the high risks and costs of being mobile. Given the high risks and costs of moving

around looking/asking for jobs and the fear of apprehension, many undocumented Zimbabwean migrants ended up taking low-status, low-paying and menial jobs because they were easy to find, as attested by Pardon:

> *That thing of being choosey about jobs, you [will be] know[ing] that your life is in order [you have papers] and there is no need for you to hurry. But if you are like some of us [with no papers], you know that you don't have time to waste [being selective about jobs], unokumba zvese-zvese uchiti chamuka inyama (you grab everything saying that anything that comes up is game meat).*

By taking these jobs, they showed a lot of flexibility, particularly by forfeiting their initial pre-migration dreams of a better job, and took any jobs that were available despite the conditions. Many showed great dislike of such jobs because they were socially degraded. For example, Ratidzo aspired to get a better job when she first came to South Africa but ended up taking domestic work:

> *I never thought that I would be someone else's housegirl. I was thinking that I will find a job as a waiter in a hotel or work in big shops [as a shop attendant], not this [being a domestic worker].*

Lovemore came to South Africa hoping to find a job as a truck driver, but when I interviewed him in September 2015, he was working as a mud mixer in construction. These people were supremely disinterested in the jobs they were doing. What made the situation somewhat depressing for some undocumented migrants was that the jobs they were doing in South Africa were held in low esteem back in Zimbabwe. Such migrants did not want their relatives and friends in Zimbabwe to know the jobs they were doing in South Africa. Several people who were doing low-status jobs, such as *"kukanya dhaka"* (mud mixing), *"kuchera matrench"* (digging trenches) or *"kucheka lawn"* (lawn mowing), or even domestic work, told me that they would not disclose such jobs to people in Zimbabwe. Lovemore said he felt embarrassed with the job he was doing and would never disclose it to the people in Zimbabwe, *"Ndingaudza vanhu sei kuti ndiri dhaka boy?"* (How can I tell people that I am a mud mixer?) He

had previously sent his CV to different companies and everywhere the employers turned down his applications for not having papers. Because he did not have the proper documents authorizing him to work and stay in South Africa, Lovemore bemoaned that he was left with no other choice but to work as a casual hand for subcontracted construction companies doing very tedious tasks, such as pushing loaded wheelbarrows. This shows that being "illegal" closed labour market opportunities for undocumented migrants and subsequently impelled them into jobs they disliked.

Doing such low-status, low-paying and menial jobs was not only physically draining; it was also emotionally exhausting. Lovemore told me that if he were to disclose his job to people in Zimbabwe, they would scornfully ask, *"Saka ungaendera kuJoni (South Africa) kunoita dhaka boy shuwa?"* (Surely, how do you go to Joni (South Africa) to be a mud mixer?) He said, for the people in Zimbabwe, it was less-sensical that one would go to South Africa to do such despised jobs. However, for these undocumented migrants, the fear that deportation could result in an abrupt termination of their time in South Africa pushed them to be less selective about which jobs to do; instead, they accepted any job because any job they got was better than not having a job at all.

Exploitation

Zimbabwean migrant workers in South Africa are popular for their strong work ethic to the extent that employers prefer them to South African workers. Such employer preference was confirmed in one of South Africa's leading radio stations, SA FM's morning breakfast show, Forum@8, on 31 January 2017. The show discussed why employers in South Africa preferred Zimbabwean employees, most of whom are undocumented, ahead of locals. The show was inundated with call-ins from employers and employees confirming that Zimbabweans were better employees. One caller from Grahamstown said Zimbabweans "were more grateful for getting an opportunity to work and have a good work ethic" (TalkPoint Zim, 2017). From the show, it could be noted that migrant workers from Zimbabwe have a celebrated work ethic; they were perceived as cheap to employ, obedient, trustworthy and easy to manage, flexible (they were prepared to work anytime, anywhere) and were hard workers.

While Zimbabweans' celebrated work ethic somehow

mirrors the historical racial construction of the labour market in South Africa through stereotypical imaginaries of foreign workers as cheap and hard workers, the undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in this study stressed that their work ethic was structurally determined by the condition of "illegality" and the fear emanating from their vulnerability to arrest and deportation:

> *It's because we are illegal… it's because of our situation. You come here [to South Africa], you don't have papers and you are afraid of the police so when you get a job, you try to keep it, you do everything that will make you stay on the job. You don't want to do anything that will make your employer report you to the police. (Melody)*

The undocumented migrant workers appeared to be more grateful for the opportunity to work because they were aware that being "illegal" limited job opportunities for them. As such, once an opportunity to work arose, they quickly grabbed it, no matter the conditions. Again, as Melody attested above, the fear of arrest disciplined them into obedient employees as they were afraid to do anything that could invite the police.

The possibility and fear of arrest and deportation gave a competitive disadvantage to undocumented migrant workers in their employment relationships while simultaneously tilting the balance of power in favour of employers. This was mainly because the employers hired undocumented migrant workers with the tacit understanding that due to their "illegality" and fear of deportation, there was little regulating the employment relationship or protecting the "illegal" employees. The undocumented migrants had a strong inclination to working (and living) under the radar as a way of avoiding unnecessary contact with authorities, which made it difficult for authorities to regulate their employment relationships and thus made undocumented workers more vulnerable to abuse. As Griffin (2011) notes, undocumented migrant workers' fear of arrest and deportation extended to those institutions designed to protect and enforce their rights as workers to the extent that they were even afraid of participating in the labour movement, like joining trade unions.

Employers manipulated undocumented migrant workers'

fear of police arrest and deportation and exploited them. Some employers would quickly raise the "but you are illegal and can be deported anytime" banner whenever their undocumented workers appeared to challenge the power dynamics in the employment relationship. This consequently rendered undocumented workers politically docile. For example, Ronny told me that when he first came to South Africa, he worked as a farm worker but left the job after his employer threatened to have him arrested because:

I had just asked for my money. Our employer did not pay us for two months, just imagine. I then mobilized the other boys that I was working with that let us not work anymore until we are paid. I was the most vocal and he warned me, "You, you want to see too much. Remember the police are looking for people like you." I then became scared that he would get me arrested. I left after two days.

In this case, Ronny's employer reminded him of his "illegality" in order to pacify him. Previous research found that several farmers in Limpopo used the same strategy against their undocumented migrant employees. The farmers became notorious for reporting their undocumented farm workers to the police when time to pay them their wages approached or when they appeared to be subversive (Human Rights Watch, 2006). In the case of Ronny, his employer exploited and took advantage of his "illegality" and the fact that he could be arrested and deported.

Other employers also pacified their undocumented employees by reminding them of their "illegality" and that they did not deserve to work in South Africa. This often made the undocumented employees feel indebted to their employers and grateful for the opportunity to work. Amos, who was working as a daily-wage worker, revealed that some employers would pay them less than they had initially agreed and if the undocumented migrant tried to complain, the employer would just say, "But [at least] I gave you a job." By saying this, the employers would be trying to make undocumented migrants see how they extended a favour which they did not deserve due to their "illegal" status. It would be like telling the undocumented migrants that, "Because [you know that] you are not allowed to work here." Once the undocumented migrants were reminded of their lack of deservingness, they would become more grateful for the opportunity given to them to work even if they were robbed of a part of their wages.

The fear of arrest and deportation also locked some

undocumented migrant workers into a state of spatial entrapment in which they tried to evade the unpredictable perils of immigration enforcement by retreating into private spaces of work. For such migrants, the workplace provided relative refuge from official detection. Sharon, a live-in domestic worker, admitted that, "Sometimes it is safer to be in your workplace, you keep yourself away from trouble." The desire to remain invisible from the police and the fear of arrest subjected people like Sharon into enforced spatial immobility. Sharon spent most of her time in the home because she was afraid that if she went out, she may be arrested. De Genova (2002) laments that such restricted physical mobility for fear of arrest signifies a measure of captivity for undocumented migrants and opens opportunities for them to be over-exploited. The fear of deportation and the sense of being relatively safe from police surveillance when they were in their places of work confined the undocumented migrants in an endless cycle of work that restricted them to the physical space of work. For example, Tinaye worked as a welder. His employer allowed him to stay in the workshop together with his other two workmates, all from Zimbabwe with no documents. Tinaye said staying in the workshop was much safer than living away from the workplace because it limited their chances of encountering the police or even interacting with hostile citizens. However, he lamented that the downside was that his employer took advantage of that and made them work for very long hours.

The understanding that deportation was an ultimate possibility instilled great fear of idleness and stimulated a strong urge to make their time in South Africa as productive as possible. Earnest said every day he worked "as if today [was my] last day here in South Africa." Some undocumented migrants were doing multiple jobs in order to maximize their time in South Africa. Oliver, James and Tobby all had very anti-social work-time arrangements, working two jobs each day. At night they worked as security guards and during the day they did "*contraca*" (contract work) in construction. For these men, their daily routines of work and home time were not as rigid as others who moved from their home to their workplace and back. Instead, they juggled between different jobs every day with little or no time to rest. They said they were able to do so because security work at night allowed them to sleep. However, they were always overworking themselves and always complained of tiredness. What motivated them was the desire to make as much

money as possible before deportation eventually struck. The feeling that they were living off borrowed time produced an apparent economic dynamism and zeal to work very hard and for long hours. Their urge to work unceasingly hard, even for less money, was less motivated by wage incentives but rather by the fear that their time in South Africa could be untimely interrupted. This is an inversion of other scholars' theorizations of how workers accepted lower wages because of the pressures of "social reproduction" especially in the context of precariousness (Fudge and Owens 2006; Malinga 2015). But for the undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in this study, their exploitation largely emanated from the political-legal constrains of being "illegal" and deportable.

Conclusion

This article has provided some insights into the effect of immigration enforcement on the work experiences of undocumented migrant workers in South Africa. The article has underlined that intensified immigration enforcement makes the threat/possibility of arrest and deportation more perceptible to undocumented migrants, even before it actually materializes. This generates a strong sense of fear and anxiety over the possible materialization of arrest and deportation. This fear comes from undocumented migrants' understanding that if they were to encounter police officials, they would likely be arrested and deported. The undocumented Zimbabwean migrants saw deportation from South Africa as a dreaded end which they wished may not happen before they had worked and accrued enough.

As intensified immigration enforcement rekindled the fear of arrest and deportation into an everyday reality, it adversely impacted undocumented migrants' positioning and participation in South Africa's labour market. By analyzing the effect of fear and anxiety over the possibility of arrest and deportation, we broaden explanations on why (and how) undocumented migrant workers are over-exploited and perform socially degraded jobs. The empirical evidence has shown that the understanding and fear that their time in South Africa is terminable constricted the ability of many undocumented Zimbabwean migrants to choose what jobs to do. As a result, they would just take any job that came no matter the conditions. Again, the desire to work and make the best of their time in South Africa and the fear of deportation had a huge disciplinary

effect on the undocumented migrant workers, which made them politically docile and sometimes unwilling or fearful to participate in the labour movement. This left them extremely vulnerable to employer exploitation and abuse.

Endnotes

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