

Work in Gigonomics: Stories of Couriers

Introduction

"I am an actor by profession, but after the market regulated me as a courier, I cover 100-120 kilometers a day on average. And if you decide to work as a courier too, I will give you one piece of advice: most people start talking to you as if you are a piece of furniture." This is how a young actor and the author of the book "Courier Stories," Temo Rekhviashvili, recalls his own story. Once, during the fifth performance he was playing that day, he felt a hunger pang on stage. The actor's pay per performance is 20 GEL, so he must play at least 45 roles a day to make ends meet from month to month. Meanwhile, the house where he grew up was sold by the bank because the family could not pay the loan. In this state of affairs, the protagonist becomes a courier. Temo Rekhviashvili's short tragicomedy describes the bitter socio-economic reality in which young Georgians (and not only them) live. Among various groups, the highest unemployment rate in Georgia is among young people.

Every third or fifth young person between the ages of 20 and 34 is unemployed.¹ In 2023, the number of people who were thinking about emigration reached 16%. According to 65% of the population, the main reason for emigration is low wages and the lack of jobs (NDI, 2023).

The study examines the organization of labor and its consequences for workers in the food delivery sector on two major platforms, "Glovo" and "Wolt." The study relies on the theoretical concepts of platform labor (see the first part of the study), while the main sources for identifying local trends are interviews with experts² in the field and couriers involved in platform labor.³

¹ National Statistics Office of Georgia, unemployment rate in 2023 by age group: age group 20 to 24 years – 31.9%; age group 25 to 29 years – 20.1%; age group 30 to 34 years – 20.4%.

² The interviews were conducted remotely during the period of March–May 2023. Expert interviews were held with Prof. Ana Diakonidze (sociologist, associate professor at Tbilisi State University and the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, author of platform economy studies in Georgia); Lela Gvishiani (human rights lawyer); and Nana Kobidze (doctoral student at Central European University, sociologist, author of the short film "Your Order is on the Way").

³ Food delivery couriers were selected for the interview from two platforms – "Glovo" and "Wolt".

1. Organization of Platform Labor

Platform labor is a part of the gig economy, which is why it is also referred to as gig work. Remote, or non-localized, labor platforms connect users and workers from any point in the world to another (so-called crowdwork), such as Upwork, Fiverr, etc. Localized platforms, linked to applications, require the worker and the user to be in the same geographical area, as is the case with Glovo and Wolt.

In platform labor, the algorithm plays a central role, which companies have "handed over" management functions to. It is presented as an intermediary between workers and users, which is often referred to as the ultimate employer (Gandini 2019). Thus, companies shift business risks entirely onto workers, and in the absence of regulations, workers are left without legal or social guarantees (Veen, Barratt, and Goods 2020; Goods, Veen, and Barratt 2019; Stewart and Stanford 2017; De Stefano 2016; Rubery et al. 2018).

Theoretically, it is considered that those involved in platform labor enjoy broad autonomy. This means that the worker should be able to decide for themselves when to work, which task to perform, and which to refuse. This factor is more attractive to job seekers (Wood, Rani, and Furrer 2021). The absence of direct supervision is considered the main prerequisite for autonomy, although the involvement of smart, self-learning algorithms increases the level of supervision immeasurably- more than any human could (Griesbach et al. 2019). Using an algorithm in the labor organization process in this way is called algorithmic management or algorithmic control. The algorithm gives directions to workers; evaluates them based on the data collected for supervision; and, in case of unsatisfactorily performed work, applies disciplinary measures (Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin 2020).⁴

1.1. Actors in Georgian Platform Labor

1.1.1. The Companies

"Glovo" and "Wolt" are local branches of multinational corporations in Georgia. "Glovo" is a Spanish company. On its website, the company indicates that it operates in 23 countries across Europe, Western Asia, and Africa, in approximately 1,500 cities, and has over 4,000 employees and nearly 61,000 couriers. "Wolt" was founded in Finland, though in 2022 it was acquired by the American company "DoorDash,"⁵ and since 2023, it has operated in 26 countries outside the United States.

The companies distinguish between employees and partners. The former includes management, support teams, and other individuals involved in organizational matters, while the latter refers to couriers. According to recent data, the number of couriers on the "Wolt" platform equals 7,000, while on "Glovo" it is 3,000 (Fairwork Annual Report 2023: State of the Global Platform Economy, 2023); however, it should be emphasized that a portion of the

⁴ For more detailed descriptions of the specifics of gig-work, see the first part of this research.

⁵ Food delivery platform in the USA.

couriers often use two or more platforms simultaneously.⁶ Furthermore, several posts are circulated daily in courier groups on social networks⁷ regarding the renting out of platform accounts, which leads us to believe that more people might be involved in platform labor, even if unstably, than appears in official statistics.

Companies have two ways of communicating with couriers: email and the application. During the performance of work, they primarily interact with the application's chatbot, though there is also a function to contact "support groups." Additionally, the company uses email to communicate with couriers. Through this channel, couriers receive information regarding implemented changes. Couriers can also communicate with the company via email when an issue cannot be resolved promptly by the support group, or when the worker needs to clarify received information or requires other types of assistance.

Access to algorithms and data control is the responsibility of the companies' central management. It defines the global strategy, vision, and standards of operation. The local representative office is responsible for implementing the global strategy in its own market, adapting it to local conditions, and ensuring compliance with regulations and the environment. At the same time, it manages and supervises the work process, the details of which are periodically coordinated with regional and international management.

1.1.2. Couriers

Due to limited statistical data, we cannot discuss the exact demographics of couriers, though it is assumed that the majority are young men. In recent years, an increasing trend of women's involvement has also emerged.⁸

For a large portion of workers, delivery platform labor is a secondary activity alongside other primary (professional) endeavors. Despite this, they maintain that the money earned through delivery platform work is still their main source of income.⁹

The couriers interviewed for this study come from various professions. For example, Archil was a professional athlete from the age of 12. By the time he registered on the "Wolt" platform, he had already given up sports. Despite having won numerous athletic titles and having worked as a coach for young athletes, he stated that the pay was "ridiculous," so when "Wolt" appeared on the Georgian market in 2018, he registered immediately. His main motivation was to receive dignified compensation. From that moment on, platform labor became his primary source of income.

Giga worked in different professions at different times. For a while, he even served in the Georgian Armed Forces. However, working on the platform became his main source of income and the primary means of supporting his family. According to him, he did not plan to work for

⁶ Interviews with the couriers; Data from Facebook groups.

⁷ Facebook groups: "Glovo Couriers' Group" ("გლოვოს კურიერთა ჯგუფი") – 9,900 members; "GLOVO WOLT BOLT FOOD couriers Tbilisi" – more than 10,000 members.

⁸ Interview with Prof. Ana Diakonidze. For her research, she selected focus group of 100 couriers, absolute majority of which were young men.

⁹ Interviews with couriers. Interview with Nana Kobidze. Short film – "Your Delivery Is on Its Way," Chaikhana.

"Glovo," but due to various reasons, he had to do so. His main motivation was not having a direct supervisor (a "boss").

Nino is a musician and sound engineer who also speaks several languages and has experience working in various industries. She decided to register as a "Wolt" courier due to financial difficulties. She says that she ruled out starting a job at a supermarket from the beginning due to the "unbearable conditions" there, and the fact that she would not have a "direct supervisor" in platform labor provided her with comfort.

Giorgi worked in supermarkets and the construction sector, where he protested against unbearable conditions and organized strikes. Eventually, he registered as a "Glovo" courier. Even though he works a lot there, he says that through couriership, he is able to deal with loan obligations and support his family.

"In the Georgian labor market, these individuals could not find work with adequate conditions based on their own skills, profession, or education; they left the 'indignified' environment in the hope of receiving better compensation, although the status of a self-employed person did not turn out to be a way to achieve this goal. Couriers are involved in highly precarious and difficult work."¹⁰

During the interview, Giorgi told us:

"The pay in this job is not attractive because it is dignified; it is just that we have no better alternative. I have been in heavy labor everywhere and at all times, working overtime. These companies at least pay relatively better."

Couriers are those young people who transition from various professions into the gig economy in the hope of receiving dignified working conditions and compensation. For them, the flexibility of work and the absence of direct supervision are attractive, but the main impetus is difficult socio-economic conditions. Despite the fact that none of them consider gig work to be ideal, compared to other employment opportunities available on the market, they cite better compensation as a source of motivation.

¹⁰ Interview with Lela Gvishiani.

2. Couriers' Experience on Platforms

In classic labor relations, the unequal distribution of power between the employer and the employee is widely recognized, yet there are numerous mechanisms in place to balance this discrepancy. In standard labor, individuals are guaranteed by law the right to leave (including maternity leave), rules for changing essential terms of employment, regulated working hours, conditions for overtime work, rules for dismissal, and the reversed burden of proof in court cases. In the absence of regulation, workers in platform labor lack these guarantees.

One of the main advantages of platform labor is cited as the worker's autonomy, suggesting that the worker defines every aspect of their labor themselves. However, this portrayal of autonomy can be considered exaggerated, especially since the use of algorithms in platform labor has become more intensive. An algorithm is a computer code that, based on the received data, changes the code, rules, and manages the work (Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin 2020; Won, Lee, and Lee 2023). This is called algorithmic management - the supervision, evaluation, and discipline of workers through artificial intelligence (Won, Lee, and Lee 2023; Wood et al. 2018).

At first glance, a labor cycle without a human manager should create autonomy for workers, providing the opportunity to choose when to work and which orders to fulfill (Wood et al. 2018; Rani and Furrer 2021). However, studies show that the algorithm often controls labor more strictly and effectively than a human does. This is referred to as "algorithmic despotism" (Griesbach et al. 2019). The algorithm manages workers in the following directions: a) provides instructions; b) evaluates; c) applies disciplinary measures (Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin 2020). Furthermore, the opacity of the algorithm and information asymmetry hinder the worker from understanding how the system makes decisions (Veen et al. 2020).

2.1. Interaction with the Algorithm

2.1.1. Algorithmic Direction for Workers

Providing direction to workers via algorithms involves managing the work process through recommendations and constraints. Through recommendations, workers are offered orders, delivery routes, and more. Constraints, on the other hand, aim to provide workers with incomplete information at only a certain level (Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin 2020).

In Georgia, a clear example of this is the division of the city into zones. Initially, the entire city was treated as a single zone, covering approximately 502 square kilometers. Under these conditions, it was possible for a courier located at one end of the city to receive an order from the other end. This was not only financially disadvantageous for workers but also physically exhausting, which is why couriers welcomed the division into zones.

However, posts in online groups show that couriers encounter systematic issues in the work process that companies have not warned them about. After the division into zones, "Glovo" informed couriers via email that they could now choose their preferred work zone, and if the algorithm provided an order from outside that zone, the next order would come from the

chosen zone again. Accordingly, a courier who left a zone would be returned to it by the arrival of a new order.

This issue was also raised during the interviews with Giga and Giorgi. The couriers note that in practice, things do not work that way. If the algorithm sends you outside the zone, there is no guarantee that it will bring you back. Both confirm that they start in their chosen zone in the morning and finish at the opposite end of the city in the evening, requiring another hour and a half to get home.

Consequently, the worker's choice is realistically limited - the platform's algorithm determines what tasks they will receive and when they will work. This restricts autonomy in terms of managing time and space (Min Kyung Lee et al. 2015; Tan et al. 2021). The algorithm's instructions resemble a manager's orders, which creates a sense of constant supervision (Rubery et al. 2018).

2.1.2. Algorithmic Evaluation

Algorithmic evaluation involves collecting data during the courier's work process and compiling a rating based on both this data and customer feedback (Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin 2020). Platforms use evaluation to ensure consistency of service. The algorithm collects data on every action of the worker- how quickly they accept or reject orders, how they move, and how long it takes them to complete a task (Griesbach et al. 2019; Rosenblat and Stark 2016). Customer feedback introduces an emotional labor component into platform work (De Stefano 2015; Gandini 2019). This means that during the work process, the courier must control their emotions, facial expressions, and speech in order to leave a good impression on the customer.

"Glovo" actively uses a rating system. On its website, the company indicates that a courier's compensation depends on "experience and rating." "Wolt" did not use a rating system for a long time, but added one in 2023.¹¹ Archil, who has been an organizer of many courier protests, mentioned that one of the couriers' demands during one of the protests was the implementation of a rating system. Nino belongs to those couriers who prefer the existence of a rating because it makes it visible to her that she is doing a good job and makes her feel more valued. Giorgi says that exactly how the system functions is still unclear: **"I have the feeling that points decrease very easily and increase with difficulty. I know what components the evaluation consists of, but I don't know which component has more weight."**¹²

When discussing the rating system, the information asymmetry that exists between the company and the worker became apparent. We will discuss this issue in more detail below.

2.1.3. Algorithmic Discipline

To encourage workers at times and to ensure compliance with platform requirements at others, the algorithm is equipped with disciplinary methods (Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin 2020). "Algorithmic replacement" (Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin 2020) implies the swift dismissal of

¹¹ Interview with Nino.

¹² Interview with Archil.

workers and their replacement with new ones. Companies encourage high-performing workers with algorithmic rewards, such as higher rates and more opportunities.

When reviewing the couriers' experience with the algorithm, we saw that every step taken by the courier and every choice they indicate in the application must be desirable for the company. If they do not work during high-demand hours, their rating drops. In the short documentary "Night Courier" by Radio Liberty, one of the protagonists describes the impact of high demand at night. When a notification comes in at 1:00 AM, they must accept the order. Refusal negatively impacts their rating: "If there is high demand and you say no several times, then fewer notifications will come to me during high-demand hours, and eventually, I will no longer have access to high-demand times at all."

Giorgi and Giga confirmed this during their interviews, though they also added that "Glovo" already allowed couriers to refuse tasks an unlimited number of times. Previously, if a courier refused an order more than a certain number of times, they would be unable to receive a new order for an hour. Couriers call this the "red hour." According to Giorgi's observations, despite the new system, if he refuses tasks too often, the application stops giving him the opportunity to receive new orders: **"When I refuse an order, I get a notification that the application is searching for another Glover who will take the order. Sometimes this takes 40 minutes, sometimes even more. I noticed that the more I refuse an order, the more time the application takes to find a new courier. I don't believe it actually takes that long."**

This suggests that even when explicit "red hours" are removed, the algorithm continues to exert disciplinary pressure through subtle, opaque delays, effectively incentivizing workers to prioritize platform efficiency over their own preferences.

The bonus system is one of the methods for incentivizing couriers, which is frequently and unilaterally changed by the company. The demand for this system has been voiced more than once during courier protest actions. The company sets target benchmarks, which initially covered a smaller number of orders, for example, twenty to thirty (per week). Couriers state that eventually, the target benchmark reached as many as 100-120 orders, which required an unimaginable amount of labor. Moreover, if you fulfill 99 orders instead of 100 per week, the bonus is not credited at all, because you failed to reach the goal.

In this way, through various algorithmic methods, the platform manages the worker's actions and the work process, collects data, evaluates the work performed by the worker, and takes corresponding incentive or disciplinary measures.

Workers have a vague understanding of all this, as the structure of the algorithm and its operation are opaque to them. Such uncertainty gives rise to power asymmetry.

2.2. Algorithmic Opacity and Power Asymmetry

Regarding the management of the work process by the algorithm, companies provide workers with only general information. Couriers uncover the details and logic of the algorithm's operation during the work process and then share them with one another. In courier groups, there are frequent posts where workers speculate, ask each other questions, and discuss the

algorithm's operation, ranging from principles of task assignment and accounting rules to the logic of territorial distribution. Ultimately, however, ambiguity remains.

If a courier relies solely on the information provided by the company, they get the impression that they can work as they please; however, as we have seen, the algorithm does not provide such autonomy. Even though workers know the general rules of the algorithm, such as how tasks are assigned, how the rate is defined, or why they might be deactivated, they are often in a state of uncertainty. They receive inappropriate orders, work at rates that were not defined in advance, or have their access to the application restricted without any prior notice.

Workers are constantly trying to decipher the algorithm's logic, as no one informs them about changes. Giorgi tells us: "Once I worked all day in the rain and was blocked at the end of the day. I was so exhausted I didn't feel like a human. And yet, I was blocked without even knowing the reason." Couriers say that if they contact the courier support team (the so-called "support") about this issue, they receive the answer that the decision was made by the algorithm.

Access to the application is only clear to the courier if the reason is a customer's negative rating. According to the experience of "Glovers," this happens very rarely. Couriers say that to lift a block, visiting the office and submitting a statement was required, although procedures are not precisely defined at such times, and lifting a block takes different amounts of time in different cases.

Couriers cannot receive complete information regarding waiting times at restaurants. Time spent waiting for an order means fewer completed orders for the courier that day, and consequently, lower income. Couriers also mentioned that at one point, applications were calculating "as-the-crow-flies" distance, which was much less than the distance actually traveled by the courier. For instance, in the interview, Archil tells us:

"No one wanted to take orders from Mtatsminda because the algorithm calculated 23 air kilometers from the center to Mtatsminda. Meanwhile, the courier would have to travel 12-13 kilometers."

Couriers say that, in general, problems related to distance calculation are frequent on both platforms. They also mentioned that the program shows incorrect directions, and often, couriers have to violate traffic rules. However, in such cases, if a courier considers that the algorithm incorrectly calculated the distance traveled and contacts management about it, the company usually reacts adequately and pays for the actual distance covered.

Beyond the algorithm, couriers also complain about the management's attitude. When discussing this issue, regardless of the company, one and the same phrase was mentioned by every respondent:

"They don't consider us human beings."

For couriers, it is not enough what type and amount of information they receive. It is even more discouraging that when they share their grievances with management, the problem often remains unresolved. All interviewed couriers used electronic mail to communicate with the company, but noted that it required a great deal of effort to receive full information about an issue to be resolved: "They send us an email, but the information provided there is just a

template." It appears that management cannot effectively resolve the problems that arise during the interaction with the algorithm in the work process, and couriers remain alone, or reliant on one another.

3. Precarious Labor

When discussing precariousness, it is crucial to examine the component of flexibility as a key characteristic of platform labor, which, in turn, plays a major role in creating precarious working conditions. Theoretically, platform labor involves flexibility regarding tasks, space, and time, i.e., the ability of the worker to maneuver within the work process to choose what, where, and when to work (Dunn, Munoz, and Jarrahi 2023; Kahancová, Meszmann, and Sedláková 2020).

Over time, it has become evident that the flexibility companies emphasize to attract workers is not an advantage but rather a characteristic of the industry that often creates a space for limiting workers' rights and their well-being (Tan et al. 2021). There is no single definition of precariousness. It is generally considered that labor is precarious if the worker does not enjoy the basic guarantees that they would have in a standard employment relationship. Labor is precarious when employment is unstable, meaning the worker knows they might not have a job in the near future. Furthermore, they lack support mechanisms that should be activated when rights are limited in the workplace. Ultimately, we get a vulnerable worker who is a victim of unstable employment and poor conditions (Olsthoorn 2014).

In Georgia, it is difficult to highlight the precariousness of any single sector, as the entire labor market is precarious and the worker is weak. Employment is not associated with solid social guarantees. The share of informal labor is high, and there are few good jobs with dignified compensation, labor conditions, and social benefits. The worker does not have a stable social safety net outside the workplace, making unemployment a major risk for everyone (Georgian Progressive Forum 2025). It should also be noted that, alongside all this, the majority of the population utilizes predatory bank loans (platform "Kommentari" 2024).

Platform labor, however, is even more insecure and lacks guarantees. Every courier mentioned having accounts on both platforms because if one is blocked, they can work on the other application to ensure they do not miss a day's income. A worker's access to the application can be restricted for various reasons, and often these reasons are opaque to the couriers.

Unilateral setting of compensation and changes to contracts by the platform are problems for workers. The first strike began precisely on this basis. Couriers demanded the return of the "old rate," as everyone noted that compensation had only worsened over time. Couriers say that for normal compensation, they have to work 12-13 hours a day. Long working hours are also facilitated by long wait times at restaurants.

When interviews were conducted in 2023, couriers mentioned that companies had started hiring foreigners, primarily citizens of low-income countries, who, unlike Georgians, were willing to accept low pay and had no protests regarding working conditions. Today in Georgia, the number of foreign couriers is visibly increased in the platform economy, particularly on food

delivery platforms, which is a targeted company policy to keep compensation and working conditions at a minimum.

Archil joined the interview from the United States. He said that in Georgia, he could no longer manage to live on courier compensation or support his family. He was also involved in platform labor in the USA, but the conditions were much better than in Georgia: "There, they listen to you and treat you like a human being."

Couriers' work is also dangerous. All respondents spoke about health issues caused by breathing exhaust fumes all day and potential long-term health risks associated with working in bad weather. Couriers stated that health insurance, not just motor vehicle accident insurance, was important. "Glovo" did indeed offer health and motor vehicle accident insurance, as well as maternity leave based on health status, but when we asked couriers about the details of the insurance, they did not know the exact terms. Giorgi told us that he once tried to clarify the terms when he had a minor car accident, but the procedures were so convoluted that he could not use the insurance. This was confirmed by others as well.

Couriers recalled the case of another courier who needed 10,000 GEL for medical treatment following a car accident; after submitting all supporting documents, the insurance company paid him 9 GEL.

The legal status of couriers remains unregulated to this day. Despite the couriers' perception that they work for the company, platforms call them independent contractors or partners. After couriers resorted to strikes and forms of protest, filed lawsuits in court, and reached out to the Public Defender regarding their status, companies implemented a practice of helping couriers register as micro or small businesses; in such cases, the income tax would decrease from 20% to 1% or 0%. While in Western countries the main demand of couriers has been precisely the status of an employee, Georgian couriers say that the status of an employee is associated for them only with an increased tax burden and provides them with no advantages.

4. Courier Resistance

Following the lifting of the "lockdown" after the first wave of COVID-19, large-scale protest movements by couriers began. Respondents state that the primary cause of the protests at the time was deteriorating working conditions. As a result of unilateral decisions by "Glovo" and "Wolt," compensation was decreasing, the bonus system was worsening, and health insurance was unavailable. Following the pandemic, couriers' demands were not just for improved working conditions, but for a return to the "old conditions."

In 2021, over a hundred food delivery platform couriers refused to work. Among other things, they demanded changes to inadequate rates, the bonus system, and the insurance system, more specifically, a return to the old system that allowed for the possibility of earning better income. According to them, the companies had reduced delivery rates. Protest participants stated that negotiations with the company were fruitless, and during the process, about 50 couriers had their access to applications restricted (Publika, 2021). Several months later, after

the company and the couriers reached an agreement, the "blocked" couriers had their access to the applications restored.

Later, at the end of 2021, "Glovo" announced that it was establishing new labor standards, which included new hourly rates, a better insurance package, safety regulations, and training (Publika, 2021). In the absence of policy, courier protests continued.

At the beginning of 2023, more than 200 "Wolt" couriers began a prolonged protest. Their demands differed from previous ones: they demanded an increase in compensation, health insurance, accurate calculation of distance traveled, and for all of this, the holding of collective negotiations (Publika, 2023). In this case, too, the protesting couriers had their right to use the application restricted. Shortly thereafter, the company published a blog claiming it had no obligations toward the couriers, as they were not employees but independent contractors, noting that the workers were satisfied with this status (Wolt Georgia, 2023).

During this protest, the intense focus of the couriers on the issue of insurance was driven by the situation of one "Wolt" courier, Levan Mdzevashvili. During interviews, Archil, Nino, and Giorgi all mentioned his story. Levan Mdzevashvili, 27, was a father of three who was involved in a car accident while working in 2022, sustaining severe head, spinal, and heart injuries, and remained in a coma. Respondents mentioned during interviews that Mdzevashvili's family sold everything to cover medical expenses. The insurance company "Aldagi" refused to pay compensation, citing the family's failure to submit the required documentation (Netgazeti, 2023). Couriers launched a public campaign to help the family cover medical expenses. Ultimately, "Aldagi" paid 70,000 GEL, but medical costs were much higher. The family stated that they were asking for nothing more from "Aldagi" and were already awaiting "Wolt's" position. In a statement published in 2023, "Wolt" focused on Mdzevashvili's case, stating that the company had no obligations toward the courier (Wolt Georgia, 2023).

During the interviews conducted within the scope of this study, respondents emphasized the lack of attention from companies. Phrases like "They don't hear us," "They aren't interested," and "They don't consider us human" were frequently repeated. Couriers said they could not continue the protests indefinitely, as they all had families and financial obligations to banks, which made continuing to work a necessity.

This type of resistance movement is even more interesting as the organization of gig workers and the creation of a strong position in negotiations is associated with great difficulty (Wood et al. 2018; Anwar and Graham 2020). In Georgia, it appears that online groups and gathering points near restaurants played a major role in organizing protests (Abuladze 2024). Giorgi noted in the interview that these are precisely the places where couriers share emotions, and Nino and Archil emphasized that all courier protest movements first matured at gathering points near restaurants, and only then did the organization move to online groups. According to the couriers, protest is also their civic duty, though they are significantly hampered by financial difficulties and bank obligations.

Conclusion

In Georgia, platform labor primarily involves young people with diverse professional backgrounds and levels of education. Their entry into the industry is driven by unacceptable working conditions and poor compensation in other fields. The motivating factors include relatively better pay and the absence of a direct supervisor. While companies present the algorithm as the main orchestrator of platform labor, the couriers' experience demonstrates that algorithmic management and information asymmetry remain the responsibility of management, so the feeling that there is no manager controlling the activity never disappears.

Couriers experience significant information asymmetry regarding both the functioning of the algorithm and other crucial working conditions. Companies make unilateral decisions regarding essential labor terms, which workers are only informed of post-facto. Couriers feel that the company does not listen to them and does not take their grievances, advice, or complaints into account when managing operations.

Platform labor in Georgia is precarious. Couriers are unprotected in terms of compensation and lack social guarantees, even though, considering Tbilisi's transport conditions, their activity carries high risks. Traffic accidents are frequent. Given the nature of this labor, serious long-term health risks emerge, caused by constant exposure to exhaust fumes and working in difficult climatic conditions. Couriers in Georgia demand dignified working conditions, not just the status of an employee, as this status for them is associated only with a heavy tax burden, which is not accompanied by adequate social guarantees or, most importantly, acceptable labor conditions.

The general trend is as follows: the weakening of workers occurs in different ways across different sectors. The process of individualizing industrial labor relations complicates the formation of collective movements for workers. Consequently, it becomes difficult to demand desired labor conditions, and the worker remains vulnerable and in a weak position, face-to-face with multinational, multi-billion-dollar companies.

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