

Uber drivers in Cape Town: Working conditions and worker agency in the sharing economy

Ine Geitung



Master Thesis, SGO4080
Department of Sociology and Human Geography

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

15.09.2017

Uber drivers in Cape Town: Working conditions and worker agency in the sharing economy

© Ine Geitung

2017

Uber drivers in Cape Town: Working conditions and worker agency in the sharing economy

Ine Geitung

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The effects of the sharing economy on labour have been intensely discussed in recent years. Some are praising the effective, and sustainability implications of the sharing economy. Others are critiquing the deregulation of labour and growth of non-standard labour relations that shift risk from employer to employee. While the discussions have largely taken place in a US or European context, the sharing economy is not limited to the global North. This study examines the working conditions of Uber drivers in Cape Town and explores how drivers are responding to these conditions through individual and collective agency. The study is based on twenty-one in-depth interviews with Uber drivers, most of which were conducted as a passenger, and union representatives. The findings suggest that Uber drivers experience tough working conditions, including long working hours, high job insecurity and exposure to harm. This is complicated by a system of renting cars to Uber drivers as many drivers in Cape Town do not own their own car. Network effects on platforms also becomes a mechanism that are pushing drivers to adapt to customer's demands and to ensure good ratings. The study uncovers how driver's individual agency is constrained by a competitive labour market and by the asymmetrical power positions between drivers and Uber. Uber also constrains collective organization by challenging workers solidarity by fragmenting the work place and labour relations. The study demonstrates how the spatiality of collective organization plays an important role in developing worker solidarity and collective agency.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my informants for sharing their story. Without you there would be no thesis. A great appreciation also goes to ACID and ILRIG for their guidance and books about Labour organization in South Africa.

Second, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Emma Arnold and David Jordhus-Lier. Thank you, Emma, for your thorough and useful comments, and otherwise excellent supervision. Thank you, David, for your Cape Town knowledge and advises to theory. I would also like to thank the Department of Sociology and Human Geography for the field work grant. The fieldwork would not have been possible without it.

Third, great appreciation is shown to my friends and family for their continual moral support throughout this process. Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow students for creating a great learning environment. To all of Pauserommet, lets never forget the day we scored twenty points in Morgenbladets quiz.

Any mistakes are my responsibility alone

Sincerely,

Ine Geitung

Oslo, September 2017

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Background	4
2.1	Cape Town.....	4
2.2	Public Transportation in Cape Town.....	5
2.2.1	Metered Taxicabs in Cape Town.	6
2.3	Uber	7
2.3.1	Uber in Cape Town.	8
3	Theoretical Review	10
3.1	Sharing or Exploitation?	10
3.2	Effects of the Sharing Economy on Labour	12
3.3	Power and Agency.....	14
3.3.1	Agency in the Global South	15
3.4	Solidarity and Fragmentation	16
4	Methodology.....	18
4.1	Constructing the Case	18
4.2	Interviews	19
4.2.1	Description and Recruitment of Informants.....	19
4.2.2	Gate Keepers	21
4.2.3	Structure of the Interviews	21
4.2.4	Processing of Data.....	25
4.3	Other Sources of Information	26
4.4	Ethical Issues and Positionality	27
4.4.1	The Researcher's Positionality in Cross Cultural Research	27
4.4.2	Informed Consent	28
4.4.3	Compensating the Informants	29
4.5	Rigour, Reflexivity and credibility	29

5	Analysis.....	31
5.1	What are Uber driver’s Experiences of Their Working Conditions?	31
5.1.1	Work on Demand	31
5.1.2	Earnings and Car Ownership.....	33
5.1.3	Safety.....	38
5.1.4	“Uber is Always on the Side of Riders”	40
5.2	What is Constraining or Enabling Uber Drivers’ Individual and Collective Actions? 43	
5.2.1	Individual Agency as Independent Contractors	43
5.2.2	Collective Organization and Agency	46
5.2.3	The Geographies of Uber Drivers Collective Organization.....	51
6	Conclusion	58
	References	60
	Appendix I: Informed Consent	66

List of figures

Figure 1: Map of reference over Cape Town..	XI
Figure 2: Picture from Uber ride.	22
Figure 3: Map over driving routes of interviews.....	23
Figure 4: Picture from Uber ride.	24

Abbreviations

CCMA - Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration

NUPSAW - National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers

SADL - South African Department of Labour

SATAWU - South African Transport and Allied Workers Union

TCT - Transport authorities in Cape Town

Map of Cape Town



Figure 1: Map of reference over Cape Town. Source: ESRI. Made by Ine Geitung.

1 Introduction

The effects of the sharing economy on labour have been intensely discussed in recent years. Some are praising the effective, liberal and sustainability implications of the sharing economy. Others are critiquing the deregulation of labour and growth of non-standard labour relations that shift risk from employer to employee (Schor, 2014, Martin, 2016). While the discussions have largely taken place in a US or European context, using US and European evidence, the sharing economy is not limited to the global North. Countries of the global South have also seen digital platforms such as Uber and Airbnb make their way into the economy (Roxas, 2016). Almost half of the cities Uber operates in are located in the global South (Uber, 2017a). In the global North, the biggest platforms of the sharing economy are being increasingly challenged for their avoidance of government regulation. However, the sharing economy's platforms continue to expand in the less regulated global South. As opposed to the global North, labour markets and labour organization in the global South have been characterized by their large informal sector, meaning economic activity that are outside of formal regulations such as labour and tax laws, and health and safety regulations (Lindell, 2010). Yet, the effects of sharing economy in global South remains an under-communicated perspective in academic circles.

This project investigates the experiences of Uber drivers in Cape Town and explores how such a global phenomenon as the sharing economy manifests in the context of a southern city like Cape Town. More specifically, this project strives to describe the working conditions of Uber drivers in Cape Town and explores how drivers are responding to these conditions through individual and collective agency. Working as independent contractors for Uber, drivers lack the traditional legal protection, as the legal framework is shaped after the standard employee – employer work contract. Drivers holds a key position of information as workers in the sharing economy, and it is seen as an important goal of this thesis to highlight these perspectives. Another interesting development have been the creation of the trade union Uber Drivers Guild Cape Town. The development of the Uber Drivers Guild could provide interesting insight into collective organization for non-standard workers in the global South, as well as for Uber drivers all over the world.

The first aim of this research is to capture an on the ground account from Uber drivers about their experiences of working for Uber. Uber drivers in Cape Town have first-hand experiences

of what it is like to work in the sharing economy in a southern city. The first research question is therefore formulated with the intent of capturing this perspective:

1) What are Uber driver's experiences of their working conditions?

This question is concerned with understanding the working conditions of Uber drivers. Experience of working conditions includes descriptions of hours of work, income labour relations and safety. It also involved qualitative aspects of driver's feelings towards being an Uber driver, such as what drivers liked and did not like about their work day and their plans for the future.

The second research question is concerned with understanding how drivers are responding to their working conditions. It does so by focusing on what is affecting driver's individual and collective action. Agency is used as a concept of understanding what is constraining and enabling actions. It is assumed that workers agency is a useful tool in understanding how labour is shaped by wider social mechanism, and also how labour can be a shaper of these mechanism. As in this case, it seeks to understand how workers actions are affected by the economic concept of the sharing economy, and how workers agency is shaping the outcome. As mentioned, some are claiming that the sharing economy have a negative effect on workers agency by operating with non-standard work relations such as independent contractors. Understanding workers agency could provide useful evidence to this discussion. The second research question is formulated as followed:

2) What is constraining or enabling Uber drivers' individual and collective actions?

To be able to answer these research questions, qualitative interviews were chosen as method. Twenty-one interviews with Uber drivers and union officials were conducted in January 2017, in Cape Town. The qualitative nature of the research questions, focusing on lived and personal experiences of Uber drivers made interviews an intuitive choice, as interviews have the ability to capture in-depth information. Nine of the interviews with Uber drivers were conducted while driving with the informants on an Uber trip, providing useful insights to the work day of Uber drivers. A theoretical framework of agency and power is used in the analysis of the evidence, while the goal to highlight driver's perspectives also influences the analysis by putting driver's experiences in the centre.

Following the introduction, this thesis is structured into five other chapters. Chapter two provides the reader with a descriptive background of Cape Town and of the city's public transportation and metered taxi service. It also describes Uber as a company and their presence in Cape Town since 2013. Chapter three is a theoretical review of concepts used in this thesis. It starts with an overview of the concept "sharing economy", and how its policies could implicate the labour market in Cape Town. Then provides an overview how agency and power is understood in this thesis, and how labour organization in the global South affects agency. It ends with a discussion of trade union solidarity, and how solidarity is being challenged by fragmentation of labour. Chapter four presents how the case was constructed and critically described the methods employed in this project. It also looks at ethical issues encountered in the field and the rigour of the research. Chapter five contains the analysis of the evidence. It starts with the first research questions, looking at drivers working conditions namely, the hours of work, earnings, renting of vehicles, safety and relations to Uber and riders. The second part looks at research question two, driver's agency. It starts by looking at driver's individual agency, as independent contractors. Then it moves over to collective agency by looking at the strategies of organization and barriers for solidarity experienced by drivers and the Uber Drivers Guild Cape Town. It finished by looking at how the spatiality of the organization and the geographies of production inflicts the collective agency. The last chapter provides a summary and conclusion of the main findings in the analysis.

2 Background

The following chapter provides a descriptive background of what is seen as important elements for the understanding of the case. It starts with a description of Cape Town and of the city's public transportation and metered taxi service. Then it moves over to looking at Uber and their presence in Cape Town.

2.1 Cape Town

Cape Town was the first city to be built by Dutch colonialists in 17th century, and the colonial history and the apartheid legacy is still highly evident in the city. The unequal structures laid by centuries of colonial rule by the Dutch and the British were intensified with the implementation of the apartheid politics in the second half of the 20th century. Apartheid became the name of the set of governmental rules and policies that enforced racial segregation in the country and consolidated white minority rule. Cape Town and the surrounding region have the second highest percentage of white population in the country, and most of the land is owned by whites. Cape Town is actually one of the most ethnic diverse cities in South Africa, yet paradoxically it is also one of the most segregated. There is very little interaction between the different ethnic groups, and spatial segregation remains as strong as under apartheid (Parry & Van Edeen, 2015). The small changes to spatial segregation are the increasing black and coloured middle class that are moving into white areas, while the poorer neighbourhoods remain racially homogenous. For example, the 2011 population census estimated that 99% of inhabitants in Khayelitsha¹ were black Africans (Munthe, 2015). This creates not only racial segregation, but an economic segregation as well (Geyer & Mohammed, 2015). In general, the white population is found around Atlantic Seaboard, the Southern Suburbs and the Northern Suburbs. In between these suburbs lies the Cape Flats, which is known as a coloured and black area. This is the home to the majority of the town's population. The Cape Flats are infamous for high crime rates, heavy drug abuse and notorious gangs. Most of the population is very poor, and the extremely high urbanization rate after apartheid has led to the development of huge informal settlements (McFarlane & Silver, 2017: 126).

¹ Khayelitsha (see reference map) is the fastest growing informal township in Cape Town, estimated to have over half a million inhabitants. It is one of the poorest township with lowest average income per household, and is known for hazardous living conditions and high crime rates (Munthe, 2015, Smit et al 2016).

Cape Town's relatively high crime rates also have spatial implications. Lemanski (2004, 2006) and Schuermans (2016) write about how fear of crime is creating gated communities and becomes a mean for "resegregation" between different socioeconomic groups. These enclaves become "free zones" for the mostly white middle class, where they do not have to be confronted with their privileged position. Crime and fear of crime also affects the movements in the underprivileged areas, and a study done in Khayelitsha showed that people rarely went out after dark, and planned their movements after "safe routes". Fear of crime also was also a big factor for depression and stress for the inhabitants. (Smit et al 2016). Tourists visiting Cape Town reported fear of crime stopped them from moving out after dark and of using public transportation (George, 2003).

2.2 Public Transportation in Cape Town

Urban transportation in South Africa is complex, as it consists of many individual transport systems with little integration amongst the different providers (Ingle, 2009). As in many other Sub-Saharan countries, para-transport services (minibus taxis, locally known as "taxis") have developed as one of the main modes of public transportation in South Africa (Schalekamp & Behrens 2013). The segregation and forced removals under apartheid created a new need for urban public transportation, as workers needed to travel to work in the white areas. As the government did not provide sufficient public transportation, illegal minibus taxis became the only means of transportation for a big portion of the South African population. The creation of the minibus taxi system has been praised by many as good example of African entrepreneurship, while the lack of official control and regulation led the industry to be highly competitive over certain routes, resulting in violent conflicts and stiff prices for the customers (Ingle, 2009). After 1994, an effort was made to regulate the service. Drivers had to obtain permits to drive, and a huge investment was made into modernising the fleet of busses. A study for taxi drivers working conditions in 2003 found that most minibus taxi drivers did not have a written working contract, worked seven days a week, and made around 1200 rand (90 USD) a month. Very few owned the minibus they were driving, and had to split the profits with the bus owner. (Ingle, 2009). Today minibus taxi drivers have a monthly minimum wage of 3,218.57 rand (249 USD) (SADL, 2016).

In Cape Town, suburban commuter rail (Metrorail) holds a large share of public transportation users. A survey from 2005 suggests that 54% of commuters used rail, while the minibus taxis

had 29% of the daily passengers, a number much lower than in other South African cities (64% on average). Scheduled bus service (such as the Golden Arrow) held 17%. (Wilkinson, 2010). One explanation for this the topography of Cape Town, with the surrounding Table Mountain range creating a bottleneck for traffic to and from the City Bowl especially in rush hours. The train line runs through this bottleneck shape, making its location useful for many travellers, at least as a way in and out of the City Bowl. In spite of this, Cape Town remains an automobile-centric city, with much shorter travel time by car than by public transportation (Hitge & Vanderschuren 2015). In 2013, car users travelled for an average of seventy minutes (same as the global average for travel time), while public transportation user travelled on an average of 110 minutes. Reasons for this include the long distance to stops from resident areas, little interlinkage between different modes of transport, little facilitation for public transportation in the road infrastructure and low speeds for rail transportation. Private cars or cabs are therefore preferred modes of transportation, for the ones who can afford it.

2.2.1 Metered Taxicabs in Cape Town.

As minibus taxis are called “taxi” in South Africa, regular metered taxis (as well as unregistered taxis) are called “cabs”. To avoid confusion, “taxis” are here referred to as minibus taxis and “cabs” as taxicabs. As part of the National Transport Act, a new strategy for passenger transportation was developed by Transport authorities in Cape Town (TCT). In the strategy, it was acknowledged that metered taxicabs served a different purpose than other passenger transport with a main market in tourism and individual transport, as well as a gap filler for public transportation (TCT, 2014a). In the strategy report, the metered taxicabs service in Cape Town were considered to have a “poor performance”, with low quality, high rates and little regulation of the service. This resulted in a “Metered Taxi Rationalization Strategy Report” which is the most in depth report on metered taxicabs services in Cape Town. Officially, there were 686 registered metered taxicabs in Cape Town, but it is believed that more are authorized to drive. Also, there is reason to believe that the actual number of cabs operating is much higher, as it is expected that around half of the operating cabs are unlicensed (TCT, 2014b). In Cape Town, metered taxicabs operate on a rank based system, as opposed to a roaming system, similar to the system in New York. Most of the ranks are public, while some are private (like the V&A Waterfront²), where not all operators are allowed. Some of the bigger operators also

² Victoria & Albert (V & A) Waterfront refers to the Cape Town Harbor (see reference map). The V & A is known for its vibrant atmosphere as well as its high-class restaurants, shopping and hotels. It is also one of the

have a call-based system and use radio dispatch facilities, which allows for more roaming (TCT, 2014b). There are many smaller or single operators, but around 90% of the market is held by ten different taxicab associations. There is a national limitation to the taxicab fare of no higher than 10 rand (0,80 USD) per kilometre, which most operators' use, with a few of the bigger operators using 9 rand per kilometre

For passengers, the main challenges were high rates, low standards of cars and driver skills, and a lack of accessibility with concentration of services in the central business district. The taxicab rank was also regarded as unsafe and unreachable for tourists who preferred direct hotel pick-ups. The metered taxicabs operators faced challenges with a difficult and technical regulating system that gives little space to grow. Also, there is tough competition in the market from illegal operators, e-hailing applications³ and specialized transport services for tourist activities. Tourists are a big part of the metered taxis' income. The reliance on tourists makes the demand seasonal, leaving the market oversaturated outside tourist season, which is generally from October until May, with peak season from mid-December to mid-January. The strategy barely gets into regulation for e-hailing apps such as Uber, as this was brand new at the time of the strategy. It does acknowledge e-hailing as a possibility for tourists and for cashless transactions. There is little written on the working conditions of taxicab drivers, and the TCT wanted to instruct the Department of Labour for further study on this.

2.3 Uber

Uber was founded in 2009 in San Francisco and has become a pioneer for what is often referred to as the "peer to peer business, or "sharing economy". For example, "Uberization" has become the equivalent French term for sharing economy, indicating how big an influence the Uber business model has had. Uber's business model for ridesharing takes advantage of unused resources – people's private cars – and connects those with cars with people in need of a ride. If you have a car, you can register to become a driver, or a partner as it is called, then log on to the app and drive whenever you have the time. The Uber smartphone application connects drivers with riders who are registered with their credentials and credit card information. For facilitating this service, Uber takes out 20 to 25% of the fare, while the rest goes to the driver.

few public spaces in Cape Town, and many of the town's museum are locked here. It is a very popular area for tourist, as well as Capetonians.

³ E-hailing application means smart phone applications where one can order or "hail" transportation services. Uber is an example of an e-hailing application.

The fare is set by Uber, and may increase (surge pricing) during peak hours to get more drivers on the road or to an area.

Officials and regulators have struggled with how to regulate the sharing economy, mainly because many regulations are not made to fit with modern digital applications, or the software service may breach existing laws (Edelman & Geradin, 2015, Cunningham-Parmeter, 2016, Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2016, Cannon & Summers, 2014). Regulations of Uber have centred around two debates, 1) if Uber is an employer and 2) if Uber is a taxi company, both of which Uber claims are not true. Uber claims that drivers are not working for Uber, they are independent contractors (partners investing in the business). As Uber states, you are your own boss and you can set your own hours (Uber, 2017b). This makes Uber the biggest company that provides passenger transport while not owning a single car or having a single driver employed (Srnicsek, 2017). However, as practice shows, Uber exercises a certain control over drivers that in many cases functions as an employment relation. This especially applies to the decision of fares and direct instructions on customer care: play slow jazz in the car, wear proper clothing, and open the door for riders. The lack of legal protection of workers outside a formal working contract, as well as the lack of legal framework to define an employer without such a contract makes it difficult for drivers to obtain rights as employees (Cunningham-Parmeter, 2016, Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2016).

Uber themselves claim that they are not a taxi company, but a *service provider* (Geradin, 2015). They do not own any cars and they do not directly provide any transportation, they are just providing the application, in the same sense that a travel agency is not a transportation company. They therefore often escape regulation that the rest of the taxi industry must adhere to, such as registering for taxi permits. This does not sit well with competing taxi companies, as they claim Uber gets an unfair competitive advantage and therefore can offer uncompetitive prices. In the last year, Uber has lost several major law suits such as the European Court advising regulators to treat Uber as a taxi company (Fioretti & Sinner, 2017).

2.3.1 Uber in Cape Town.

Uber was officially launched in Cape Town in October 2013 (Uber newsroom, 2013). Effective advertisement played on the fear of crime and the ineffective rank based metered taxicabs. With slogans as “From start to finish, a ride you can trust” “Whether you’re headed to Waterfront, Camps Bay, CPT Airport, or out on the town, Uber connects you with a reliable ride in minutes”

it seems like no surprise that a company like Uber would become to thrive in Cape Town. Today Uber has expanded to several cities in South Africa, and have over four thousand drivers in Cape Town alone (Uber Drivers Guild Representative). In addition to its driving services UberX, UberXL and UberBlack, Uber has launched UberEats and UberAssist in 2017. Still, Uber's journey in Cape Town has not been carefree. In 2015, Uber was operating illegally for some months while regulators discussed if and how Uber should be regulated. This is not exclusive to Cape Town and South Africa, as Uber have been known to operate illegally in other countries, as in Norway for example. In Cape Town, Uber was deemed legal as it was using e-hailing (digital and cashless taxi service), as long as all drivers obtained permits for driving (TCT, 2015, Co-Pierre & Rose, 2016). Offering rates as low as 7 rand per kilometre, the competition has created tensions with competing minibus taxi and cab drivers, resulting in street protests and several violent attacks on Uber drivers. Especially after Uber expanded from e-hailing and started accepting cash in 2016, and thereby reaching out to a new client base, tensions has risen.

Some noteworthy actions have occurred more recently. Seven Uber Drivers, the founders of Uber Drivers Guild, supported by SATAWU and NUPSAW, challenged Uber in labour court, the South Africa's Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). The drivers filed a complaint to be recognised as employees, after being deactivated from the application. CCMA ruled that Uber drivers should be considered employees and not independent contractors. This was based on the controlling relationship Uber had on drivers and the drivers economically dependency on the income, ruling that Uber was an employer for drivers. "They [drivers] are not independent contractors in any true sense and they are in fact highly dependent on Uber for work." (CCMA, 2017:12). This ruling would mean that Uber drivers have the rights as employees under the Labour Act, and Uber having the responsibilities. Uber have protested the ruling, claiming first of all that the ruling only applies to the seven drivers involved in the law suit and second that the ruling was not final with new rounds in court (IAfrikan news, 2017). The final decisions of this case can create interesting precedence for all South African Uber drivers, and follows from a range of other similar law suits in the UK and US (Kerr, 2016. CBC, 2017).

3 Theoretical Review

Having briefly explained Uber in the previous chapter, this section looks at Uber and the sharing economy in a more theoretical perspective. As the concept of the sharing economy is still a “floating signifier” this section starts with explaining how the sharing economy is defined in this thesis. After that the sections looks at how the sharing economy could implicate the labour and labour market in Cape Town. This has relevance to the first research questions, which strive to understand working conditions in the sharing economy. Following this, the concept of agency and power is explored, and how labour organization in the global South affects agency. This has relevance to the second research question which aims at understanding how Uber drivers exert power and agency in response to their working conditions. Lastly the section looks at theoretical perspective on trade union solidarity, and how solidarity is being challenged by fragmentation of labour. This is of importance when looking at driver’s collective agency, also explored in research question two.

3.1 Sharing or Exploitation?

In the last decade, there has been a growing trend in so called “peer to peer” business, disrupting traditional models of business to customer and business to business (Muñoz & Cohen, 2017). Innovations in ICT have enabled real time communication all over the world, which has made it easier to connect buyers and sellers in all markets. Especially, the development of smart phones and applications (apps) has been crucial for these “new” forms of transactions. Researchers have so far struggled to find a common term and definition for these trends. Terms like “peer economy”, “gig-economy” and “platform economy” have been used, but so far, the “sharing economy” has stood out as the most accepted and frequent name, at least in everyday language. The meaning of the term is however not clear, differing amongst researchers and disciplines (Frenken & Schor, 2017). A reason for these differences can be acclaimed to the complex and vast differences in organizational forms of actors operating in the “sharing economy”. Defining the sharing economy using a wide definition can make it useless in academic research, while a precise definition will exclude important actors. Acquier et al. (2017) suggests overcoming this naming-challenge by using sharing economy as an umbrella term. Using an organizing framework, they separate the sharing economy into three different “cores”, 1) Access economy, 2) Platform economy, and 3) Community-based economy. They

stress that while their definition of the sharing economy includes these three cores, it is important to remember that these cores also contest each other and produce quite different outcomes. It is exactly this paradoxical nature of the sharing economy that makes it difficult to define, and why a wide definition is needed. I find this organization useful as it includes the different forms of economic organization, while it also makes it possible to distinguish which cores of the sharing economy that is present in each case.

The access economy is used to describe the part of the sharing economy activity that takes advantage of underused resources by sharing or lending items for a specific period, instead of owning them. This is not a new way of interaction, take libraries or car rentals as examples, but there has been an increasing trend in lending goods that previously were seen as bought goods. Another trend is the increasing renting of services, in the same way as renting goods. The access economy is believed to be eco-friendly and sustainable with more efficient use of resources. Yet, as Acquier et al (2017) points out, access can also bring a “Jevons paradox” where easier access to resources makes it easier for people to use them, stimulating higher demand or indulgent consumption (making it easier and cheaper to rent/share a car, more people will be prone to use a car instead of public transportation).

The Platform economy refers to the creation of digital platforms that acts as intermediaries of exchange of goods or services between peers (such as Airbnb and Uber), or as platforms that other services can interlink with (such as Google and Facebook). The platforms make it easier for peers to gain access to markets by reducing market barriers and transaction cost. These platforms have attracted major critiques in the academics, mostly due to its increasingly powerful market positions. Several have concerns in including these platforms in the “sharing economy” as it creates a false image of what is actually happening on these platforms. On the platforms, it is not the “sharing” that creates profit, it is the *platforms* itself that creates profits through enabling “sharing” (Srnicek, 2017, Frenken & Schor, 2017). The Platform Economy then stands out as an extreme form of capitalist exploitation, where the capitalist, the platform, takes no actual part in the production, but still collects the profits.

An important term to understand when it comes to platforms is network effects. Network effects means that a product becomes more valuable the more users there are on the platform. The more people who use Uber, the better Uber becomes. And the better Uber becomes the more users will use Uber. Network effects therefore tend to have a monopolizing effect on the market distribution. Srnicek (2017) also points to how the platforms are increasingly designed to extract

data. Access to data gives the platforms more or less control over the markets, as they can constantly adapt their products to demands. More importantly, they have access to more information than the other competitors. Combined with network effects and enormous venture capital, their market positions become nearly unbeatable. Other critiques are pointing to how there is an increasing group of “platform” workers, who are economically dependent on the income they make of working for the platforms. These workers are subjugated to strong control, little job security and lack of legal protection, as they are legally independent contractors on the platforms (Carboni, 2016, Scholtz, 2016).

The community based economy refers to initiatives of non-monetized interaction where the goal is not to maximize profits, but rather to obtain a social goal (such as Couchsurfing, an accommodation service with a goal to create meaningful human interaction). It shares the same ideas as in the access and platform economy, except the sharing of resources is not meant to create a monetized return. It relies on the idea of a post-market or post capitalist society, and sees the co-optation of the “sharing” by market driven actors as harmful for the overall sharing economy. Interactions in the community based economy have been claimed to be the “true” sharing economy. Some scholars are therefore opposing the inclusion of actors as Uber and Airbnb to the term (Schor, 2014). Others are pointing to how the community based economy is such a little part of the transactions occurring, that excluding the others can hurt the understanding of what is happening. Also, some monetized transaction does involve other social goals, such as Uber drivers driving to meet more people. As previously mentioned, treating these different aspects as “cores” to the sharing economy can be a solution to understand the complexities of these interactions, while not ignoring the differences between the actors involved.

3.2 Effects of the Sharing Economy on Labour

The effects of the sharing economy on labour has been a subject of debate, which are somewhat related to the paradoxes of the sharing economy term as outlined above. As it is a relatively new phenomenon, there is not much hard evidence and the debate suffers from speculation. Martin (2016) distinguished six different discourses of the sharing economy, separated into two categories of positive and negative views of the sharing economy. The positive side talks about the sharing economy as “(1) an economic opportunity; (2) a more sustainable form of consumption; and, (3) a pathway to a decentralised, equitable and sustainable economy”

(Martin, 2016 :158). For labour, the sharing economy's opportunity would involve an increase in low entry jobs, which would help take down barriers for entering the labour market for the more marginalized working class (Cannon & Summers, 2014). The sharing economy also brings with it a flexible work day giving workers more control of shaping their own work day. The peer focus in the sharing economy can also lead to empowerment of workers over firms, by cutting down middlemen. Creating a more sustainable consumption is expected to benefit all workers in the long term.

The negative side highlights how the sharing economy is “(4) creating unregulated marketplaces; (5) reinforcing the neoliberal paradigm; and, (6) an incoherent field of innovation” (Martin, 2016:158). The latter refers to the complexity of the actors involved in the sharing economy”. For labour, the flexible work relations in the sharing economy pose a legal challenge as most of the labour rights are based on the employer – employee contract. Workers without such a contract, such as “independent contractors” do not have the same legal rights and legal protection as workers who are employed. Also, a lack of proper government regulation on digital services has created a loophole to how digital labour services should be regulated (Schor, 2014, Srnicek, 2017). For labour, this results in a deregulation of the labour market, or a continuation of the neoliberal “flexibilization” and fragmenting policies. It is the “Platform economy” in particular that stands in the centre of this critique, as previously discussed. The critics also question if the sharing economy is creating more sustainable consumption, suggesting the possibility of a stimulation of hyper consumption instead.

Moving the discussion to South Africa, the sharing economy could have both positive and negative outcomes on labour. Gelb (1991) described the South African labour regimes during apartheid as Racial Fordism, as the government regulated which race could work in what profession. The producers of manufactured goods and services were People of Colour and the consumers were white. Since apartheid, labour regulations in South Africa have been influenced by the neoliberal deregulation politics, as shown by an increased flexibilization or “informalization” of the labour market (Jordhus-Lier, 2010). This has resulted in more casual labour relations and more people finding themselves earning money in the informal sector. A lack of real structural change has resulted in little change in the socioeconomic patterns created by apartheid, and the working class is still largely comprised of black workers. South Africa, and Cape Town in particular have a high number of immigrant workers (Deumert et al, 2005). Since the financial crisis, South Africa has experienced a stagnation in economic growth.

Unemployment has risen to 27% as of January 2017, and up to 50% for youth (STATS SA, 2017). The job creation associated with the sharing economy could be an important boost for the South African labour market and economy. The low skilled, easy entry jobs could function as a stepping-stone into a more formal working situation for the black working class. However, the deregulation also associated with the sharing economy could act as an intensifier of the already uneven structures. The lack of legal protection, and increasing fragmentation of work relations could contribute to exploitation of workers. The big question is will the sharing economy help give workers better access to the labour market and more control of the work day, or will it create a new permanent underclass?

3.3 Power and Agency

Agency is understood here as how actor's actions are enabled and constrained (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010). Put otherwise, actions can be enabled and constrained through various social mechanisms and an actor's ability to control or form a wished outcome is symbolised as the actor's agency. All actors have agency, but as mechanism and social relations affect different actors differently, actors also have different agency. Agency must therefore be understood as relational. By conceptualizing the relations (mechanisms), one can conceptualize workers' agency. An actor can have both individual and collective agency. Collective agency is understood here as the agency of workers' collective organization, while individual agency is the human agency of each worker. Individual agency of workers has had a tendency of being overlooked, or ignored in favour of the agency of workers collective organization (Lier, 2007). Agency can be mixed with the concept of power, as power is also a mechanism that enables and constrains actors' actions. (Webster et al, 2008) I differentiate between agency and power as agency is something all actors have, while not all actors have power. Power can also function outside of an actor's actions as power can be embedded in relations and spatial design. Power is here viewed as one of the mechanism that enables or constrains an actor's actions (e.g. a mechanism that affects an actor's agency). An actor's ability to gain power will affect an actor's agency, just as an actor subjugated to power will hinder agency. (Webster et al, 2008)

Power can be portrayed in many forms. Allen (1997) define three different approaches to power used by geographers. Power can be seen as capacity. Here power is a resource actors can possess and use to obtain goals. Actors can gain and lose power depending on their capacity. Power can also be viewed as relational. Power is not something that is inherent in all social relations, but

it can occur when different actors have different objectives. In geography, this relates to how power is distributed in a network. For example, collective organization can overcome resourceful capitalists by building social relations, but if the alliances are broken, their power will not exist. Power is therefore viewed in relation to others. The way that actors place themselves in a network with other actors will determine their power. Power can also be exercised, which is often viewed as the Foucauldian approach to power (Allen, 1997, Townley, 1993). Power is not held or possessed, it is exercised. It is through the ways it is exercised, its practice and operation that you can understand how it works. Foucault uses an example of how the spatial design of a telescopic prison could exercise power. The telescopic design does not tell if the prisoners are being watched, but despite this, they act like they are. In this situation, no actor explicitly possesses power, but some actors are still subjugated to power (Townley, 1993:520). In geographical terms, this speaks to how power operates and is organized spatially. The spatial organization of labour can be designed to be powerful, meaning the spatial design can exercise power. The power of spatial design is in particular interesting when it comes to control over labour (Webster et al, 2008).

3.3.1 Agency in the Global South

In general, trade unions in an African context are seen as having “weaker” collective agency, at least on the national scale compared to the position of western trade unions (Lindell, 2010). However, as western unions are experiencing falling numbers of workers organizing, collective organizing is multiplying in informal economies in Africa (Lindell, 2010). Also, the tendency of overlooking workers’ individual agency have constrained the understanding of informal workers agency. As Lindell points out when researching nonstandard labour, workers without a standard working contract are seen as “downgrading of labour” and tend to allow little room for resistance among informal workers. “Praised or victimized, informal workers are seldom seen as political actors” (Lindell, 2010:1). A growing term in urban "southern" geography is everyday practices (Simone, 2004). Everyday practices are a useful analytical term to show how forms of resistance is created through everyday practices, practices which can be difficult to understand using the structural terms in Marxist theory. The resistance is not shown as a result in new legislations, but instead workers are gaining rights outside the formal structures as well, which is the case for most workers in the global South. Several labour geographer have adopted Katz categories of worker agency; resilience, reworking and resistance. (Lindell, 2010, Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010). Resilience means the everyday practices workers do to be able to

“get by”. Reworking means the small negotiation about work that will benefit the workers. Resistance means actions that are meant to change the current capitalistic system. Separating agency into these categories enables a more complex analysis of workers agency, which is useful given the complexness of non-standard work relations (Lindell, 2010).

3.4 Solidarity and Fragmentation

As mentioned, workers become more powerful with numbers. The relations build in the network strengthens the combined agency of all actors. A way to build such relations is through solidarity. Solidarity can be explained as ties between people or groups of people. There can be different factors for why these ties are made, such as mutual interest, sympathy or “likeness”. Durkheim *solidarity* to explanation for why societies hold together, acting towards a collective good instead of acting individually (Coser, 1984). Durkheim separated between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity was used to explain solidarity in smaller societies of similar traits. Here solidarity was built on kinship or likeness. Solidarity had clear boundaries, an “us” and a “them”. Boräng (2015) usefully named this for “insider” solidarity. Organic solidarity was the kind of solidarity that arose in more complex societies such as urban ones, where a division of labour divided the society and solidarity arose as mutual dependency. This form of solidarity can be termed “outsider” solidarity. Durkheim suggests that organic solidarity is a “weaker” one, in terms of a state that is easier to move over to “anomie” a state where the norms and morals are not followed. Put differently, outsider solidarity may struggle compared to insider solidarity as outsider solidarity does not necessarily have strong natural “borders” of solidarity.

Traditionally, trade union solidarity can best be compared to “mechanical” or “insider” solidarity. Collective labour organization started in the 19th century’s industrial factories where workers “likeness” was key to build solidarity. They worked in the same space, at the same time, and they had the same goals. Trade unions can be said to rely on a nearness in space and time for building solidarity. However, today’s labour organisation has much more complex geographies through global production network (Coe & Hess, 2013). Fragmentation can be a useful term in understanding how new production is affecting labour and labour organization. Fragmentation of labour entails spatial mechanism that fragments labour relations and the workplace (Lier, 2007). The neoliberal *flexibilization* can be said to result in a fragmentation of labour, and same with the sharing economy’s *deregulation*, as mentioned previously.

Outsourcing of production, high workforce turnover, part time workers, unclear working relations (such as “independent contractors” are all mechanisms that break up and fragment labour relations (Coe & Hess, 2013). Workers are no longer working directly under an employer, but hired in from a firm to do a job for another firm. Some firms may have workers working the same jobs, but in different countries. Fragmentation also involves the workplace. Workers are less confined to a certain place of work, but are rather fragmented to smaller units. An example can be having “home office” or not having an office at all, as is the situation experienced by many workers in the sharing economy today (Schultz, 2016). Fragmentation of labour is particularly valid for the service sector (Lier, 2007). Labour immigration can also be seen as a form of fragmentation of labour. Immigrant workers are in general looked upon as vulnerable due to their geographical dislocation from support structures (Deumert et al, 2005). As immigrants, they lack the close support from friends and relatives, as well as lacking access to support structures in the country of residence. This is particularly evident in countries with high informality. In such, immigrant workers can experience “poorer” agency as their support structures are more fragmented (Rogaly, 2009).

Fragmentation affects the spatiality of labour and the spatiality of labour is important as space will influence how labour is organized, which again will have an impact on workers’ agency. With trade unions reliance of space as a means of organization, the increasing fragmentation of labour can also be seen as a threat to workers solidarity. Fragmentation breaks up the borders of what is “us”. The more complex geographies of labour has resulted in a call for “reorganization” of trade unions” to be better equipped to meet the complexness of modern work life (Jordhus-Lier, 2010). Put otherwise, trade unions need to shift focus from a mechanical solidarity to an organic or outsider solidarity. Evidence of this is the increasingly inclusion of other groups into their struggles including other social movements or consumer groups and the construction of global networks (Lindell, 2009, Traub-Werner & Cravey, 2002). This type of solidarity can perhaps be explained as “organic” or “outsider” solidarity”.

4 Methodology

This chapter will critically examine the methods used in the data collection for this thesis. Evidence in this study is based on twenty-one interviews that were conducted in January 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa. In light of my research questions - 1) *What are Uber driver's experiences of their working conditions?* and 2) *What is constraining or enabling Uber drivers individual and collective actions?* - interviewing was selected as the appropriate method, as it allows the researcher to get an in-depth knowledge on the subject studied. The informants are not expected to be a representative selection of a group, nor should their opinions be interpreted as representative for the group. The opinions expressed are personal and should be viewed and interpreted as such (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). The chapter starts with explaining how the goals of research influenced the construction of the case. Then it proceeds to describe and critically reflect on the choice of methods, ethical issues encountered in the field and discuss the rigour of the research.

4.1 Constructing the Case

A case study is “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (Baxter, 2010: 81). This is similar to the purpose in this study, with an intensive study of the “unit” Uber drivers in Cape Town with the purpose to better understand the effects of the sharing economy. Only an intensive case study design would allow the possibility of getting an in-depth knowledge as intended in this study. Ragin (1994) points out seven goals for social research that will influence the methodological strategies employed. Two of these goals have impacted how this project was constructed, namely giving voice and advancing new theories. The lived experiences of Uber drivers were a perspective I felt to be under communicated. This feeling was shared by several of my informants, stating that their perspective of Uber was seldom heard, not in the media, by their clients nor by Uber management. The goal of giving voice to the Uber drivers in Cape Town has affected the data collection and analysis by focusing it on the stories from the drivers, by using mainly drivers as sources of information and giving their story most of the space in the analysis. I also was under the impression that the experiences of Uber drivers could provide important evidence in understanding workers agency, touching upon the second goal to develop and advance new theories.

To be able to fully comprehend the stories of the drivers I wanted to be free from a theoretical framework during the data collection and chose an inductive research design. In an inductive relationship, it is the evidence that forms the ideas, which have been the case for this research process. Metaphorically speaking, you choose your picture-frame after the shape of the image instead of shaping the image to make it fit in a certain frame. This choice effected how the case was constructed and analysed. It was only after the fieldwork that this case was "framed" as a case of workers' resistance. I also drafted the analysis and sketched out the preliminary findings before diving into the literature. The timeline of these choices is important as it influences the relation between the data (evidence) and theory (ideas).

The inductive approach was also a deliberate choice in effort to decolonize the research process. The sensitive situation of doing research in a country in the global South by a researcher from the global North, has made me well aware of the uneven power structures in scientific knowledge production. The global South is too often used as pool of evidence to explain theories made and shaped in the global North. I wished to change this by making the evidence from the global South the maker and shaper of theory, which was only allowed through an inductive design.

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 Description and Recruitment of Informants

The informants in the study includes seventeen Uber drivers, two metered taxicab drivers, and two representatives from relevant unions, namely South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) Western Cape Office, and the Uber Drivers Guild Cape Town (an unrecognized union at the moment of research). Uber management in Cape Town was requested to participate, but declined due to limited capacity. The Uber drivers came from various backgrounds: seven were South Africans, seven came from Zimbabwe and three came from Congo DRC, Tanzania and Somalia. The drivers varied in terms of age and how long they had been on the Uber platform. Most of the drivers had Uber as their full-time job and their only source of income, while two of the informants classified it as their second source of income.

The recruitment strategy of informants depends on the type of information that is searched for, and will influence the information that is given (Cameron, 2010). Different methods for

recruiting informants were used. Union representatives were purposively recruited through the relevance of their positions in their respective unions. The taxicab drivers were recruited randomly through traditional taxi hailing. These interviews were conducted in their respective taxis while the drivers were waiting for a ride. Twelve Uber drivers were recruited by requesting a ride on the application, resulting in a randomized selection. Five drivers were recruited at the airport parking lot for Uber drivers. It is estimated by one of my informants that there were four thousand Uber drivers in Cape Town. In some ways, the recruitment method could be called “convenience sampling” by interviewing the first met and not necessarily the best-informed person (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010:75). This can have a default that it leads to poorly informed cases with low dependability. In this case this seems very unlikely as by virtue of being an Uber driver all had experiences of being an Uber Driver, and therefore *knowledge* about the experience of being Uber driver. Instead, a positive aspect of the random sampling method can be to minimize the researchers’ bias in informant selection. As for most of the interviews, I had no control of who I would interview beforehand, I could not make up biased perceptions influencing the interviews (and neither could the informants of me). A method of making sure the case is fully informed is *saturation*. A point of saturation is when the researcher believes no new information is can be added to the study (Cameron, 2010). I feel this was the case with my interviews as around eights interview it was the same issues that kept resurfacing. Together with the randomized recruitment method I am confident that the selection was sound.

“The Hidden Figures”

The diversity in drivers in terms of background ensured a diverse selection of informants. If this had not occurred naturally through the random recruitment I would perhaps made extra effort of a more purposively sampling. I did however try to recruit female drivers, as all my Uber driver informants were male. It was estimated by several of my informants that there were around one hundred female Uber drivers out of four thousand drivers. The method of random recruitment created very low chances of recruiting female drivers. I had hoped to meet a female driver at the airport parking as one of my informants had told me he often saw female drivers there, but I was out of luck there as well. In hindsight, I believe I should have made more effort in recruiting females through my network of informants or through relevant media channels.

4.2.2 Gate Keepers

Networking and gatekeepers were necessary to gain access to certain spaces and informants. I was interested in going to the airport parking lot as I had heard some drivers talk about it, but as my gatekeeper told me “You could drive past the airport all the time but you would never know about this place if it wasn't for me. Even I had trouble finding it and I had to be guided by a friend” (Bongani, Uber driver from Zimbabwe). To go to the airport, I therefore asked one of my previous informants if they could take me. We agreed on a time and price for the service of driving me back and forth to the parking lot, based upon what it would have cost as an Uber ride. Bongani told me that there were people who would not be happy at seeing white people there, and made it clear that I would not be able to go there without his help. Upon arrival, we agreed that he (the informant) should find people I could interview. We agreed that he should ask people from different backgrounds. As of my understanding, most of the informants he recruited were friends or acquaintances of his. This could have affected the information as the informants could be inclined to alter their response to “look good” for their friend. Since the information given in the interviews fit with the image given by other drivers earlier, I am inclined to say that my gatekeepers’ presence and recruitment did not affect the information obtained. Perhaps it even made the informants feel more secure, as his acceptance of me became a proof of trust.

I also had trouble getting access to the leaders of the Uber Guild. One of my informants straight out told me that they would probably not talk to me since I was white. I eventually got the right contact information from another informant. After some WhatsApp correspondence about my project and my intentions, I got an interview. For me it was evident that only "sympathizers" of the cause would gain access. I presented my project honestly, but I emphasized that my focus was on Uber drivers and their experiences. I believe this made me look like a valuable "ally", worthy of "the trouble". I believe this access would not have been possible without the "gate key" from my informant.

4.2.3 Structure of the Interviews

The interviews were in general short, ranging between fifteen and thirty minutes, with some exceptions of a few longer interviews (one to two hours). The interviews were designed to fit the different types of informants, and were loosely structured. I always carried a handwritten interview guide with me to the interviews, but it was mostly used as a check list at the end of

the interviews. I made different interview guides for the Uber drivers, the taxicab drivers and the union officials. The interview guide for the Uber drivers was revised and altered several times during fieldwork. This was done in response to new observations as I came to understand the field better. There is a copy of the full interview guide in Appendix II.

Driving with the informants.



Figure 2: Picture from Uber ride. View over Cape Town CBD from N2

Nine of the interviews with Uber drivers were done while driving on a trip requested through the Uber application. The interviews started when I got in the car and got informed consent of their participation and lasted until the trip was finished. All rides were UberX. The destinations of the trips were chosen by the overall length of the trip and to areas I knew would be easy for the drivers to get new rides. All trips were paid through the Uber application, as a normal trip. The trips varied in cost between 40 to 130 rand (3 – 10 USD). Below follows a map over the routes driven with the informants. Unfortunately, two of the trips have not been included in the map. This was discovered too late in the process to be able to change.

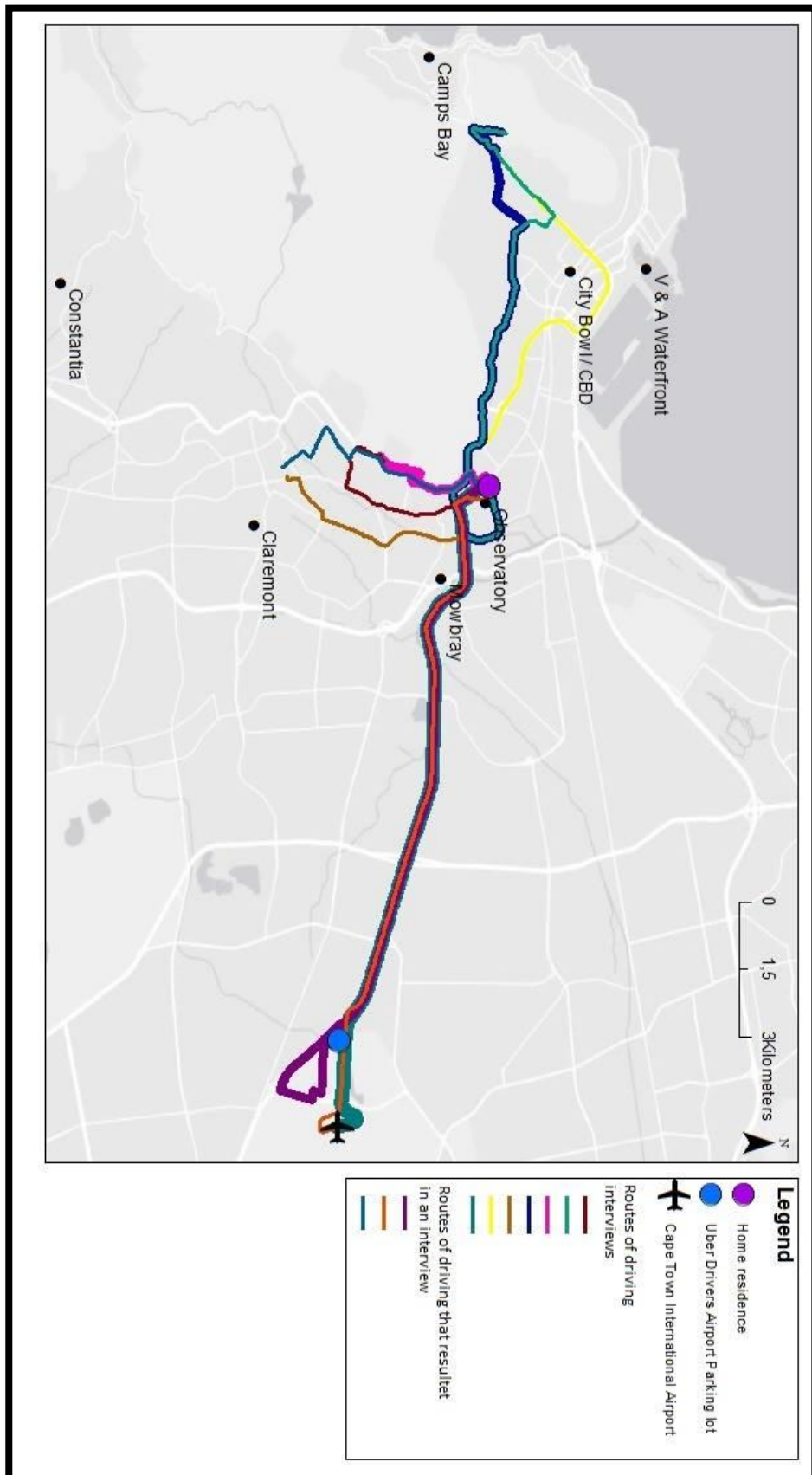


Figure 3: Map over driving routes of interviews. Source: ESRI. Made by Ine Geitung. Ten routes are showed on the map, while the total trips done with informants - during an interview or resulting in an interview- are twelve.

I chose to ride with the informants because of the convenience of easy recruiting drivers, to "normalize" the interview situation for the drivers and for the observational "plus". Being on the road with the driver helped widen my understanding of the case. I got to experience the usage of the application and observe the drivers in their natural working environment (e. g. how they dressed, acted, drove, etc.). Time was a limitation, as the trips were no longer than thirty minutes. A negative aspect of that was that I did not allow for the "silence" to sit. As I experienced with the longer interviews some informants spoke deeper about some issues if I let them sit in silence for a few seconds. I did not let the silence sit as long in driving interviews. A positive aspect of the short time was the possibility to have more informants and therefore also greater possibility to cross-check the information and experiences with other drivers.

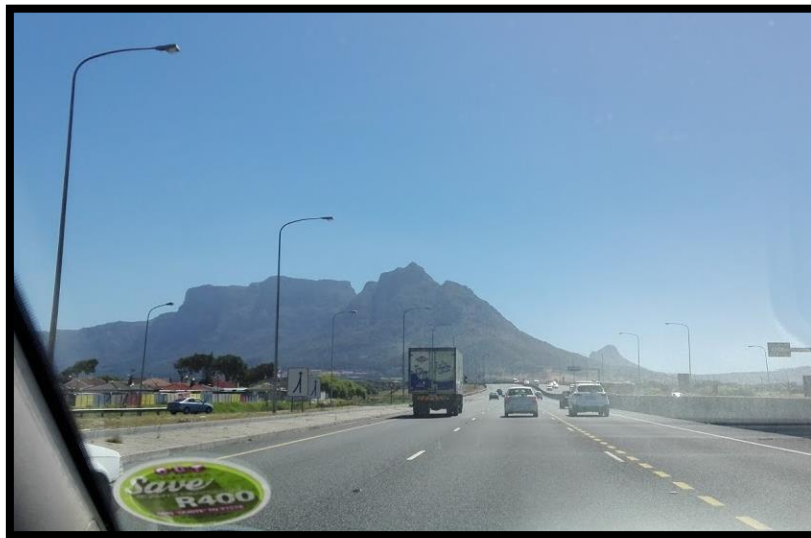


Figure 4: Picture from Uber ride. View of Devils Peak and the Table Mountain range from N2 Settlers Way

Because of the ethical issues of compensation and customer relation (discussed later in the chapter) seven interviews with drivers were also done outside of Uber rides. Five were conducted as at the airport parking lot, one was conducted at a café. Two of the interviews were done over mail or WhatsApp, as this was more convenient for the drivers. I do have a feeling that the comfort of driving made the information flow more easily than in the setup interview and I therefore preferred interviewing while on a trip. This resulted in much shorter answers and I preferred the actual face to face conversations as this allowed me to read the drivers body language and the ability to probe and investigate statements further.

4.2.4 Processing of Data

Due to the sensitive topic concerning questions about informant's union participation, the study was reported to and approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). I have subsequently strived to follow the NSD guidelines for ethical research and safe storage of data. All informants are also anonymized and the names used are alias names. I told the informants right away that everything they said would be anonymized. This was because I knew some of the questions I would ask could feel personal, such as questions about income and union membership. Also, as Uber had become known amongst drivers for deactivating drivers who had been negatively outspoken about Uber's practices, I felt anonymity was important in ensuring no harm to the drivers. I also felt that ensuring anonymity from the start would encourage the informants to speak their opinions freely. The only personal information that remains about the drivers is their country of origin and if they rent or own the car they are driving. An exception to this is the two union officials who have a stronger chance of being indirectly identified by virtue of their positions. These two informants were therefore not promised anonymity, but their names are still anonymized due to the sensitivity of the topic.

Four of the interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed word for word. Recordings were done with a smartphone application (Smart Voice Recorder). This was chosen to "normalize" the situation, where an actual tape recorder device visible on the table can come across as unnatural to the conversation as opposed to a phone. Twelve interviews were not tape recorded, but were transcribed using notes and personal memory. I do recognize the limitations of this as an audio recording ensures that the transcriptions truly represent the content from the informants, whereas non-audio transcriptions will be prone to researcher influence and interpretation (Kvale, 1997). To mitigate this, several techniques were employed. First, all transcriptions were done right after the interview to ensure the most detailed transcription as possible. Second, I wrote detailed notes while interviewing to help get as accurate sentences as possible. I also found it easy to remember information in the driving interviews as I connected the question to different places of the route. When going over the interviews, I also went over the driving route visually in my head, which made me more confident that I had remembered everything important. As the interviews were short (15-30 minutes) it was also easy to remember whole phrases.

The main reason for not doing an audio recording was due to a misunderstanding of data security when using smart phone applications (which was clarified mid-way through

fieldwork). Also, as time was a limitation in the driving interviews I chose not to prioritize spending time on getting an approval of the tape recordings and starting the recordings. I also believe that not tape recording the interview made the interview situation "lighter", making the drivers feel more comfortable with speaking their mind. This was especially important to me given the sensitivity of the information. It also became a time saver, as oral transcriptions are more time consuming, giving me the chance of getting more interviews instead.

A consequence of the non-audio transcriptions is that not all quotes presented are exact word for word quotes. However, as Kvale (1997) and Dunn (2010) points out, sometimes the word for word depiction is not suitable. As the quotes used here are meant to portray a meaning or experience, the most important is that this meaning or experience is clear to the reader. An alteration from oral to written language will demand some linguistic liberties from the researcher. I also strived to use direct quotes that I had audio recordings of. I recognize the limitations of not having all interviews tape recorded, but do believe the original gist is well preserved by thorough field notes and the rapid transcriptions right after the interviews. Since there is relative little difference between the audio recorded and non-audio recorded interviews I do not feel this implicates the credibility of the data.

The transcribed data was analytically coded by using the software NVivo. This proved to be very helpful in the analysis by keeping an easy structure of all the data.

4.3 Other Sources of Information

Doing fieldwork in Cape Town gave me the possibility to physically observe and experience important places to the Uber drivers. As mentioned, the observational part of driving with the informants was an important part of understanding and contextualizing the information. My trip to the airport parking lot also had a tremendous research value in addition to the interviews conducted. I got to observe one of the few meeting places of the Uber drivers, the physical space and the interactions between drivers, which has helped me when analysing the data. I also got to observe the Uber app from some of the driver's accounts, which was very interesting. The casual conversations with other drivers before and during the fieldwork has also undoubtedly shaped my understanding as well.

I wrote down a detailed field diary almost every day during the fieldwork. This has been helpful in the analysis to understand my own research process. It was also a useful tool to store my

observations. I am certain that the observations from the field have contributed to a deeper and fuller understanding of the case.

To cross check information, written text was also used as a source of information. The CCMA case and rapports from the TCT have been important documents with this. I also followed Facebook pages of the Uber Drivers Guild and of the global Uber Forum, as well as looking at the official web pages of Uber and SATAWU. This proved to be useful sources to triangle information from the interviews.

4.4 Ethical Issues and Positionality

4.4.1 The Researcher's Positionality in Cross Cultural Research

There is no such thing as an objective researcher (Dowling, 2010). As a white, young, able cis woman from Norway, this already puts me in certain boxes, also called the researcher's positionality (Kearns, 2010). There is no clear way of measuring what influence my presence had on the information given. However, Dowling (2010), in the company of many others, suggest critical reflexivity, meaning being aware of researchers social relations, as a method of controlling this impact. Reflexivity around researcher's positionality is especially important in the cases of a researcher in the global North doing fieldwork in the global South, given the often privileged and powerful position of the researcher (Howitt & Stevens, 2010).

In a racialized society, as South Africa race does matter, something I experienced in the field. My skin colour was brought up several times, and I struggled to gain access to information. I did for a period think about using a proxy, having another person with more "fitting" personal characteristics do the interviews for me. Since I in the end managed to get access, I decided to drop this. To challenge my "white image" I purposely tried to sneak in a few phrases of Xhosa, Afrikaans and Shona, however I am unsure if it had an effect on the information I was given. As a foreigner, the racial aspect did perhaps not have such an influence, as foreigners are often "relieved" of some of the typical assumption about white South Africans, and vice versa for me and assumptions about South African and African persons of colour. I do believe that being face to face with my informants gave me a unique possibility to analyse and understand the information I was given, and I am glad that this was possible for all my interviews. I did not experience any problems with building rapport with my informants.

4.4.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent is more than a “yes” to participate in an interview. It is a process of ensuring the informant’s understanding of their rights and consequences of participating in the research (Dowling 2010, Kvale 1997). All my informants agreed to the interview with verbally informed consent. In general, written consent is preferred as this leaves the researcher with documented proof of the consent given. I chose to operate with verbal consent based on the issues of my positionality and the following distance it created to the informants. I was under the impression that if I were to come into their territory and give them a piece of paper to read and sign that this would create a deeper division between me as a researcher and them, leading to more estranged information. I therefore made the choice to use verbal consent as I felt this removed this division. On another note, written consent would also have been unpractical, as many of the informants were already driving before the interview had started. To ensure that I covered all important topics concerning informed consent I carried with me a handwritten “check list” of points to cover. A copy of this is in the appendix. I acknowledge the issues of not having written consent and am aware that this can negatively influence the rigor of the research process.

Another issue concerning willing consent was the fact that as a rider requesting a ride with a driver you are the customer to the driver. Drivers need to keep customers happy to avoid lower ratings, as this could possibly take their job away since drivers with low rating can get kicked off the app. This could have made the drivers feel obliged to participate even if they did not want to. This was handled by stressing that the participation was voluntary, and that a withdrawal would have no consequences. In practice, the drivers showed much interest in the project, and appeared glad to participate, which makes me confident that no informant felt pressured into participating. The informants’ free and critically outspokenness about Uber is a good indicator that drivers felt safe and free to talk.

I do acknowledge a grave flaw concerning informed consent and that is the lack of my informant’s ability to withdraw consent. In the first half of my research I was naively unaware of the University of Oslo’s rules concerning informed consent, and for five of the interviews I did not share my personal contact information with the drivers. This is a breach of the informant’s private rights which is not taken lightly.

4.4.3 Compensating the Informants

Since seven of the informants were interviewed during a paid Uber trip, the issue of compensation must be addressed. The research ethics guide book for social researchers suggests following these steps in cases of paying informants:

- “• develop guidelines for when and how payment is made;*
- ensure you have a clear and explicit justification for paying participants that you can give to the ethics committee;*
- ensure that participants who choose to withdraw from the research will still receive payment;*
- consider carefully any cases where there is concern that people are consenting because of payment and not because they wish to take part; and*
- develop a general policy on describing payments in the consent process.” (Ethics Guidebook, 2017)*

I feel that this has been upheld in my case. The price and payment was set by an independent actor (Uber app). It was made clear to the informants before giving consent that the trips would be completed regardless of their participation or type of answers. It is important to remember that most drivers worked around twelve hours a day and therefore any time taken off to do the interview would have been an additional cost for the driver. As mentioned earlier the possibility to ride with the informants also had a highly positive influence on my ability to interpret their experiences. For example, just interviewing drivers at the parking lot would have left me without the valuable experience of riding with the informants. Given these arguments, I feel the payment of informants is justified and I firmly believe the payment of informants did not affect the information.

4.5 Rigour, Reflexivity and credibility

When discussing the quality of qualitative credibility can be a useful term. Credibility is here understood as how accurate the study represents the participants own realities of the phenomena studied (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A rigorous employment and reflexive account of research method can help ensure the credibility of the research results (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010).

The main issues for this study's rigour have already been discussed, such as non-tape-recorded interviews and the lack of rigour in ensuring informants right to withdraw consent. Also, as all informants are anonymized, this can hurt the transparency of the research as it makes it more difficult to verify the information and the informants. Due to the sensitivity of the information I felt this was not ethical due to the risk of putting informants in harmful position.

I've already critically discussed my positionality, however there are a few more issues regarding the researcher's reflexivity that should be mentioned. I discovered while in the field was that some of my questions were leading. In the beginning, I asked the drivers the question "do you like driving with Uber", which I later changed to "what is your experience of driving with Uber". The first question almost all informants said yes immediately and then went on to discuss more nuanced pictures of their experience often by explaining some of the negative aspects of it. The drivers asked the other questions did, in my opinion, express in general a more negative impression from the beginning, though both gave similar examples and experiences of negative aspects.

I also noted that in the first interviews I was more "gullible" by what the informants told me and did not critically question the information I was given. I became more driven with this later in the fieldwork. In a few of the interviews I also experienced "losing control" over the interview, but it was never to a point where I felt the information or interview suffered extensively from it. In the beginning of the field work I was also more open about my personal political opinions, something I later learned to better conceal. This could have swayed the informants to modify their responses to fit with what they thought I wanted to hear.

A possible influence in information was that during the period when interviews were conducted it was a slow season for drivers. The abrupt difference between tourist high season in December and the quieter period in January could have affected the drivers to a more pessimistic outlook on their earnings, something that was taken into consideration in the analysis.

I do think the evidence presented in this thesis is credible. Having twenty-one interviews have made it possible to better triangulate the information. Having employed a reflexive account of the research methods, as well as to the analysis, this makes me confident that the representations of my participants in this thesis are credible.

5 Analysis

As discussed in the theoretical review, the sharing economy could potentially have both positive and negative outcome towards labour in Cape Town. This chapter seeks to provide insight into this by analysing the empirical evidence from the interviews with Uber Drivers and unions representatives. Drivers experiences and perspectives are sought to be the main focus in the analysis, shown by the high numbers of direct quotes. The analysis is structured after the two research questions.

5.1 What are Uber driver's Experiences of Their Working Conditions?

5.1.1 Work on Demand

The business model of Uber – consisting not of employees but only independent contractors – has by many been seen as a manifestation of the flexibilization of the labour market. The term “Uberification of the labour market”, is a clear example of their pioneer position in the market. Flexible working hours being a prime example of this. Many of the drivers found the "freedom" in setting one owns hours and “being one’s own boss” as something positive.

“I like Uber because when you drive with Uber you are free to do what you want. You are the boss, the worker. You are the one to say you want to work two hours, three hours, or the whole day. It's up to you” (Tendai, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, car owner)

“There is no boss you have to ask when you want time off. You work your own hours” (Callan, Uber driver from South Africa, car owner)

“I like being self-employed or an entrepreneur. That's what I love about it” (Panashe, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

Freedom in when to work is also one of the primary marketing strategies Uber uses to attract drivers, with tempting quotes like this on their webpage “Work that puts you first. Drive when you want, make what you need” and “Set your own schedule. You can drive with Uber anytime, day or night, 365 days a year. When you drive is always up to you, so it never

interferes with the important things in your life” (Uber, 2017b). However, even though the drivers were free to set their own hours, the days of driving with Uber were long, with most drivers working nine to twelve hours a day, every day. In comparison, in South Africa there is a statutory limitation of nine hours per day, with maximum forty-five hours per week. One informant stated that he drove for Uber around sixty hours per week and still Uber was not his main source of income. Sitting in the car all day made the drivers tired, and drivers’ fatigue was an issue. The weekends were usually busier, so most drivers felt they could not afford to take the weekends off. In fact, drivers did not feel they could afford any days off, despite their “flexible hours” and “being their own boss”.

“We work till we sweat. Till you are too tired” (Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

“If you get sick you still have to drive, otherwise you are missing out. [...] I work from 7 am till 10 pm, every day. More in weekends. If not, you are missing out”.
(Simbarashe, Uber driver from)

As drivers had no fixed hours, they “worked on demand”. This had a clear effect on the time of day the drivers were working, as the drivers had to adapt their working hours to the demands of the riders. Uber also operated with “surge pricing”, meaning they would increase the price in areas of high demand to attract more drivers to certain areas. The price would however often drop once enough drivers came to the area. In weekdays, the busiest periods were in the morning rush, afternoon rush and evenings till around 1 am. Weekends were mostly busy the whole day, especially in the evening with more people needing a ride when going out. As independent contractors, overtime or supplements for working outside of normal business hours are of course not heard of. Working on demand resulted in a lot of dead time (hours without earning money) in the day, especially around midday.

“From 12 pm to 2 pm you must look for somewhere to sleep. I go here to the airport and wait. I’m waiting for two hours I get a trip and I can go. I go to the airport and I can sleep. They count the hours when I am online, but most of the time I’m working eight or nine hours. You see all those people sitting here. Two hours or three hours. In a day, you work from 6 am to 6 pm. But from 12 pm to 3 pm we are just sitting”
(Tendai, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, car owner)

The dead time, the hours with no rides, were spent either sleeping, or just waiting. Many had to sleep in their cars during the night, because they did not have the time to go home between the evening rush and morning rush.

“The reason you see this blanket is because you don't go home. You don't have time for family. Your kids call you uncle. I'm sure you know all the drivers look grown up. They have kids. How do you support kids on something that doesn't give money? If you sleep in the car like that, do you think your kids will ever know you?” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

5.1.2 Earnings and Car Ownership

Car Ownership

Uber's business model of using free time and unused cars could fall into the description of the Access Economy. However, as a commercial platform they also fall under the category of Platform Economy. Uber's organization in Cape Town is a special example of the uneven power relations as described in the platform economy. In Cape Town, it also contests the idea of any form of “sharing” on the platform as most drivers rented the car they were driving, crushing the core of both Access and Community based economy. Most of the drivers I interviewed had Uber as their main source of income and as their only job. They were mostly adult family men, mostly immigrants from another African country. They therefore relied heavily on the income they got from driving with Uber. Uber has strict rules on the standard of the cars that can be allowed on the platform, only allowing cars that are four years old or younger. This had an exclusionary effect on who could operate on the platform.

“You need to have a car that is not older than four years. Now, who can afford that car? No one of the previously marginalised people. No one can afford that car. It can only be afforded by the rich people. Of which undoubtedly they are white” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

To solve this barrier, many drivers were instead renting cars, as the cost of investing in a new car was too high. The renting deals were organised in different ways. A few drivers rented from traditional car companies, and some rented from or shared cars with family or acquaintances. However, most drivers rented from other *Uber Partners*. For Uber, all partners registering a car

with Uber are called a partner. The partner had to sign an agreement with Uber, which states that the partner is an independent contractor. However, a partner did not have to drive the car but could lease it to another driver. He could get a list of drivers from Uber, or he would find a person to become a driver himself. Then the partner and the driver made an agreement of how to split the fare. A *partner* would refer to a car owner, and the person driving the rides was called a *driver*. The drivers who drove their own cars were called *partner drivers* or just drivers as well. The system of renting shows a much more complex labour relation than just “independent contractors”. Some drivers reported stories of partners exploiting and or harming drivers. Uber seemed to have very little to do with relations between partners and drivers.

Once a driver had gotten a car from a partner, the drivers would have to go through a training with Uber, and then they borrow the car. The number of cars a partner was renting out varied a lot, with some having up to ten or even thirty cars that they rented out. Very few of those who had many cars actually drove for Uber, but earned money through leasing cars. An informant suggested that around 90% of Uber drivers did not own their own car. The renting deals varied between splitting the profit fifty-fifty or having a weekly fixed price, usually between 2500 and 3000 rand (185 – 225 USD). Drivers seemed to prefer having a fixed price, as they felt they got more out of the deal that way. For example, if they earned 10.000 (750 USD), then 5000 would go to the car owner instead of a 3000-fixed price.

Renting was drivers only possibility to be able to participate on the Uber platform, as investing in a car were too expensive. This led drivers into a "poverty trap", where high expenses from renting a car were preventing them from saving money, but without a car they had no job.

“I’m paying 3000 for the car, then 2000 for fuel and 150 for data every week. It is painful really if you don’t own your own car. I am in the process of buying my own car, I might do it next month. I pay 12000 every month for this car, and then the partner pays 4000, and then he earns 8000 just by owning a car” (Sipumelele, Uber driver from South Africa, renting)

“It feels like sometimes I’m only working for that person [car owner], so when I’m done with the week and given the money to that person it’s just a few hundred left. Because you must also put fuel from that money, from your share” (Tadiwa, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

“This is my car [A Toyota Corolla]. I bought it for 110.000 rand (8250 USD). The other ones working for Uber they are charged more. Because in South Africa this car is about 2800 rand per month. They are paying 2500 per week for this car. Imagine” (Tendai, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, car owner)

Some measures had been taken to try to ease the barriers of getting onto the platform. Uber sometimes arranged for drivers to buy a car from them. They would auction it away, and then drivers would have to pay a fixed amount to Uber for around three years, then the car was theirs. Some drivers complained about this being too little advertised, as few got the chance to do so.

Instead of creating a group of "micro business owners" or independent contractors, Uber has in Cape Town created car renting empires with contract free workers without any labour rights. This is similar to how the minibus taxi industry also was developed and organized. Instead of moving towards an inclusive labour market, Uber is resegregating the labour market after economic capacity. In a larger scale, the continuation of reducing the returns from the endowments of human capital, and increasing the share of the capital holders, inequality is increasing. One needs to have capital to make money and earn enough to have a basic living wage. As one of my informants bluntly put it:

“In Africa, this small entrepreneur possibility could help a lot. Take down unemployment rate, creating low threshold entry jobs. It's a good pay, I think it could help bring people out of poverty and push them into the middle class. I thought Uber would revolutionize the transport system, but with partners owning ten cars, it's just capitalising” (Panashe, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

Earnings

Every week Uber would give drivers a detailed plan of how many hours they logged on the app, and how much they made. Drivers driving for a partner would receive payment from the partner. The drivers distinguished between how much they made (the total price from their rides) and how much they earned (the profit left at the end of the week). Roughly the drivers made around 7000 rand (525 USD) a week, but it varied a lot. In peak times, drivers could make as much as 11.000 rand (830 USD) a week, but in slow times it could well be down to 5000 (375USD). What they earned was much less. From what they made, 20 or 25% (depending on when they signed up) would go directly to Uber. Then, many of the drivers had to pay rent (the fee

deducted by the partners) for their cars which sometimes covered half their earnings. From their share, they also had to cover fuel expenses, weekly car washes, and data for their phones. The drivers owning a vehicle also had to pay for car insurance. Many drivers did not feel they earned enough compared to how long and hard they worked. Especially during the time of the interviews, with the end of tourist high season and students still on holiday, drivers had trouble earning enough money.

“I think at first it was ok to work for Uber. But now I feel like it’s, the way it’s going, at the end, it’s not gonna be worthy of your time. You are gonna spend so many hours on the road for you to make enough money” (Tadiwa, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

“Working for Uber is not good, not good at all. At first it was fine, but now it’s not good at all. Everything changed. I’ve been with Uber for eight months now. And now they put up the price from 20 till 25%. So now, if I make 8000 a week, I’m down to getting paid 1800 to 2100 a week (135 – 160 USD)” (Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

“We are just working for fuel right now. [...] The fuel is going up but the fare is not. And with the 20/25% they take it’s not enough. We also need to clean the car, and insurance which is very expensive. And they don’t even know” (Menzi, South African, renting)

What drivers were left with each month was around 3000 to 6000 rand (230 – 450 USD). There are no minimum wage requirements for the metered taxicab industry, but in comparison the minimum wage requirements for a minibus taxi driver per month is 3,218.57 rand (249 USD) (SADL, 2016). Hourly wage is set to 15,47 rand (1,2 USD). If an Uber driver worked with this hourly salary for twelve hours a day, seven days a week (which most drivers did), excluding any regulations on overtime or wage supplement, their monthly salary should be up to 5040 rand (390 USD). Meaning, a lot of drivers earned well below the minimum wage. The pay gap between drivers was a result of the car lending practises, which was also reflected in how drivers viewed their earnings.

“You will probably get another story from the guys who doesn’t own their own car. They will probably complain they don’t make enough money. If they split it or work for a target they will not make enough. If you work for a target, then in slow times like

this you are basically making no money. When you have reached the target then there is no money left for you” (Callan, South African, renting)

Despite of all this, many of the drivers were content with what they made, especially with what they earned now compared to previous jobs.

“I mean, I can always get more, but in Cape Town it’s not so bad. It’s not so hard work, you just drive around. Sometimes it’s hot and not so nice, but it’s not so hard as other jobs. I worked in Joburg [Johannesburg] as a caretaker for 89 persons, but now I work with Uber. For Cape Town terms, I am lucky” (Thabo, Uber driver from South Africa, car owner)

“Uber changed my life. I worked for a printing company before, and what I used to make in one month I now make in one week with Uber. It completely changed my life” (Callan, South African, car owner)

Uber also seemed to have better working conditions than metered taxicab drivers. Two of my informants used to work for another taxicab company, but switched to Uber as they earned more and could work shorter shifts. One driver reported of working 24-hours shifts and not getting paid more than working twelve hours with Uber. Though Uber is fragmenting labour relations by operating with independent contractors, non-standard work relations is not new in Cape Town. Non-standard work, or informal work is the normal work situation for the majority of Capetonians. Uber can perhaps be seen as a much more formal job arrangement than found in the informal sector. They are no longer working here and there, they are working “for” Uber. They are no longer unemployed but have a somewhat steady income to rely on, and it is an income they can somewhat survive on. They work long hours and earn little, but so does the majority of the Capetonians as well.

However, many of the drivers did not see Uber as something for the long term, but more as a “quick fix” for money. As long as you worked *hard*, worked long hours, you would earn good enough money. However, working that hard for the rest of their lives did not seem tempting. High turnover is not an uncommon phenomenon for Uber drivers in the US either (Scholz, 2016).

“If I was offered another job with a decent salary I would park this car tomorrow, or even tonight. No, it is not a future job. [...] There is no Plan B. If I quit Uber now, then

in twelve days' time I still have to pay my bills" (Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

"I don't know someone who can work for Uber for five or six years. You'll be finished. There is no one who can do that" (Tendai, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, car owner)

5.1.3 Safety

Safety was an issue of great concern to the drivers, more than I had anticipated before I conducted the interviews. Many drivers stated that they felt unsafe when they were driving for Uber and mentioned several incidents where an Uber driver had been exposed to serious bodily harm and trauma, even leading to deaths of the drivers.

"One time, a friend of mine, guys came in [the car] with a gun and told him to cancel the trip and go with them and the whole night he drove with them. They were criminal you know, dealing drug and stuff." (Abdullahi, Uber driver from Somalia, car owner).

"Like yesterday we lost two Uber drivers. One was in an accident and one was shot in a car hijacking. It was very shocking for me, yes it shook me. [...] This was the first time I've heard about an Uber driver being shot. It makes you think about security" (Thabo, Uber driver from South Africa, car owner)

With the high crime rates in Cape Town, most of the drivers had ideas of which areas that were seen as more dangerous, and preferred to stay out of those areas, especially at night. However, as mentioned, the Uber app only showed the drivers where they would pick up the riders, not where the trip was going. This was creating a lot of uncertainty for drivers, as they were afraid of getting rides to areas they were not comfortable of driving to.

"Like, I will go to Khayelitsha in day, it's dangerous yes, but I will. But to go there at night, hm. I think Uber should understand that and not make us go drive to dangerous places. If we could see where we are going before we accept the trip and not once we start it, then we wouldn't take many of the trips" (Thabo, Uber driver from South Africa, car owner)

“Uber wants to make everybody happy. So, they allow trips from everywhere, every area. And if you go there and you die then it’s your own responsibility.” (Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

The implementation of cash trips in 2016 intensified the situation. In South Africa, only a small portion of the population has credit cards. To reach out to more riders Uber made it possible to pay in cash, much to the dissatisfaction of the drivers. As people now knew that Uber drivers would have cash in the car, drivers felt they became a target for crime. There was also an issue about who used cash. The drivers would get more customers, but the new customer base was also thought of as living in the unsafe areas. Drivers did not trust Uber’s verification of riders, as it is fairly easy for riders to create an account.

“They should change cash trips, and go back to credit trips, because cash trips are not safe. Everybody can download, and Uber does not know who it is. They can download and then throw away the sim and then Uber does not know who they are. And the people who use cash live in unsafe areas. We get more customers but our safety is our first priority” (Abdullahi, Uber driver from Somalia, car owner)

“We already have about more than ten people that have been robbed at gunpoint as a result of cash trips. We already have women Uber drivers that have been raped because of cash trips. How many people have to be raped and killed and assaulted before cash transactions on Uber are stopped?” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

A great paradox to the implementation of cash is an email one of my informants received from Uber in 2015 about their commitment to the driver’s safety, before cash was implemented.

“[Reading from the email] *“From Safety to Start to Finish, no one is a stranger, always on a map, risk free transactions. Uber is cash less so you never have to drive with money in your car, you always get paid, so you never want to drive with cash in your car”*. Doesn’t that impress you? Doesn’t that show you clearly that this is a company that cares never for anybody’s life here? Risk free. So, they knew that there is a risk, they did” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

Another issue that made the drivers fear for their safety was attacks from minibus taxi drivers and “normal” street taxicabs as a result of increased competition from Uber, especially after implementing cash transactions. Their fear was rightfully grounded in an earlier episode where

minibus taxi drivers had abducted an Uber driver and locked him in his car while setting the car on fire (Abbas, 2016). The driver was brought to the ICU and survived the incident, but he got seriously injured and could not work for many months. The incident was brought up by many of the drivers.

“They, the [minibus] taxi drivers they threaten us, break our car, some kidnap the driver and some kill the drivers. [...] The taxi drivers don't like Uber because so many of the drivers are foreign, that's why they don't like them. And they don't have a permit, and they don't know how to get a permit so they say it's illegal” (Sipumelele, Uber driver from South Africa, renting)

The drivers were not satisfied with the response from Uber towards their safety. Especially several expressed their anger and disappointment to Uber's response to the driver who had been burned in the car by minibus taxi drivers. Uber donated around 400 rand (30 USD) worth of groceries to the driver's family, a family of four children including an infant baby. The informant from the Uber Guild compared the ludicrous donation to the fines for impounded cars that Uber volunteered to pay for whilst Uber were operating illegally in the city.

“I'll tell you what Uber does when someone has been killed or hurt as compared to when a car has been impounded. And how much does Uber pay [for the impounded car]? 10.000. How much groceries were bought? 400 rand groceries!” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

5.1.4 “Uber is Always on the Side of Riders”

After every ride, the driver and the rider rate the other person with up to five stars. The five-star system can be seen as an example of modern control mechanism of workers. The riders' rating gave Uber information on how the drivers performed their task, and because of that Uber could control drivers working environment without any physical interaction.

“One thing I don't like is their rating system. Because we are in Africa. I've noticed that it's different with European customers who understand the five-star system. Here in Africa, the five-star system, they don't understand. So sometimes I think their rating system doesn't work because sometime drivers are getting their accounts closed. For others, they don't think about it, they just close their phones. They don't think, Also I don't know also if they tell them enough about what is this five-star system. That's one

thing, I don't like the rating system, I don't like how it works. They think it's a loving way but the people here they don't think about it. The rating or the stars. So sometimes I must press any star to go out of the phone. But they don't know how it's affecting you as the driver. Your rating is going down because of that. So now Uber suddenly decided to deactivate your account. What must I do? Sometimes you drive the whole day giving people five star. Five-star rating. But at the end of the day you look at your rating and I don't like it" (Tadiwa, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

The drivers who received bad ratings (average lower than 4,3) got deactivated from the application. For riders, deactivation was not as common. Drivers could see riders with one or two stars using the application, but a driver could not afford getting below four stars if they wanted to continue to drive for Uber. If a driver got deactivated from the app, it would mean they lost their job and income immediately. As independent contractors, they did not have the right to a period of notice. Keeping customers happy was thus very important for drivers to maintain a high rating. This was not always easy, as drivers had to deal with rude and sometimes racist customers. Drivers had different views on racism and how it affected their work lives. Some drivers experienced racism as something very present and as a big challenge. The Uber Guild representative stated that they dealt with racist incidents on a weekly basis. Comments from riders ranged from "put on music for white people" to comments on "the incapability of black drivers". Others pointed to "black on black" xenophobia and discriminating comments, as many of the drivers were immigrant workers. In cases of rude or racist riders, a big issue for the drivers was Uber's lack of loyalty towards them. The drivers felt that Uber seldom listened to their stories, but instead only heard the rider's version.

"The way they take if it's a problem with a rider, or if it's a rider who reports a driver or a driver who reports a rider it is very different. They are quick to close a driver's account without really knowing what happened. Sometimes the rider is wrong, but they don't even want to listen. Sometimes it feels so bad because we as drivers we try to be professional. We try, but some sometimes you get a customer who are like "you are a cab driver, I'm paying you so you must do as I say". That's how the experience is like. I don't think they educate the riders. Like how does Uber work [...] because they think it's just like an ordinary cab. And it's totally different, you see, totally different" (Tadiwa, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

“If me and you complain to Uber right now and I'm a driver and you are a rider. If I say I'm being racially abused there is nothing happening there is no follow up. Nothing happens. If you say the same thing, my account in the next 15 min will be deactivated” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

The different treatment of Uber between drivers and riders was also shown in the different requirements for getting access to the application. Naturally, drivers had a longer process than rider. Drivers had to go to training with Uber, get a background check as people with a criminal record were not allowed on the platform and Uber also did their own test of driving abilities. The process would take several weeks. Their profile also had to show their real name, photo, the registration number and colour of the car and their rating. Drivers also had to do facial recognitions test on the app from time to time to so Uber could remotely control who was driving. For riders, the requirements were very different. There was no need for photos or using of real names. Before cash trips riders' accounts were connected to their credit cards, while now all a rider needed was a phone number. As mentioned, drivers saw this as a safety threat, as obtaining an illegal or unregistered sim was easy in the townships.

“We pick up a lot of M., we pick we pick up a lot of L., we pick up a lot of J. [...]. You get there and because this person sees your name, your picture and your registration number, he jumps in the car. What do I see from my side? I see an L. I don't see a picture of that person. I can't make an informed decision. I don't even allow my intuition to tell me whether this person is a good person or not. All I do is I get there because they got all the information” (Uber Driver Guild Representative).

This difference in registration requirements were an issue when drivers wanted to report incidents with riders. A driver told me a story of how a friend of his, an Uber driver, had beaten a rider when the rider called him a “nigger” since he was delayed because of a default in the apps pick up location. The driver got reported to the police and deactivated from the platform. However, when my informant had experienced being harmed by a rider, Uber would not give him the information of the rider.

“There is no way I can go to the police to say L. U. C. was beating me. I want to know his address, his surname or even his email. Or only his name or surname. Uber, they don't give me that one. They are gonna protect him [the rider] even if he kills someone” (Tatenda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, car owner).

The skewed power balance, forced the drivers to endure the rider's rudeness and racist comments. This is however not unique for Uber drivers, but an experience for most workers in the service industry. Constantly battling one's own feelings, also known as emotional labour, can have an alienating effect towards how to handle one's emotions (Hochschild, 1983). An explanation for Uber's customer orientation could be found in network effects. For Uber to secure their platform monopoly position they need to secure the network effects to work in favour for their platform. Meaning they need to get as many customers as possible. This forces the company to become extremely customer oriented. This again has a severe negative effect for the drivers, as their rights are being constantly pushed to the limits.

5.2 What is Constraining or Enabling Uber Drivers' Individual and Collective Actions?

5.2.1 Individual Agency as Independent Contractors

As mentioned earlier, being an "independent contractor" was for many drivers the best part of driving for Uber, with the free hours and being one's own boss. Why then, did drivers work 16 hours shifts, or worked till they were "too tired" if they were free to set their own hours? An analysis of agency can be useful for understanding these choices. Agency must be understood in the embedded contexts of the case. By conceptualizing the relations (mechanism) one can conceptualize workers agency. In theory, being an independent contractor should leave the worker with more individual agency than a "common worker". In reality, Uber's relationship to drivers is much more complex. Many drivers express the view that Uber exercised extensive control over the business terms and the driver ability to earn money. Most of the issues centred around Uber's lack of interaction with drivers before making changes that had consequences for the drivers. One was Uber's decision of downgrading of fares to 7 rand per kilometres. Others were that Uber increased their share of the fare from 20 to 25% for the new riders. As mentioned, the implementation of cash had caused a lot of frustration. Lastly, it was a big issue that Uber kept on bringing on cars to the platform, and as a result of the increased competition making it harder for the drivers to keep busy the whole day and making enough money.

"I do not understand, they charge more when we are supposed to be independent"
(Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

“When Uber drops rates to 7 rand per kilometres (0, 5 USD), it is not your decision. After you invest all this money” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

Another frustration was the fact that they could not see where the trip was going. As already mentioned, this was seen as a threat to driver’s safety as they were forced to drive to more dangerous areas. Another issue with this was short trips. Many drivers experienced being requested for trips so short that they spent more fuel driving to pick up the rider than they made during the trip. Many drivers said they would never accept half of their rides if they knew where they were going. Uber had an arrangement for paying back drivers if a trip was calculated to cost more than it earned. Yet, this was not automatic, and drivers had to report it to Uber themselves. Many drivers forgot, or did not have the time to report back to Uber.

“They don't want you to see the destinations. They don't want you to make an informed decision of whether I want to take that person there. They don't want you to look at the logistics of the trips. This is your car, your business, your petrol that you are driving. Is it not only fair that you look at where this trip is going?” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

The lack of understanding and consulting with the drivers from the side of Uber made the drivers feel very powerless. Very few saw themselves able to negotiate with Uber, and few felt that Uber listened to the drivers.

“They let you know about changes they are gonna make, like when they switched to cash. But you know if you are not agreeing with what they are saying then you are not gonna win. Like if you say you don’t want to drive around with cash they are not gonna listen to that.” (Callan, Uber driver from South Africa, car owner)

“Uber makes their own decisions. If you don't like it you can leave. If not, you just deal with it. It’s the way it is” (Abdullahi, Uber driver from Somalia, car owner)

This is very paradoxical considering how most drivers also liked being “independent”. Drivers did not see Uber as their employer, but still saw Uber as an “unrockable” power structure in their work day. In reality, Uber had all the power over the financial decisions on the platform. It does not fit the relation as “independent contractors”, something that was also found in the CCMA court case (CCMA, 2017). In addition, the organization of Uber in Cape Town, made the relations more complex than just “independent” contractors.

"Uber says you are your own boss, but really I am not, cause I work for them, and I must pay the partner for the car. So really, I'm not my own boss, and it is a pain. It is painful to drive for Uber" (Sipumelele, Uber driver from South Africa, renting)

Apart from the training course for new drivers, Uber drivers had very little physical interaction with the Uber office. Almost all communication was digitalized through the app or by e-mail. Drivers would get pop up notifications on their apps whenever Uber had new information. If drivers wanted to get in contact with Uber, they would have to send e-mails. Many of the drivers complained about receiving robotic or computerized email answers, that were hard to understand. When trying to reply or argue a decision, drivers experienced being forwarded to new persons or not getting an answer at all.

"They only have emails and it's like you are talking to a robot. They have this standard email answer and if you try to argue with the answer you get a new person, and ah, it's just not effective". (Panashe, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

"Uber nowadays they don't want to speak with us. They send email. And that email you can't reply. No way, which means, they don't want to speak with us. It's them only, saying what they want". (Tendai, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, car owner)

The digitalizing of the communication channels is stripping the drivers of actual human interaction. Together with the one sidedness of the communication channels, drivers are left in a digital "don't call us, we'll call you" situation. This form of communication is a process of alienation and an exercise of power. Psychological, alienation refers to the state of mind of feeling estranged, misplaced to one self or the rest of the world. Economical alienation can also refer to Marxist understandings of how capitalist production disrupts the workers' natural feelings, workers' feelings towards their products they make, themselves and their surroundings (Rey, 2012). Uber is felt as unreachable for drivers, but Uber can always contact drivers. Through the control of the app Uber can dictate where drivers go Uber can even control and supervision drivers with their rating system without even having any physical presence in the drivers work day. Looking at a Foucauldian approach to power can be useful in this situation. As independent contractors Uber does not hold any power over drivers legally, but the way labour is organized on the platform Uber is *exercising* power over drivers.

Another mechanism constraining Uber drivers' agency is the competitive labour market in Cape Town and in South Africa in general. Drivers knew that they were easy replaceable with other workers, and felt the need to comply with Uber's decision.

“Yes, we have tried [to talk to Uber about our issues], but mostly they say if you don't like it, go find some other job if it's not for you. But you know, in Cape Town, it's difficult” (Thabo, Uber driver from South Africa, car owner).

“Uber doesn't lose anything. They are rational. Labour is available anytime” (Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

This experience of job insecurity ended up putting drivers in positions where they endured racism and unpleasant comments from riders. They also risked their lives by driving to wherever the app and riders requested. As independent contractors, Uber drivers are stripped of labour rights. The lack of job security or other forms of safety net made the drivers very economically dependable on Uber, constraining the driver's agency. Despite the excessive control of drivers, and the complete control of financial decision on the platform, Uber did not take any responsibility for the drivers, economically or security wise. This “Janus-faced” approach of total control and no responsibility were in particular evident in the way Uber handled drivers' safety:

“If someone has died as a result of not being able to decide on where to drive in the night, or of driver fatigue because of long working hours, Uber says, sorry John there is nothing we can do, you are an independent contractor” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

5.2.2 Collective Organization and Agency

When looking at power as position, an actor's power e.g. an actor's agency, lies with the actor's position in the network. One's position or ties to others can strengthen or weaken one's power, and therefore also one's agency. Looking at power like this, collective agency can be seen to enhance an actor's agency by creating ties in the network. Collective agency can therefore be compared to network effects. If the actors unite, their collective agency, e.g. their power will increase, and if their power increases more will want to join the network and the more powerful the network will get and so on. Collective agency then does not only enhance the group's

agency, but also the individual agency. A way out for the Uber driver's economic dependency could therefore be collective organizing, a well-known and successful strategy used by workers before.

SATAWU, the natural existing unions for transportation workers did not have a clear way to organize Uber drivers yet. They did however assist two Uber drivers with their court against Uber at the CCMA. In general, they had trouble organizing metered taxicab drivers, as they often worked alone or operated illegally. They had also heard of owners of minibus taxi punishing workers who joined the union, making it difficult to organize them as they could not operate like they were supposed to where the owner deducts money for the union. Drivers would have to come their office instead to sign up and get a receipt, which created an extra barrier for workers to join.

A group of Uber drivers formed a group called the Uber Drivers Guild, Cape Town. These were the same persons that SATAWU was assisting, and the Guild affiliated themselves with SATAWU. They claimed to have around 2000 drivers signed to their union. As of now, there were no fees for the members, they just had to sign their name to become a member. The guild was driven by a few enthusiasts, who worked as an interim committee, while they were waiting for official recognition. They planned to draw up "proper" organizational constitution and have an election, once they would be officially recognized. If recognised, they wanted to start to negotiate on behalf of drivers with Uber about issues drivers were concerned about. These issues were the same as brought up by my informants, such as higher tariffs, ability to see where trips were going, dropping cash trips, securing Uber's commitment to their safety, and more control of how many cars were driving. Seeing how the drivers previously marginalised position in economic decisions, getting included, getting an actual influence in the space of decisions were the ultimate goal for the Guild.

"We feel strongly that we are involved in the business and that we should be involved in all the decision-making processes" (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

Another goal was to expose how Uber treated drivers and the challenges they endured on the platform. The Guild therefore tried to get media attention to the driver's issues. After the incidents in Manenberg, where minibus taxi drivers had attacked an Uber driver, the Guild led drivers to the streets in protest (Geach, 2016, Le Roux, 2016). The drivers marched to the Uber office and then to the Provincial Legislatures office.

“That was the time when we had enough. We wanted to shut up the provincial office. So, we sat and we parked our car and blocked the road in town. We had enough and we wanted to intervene (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

Their protest got media attention, but in the end had little effect on Uber’s policies. They also tried to use formal channels to get their message through. They had organised meetings with the parliament in Cape Town to explain their issues. As mentioned, they also had a court case against Uber at the CCMA to get recognized as employees.

“Last year in August I was in parliament with Uber and we told parliament exactly what is happening with Uber, this is the national parliament we are talking about. Just this end of this month we’ll go to parliament with Uber again. They have been asked to come, and we will explain the challenges we are facing on the platform. Because we want to make sure that we tell South African law makers what we are experiencing on Uber. Also, we told our self that we’ll go to every media news outlet and expose Uber. Which is what they don’t want. We also are taking Uber to the CCMA” (Uber Driver Guild Representative).

Barriers for Building Solidarity

When asked about challenges for the guild lack of financial resources was stated as the biggest challenge. It was highly necessary to secure more financial assistance to be able to fight Uber legally. Since there was no member fee, the guild had struggles collecting resources. They tried to do crowdfunding within the group, but were not happy with how many had contributed.

“Not all of us understand that if you want economic freedom that to have economic freedom you need to put something in. You need to put effort. You need to put some money to get. No loss. No gain. But very few understand that. Because the biggest challenge we have so we can get where we want to get. That is financial assistance. That is our biggest challenge” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

Out of the drivers I spoke to, only three said they were part of a union, including one being the founder for the union. Some of them did not think there was a union available for them, suggesting recruitment and knowledge of the Guild as other important challenge. The perhaps “informal” way of signing in members by getting their signature on a piece of paper made the drivers feel like they were not part of an “official union” (which by critics can be claimed to be

true as the Guild was not an official organization). One driver stated he did not get involved with the union as he had heard unionism cost money. Another driver also mentioned that it seemed too political, and nothing he could be a part of.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for getting more drivers involved in the struggle, was the individualism brought by the idea of being “independent contractors” Many of the drivers did not see the value in collective organization as they saw themselves as “their own boss”. They did not like the idea of being connected or “dependent” to others.

“I like to be independent. I'm not ready to join a union. I like to make my own decisions” (Abdullahi, Uber driver from Somalia, car owner)

“No, I'm not part of a union. I am in the WhatsApp group, but I'm not part of the union no. I'm only here to make money” (Menzi, Uber driver from South Africa, renting)

The nature of the taxi sector can be said to be “fragmented”. Drivers drive around in their own car which can be seen as a form of “mobile work place”. This fragmentation was intensified by Ubers communication strategy of always addressing drivers individually through their app, there were few natural meeting points for drivers. This created a fragmented working environment, where building solidarity was challenged.

“Because of the way in which Uber works with the drivers, it makes it difficult to know who is an Uber driver and who is not” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

Another challenge was the different experiences of drivers on the app. Some did not see the need for collective organization as they were content with their current situation.

“No, I'm not part of a union, but I support the worker's right yes. Right now, things are good so I don't need them, but if anything happens I can contact the CCMA” (Gloire, Uber driver from Congo DRC, car owner)

“No, I don't see why. Because everything goes smoothly now” (Ziad, Uber driver from South Africa, car owner)

Interestingly, the two informants explicit mentioning this were both car owners and therefore probably got more out of the share of what they were driving. However, as already mentioned,

Uber's working conditions are harsh, but so are the working conditions in Cape Town in general.

“It's different for people. Since we are all not that united. If you come from Zim [Zimbabwe] and your former job was with cattle then you are happy with this job, because you can feed your family. So, for someone this job is great. You make ten times more than you did before maybe. You are thinking at least I'm getting something. But it should be better. It's not only about surviving or work till you sleep. It is relative for which country and which money you are used to” (Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

If you as a driver are content with your work, it is difficult to decide to use your resources to fight it. Especially if you know that it could cost you your job. Uber has shown excessive resistance towards the work of the guild. Several of the founding members that had been outspoken in media, had been deactivated from the application. Of course, Uber did not use their outspokenness as a reason for deactivation, as this would have been a criminal offence, by violating driver's constitutional right to organize. Uber had explained the deactivation with reasons such as a failure of a previous approved background check, which just coincidentally happened to result in deactivating the core members for the guild. The deactivation had been a setback for the Guild's struggle. Several drivers mentioned that they had heard of some drivers trying to organize drivers, but were disappointed when the Guild had gone “quiet”, which was a result of the deactivation. This had made drivers concerned about the agency of collective organization. Some did not think collective organization would work with Uber because they had too much power.

“With union, Uber is fighting them. It is their own fault. I know those guys wanted to get 500 drivers together, but Uber deactivated them. Uber destroyed them so no more” (Abdullahi, Uber driver from Somalia, car owner)

“There was something were driver got together to ask Uber, but it was not successful. Uber is too big, there is nothing they can do. We all have the same issues but there is nothing to do about it” (Sipumelele, Uber driver from South Africa, renting)

It is difficult to state if Uber was putting spokes in the Guilds wheels, but it seemed to have an effect in scaring drivers to resist at the same time as showing drivers who held the power. The Guild saw the deactivation as challenging, but also took it as a sign of the powerful position the

Guild was building. If Uber did not want them to organize it was a clear sign that Uber was afraid of what they could accomplish collectively.

“What is the problem for Uber to have to deal with a guild of drivers that represents all of drivers? [...] Uber doesn't want that. Uber wants to deal with each and every person individually” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

“We're becoming a threat to Uber because something they definitely don't want is someone who runs to the media and exposes them” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

5.2.3 The Geographies of Uber Drivers Collective Organization

The Spatiality of Organization: The Airport Parking Lot

A perfect example of how space matters for organizing is the Uber driver's airport parking lot. This was one of the very few actual places drivers met up physically, and had become the most important meeting place for the Uber Drivers Guild and drivers in general. It stood out as a space of unity against the fragmenting policies of Uber. Physically, the place was an open area in an industrial area close to the airport. The location was around one kilometres from Cape Town international airport, which is located in the Cape flats, a thirty-minute drive from the city centre of Cape Town. The area is an industrial area known as the Bonquinar Industrial area. The ground was sandy and there were only about ten spaces offering shade, while the rest were in the sun. A “festival toilet” was also put up and a few women had set up shops selling food and drinks from the trunk of a car. Drivers told me that there could be over a hundred drivers waiting here at a time. Some drivers told me they would get a new parking space from Uber with more shade that also would be tarred. The dusty grounds made the cars dirty, which was an issue as Uber had strict rules to how clean a car had to be. When drivers go to the parking lot they are placed in a queue for rides from the airport. They can see which number they are in the queue and how they are getting closer to getting a trip. How long they wait will depend on how many rides are being requested but a lot of drivers mentioned waiting for several hours at least. Drivers went to the airport to secure longer trips. Some did it very often, others saw it as a waste of time and did not like it when they had to go to the airport because of the long wait for a trip back.

“The other day I waited 6 hours there (airport parking lot). I didn't go to work in the day so in the evening I said to myself I will drive to the airport and I waited six hours. Then

at 12 am I got a ride and it was only to Mowbray” (Simbarashe, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting).

It is clear that it was not only a working space, but also functioned as a social space for drivers. Most drivers were outside chatting with friends, sharing stories, and getting food or dozing off in the car. As written in the methods section, it was clear that this space was for *Uber Drivers*. The airport parking lot therefore acted as a space of unity for drivers, a space only Uber drivers knew about and only Uber drivers used.

The strategy of using this space as the primary meeting place can be seen in light of traditional collective organization. It was chosen as many drivers went there, and the time of the meetings were often around the less busy time, so more drivers would be free to participate in the meetings. This way, they tried to overcome the challenge the spatial fragmenting of being taxi drivers as well as being independent contractors.

In general, airports have in particular been an interesting space for Uber, considering in some cities, Uber has not been allowed access to the airport because of resistance from metered taxicab drivers (Nelson, 2015). Airport trips are in general important for metered taxicabs as they usually involve longer rides, and have therefore become a place for struggle against Uber and other app based ride services. Yet even more interesting is the new ruling in the CCMA case. A reason for ruling Uber as an employer was the fact that Uber organized the parking lot for drivers, insinuating that Uber has a considerable power and responsibility over drivers’ work (CCMA, 2017).

Social Media as a Space and Tool for Collective Organization.

In addition to meeting at the airport, drivers used social media to connect with each other. WhatsApp was frequently used, and drivers had their own WhatsApp group chat. This group functioned as a digital learning space for drivers. The group was used to share information such as traffic, road blocks, if anything was up with the app, or if something had happened to a driver. They also used to exchange tips, like how to treat riders and naming partners whom had treated drivers badly.

“It is very active, we talk about things every two minutes. If cars are being towed, or traffic, or drivers being shot. It keeps everyone on the platform updated” (Tawanda, Uber driver from Zimbabwe, renting)

For the Guild, social media was an important tool to reach out to drivers. The guild had a Facebook page and was also responsible for creating the driver's WhatsApp group. In addition to allowing drivers share tips, these platforms were used to communicate when the guild had meetings, what the guild was working on, and channels for crowdfunding for the Guild.

Social media is very effective in that it can reach out to enormous amount of people at the same time. It also functions as a platform of engagements as it allows for digital interaction amongst the users. Social media hinders previous spatial and time constraints in communication as it allows global real-time communication. Gladwell (2010) points to how social media is effective in distributing information, it also struggles to build strong ties of solidarity. Meaning, when the struggle "gets tough", social media organization struggles to obtain strong commitment to the cause by its followers. The effectiveness of social media also creates a distance as it is easier to disconnect from the movement. This is a natural reaction to the alienating process of digital communication (Rey, 2012). Social media activism will therefore struggle to obtain real structural change, as compared to social movements built on physical interaction. Other points to how it is meaningless to compare previous social movement capacity with modern ones, as the political and social context have changed tremendously since, and that most social movement still heavily relies on physical organization as well. Social media works as a helpful tool in connecting and spreading information (Segeberg & Bennet, 2011).

When looking at Katz three categories of agency, the resilience category can be useful to understand how driver's agency are at work in their social media organization. Through their everyday interactions on the WhatsApp group the drivers are creating a community, and a sense of unity. The group chat then becomes a channel of change as this unity is also what is creating their collective power. This is perhaps big thoughts to imply to "just" a WhatsApp group chat, but as Katz and Simone show, it is through these everyday practices the actual struggle is happening. Though their interactions on the chat drivers are not going to create substantial structural change (Katz definition of agency of resistance), but through the chat drivers are slowly resisting and reworking their working experience. It is through the chat the drivers collectively decide which violent partner *not to* rent from, and it is through this chat drivers are discussing their mutual challenges and strategy to overcome or overbear this.

When looking at theory of solidarity one would think that Ubers fragmenting organization would be a hindrance for driver's collective organization and therefore a hinder for driver's collective agency. The actual result is quite another story. Through the Uber platform, drivers

have been united. “Uber” has created a sense of commonality, a common work place. The geographies have in particular played an important role in this unification. Meeting other Uber drivers through the airport parking lot and on WhatsApp drivers have created a “we” and “us”. *Us* as Uber drivers, *we* have the same issues. They are not cab drivers, they are Uber drivers. By creating a sense of unity drivers have managed to start to build a collective organization, forming a collective agency. Uber’s resistance to this organization can be seen as clear evidence of the believed powerful position Uber drivers would come in, if united. This is of course looking at it very optimistically. One must take into account the drivers’ resistance and reluctance to organize. Many drivers did not want to get organized. As many did not believe organization would work. The actual outcome of the organization is still unclear, and Uber’s positional power and resource advantage must be included.

South Africa in a Global Network of Production

As mentioned, space and scale is analytical important tools in Labour Geography as phenomena can have different outcomes depending upon which scale one sees it on. The global outcome is perhaps not the same as the local outcome. For the Guild, the outcome of Uber’s policies in the South African context was very important. There were clear views of Uber as a foreign company with foreign rules that did not fit in a South African context. The Guild wanted Uber to adjust their policies to become more South African friendly. The point that South Africa was a “third world” country was important. The Guild referred to how Uber had been banned in several European countries, or made to comply with new regulations. However, in South Africa Uber was “welcomed” with lack of strong national regulations.

“We are sitting with a company that have first world policies. It got policies that have been made in the US that does not fit a third world country. Unfortunately, we don't have an economy that accommodates Uber policies”. (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

“Uber cannot continue to disregard the people of this country. Uber must pay tax in this country. Uber must adapt to the dynamics of the South African people. We don't need to adapt to the States. We didn't go to the US” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

As a “third world” country, South Africa had other struggles then the “first world” countries. Uber’s competitive business model intensifies the already existing structures of inequality. In

Cape Town, this is shown in two ways. One is the system of car barons. The economic elite, which have the possibility to invest in cars, are making a lot of money by renting cars to Uber drivers. The drivers are stuck in a ruthless job market, where they have little economic power. They are easily replaceable. The second one is the issue of race. Which is not really an issue about race but about economy. With the apartheid legacy, economics in South Africa is racial. The car barons are not only the rich elite, but the white elite. The drivers are not only the working class, but the black working class. The riders are also rich, because who else can afford a private driver? As most of the middleclass are white, the riders are also mostly white.

“In our country, we must always reflect on the history. And because of the history the blacks have a disadvantage. Take me for example. I was not able to pay for more education after I finished high school. So where am I today? I am poor working for Uber. Who can afford the car Uber is requiring? It is a system to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. It is helping dividing people [...] The black driver is working and the white makes money of this” (Uber Driver Guild Representative)

The driver is stuck in a colonial pattern of working for a foreign company servicing the rich (white) elite, while working for “slave prices” and “slave hours”. If the apartheid labour regimes were called racial Fordism, post Fordism, or neoliberalism does not seem to have become any less racial in the division of labour and of producers and consumers.

The Scalar Challenge of Building Global Solidarity

This brings me over to another part of the geographies of Uber, the scalar issue. When working with agency, scale is important as there are different levels of decision making. Uber is a global company stretched out in space and scale. It was developed in San Francisco in the US, has their headquarters for international operations in Amsterdam the Netherlands, while their Cape Town office functions as the local branch as well as being the head of Uber’s African operations. Uber is engaging in both national and local regulations while also having an international or “global” position as the biggest taxi company in the world. This access to all levels of scale in both decision making and in the global network of production gives Uber a strong positional power, e.g. agency. The situation is quite different for the drivers. As individual workers, drivers are spatially and scalar constrained to the local level as Uber drivers in Cape Town. Through collective organization workers have managed to gain some access to the national scale. This is symbolized by how the Guild had approached both local and national

levels of decision making in effort to get their case heard. Their current case with the CCMA stands out as a successful story for the Guild. This success must be viewed in light of their ability to form bonds with official organizational structures as SATAWU and NUMSAW. These bonds have provided the guild with more financial resources and knowledge, which the Guild otherwise suffers with lack of. After the fieldwork, the Guild had managed to start building a national alliance by get connected with other Uber organization in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Same alliances at the global levels are missing. One can only imagine the powerful position a globally united Uber driver's organization would get, but so far, the barriers for building global solidarity seems to be too high. Financial resources and knowledge stands out as important barriers. A suggested solution to solve this spatial and scalar barrier is the use of Social media. So far a few "Uber forums" have occurred, through social media such as Facebook groups (Uber Forum), informational YouTube videos, and more grassroots based websites (Uberpeople.net). It would seem these forums are still lacking the more official organizational structures and more importantly *ties of solidarity* to be able to build a "strong enough" alliance. Traub-Werner & Cravey (2002) shows how important yet difficult it is to create a discourse of solidarity wide enough to work over large spatial distances. Perhaps it is the lack of physical space of interaction is also a hindrance for building solidarity, a barrier that would demand much more resources to overcome.

Another interesting point that shows how important scale can be, is found in the CCMA case. The global scale of production was by the CCMA reported as difficult to decide where charges could be made legally. In the case, Uber argued that Uber drivers in Cape Town were under Uber's international branch in the Netherlands:

"If a driver is in dispute with Uber, the service agreement provides that the laws of The Netherlands apply and disputes may be resolved by submission of the dispute to the International Chamber of Commerce for Mediation and Arbitration". (CCMA, 2017:6).

It is obvious that for the common Uber driver, an international court case against Uber is not possible. Subjecting drivers to the laws of the Netherlands seems rather parodic, considering the Dutch colonial history in South Africa. The fact that most drivers were immigrants gives another perspective to this as well. Take Panashe from Zimbabwe as example. He worked in South Africa for Uber while he waited to get his education approved. As an Uber driver, he is

then obliged to follow the labour rules of the Netherlands. As previously mentioned, immigrant workers are often more vulnerable as they lack access to the same safety networks. Most immigrant workers also lack democratic influence in the host country. So to speak, for most of the drivers, there were a mismatch between the scale of democracy, and the scale of capitalism. They had to participate in the scale of capitalism as they had to work for wages, but they could not access the scale of democracy to obtain influence towards capitalism. Uber on the other hand, is actively using their capacity to access both scales on all levels, in order to fragment and crush driver's agency.

Ubers arguments of drivers being subjects to the laws of the Netherlands was not upheld by the CCMA ruling, who showed how national legislations (sections 200B and 198 of the Labour Relations Act) protected the drivers from these scalar difficulties:

“The local subsidiary of an international company must be regarded as the employer to avoid severe disadvantage to South Africans working for foreign companies. An ordinary driver could not have insight into inter-company arrangements and Uber SA presents itself as Uber for all intents and purposes. The Uber office in Cape Town has a general manager, with whom some drivers actively engage, and emails come from an Uber Cape Town email address.” (CCMA, 2017:7-8)

6 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have sought to investigate how the sharing economy is affecting workers agency in a southern city, by looking at working conditions and agency of Uber drivers in Cape Town. The study was focused around two research questions:

- 1) What are Uber driver's experiences of their working conditions?*
- 2) What is constraining or enabling Uber drivers' individual and collective actions?*

By using Uber drivers experience as evidence, and putting their perspectives in the centre of analysis, this project contributes to giving voice to some of the unheard voices in the sharing economy. Their perspective has contributed to several interesting, unexpected and important findings of how Uber is organized in Cape Town, and how workers are resisting Ubers fragmentation.

The study finds that that Uber drivers experience tough working conditions. Drivers usually worked long days with little time for other activities than work. Many drivers were concerned with their safety when driving for Uber, as the application gave drivers little control over who requested a ride. Especially since the implementation of cash trips, drivers felt their safety were being threatened. However, Uber drivers in Cape Town have different experiences of their working conditions, largely because of their different backgrounds. The drivers renting their cars seemed to be less content with their working conditions, as they got less out of the hours they worked. The system of car renting seems to be particular for Cape Town. Reinforcing old structures of inequalities, rich capital owners rent out cars to drivers for high returns. In such the “sharing” or “access” in the organization of Uber in Cape Town is rather limited, while the Platform Economy seems to be a better “core” for understanding Uber in Cape Town. Following this, the platforms dependency of network effects also affected drivers work, by constructing the app in favour for riders over drivers. This forced drivers to adapt their work to the demands of riders, constantly chasing good ratings and enduring racist and unpleasant riders.

Moving over to the second research question, this study uncovers how driver's individual agency is being constrained by the competitive labour market, and how Uber uses its asymmetrical power position to exploit drivers. As independent contractors, Uber drivers are

stripped of all labour rights. Yet drivers are still heavily subjected to Ubers control. Drivers did not feel they could influence Ubers decisions, and did not feel that Uber listened to them. The feeling of being one's own boss as independent contractors were over-shadowed by Ubers interference in the business. The design of the application also constrained worker's agency. The app is designed to remotely control driver's presence, work performance and places of work. In such, the app works as a "telescopic prison", constantly watching drivers. This way, Uber enjoys not having any employee responsibilities, while still being able to control their drivers. Despite the excessive control of drivers, and the complete control of financial decision on the platform, Uber did not take any responsibility for the drivers, economically or safety wise, moving the all the risk over to the drivers.

Uber also constrains collective organization by challenging workers solidarity by fragmenting the work place and labour relations. However, In Cape Town, Uber's policies can also be seen to have paradoxical outcome. Through the platform of Uber, Uber drivers have managed to build solidarity and have started the Uber Drivers Guild. It is interesting to see how the spatiality of organization have mattered for collective organisation, and how social media can be seen as a tool for workers to easy create networks and to communicate information easily.

Drawing solid conclusions in a field that is so rapidly changing have proven to be a rather difficult task. Feeling as only having scratched the surface, this thesis is a start of a foundation for further research on labour and the sharing economy in South Africa and in the global South in general. Looking towards the future for Uber drivers, two recent developments stands out as important. One is the development of a South African e-hailing application called Taxify, which already have been estimated to have taken a 15% market share from Uber (Luedi, J. 2017). Could a South African e-hailing company provide a different narrative for workers in the sharing economy? Or can it result to a race to the bottom in deregulation of labour? Latest Facebook updates from the Guilds show how Uber drivers are trying to include Taxify-drivers into their organization as well. The other development is the CCMA case, and if the current ruling of seeing Uber Drivers as employees will stand. Being able to determine an employee relationship without a formal contract could provide important precedence for workers in the sharing economy, as well as for non-standards workers. This only shows how the sharing economy and the global South is not a ploughed field for further research.

References

- Abbas, G. (2016) "Attack on Uber driver 'a warning'" *IOL*. Published online 11/05/17:
<https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/attack-on-uber-driver-a-warning-2044206>.
 Accessed 17/08/17
- Acquier, A., Oudaudigeos, T., & Pinkse, J. (2017) "Promises and paradoxes of the sharing economy: An organizing framework". *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*. Article in press. Available online:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.07.006>
- Baxter, J. (2010) Case Studies in Qualitative Research. In: Hay. I. ed. *Qualitative Research methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. :81 - 98.
- Boräng, F. (2015) "Large-scale solidarity? Effects of welfare state institutions on the admission of forced migrants". *The European Journal of Political Research*, Vol 48(14) :1879 – 1904
- Bradshaw, M., Stratford, E. (2010) Qualitative research design and rigour. In: Hay. I. ed. *Qualitative Research methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. :69 – 80.
- Cameron, J. (2010) Focusing on the Focus group. In: Hay. I. ed. *Qualitative Research methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. :152 – 172
- Cannon, S., & Summers, L. H. (2014). "How Uber and the sharing economy can win over regulators". *Harvard business review*, Vol 13(10) :24-28.
- Carboni, M. (2016) "A New Class of Worker for the Sharing Economy". *Richmond Journal of Law & Technology*, Vol 22(4). Available online:
<http://scholarship.richmond.edu/jolt/vol22/iss4/2>
- CBC (2017) "Court: Uber Drivers Are Independent Contractors, Not Employees" CBCEMiami Published online 01/02/17.
 Available online: <http://miami.cbslocal.com/2017/02/01/court-uber-drivers-contractors-employees/> Accessed 20/08/17
- Co-Pierre, G. & Rose, M. E. (2016) "Licensing metered taxis does more harm than good – South Africa should stop it" *The conversation*. Published online 24/09/2017:[
<https://theconversation.com/licensing-metered-taxis-does-more-harm-than-good-south-africa-should-stop-it-64563> sa=google&sq=Licensing+metered+taxis+does+more+harm+than+good+%E2%80%93+South+Africa+should+stop+it&sr=1] Accessed 24/6/17
- Coe, N. M. & Hess, M. (2013). "Global production networks, labour and development". *Geoforum*, Vol 44 :4-9.
- Coe, N. M. & Jordhus-Lier, D. C. (2010) "Constrained agency? Re-evaluating the geographies of labour" *Progress in Human Geography*. Article first published online: 23/04/10. Issue published: 01/04/11. Vol 35(2), :211-233

- Coser, L. (1984) Introduction. In Durkheim, E. eds. *The division of labour in society*. China. The Macmillan Press LTD. :ix- xxiv
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). "Determining validity in qualitative inquiry" *Theory into practice*, Vol 39(3) :124-130.
- Cunningham-Parmeter, K. (2016). "From Amazon to Uber: Defining Employment in the Modern Economy". *Boston University Law Review* Vol 96(5) :1673-1728.
- Deumert, A., Inder, B., & Maitra, P. (2005). "Language, informal networks and social protection: evidence from a sample of migrants in Cape Town, South Africa" *Global Social Policy*, Vol 5(3) :303-328.
- Dowling, R. (2010) Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research. In: Hay, I. ed. *Qualitative Research methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. :26 – 39.
- Drahokoupil, J. & Fabo, B. (2016) "The Platform Economy and the Disruption of the Employment Relationship" *ETUI Research Paper - Policy Brief 5/2016*. Available online: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2809517>
- Dunn, K. (2010) Interviewing. In: Hay, I. ed. *Qualitative Research methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. :99 – 138.
- Edelman, B.G. & Geradin, D. (2015) "Efficiencies and regulatory shortcuts: How should we regulate companies like Airbnb and Uber" *Stanford Technology Law Review*. Vol 19, :293 – 328
- Ethics Guidebook (2017) "Compensation, rewards or incentives?" Available online here: <http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Compensation-rewards-or-incentives-89>. Accessed 17/03/17
- Fioretti, F & Sinner, M. (2017) "Setback for Uber as European court advised to treat it as transport firm". *Reuters*. Published online 11/05/2017: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-uber-tech-court-idUSKBN1870SO> Accessed 31/07/17.
- Frenken, K., & Schor, J. (2017). "Putting the sharing economy into perspective" *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* Vol 23. :3-10.
- Geach, C. (2016) "Cash puts us at risk, say Uber drivers" *IOL Industry* Published online 13/07/17: <http://www.iol.co.za/motoring/industry-news/cash-puts-us-at-risk-say-uber-drivers-2044785> Accessed 03/05/17
- George, R. (2003) "Tourist's perceptions of safety and security while visiting Cape Town" *Tourism Management* Vol 24(5) :575-585.
- Geradin, D. (2015) "Should Uber Be Allowed to Compete in Europe? And If So How?" *Competition Policy International*; George Mason Legal Studies Research Paper No. LS 15-11. Available online: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2615530>
- Geyer, H. S., & Mohammed, F. (2016) "Hypersegregation and class based segregation processes in Cape Town 2001–2011" *Urban Forum* Vol. 27(1) :35-58.

- Gladwell, M. (2010). "Small change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted". *The New Yorker*. Published 4/10/2010 Available online: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell> Accessed 17/08/17
- Hitge, G. & Vanderschuren, M. (2015) "Comparison of travel time between private car and public transport in Cape Town" *Journal of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering*, Vol 57(3) :35-43.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, University of California Press, :3-23.
- Howitt, R. & Stevens, S. (2010) Cross-cultural Research: Ethics, Methods and Relationships. In: Hay. I. ed. *Qualitative Research methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. :40 – 68.
- Ingle, M. (2009) "An historical overview of problems associated with the formalization of the South African minibus taxi industry" *New Contree* Vol 57 :71 – 86.
- Jordhus-Lier D. C. (2010) Moments of resistance: the struggle against informalization in Cape Town. In: Lindell, I. ed. *Africa's informal workers*. London, New York, Zed Books. :115 - 129
- Kearns, R. A. (2010) Seeing with clarity: Undertaking Observational Research. In: Hay. I. ed. *Qualitative Research methods in Human Geography*. Ontario, Oxford University Press. :241 – 258.
- Kerr, D. (2016) "UK court rules Uber drivers are employees, not contractors". *CNET*. Published online 28/10/2016: <https://www.cnet.com/news/uber-uk-court-ruling-drivers-employees-not-contractors/> Accessed 20/08/17.
- Kvale, S. (1997) *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju*. Gjøvik, Ad Notam Gyldendal
- Lemanski, C. (2004) "A new apartheid? The spatial implications of fear of crime in Cape Town, South Africa" *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16(2) p. 101-112.
- Lemanski, C. (2006) "Residential responses to fear (of crime plus) in two Cape Town suburbs: implications for the post-apartheid city". *Journal of International Development* Vol 18(6) :787-802.
- Luedi, J. (2017) "Under the Radar: Is the sharing economy really good for Africa?" *Global Risk Insights* Published online 05/06/17: <http://globalriskinsights.com/2017/06/sharing-economy-africa/>
- Allen, J. (1997) "Economies of Power and Space". In Lee, R. & Wills, J, ed. *Geographies of Economies*. New York. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Le Roux, I. (2016) "CT UBER DRIVER IN A STABLE CONDITION AFTER ATTACK". *EYEWITNES NEWS*. Published online 10/06/2016: <http://ewn.co.za/2016/07/11/CT-Uber-driver-in-a-stable-condition-after-attack> Accessed 03/05/2017
- Lier, D. C. (2007) "Places of work, scales of organising: a review of labour geography" *Geography Compass* Vol 1(4) :814-833.

- Lindell, I. (2010) Introduction: the changing politics of informality – collective organizing, alliances and scales of engagement. In: Lindell, I. ed. *Africa's informal workers*. London, New York, Zed Books. :1-45
- McFarlane, C. and Silver, J. (2017) “The poolitical city: “Seeing sanitation” and making the urban political in Cape Town” *Antipode* Vol 49(1) :125-148.
- Martin, C.J. (2016) “The sharing economy: A pathway to sustainability or a nightmarish form of neoliberal capitalism?” *Ecological Economics* Vol 121 :149-159.
- Muñoz, P., & Cohen, B. (2017) “Mapping out the sharing economy: A configurational approach to sharing business modelling” *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*. Available online here: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.03.035>
- Munthe, M. (2015) *Voices in local democracy: Political participation, democracy and development in Khayelitsha, Cape Town*. Master thesis, University of Oslo
- Nelson, L.J. (2015) “What's holding up the start of Uber and Lyft pickups from LAX?” *Los Angeles Times*. Published online 21/10/2015:
<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-uber-lax-20151021-story.html>
Accessed 19/08/17.
- Parry, K., & van Eeden, A. (2015) “Measuring racial residential segregation at different geographic scales in Cape Town and Johannesburg” *South African Geographical Journal* Vol 97(1) :31-49.
- Ragin, C. (1994) *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press.
- Rey, P. J. (2012) “Alienation, exploitation, and social media” *American Behavioral Scientist* Vol 56(4) p. 399-420.
- Rogaly, B. (2009) “Spaces of Work and Everyday Life: Labour Geographies and the Agency of Unorganised Temporary Migrant Workers” *Geography Compass* Vol 3 :1975–1987.
- Roxas, M. C. M. (2016) *The sharing economy in the Global South and sustainability transitions: An assessment of the sustainability claims and sustainability transitions in Metro Manila, Philippines*. IIIIEE Masters Thesis.
- Schalekamp, H & Behrens, R. (2013) “Engaging the paratransit sector in Cape Town on public transport reform: Progress, process and risks” *Research in Transportation Economics*. Vol 39(1) :185-190.
- Schor, J. (2014) “DEBATING THE SHARING ECONOMY” *Journal of Self-Governance & Management Economics* Vol 4(3) :1 - 14
- Schuermans, N. (2016) On the politics of vision and touch, encountering fearful and fearsome bodies in Cape Town, South Africa. In Darling J., & Wilson, H. Ed *Encountering the City: Urban Encounters from Accra to New York*. Routledge.
- Scholz, T. (2016) “Platform cooperativism - Challenging the corporate sharing economy”. New York: *Rosa Luxemburg*. Retrieved 30/08/2016 from http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files_mf/scholz_platformcoop_5.9.201650.pdf

- Seegerberg, A., & Bennett, W. L. (2011) "Social media and the organization of collective action: Using Twitter to explore the ecologies of two climate change protests" *The Communication Review* Vol 14(3) :197-215.
- Smit, W., De Lannoy, A., Dover, R. V., Lambert, E. V., Levitt, N., & Watson, V. (2016) "Making unhealthy places: the built environment and non-communicable diseases in Khayelitsha, Cape Town" *Health & place* Vol 39 :196-203.
- SADL (2016) "Department of Labour sets new minimum wage for the Taxi Sector". South African Department of Labour. Posted online 27/07/2016 by Lloyd Ramutloa . Available online here <http://www.labour.gov.za/DOL/media-desk/media-statements/2016/departement-of-labour-sets-new-minimum-wage-for-the-taxi-sector> Accessed 17/8/17
- Srnicek, N. (2017) "The Challenges of Platform Capitalism: Understanding the Logic of a New Business Model" *Juncture* Vol 23(4) :254-257
- STATS SA (2017) "Quarterly Labour Force Survey – QLFS Q1:2017" Statistics South Africa. Available online here: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=9960>
- TCT (2015) "CITY WELCOMES GRANTING OF OPERATING LICENCES TO UBER DRIVERS". Transport for Cape Town. Available online: [<http://www.tct.gov.za/en/news/general/city-welcomes-granting-of-operating-licences-to-Uber-drivers/page-1/>] Accessed 29/6/17
- TCT (2014a) "Operating Licence Strategy: 2013 – 2018" The City of Cape Town's transport authority, Transport for Cape Town. Published October 2014. Available online: [<http://www.tct.gov.za/docs/widgets/227/OperatingLicenceStrategy.pdf>] Accessed 24/6/17
- TCT (2014b) "Metered Taxi Rationalisation Strategy Report - J33172A" The City of Cape Town's transport authority, Transport for Cape Town. Published July 2014. Available online: [[http://www.tct.gov.za/docs/categories/1403/Metered Taxi Rationalisation Strategy 1.pdf](http://www.tct.gov.za/docs/categories/1403/Metered_Taxi_Rationalisation_Strategy_1.pdf)] Accessed 24/6/17
- Traub-Werner, M., & Cravey, A. J. (2002) "Spatiality, sweatshops and solidarity in Guatemala". *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol 3(4) :383-401.
- Townley, B. (1993) "Foucault, Power/Knowledge, and its Relevance for Human Resource Management" *Academy of Management Review*, Vol 18(3) :518 – 545.
- Uber (2017a) "Cities". Uber webpage. Available online here: <https://www.uber.com/en-NO/cities/> Accessed 24/8/17.
- Uber (2017b) "Always the ride you want". Uber webpage. Available online here: <https://www.uber.com/en-NO/ride/> Accessed 22/8/17.
- Uber Newsroom (2013) "Connecting Cape Town: Uber Has Officially Launched" Published online 11/10/13, by Patrick Studener. Available online: <https://newsroom.uber.com/south-africa/connecting-cape-town-uber-has-officially-launched/> Accessed 22/6/17.

Webster, E. & Lambert, R. & Bezuidenhout, A. (2008) *Grounding Globalization*. USA, UK, Australia, Blackwell Publishing.

Wilkinson, P. (2010) "The regulatory cycle stalled? An assessment of current institutional obstacles to regulatory reform in the provision of road-based public transport in Cape Town, South Africa" *Research in Transportation Economics* Vol 29(1) :387-394.

Appendix I: Informed Consent

An overview of what I said to my informants to secure oral informed consent before the interview started.

So, before we start there are just a few things I must go over. First, this is a student project for the University of Oslo, and it is due to be finished in May this year. The article will be published in a database with all the other master thesis, and perhaps published elsewhere. Everything you say will be anonymised. If there are any questions you don't want to answer that's completely fine, and you are also free to stop the interview at any time. That is not a problem. Is this ok with you?

Appendix II: Interview Guide

Interview Guide with Uber Drivers

How long have you been driving with Uber?

What is your experience of driving with Uber? / Do you like it?

Is Uber your main source of income?

Is the car your own?

If not, who are you lending it from?

What are your renting agreement?

What must you do to become an Uber driver?

How many hours a week do you work?

In general, how much do you earn?

Do you have contact with other Uber drivers? If so, how?

Are you part of a union?

If you could choose, what do you think Uber should change to make your work day easier?

Do you feel like Uber listens to you?

Have you experienced any racist incidents?

Have you ever used Uber as a rider?

Do you see a future for you with Uber?

Where are you from?

Anything you would like to add?

Interview Guide with Union Official

What strategies do you have to organize Uber drivers?

How have Uber affected the transport industry?

What are the main goals for the union?

What are the main struggles for drivers?

What are the main challenges for collective organization?

Why do you think the cab industry attract so many foreign /immigrant workers?

In general, how would you describe the collective organization in the transport sector?

Have you looked at similar situations with Uber in other cities for inspiration on how to organize drivers?

How important is social media in your struggle?

Would you say there are drivers opposing the goals of the union?

What reasons were given to you for being deactivated?

How do you feel about the communications with Uber?

Some of the drivers I've spoken to are unaware of the union, why do you think that is?

What future do you see for Uber?

What future do you see for the guild?

How is the guild structured?

Do you have a member fee?

Why did you call it a guild?

Interview Guide with Cab Drivers

How long have you been a taxi driver?

What effect have Uber had on your work day?

Do you identify as a cab/taxi driver? /Would you say you are cab driver by profession?

Are you part of a union?