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Gigs, Side Hustles, Freelance: What Work Means in the Platform Economy City/ Blight or Remedy: Understanding Ridehailing's Role in the Precarious "Gig Economy"/

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Introduction

Lisa K. Bates

Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA

Over the past year, taxi drivers around the world have protested the appearance of ride-hailing apps Uber and Lyft, creating massive traffic slowdowns in London, Warsaw, Hong Kong, Paris, and Berlin. In the most extreme and tragic incidents, some taxi drivers have committed suicide publicly, naming economic desperation brought on by competition with app services as the reason. Proponents of the platform apps point to consumer convenience and lower (albeit heavily subsidized) costs, blaming the excessive regulation of the taxicab industry for its stagnation, but rarely speak to the cost for driver workers. Meanwhile, the ride-hail companies are fighting legal challenges around the world over using ‘freelance’ contracts to circumvent labour laws. As Uber and Lyft make their IPO debut on the stock exchange, drivers for the services in the U.S. have staged a strike, asking customers to boycott the apps in support of their protests about missing out on the benefits of the sharing economy. In the meantime, employees with full benefits, the people providing the services, are providing a less-than-optimal condition for the sharing economy. Interface design and the world community impacts on neighborhood development and the sharing economy as they define the sharing economy as a new form of employment development. Zwick and the sharing economy with drivers of work, and



As Baber argues, these shifts towards flexible or ‘gig’ jobs are growing much more significantly with the rise of platforms during a moment when there are many workers looking to supplement unstable or low-paying jobs. The gig economy, she notes, benefits platform companies far more than it does workers or cities. Green takes this argument further to make the case for planners, specifically, to be far more active in the debate over platform apps as employers with responsibilities to labour, not just as go-betweens for customers and independent contractors. He views the question of jobs

This book is a collection of essays that explore the role of technology in the future of work, and the potential for a more equitable and sustainable world. The authors discuss the challenges of automation, the impact of artificial intelligence, and the need for a new social contract. They also explore the potential for technology to create new jobs and opportunities, and the importance of education and training in preparing the workforce for the future. The book is a thought-provoking read that offers a glimpse into the future of work and the role of technology in shaping it.



Related research

and practitioners to ask how in their local economic and regulatory context, they might use examples from abroad.

Blight or Remedy: Understanding Ridehailing's Role in the Precarious "Gig Economy"

Austin Zwick^a and Zachary Spicer^b

^aSyracuse University, Syracuse, NY, USA; ^bWestern University, London, Ontario, Canada

A new form of industrial relations, the 'Gig Economy', has rapidly displaced traditional labor-employment relations. In this new gig economy, firms, predominantly those with digital origins, are dependent upon the fleeting hired help of independent contractors, where employment is now often measured in minutes. There is no industry that embodies this scenario better than ride-hailing, the platform economy transportation-for-hire service in which Uber holds over two-thirds of the US market-share as of December 2018 (Molla, 2018).

With all the criticism of platform firms, like Uber, we set out to understand why workers willingly enter into precarious employment arrangements, particularly in a strong

We decided to study these differences in January 2014, when our understanding of such as the relationship between the question of the shipping firms, and are additional

our initial observation: although Uber may be a cause of precarious employment, it is just as much a tool for workers to survive bouts of precariousness, some of which are inflictions of unfortunate individual circumstance, while others are chosen lifestyles that require flexibility. Although through some workers' eyes, Uber appears to part of the blight spreading through the modern economy, other workers see it as a remedy for an already precarious economy. In short, the relationship between platform firms and drivers may not necessarily be always exploitative, as some may wish to portray.

The barrier to entry to driving on the Uber platform is low. In most jurisdictions, merely having a license, a smartphone, and a clean criminal record is enough to begin as an Uber driver. In some circumstances, Uber is able to provide the vehicle, or financing to acquire one, if the driver does not already own one (for a fee, of course). Some jurisdictions now require driver-training, vehicle inspections, and other government mandates to protect consumers and align this new transportation-for-hire service with pre-existing taxi regulation.

Uber provides drivers with an immense amount of flexibility in scheduling. Drivers are able to choose when they log onto and off from the platform, controlling how long and under what conditions they work. While this flexibility can be interpreted by some as negative (Bajwa et al., [2018](#)), in that those logging on to drive with Uber lack employee benefits, consistent wages, and job security, particularly in contrast to the taxi drivers that they

From our perspective, the reason for driving for Uber is the control when they want to work. They are able to work concurrently with other jobs. Additionally, three different ways to make a third a small business. Their service is a new leads during business hours.

The driver's pay is a percent pay of Uber. Most drivers earn (USD) an hour, far less than the minimum wage.





Along the same lines, some drivers mentioned the relative politeness of their customers. Some drivers enjoyed talking to their customers; others preferred them to be silent. We did not ask directly in our interviews, but Uber drivers who brought up bad experiences with customers also mentioned it was rare – and did not often last long when it did occur. One driver noted that he had only one customer use a racial slur towards him during his two years of driving for Uber. He did note, however, that customers in his previous job used similar slurs against him on a near daily basis.

The low barrier to entry makes ridesharing not only an easy job to start, but also an easy job to leave. Cook et al. ([2018](#)) found that “more than 60% of those who start driving are no longer active on the platform six months later.” Many might be taking a ‘break’ for months at a time as they found a better job, or merely a better gig. However, considering Uber constantly recruits, the vast majority probably ‘quit’ – an odd term considering they were never legally employed to begin with – soon after starting as they determined driving for the platform did not suit them. Those that we interviewed were overwhelmingly happy with the service, however, there is an obvious ‘survivor bias’ occurring. Those who were happy kept driving, while those who were not, simply stopped.

Almost every driver we interviewed, except one, had been driving for at least a year. That single exception among our sample had only joined the platform two weeks earlier. The driver weighed the good and bad of the job and decided they were going to stay for the mean time.”

This sense of precariousness was a common theme in our interviews. Drivers interviewed often mentioned that their earnings were not consistent, and that they may not be able to rely on driving for a living. They also mentioned that the work is precarious, and that they may not be able to rely on driving for a living. They also mentioned that the work is precarious, and that they may not be able to rely on driving for a living. They also mentioned that the work is precarious, and that they may not be able to rely on driving for a living.



Our work cannot answer that question, but it does provide some clarity as to how people are using platforms, such as Uber. Although our sample was small and far from conclusive, this brief study challenges some prevailing opinions about Uber's role in the modern economy and perhaps places the role of labor in the platform age into a different light. Ridehailing should not be instantly dismissed as a blight on the labor landscape without further exploring how operators fully utilize and potentially benefit from its existence. Furthermore, as Zwick and Spicer ([2018](#)) note, policy-makers and planners should carefully weigh all of the costs and benefits to all of their constituents prior to making any decisions about the platform economy's fate.

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The value and impact of this shift is only beginning to be understood. Questions of individual physical and emotional labour, unequal dispersion of benefits and impacts on long-term employment and social mobility can be considered in tandem with the questions of the impact on the city. As jobs and incomes are increasing variable, unreliable and unprotected, and each job – whether through a platform or an employer – is insufficient to make a living, the relative flexibility of gigs is becoming especially attractive in the ability to meld it around other work and other responsibilities, such as child or elder care, education or health needs – and in the case of home-sharing, with a basic need for housing.

Airbnb and similar platforms have met with widespread criticism for turning homes serving long-term residents, into hotel rooms serving tourists, raising rents and home prices and furthering displacement and gentrification. Research shows that Airbnb income is driven primarily by commercial Airbnb, entire units using the platform to operate no 'host'.

Related research

income out of nothing, incurring no actual or opportunity costs, by using a space that otherwise would stay empty. Interactions with guests are presented as being cost-less or even valuable.

Even as cities move to restrict or ban Airbnb, provisions are made for home-sharing and hosting to continue. In Berlin, a ban enforced by 100,000 Euro fines applies only to commercial renters – partially owner-occupied rentals are entirely exempt. San Francisco has limited short-term rentals to 90 days per year – unless owner-occupied. Santa Monica has banned whole-home rentals, but continues to allow home-sharing. Boston’s tax for entire homes in the short rentals market is \$1000, but only \$25 for shared home rentals. (AirDNA, [2017](#))

I would argue, however, that the home-sharing side of the practice too deserves consideration through the lens of de-formalizing urban labour and spiralling housing costs. Short-term rentals are more profitable than long-term ones, and it is necessary to identify, characterize and quantify this added value. It appears to emerge from the shorter lease (and thus higher risk to the lessee), but also in the furnishing and setting up of the existing household, the ease of access and marketing of the space, and the booking, directing, meeting, explaining, hosting and cleaning of it. In other words, the labour of the Airbnb host.

For some, home-sharing is a desirable. However, it is also a physically laborious activity, through hours of cleaning and home as a genuine experience.

For renters, the option from Airbnb allows the host to would prefer the income from Airbnb, setting it equally as a time and physical

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emailed directions, a door code and a wifi password mean an Airbnb stay can involve no face-to-face human interaction, rendering the 'host' an entirely digital presence. Who are the hosts taking advantage of this kind of reduction of labour and dis-embodiment? It is precisely the small, 'authentic' hosts, who rent out spaces in their own homes, who have not entirely automated the process and must maintain an embodied presence to handle both the logistical and emotional interactions with their guests/customers. This labour and these interactions require closer scrutiny in order for us to understand the implications for Airbnb hosts' lives, particularly with regard to gender, age, class, family status, other employment and their own housing status.

My preliminary interviews suggest some troubling hypotheses. Being able to maintain a full Airbnb schedule requires a combination of flexible and part-time employment, the shifting about and even skipping of paid work, and drawing extensively on favours and social capital from family and friends. (At the same time, it is never, on its own, sufficient to make a living.) Emotional and social labour – performances of friendliness, hospitality, cleanliness, homeliness, authenticity, elegance and constant availability – are also crucial to maintaining good reviews and thus being able to continue to draw visitors.

Women appear to be required to dedicate more labour, and make more allowances, in this regard. A wide body of literature identifies feminized, embodied labour practices requiring... Airbnb hosting fits this... and labour, and are... also more... entation in precarious

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The Price of the City

As McDonald's has changed its business model to focus on the service of its customers, it has also changed its business model to focus on the service of its customers. This is a common trend in the service industry, where companies are increasingly focusing on the customer experience. This is a common trend in the service industry, where companies are increasingly focusing on the customer experience.

Airbnb (formerly AirBed & Breakfast) is a company that has changed its business model to focus on the service of its customers. This is a common trend in the service industry, where companies are increasingly focusing on the customer experience. This is a common trend in the service industry, where companies are increasingly focusing on the customer experience.

The city itself becomes the object of consumption, and the very act of being in the city requires increasingly, labour. Being in the city is precarious and conditional just as work is precarious and conditional. For some Airbnb hosts, at least, hosting is a necessary strategy for accessing the employment, education and social opportunities of the city – but their reliance on it requires a restructuring of their lives and labour precisely in ways that limit their ability to fully take advantage of these opportunities.

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The Gentrification of ‘Sharing’: From Bandit Cab to Ride Share Tech

Anna Jock

Department of City and Regional Planning,
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Many years ago, I worked as a taxi driver in Los Angeles, I was part of the LA Taxi Workers Alliance, the Labor Center (a labor center) and as a child of Korean ethnoburbs, I speak the language of the taxi drivers for



Out of respect, rather than ‘bandit’ cab drivers, I use the term co-ethnic drivers. Korean co-ethnic drivers work for smaller, unlicensed Korean companies in Los Angeles, giving rides exclusively within the Korean American urban and suburban spaces of Southern California. (See [Table 1](#) for a sampling of rates charged by co-ethnic Korean drivers. The table shows flat fees by location from Koreatown to the various Korean ethnoburbs of Southern California.) The term itself, ‘bandit cab,’ a common moniker given to this type of ride-sharing, is a reference to how these drivers operate in the city’s various ethnic enclaves, often without proper licenses or insurance. Many of these drivers are immigrants from South Korea, and a significant number are women. In the pre-Lyft era, these drivers were often treated as a separate, less legitimate population that informed the city’s racial and ethnic dynamics.



Table Angel

Later in my work on Los Angeles' informality, I interviewed many low-wage, monolingual Korean speaking workers in Koreatown and the 'bandit' cabs came up again and again. This time, not for their illegality, but because many Korean immigrants, especially undocumented Korean immigrants, spoke of how they were able to utilize co-ethnic Korean drivers as a 'safe' mode of transportation in post 9-11 Los Angeles. When buses became targets of ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement), and taxis remained too expensive, using underground Korean drivers were the ways in which immigrants learned to 'ride-share' – before ride-sharing apps existed.

"The taxi system here is set up really well here [Koreatown, LA] – though of course the taxi system is illegal, too. Yellow cab or legal cabbies are really expensive; tick, tick, tick, the prices go up. My cabs, I can get from home to work for about 4 or 5 dollars a trip. The buses used to have free transfers, so for a bus from work to home, I had to take two buses, but now they make you pay twice, so it's $1.50 \times 2 = \$3$ but I have to walk about 10 to 15 minutes to get home. Why should I risk that danger [of deportation] for 1 dollar when I can pay the dollar more and make sure I get home. So most people I know use these taxis. So, you know governments and cities, banning it, doesn't stop people from doing it. Because there is a need. Where there is a need people do it." – Author interview with Undocumented Korean Taxi-Rider



sharing economy) may lead to more dangerous, risky or underpaid relationships within the informal sharing economy. Planning for sharing and changes to transportation policy may be helpful in opening up one end of the sharing spectrum while remaining in complete ignorance of a sizeable market for co-ethnic sharing that often continues to remain illegible and untranslated (see [Figure 2](#)). Bringing fresh attention to the ‘old’ ways of sharing that still exist today expands our ability to know what happens in communities that continue to have limited access to the app-based sharing economy, and also to pay attention to how sharing behaviors in some linguistically isolated communities may change as a result of the new and emergent forms of sharing.

Figure 2. Rear of business card advertising Korean Co-Ethnic Cab Services (Pricing has been translated into [Table 1](#) above).

귀빈택시

지역	요금	
	싱글	대리
다운타운	\$ 9	\$ 20
글렌데일	\$ 15	\$ 30
파사데나	\$ 20	\$ 35
라크라센타	\$ 20	\$ 35
버뱅크	\$ 20	\$ 40
가디나	\$ 20	\$ 35
세리토스	\$ 25	\$ 45
플러...		
벨리...		
부에...		
하시...		
가든...		
얼바...		
커 머...		
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The 'Sharing Economy'? Precarious Labor in Neoliberal Cities

Ashley Baber

Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

The 'sharing economy' has certainly gained a lot of attention over the last few years. Through the use of app-based platforms, people have the ability to use their personal assets to gain income. With few exceptions, anyone with a suitable car, maintenance skills or extra space in their home, can gain income through Uber, TaskRabbit or Airbnb. The term 'sharing economy' seems to stem from the ability of private citizens to sell their services or assets through an internet or app-based platform. Yet, there is something crucial missing from this categorization of this emerging economy; precarious labor and the impact on cities. By calling the sale of personal assets or services the 'sharing economy', the broader processes of growing labor market precarity are obscured. The 'sharing economy' is complex and embedded with social relationships, namely the 'flexibilization' of labor. This relationship is not new, but rather rises under precarious labor market conditions within neoliberal cities as a response to economic

On-demand labor markets have emerged in response to the labor market since at least the 19th century. The labor market has experienced rapid expansion and contraction, with significant shifts in the types of work required by firms. The labor market is characterized by a high degree of flexibility, with firms using a variety of strategies to manage labor. These strategies include hiring temporary workers, using a variety of employment contracts, and relying on a mix of permanent and temporary workers. The labor market is also characterized by a high degree of precarity, with workers facing uncertain employment conditions and limited job security. The labor market is a complex and dynamic system, and its evolution is shaped by a variety of factors, including technological change, globalization, and the needs of firms. The labor market is a key component of the economy, and its health is crucial for the well-being of society. The labor market is a complex and dynamic system, and its evolution is shaped by a variety of factors, including technological change, globalization, and the needs of firms. The labor market is a key component of the economy, and its health is crucial for the well-being of society.



Comparatively, recent advances in technology have resulted in a rapid influx of app-based platforms which provide services on-demand, sometimes referred to as ‘gig’ work. This emerging form of work acquisition parallels the employment relationship of the temporary help industry. Job seekers use their smart phones to access apps which allow them to pick up jobs as they become available (Healy, Nicholson & Pekarek, [2017](#)). Take for example Uber; drivers will log into their Uber app which will put them in contact with customers seeking a ride. Drivers will then ‘pick up’ the rider and drive them to their destination. The driver will then wait for an alert from their app for their next employment opportunity. Therefore, neither the temp nor gig worker has a guarantee of income, a permanent connection to the labor market or employer provided protections (Zwick, [2018](#)), ultimately resulting in precarity and exploitation.

As scholars have been quick to point out, gig and temporary labor are linked with growing inequality and insecurity for workers on the one hand and subsequently capital accumulation for firms on the other (Scholz, [2017](#); Standing 2011; Theodore, 2003; Zwick, [2018](#)). Temporary and gig laborers often go for long periods of time without health insurance, paid leave, and a stable income (Berg & Johnston, [2019](#); Purser, [2012](#)). Further parallels emerge between the temp and gig industries, as they both extract profit from workers, use mechanisms of surveillance and control and function as a job matching service (Gonos, [1997](#); Healy et al., [2017](#)). Meanwhile these flexible

forms of labor are concentrated in urban areas (Peck & ...). The gig-... exploitation... employe... against... (Johnsto... (Han... been a... [2016](#)), p... London... as empl... workers... share co... approxi...



Conversely, recent rulings in Miami went in favor of the gig-industry, as a worker was denied unemployment benefits after he was shut out of a ride-sharing app, essentially firing him from his job (Hanks, [2017](#)). These examples highlight the role of cities in mediating or mitigating the impacts of the gig economy.

Beyond the regulatory connections to cities, these flexible forms of labor rely on a concentration of workers and customers; factors typical of urban areas. Reflected in the geography of low-wage temp agencies, areas that lack job opportunities and hold high unemployment rates are prime locations for ‘hiring halls’. Temp agencies have a vested interest in being located closest to their product; unemployed workers. Locating near swathes of folks with a lack of employment options allows for temp agencies to provide on-demand workers for their clients with ease (Peck & Theodore, [2001](#); Purser, [2012](#)). Similarly, with the increase in app-based on-demand service platforms, concentrations of clients and available workers become crucial for successful operation for companies such as Uber, Wag, Task Rabbit or Insta-cart. For example, Uber, a company that boasts personal on-demand drivers in just a few minutes, would have a difficult time operating efficiently and as advertised in more rural or suburban areas with considerable sprawl. Large geographic gaps between customers and workers make this business model less viable, particularly when considering a company such as Uber or Lyft who provide services at a fraction of the cost of their Taxi Cab counterparts.

In addition, the gig economy has revealed a primary source of income for many workers, often paid jobs, and the time spent posting to the after as an important factor. Impact play in the rise in gig work. Complicated by governance, Neoliberalism, and sandwiched between



process transpires in decidedly uneven ways. Integral to uneven development are the state institutions intervening to provide a favorable regulatory landscape for capital accumulation (Brenner & Theodore, [2002](#)). Labor markets at the city level are produced by patterns of uneven development which result from neoliberal governance and ultimately, develop unevenly as well (Peck & Theodore, [2001](#)).

While this interaction can be taken as an unintended consequence, there are additional intentional manipulations of the labor market working to drive down unionized and stable employment while valorizing flexible labor markets. The recent battle between Uber and the city of Austin can be seen as evidence of this interplay. In 2016, Uber and Lyft left Austin after legislation was passed requiring regulations of transport companies, including stricter background checks and security measures. Prior to the passage of legislation, Uber invested over \$8m in advertising and campaigning against the proposed measures. Once the legislation passed, Uber and Lyft abruptly stopped service, which also meant they abruptly eliminated jobs (Sisson, [2016](#)). Recently, with the passage of state-wide legislation, Uber and Lyft have returned to Austin sans stricter background checks and increased security measures (Sisson, [2017](#)). This example reveals a complex relationship between regulatory bodies, cities and flexible labor markets, all of which are concealed by terming this the ‘sharing economy.’

Across cities, unions are under attack, full-time, stable and well-paid employment opportunities are being replaced by precarious work, and social welfare programs are being dismantled. This is the new normal under which we live, a world of flexible labor markets, precarious work, and economic and social complexity. The complex relationship between regulatory bodies, cities and flexible labor markets is being investigated, and the uneven development of the local state is being sought. The local state should also seek to regulate and property rentals, and do, is stop calling it

Where Is Economic Development in the Platform City?

Jamaal W. Green

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In the online sci-tech magazine OneZero, Susie Cagle, a journalist and commentator on Silicon Valley politics and labor practices, offers a retrospective analysis provocatively titled ‘The Sharing Economy Was Always A Scam’ (Cagle [2019](#)). She describes how early ventures, like the first iteration of Zipcar or CouchSurfing, were more idiosyncratic or collective in nature and that these contemporary businesses, transformed by the demands of venture capital, have morphed into naked rent seekers. An always vague concept, the ‘sharing economy’ – to paraphrase Cagle – did not tame the excesses of capitalism and consumerism, but stoked them.

The ultimate result of this shift, Cagle emphasizes, is that ‘sharing economy’ companies now large. Uber and Lyft are (MT), in addition, by multiple all-time renter w a cheap place to

Many an themselves as ‘p tantly for planners urbanism’. And just business models l form’ compani these compani ght to transform to dominate

While there is a growing realization of the challenges platform companies pose to cities in terms of traditional planning priorities, such as residential land-use conflicts and traffic impacts, the threat these companies pose in terms of local labor markets and their conception of economic development is just as, if not more, harmful than some of these more conspicuous issues. As ‘platform’ companies continue to try to dominate municipal and state policies while promising efficiency and prosperity, it is incumbent upon us to critically appraise what kind of prosperity these companies promise.

Misclassification and Wage Theft

Platform companies are adept at constantly changing their public facing missions while pursuing the same profit-driven ends. The branding shift from ‘sharing’ to ‘platform’ by companies like Lyft is emblematic of this shift. While this rebranding can be read as another example of casual corporate cynicism, the adoption of ‘platform’ as a label serves a specific goal. That goal is the systemic misclassification of many of these companies’ largest class of workers in order to maximize profit while minimizing any hint of liability.

A large white rectangular box with a dark gray border and a dark gray 'X' in the top right corner, indicating a redacted area. A small circular logo with a dark gray border and a white background featuring a dark gray 'X' is located in the bottom left corner of the white box.



hours and the manner in which certain tasks are completed (Weil [2017](#)). When a company can dictate to you how long you have to work and the way that you perform the work then it is clear you are not independent but actually an employee. For Uber/Lyft, classifying their hundreds of thousands of drivers as independent contractors saves them hundreds of millions of dollars a year in obligations, two of the most important being paying a minimum wage and offering overtime. Of course, the basic proposition by these firms that drivers are contractors is hard to accept as they control basic aspects of the everyday operations of drivers, such as dictating the look of cars and policing driver behavior through soliciting feedback from customers to offer performance reviews to drivers. Additionally, Uber and Lyft offer supplemental services to their drivers that further place them under corporate control through vehicle financing schemes that charge exorbitant rates for drivers to either buy or lease a new car for the purpose of giving rides. The relationship of these companies to their employees can only be described as predatory.

Misclassification can be seen as one aspect of a larger epidemic of wage theft, a tremendous problem in the US that results in billions of dollars per annum in lost wages (Traub [2017](#)). Joining other low road employers many platform companies go beyond the bureaucratic strategy of misclassification and move to blatant theft as a matter of policy. Instacart and Doordash, popular food and grocery delivery companies, are

currently (Ghaffar Instacart out as w based on nature of variable security

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What is a platform? If you take the word of the major players in this space, then a platform is simply any middleman service that connects buyers (or renters) to sellers. But even under casual scrutiny it is clear that ‘platform’ companies do not even meet their own shallow definition. These companies are not simply a featureless plane where market actors can meet (a real example of this would-be Craigslist), but fully fledged service providers that are intimately involved in every stage of the service process. Uber and Lyft do not merely provide an app, but dictate standards on driver behavior and car cleanliness. Airbnb is not merely Craigslist with pretty pictures, but nearly a fully-fledged property management company. Beyond allowing them to steal wages from their workers, these companies who label themselves ‘platforms’ are afforded the excuse to violate any other number of regulations. One of the more egregious examples of this is Airbnb’s facile claim to being merely a platform even as it



Planners should also offer a clear vision of the kind of work that will allow their residents to lead fulfilled lives. Such a vision can include job upgrading through labor market policy such as determining a proper living wage and mandating sick leave. Beyond that, economic development planners should identify industries that offer good pay, benefits and advancement for all classes of workers, and seek to expand those. This can include encouraging, or protecting, certain industrial users at risk of being pushed out of industrial districts due to commercial and residential conversion, and working with anchor institutions to invest in local communities and worker cooperatives such as the Evergreen Cooperatives. These kinds of approaches offer a more coherent, inspiring, and equitable vision of labor markets than anything that Uber, Airbnb, or DoorDash can offer.



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Shared Economy: WeWork or We Work Together

dominic t. moulden

Resource Organizer, ONE DC, Washington, USA

The Manhattan Laundry in the 1980s was an abandoned, Art Deco designed laundry in the heart of Shaw and a few blocks away from ‘Black Broadway’ – the historic U Street area in Northwest DC (Figure 1). Today if you browse the WeWork Manhattan Laundry website you will see a description for a “handsome building on Florida Ave” featuring coffee shops and a beer garden (<https://www.wework.com/buildings/manhattan-laundry-washington-DC>). The description continues with ‘the site attracts “creative firms”, tech startups and nonprofit organizations’. For people like me, who have walked and traveled to the building, the WeWork website provides a needed reading of Richard Florida’s (2002) socioeconomic theory of the creative economy (Florida, 2002).

Figure 1.



[Display full size](#)

The WeWork spaces are a facade of shared work and the shared economy. WeWork



and gender equity. Their vision is an economy that works for all. The Green Worker Cooperatives range from artisanal art, birthing services, cleaning services, compost, food, manufacturing and design.

If and when we work together, we can create a non-extractive, humane and ecologically stable shared economy for all, and gradually challenge and replace the unstable, precarious, destructive, extractive capitalist class and exploitative individually centered economy. It is time to plan, design, and boldly create a shared economy.

The Working World (www.theworkingworld.org) identifies the root of the precarious shared economy with the historical crises of 'the extractive economy.' TWW states clearly on their website that "our system makes profit for a few by extracting from people and planet." Their goal is to transform this current crisis into a "democratic economy." Here's how they do it: they recreate finance that is non-extractive, provide pragmatic training through democratizing capital and democratizing knowledge, they put people in charge so communities control resources – and they plan to grow virally and transform the world. TWW invests in workers and community owned businesses, like those which the Green Worker Cooperatives create and develop.

Can this movement and new set of practices grow virally? There are a few of us cooperative organizers and practitioners who believe it is gradually making waves.

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economic practice in cooperatives. Learning this history has framed our development of Cooperation DC as part of a long trajectory of Black freedom movement work to not only provide economic security, but to also build community power. Cooperative movement organizing succeeds when people come together to study and learn about alternatives. Study groups and learning circles are a key part of building a collective and people-centered economy.

If and when WE WORK TOGETHER, we can create a non-extractive, humane, ecological, stable and shared economy for all. We can gradually challenge and replace the unstable, precarious, destructive, and extractive capitalist class and exploitative individually centered economy. It is time to bravely plan, design, and create a shared economy.

Notes on contributor

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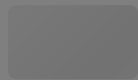
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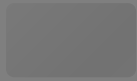
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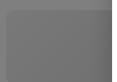
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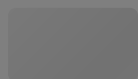
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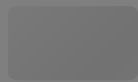
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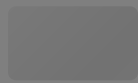


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