

**BEYOND THE CLICK: UNVEILING NEOLIBERAL POWER  
DYNAMICS IN TURKISH LOCATION-BASED PLATFORM  
GOVERNANCE**

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## ABSTRACT

In the era of escalating global platformization, examining the repercussions of the digital platform model on the world of work and social fabrics is imperative. This thesis examines the impact and means of the novel platform governance model(s) within the particular context of location-based digital platforms in Turkey. Employing the Foucauldian framework of neoliberal governmentality, the research investigates how neoliberal rationality operates in the platform governance, exploring distinct power techniques through the lived experiences of the platform delivery workforce (moto-couriers) in Turkey, particularly focusing on algorithmic performance technologies and the ever-growing reserve army of couriers through the (in)action of state policies. Based on six semi-structured interviews conducted with the moto-couriers and examination of secondary relevant data, it reveals that neoliberal power operates from below in the body of platform governance, not by regulating or repressing but by influencing and molding the field subjectivities and actions of the workforce. By shedding light on the socio-economic embeddedness of the platform governance(s) and its immanent connection to broader contextual factors, this study contributes a contextualized theoretical examination, enriching global empirical and theoretical research, and adding geographical depth to the field. The research provides valuable insights to navigate and make sense of the novel complexities of the rising platform economy and its possible implications on the global social fabrics.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Deliveries in 10 minutes,” “Minutes from your door,” “Track your order door to door.” Today, many of us often encounter these phrases in company advertisements, on couriers’ bags seen frequently on the streets, or within the apps we use for food, grocery shopping, or ordering a ride. In fact, these just-in-time applications, which promise to bring our driver, food, or grocery shopping to our doorstep within 15-20 minutes with a click, have deeply integrated our daily lives and become a ‘natural’ part of it in a short span of time. Yet, if one scratches the surface of it, an intriguing factuality comes into sight. As Goodwin (2015) illustrates this aptly: “Uber, the world’s largest taxi company, owns no vehicles...Airbnb, the largest accommodation provider, owns no property. Something interesting is happening.” This paradigm is in line with the current trajectory of the grocery and food delivery services sector, in which leading companies are experiencing an unstoppable rise globally without having the ownership of any critical assets, be it products or vehicles.

At the heart of this factuality is the meteoric rise of the platform economy, which relies upon the triangular model of digital platforms acting as intermediaries between various users to extract data/value by owning “the means of connection” (Chan, Voortman, and Rogers 2019, 3). Indeed, as this platform model has been operationalized across various spheres of the economy, the “platformization” (Poell, Nieborg, and Dijck 2019) of on-demand services has come forth as a hallmark of contemporary living in the form of “Uberization” of the services (Webster 2020). Today, by leveraging big data assets, these platform firms have rapidly turned into industry giants with extreme profits and subsume large amounts of physical workforce, particularly low-skilled and vulnerable populations (Yeşilbağ 2022, 1-2).

Concerning the impact of platformization in several lines of physical work around the globe, critical inquiries from diverse academic fields have been directed to comprehending the novel aspects and features of this rapidly expanding economic model (e.g., De Vaujany et al. 2021; Lata, Burdon and Reddel 2022; Srnicek 2017). Accordingly, in-depth studies have argued that work done through the medium of platforms is not new per se as piece-based, contractual, outsourced, and precarious models of work, namely gig work, have been present for long alongside neoliberal practices (Woodcock and Graham 2020, 20). Instead, the novelty of the platform model originates from how the work process and outsourced workforce are organized and managed through the innovative and discursive “fixes” of platform infrastructure (Srnicek 2017, 33-34; Silver 2003).

In this respect, the governance dimension has been prompted as a crucial research agenda by political economic scholars to understand the extension and aggravation of “global platform power and governance” (Poell, Nieborg, and Dijck 2019, 5), which represents paradoxically both “one of the most recent stages of technological management of labor and one of the deepest stages of precarization” (Franco and Robles 2022, 100). While algorithmic technologies have been mainly recognized as the distinctive aspect of platform management strategies, fostering disciplinary, repressive, and automated regimes of power (e.g., Rosenblat and Stark 2016; Griesbach et al. 2019), this thesis distinguishes the novelty of the (location-based) platform management processes in terms of their embeddedness in productive power relations, which foster a neoliberal fantasy “from below” (Gago 2017,6), concurrently contributing to the precarization of the masses.

In this respect, this research focuses on the platform governance regimes of the location-based digital platforms in Turkey, in which the triumph of the on-demand platform model has been large-scale and meteoric. As the impact and components of the platformization process have been striking in Turkey, to the best of my knowledge, there has yet to be a systematic

inquiry into the governance regimes of these platform firms. Regarding the scholarly attention have been primarily given in the global north contexts, taking the case of Turkey to the center of the analysis widens the geographical span of the field with possible novel contributions. Therefore, by employing the theoretical framework of Foucauldian neoliberal governmentality, this study aims to answer the research question of how, in what form(s), and through which techniques power operates in the location-based digital platform governance(s) regarding the context of Turkey.

Recognizing neoliberalism as a discrete governmental rationality allows us to explore the power technologies and techniques of this “art of government” (Foucault 2008,142) embodied in the platform governance(s) by means of reorganization and reshaping the everyday notions, acts, and subjectivities and its broader interlock with the socio-economic landscape. Based on this, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with the location-based platform delivery moto-couriers in Turkey and the relevant secondary data was evaluated. Hence, the research traces the techniques and “mentalities” (Dean 2010,39) of platform governance through the lived experiences and perspectives of delivery moto-couriers, enabling a bottom-up approach.

The analysis put forward by this research hopes to contribute empirically and theoretically to the field by drawing attention to the conditions in different geographies and proposing a comprehensive and theoretical approach that allows one to apprehend the platformization processes on a broader scale. Presenting the micro-level case study of Turkey with implications for global debates is one step forward to look closer at the intertwined global and local features of the process of platformization and counterstrategies to it. At a time when the resistances and collective actions of platform workers are growing rapidly in Turkey and around the world (e.g., Woodcock 2021; Cant 2019), it is of great importance to comprehend

the transformations brought by platform model to grasp both the strategies developed within the capitalism itself and the underlying agencies and features of the rising waves of resistance.

## **Methodology and Data Collection**

The research is based on semi-structured interviews and relevant secondary data, including policy reports, media outputs, official documents, particular reports of international and national organizations and certain magazines of local movements on the location-based digital platform work in Turkey. Six semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in May 2023 with the location-based platform (food and grocery) delivery moto-couriers couriers based in Ankara and Istanbul.

The semi-structured interview method was preferred as it enables better comprehension of the individuals' meaning-making processes embedded in a social context and enables more flexibility, adaptability, and in-depth information (Alshenqeeti 2014, 39-40), allowing the participant to deepen the subject beyond the possible answers (Lune and Berg 2017, 136). The approach adopted for the interviewing process is based on relational interviewing, put forward by Lee Ann Fujii (2018), which generates information through mutual dynamics and dialogue between the researcher and participant and allows for the co-creation of knowledge in collaboration (2-3). Therefore, it adapts an understanding of data that "do not exist in free-standing form prior to the engagement between researcher and participant... the data emerges from interaction, rather than interrogation" (Fujii 2018, 2-3). As relational interviewing is situated in the realm of interpretivist methodology, this research remains in and aims to contribute to the extensive field of interpretivist scholarship.

The interviews were mainly realized face-to-face with the moto-couriers working in the platform companies of Trendyol, Yemeksepeti, and Getir, some of the biggest on-demand platform firms in Turkey recently. All the participants are in the legal status of 'self-employed'

or ‘independent contractor’ even though some had experience working as payroll couriers before the large-scale transition to the ‘independent contractor’ courier model in Turkey. Codifications through numbers are used to conceal the identity of delivery workers as it might be dangerous for them to publicly talk about the platform firms in which they are working. The interview questions primarily focus on working experiences, conditions, the degree of autonomy and flexibility of participants over the work process, pressures, control mechanisms and dangers they face, and general constituents of the conduct of the work.

Reaching out to possible participants for the research was not complicated thanks to my previous close contacts with one of the grassroots trade unions, Umut-Sen, which is particularly active on the working conditions of platform delivery work. Yet, the lack of a workplace, a characteristic feature of digital on-demand platform work, was a challenging part of the research process. On the other hand, participants’ intense and ‘flexible’ work schedule was the reason for conducting some interviews online. Even one interview was conducted while the participant was on a delivery task.

An essential information in terms of the demography of the interviewees is that all of the participants are young and middle-aged men with Turkish citizenship. Indication of this issue is crucial as the gender and race-based distinctive factors and conditions in the location-based platform delivery sector, unfortunately, have to miss out on this research. The platform delivery work is occupied mainly by men, which signals the gendered dimension of the on-demand delivery courier profession in Turkey, and the migrants’ intensifying socio-political vulnerable condition in Turkey makes it dangerous for them to be constantly visible through a profession such as being a platform courier. Therefore, it has been challenging for me to encounter or reach out to diverse genders and migrants working in Turkey’s location-based platform firms.

## **The Structure of the Thesis**

The structure of this dissertation is sectioned into four chapters. The first chapter aims to introduce the background and general characteristics of the digital platform model and the particular mode of location-based digital platform to familiarize the reader with the dynamics that gave rise to the global ‘platformization’ process and the foundational critics of it. The second chapter will delve into the literature on location-based platform management, in which critical analysis, conceptualizations of these management processes and the intended contribution will be given place. The third chapter will present and discuss the theoretical framework of Foucauldian neoliberal governmentality and its prosperousness to analyze the world of platform work and management. Chapter four will move on to the case of Turkey to analyze the location-based platform governance through the analytical framework of neoliberal governmentality embedded in and shaped by the socio-economic contextual dynamics. Following the examination of the contextual background in Turkey, the particular technologies and techniques through which neoliberal governmental power operates will be revealed in their socio-economic embeddedness.

## **CHAPTER 1: A REVIEW OF THE DIGITAL PLATFORM MODEL**

Platform business model and employment have embedded themselves in numerous economic sectors despite being just ten years old, sparking discussions on comprehending this type of work arrangement and economic structure (Vallas and Schor 2020, 274). This study will only focus on a particular type of platform model: location-based digital labor platforms. However, before addressing the particularities of the location-based model, it is necessary to briefly scrutinize the platform model's novel features, operationalization logic, historical preconditions that enabled its rise, and its types.

### **1.1 Historical Context and General Features of Digital Labor Platforms**

Platforms can be defined as the emerging novel digital infrastructures bringing together “the supply of, and demand for, labor” (Graham and Woodcock 2018, 242) and asserting a ‘neutral’ intermediary role to connect different users (worker and customer), thus promoting a new business model. Many terms have been coined to name the transforming economy and business models based on platforms such as sharing economy (Das Acevedo 2018; Sundararajan 2013), gig economy (Woodcock and Graham 2020; Wood et al. 2019), platform economy (Schmidt 2017; Kenney and Zysman 2016) and platform capitalism (Srnicek 2017; Schmidt 2015). This research will adopt the term (digital) platform economy as it offers a more neutral conceptualization that is “less tainted by ideology or marketing” (Schmidt 2017, 9) and more inclusive than most of the terms above in terms of containing sub-categories of platform model. Platform economy refers to a new economic model in which digital platforms act as intermediaries between users to exchange various activities and services (Kenney and Zysman 2016, 62).

It is not a coincidence that platforms have been adopted rapidly and spread like wildfire to many areas of the economy. Technology is one of the substantial preconditions for the rise

of the platform model as it provides “platform infrastructure, mass connectivity, and digital legibility of work” (Woodcock and Graham 2020, 26). Srnicek (2017) argues that as the conditions of the 1970s laid the foundations of the prolonged decline in manufacturing profitability, the dotcom boom and technological revolution of the 1990s enabled a hope for a profitable “new economy” with the opportunities provided by internet assets (18-20). This data-driven digital economy has been scaled up in the post-2008 crisis period, increasing the need for a robust business model, with platforms rising as fundamental forms “to monopolize, extract, analyze, and use the increasingly large amounts of data that were being recorded” (Srnicek 2017, 34). In addition, long-standing deregulation policies, sprawling marketization trends, outsourcing and subcontracting practices prompting flexible and insecure work are harbingers of the neoliberal logic on which the platform economy is both founded and which it continues to reinforce under different novel forms (Woodcock 2021, 8; Graham and Woodcock 2020, 40-42)

The operation of platforms is based on a triangular model, which acts as an extractive tool for data. Located between various users as intermediaries, platforms’ position provides them exclusive access to record the activities of users, which “gives them a comprehensive big-data overview of all the interactions between the user groups, and they furthermore have the power to influence the exchange between the other two” (Schmidt 2017, 10), providing platform owners an exclusive and favored position. Srnicek (2017) asserts that this position further renders platform owners with the power to control and determine the rules of the game, governing present and possible interactions through “a designed core architecture” (37). In this respect, the novelty of the platforms originates from how the work and labor are reorganized by utilizing data as the central resource (Srnicek 2017, 33-34). As Woodcock and Graham (2020) elaborate splendidly, “Uber has neither invented the role of the driver, nor the need of

the passenger, but rather a new way to connect them” (52), hence a new way of the organization of the work.

There are numerous hybrid platforms and types of platform work, along with the variegated sub-categories, but scholars offer pragmatic categorization based on specific vital characteristics. “Geographically tethered work” (Woodcock and Graham 2020) or “location-based digital labor/gig work” (Schmidt 2017) refers to “one that takes existing forms of work that happen in particular places and reorganizes them through a digital platform” (Graham and Woodcock 2020, 55). This type of platform work involves on-demand tasks like transportation and delivery services, household or personal services, and types of accommodation services. “Cloudwork” (Graham and Woodcock 2020; Schmidt 2017) is distinguished by the untethered character of the work in which “the task is not location-based and can be done remotely via the internet” (Schmidt 2017, 5).

Although the general characteristics outlined above can be seen in both types of platform work, the scope and application of these characteristics in the location-based digital platform work differ significantly, especially in terms of the new methods of platform management and the rationality they based upon.

## **1.2 Location-Based Digital Labor Platforms**

The emerging location-based digital labor platforms offer an expanding array of services and work today. As each of these services already existed before digital platforms, the transformation brought by the location-based digital labor platforms is not in the nature of the work, but rather, in the way it connects and reorganizes the customer and worker by utilizing smartphones apps (Graham and Woodcock 2020, 56), while still maintaining its dependence on spatial and temporal proximity.

The most substantial key feature of this platform model can be set forth within the framework of efforts to minimize costs and asset ownership to the fullest extent to maximize

profit (Srnicek 2017, 38). Yet, the most essential asset is kept: “the platform software and data analytics infrastructure” (Srnicek 2017, 53). In this regard, *outsourcing* comes to the forefront as an outstanding component of this type of platform operating “through a hyper-outsourced model” (Srnicek 2017, 53).

One of the platforms’ most prominent outsourcing practices is using outsourced workers. The novel character of platforms as ‘neutral’ intermediaries between demand and supply allows them to classify the workforce as ‘*independent contractors*,’ implying a self-employed status that is discursively entitled to autonomy and work-shift flexibility. The independent contractor and platform firm come together around a contract that elaborates the legal relationship in the body of terms and conditions (De Stefano et al. 2021, 12; Schmidt 2017, 11), particularly prompting the contractor as an independent enterprise.

The ‘independent contractor’ model allows platform companies to minimize labor costs, avoid work-related risks, and worker protections (Woodcock and Graham 2020, 57). This situation frees platform companies from the legal responsibilities of labor law and shifts risk liability from employers to contractors (Zwick 2018, 682-683). On the other hand, classified as self-employed, platform workers are obliged to supply their tools of production required for work (Ceylan 2022, 58), implying necessary types of equipment or physical assets (e.g., vehicles, protective equipment, and fuel), as well as ensure and follow up all the legal registration procedures and expenses such as social security obligations, health insurance, accident insurance or legal taxes. In return, contractors get paid only per the fulfilled task, meaning only “for that productive moment, rather than the waiting demand in between demand” (Woodcock and Graham 2020, 56).

Furthermore, the legal classification of independent contractors prevents platform workers from forming trade unions and participating in collective bargaining (Johnston and Land-Kazlauskas 2019, 3), leaving them vulnerable to possible poor working conditions, unfair

dismissal, or low wages. In contrast, platform companies assert that they “nurture autonomous micro-entrepreneurs who can determine the nature of their work independently” (Ivanova et al. 2018, 3). However, the novel management strategies of platforms lead to the structural inability of workers to achieve promised autonomy and results in the intensification of worker dependency on platforms. As a result, it is widely argued that contractors, regardless of their legal status, are workers who are (mis)classified and are, in fact, in a “subordinate employment relationship” yet deprived of any standard labor protection measures and rights (ILO 2016, 32; Woodcock 2021, 9; OECD 2019, 2), causing the ongoing precarization of platform labor (Muntaner 2018, 598).

It should be noted that, though, even if the (mis)classification of workers is one of the novel facets of the platform model on the surface, the practice of outsourcing labor is not a new one; instead, it is part of a broader and longstanding shift unfolded in the 1970s (Srnicek 2017, 53-54). Nevertheless, the novelty of today’s location-based digital platform model stems from combining distinct outsourcing practices that are part of a long-term trend with new ways of organizing and managing the workforce. In fact, labor management emerges as “a prominent feature and novelty of the platform type of market organization” (Uysal and Boyraz 2023, 3), forming novel work models reconfiguring work and workforce conditions.

The location-based digital platform work has been the one in which these novel modes of platform management are more apparent and executed with greater scope due to its operation in the physical world, employment of tangible assets, and a substantial portion of the affected workforce (Ceylan 2022, 54). Therefore, a closer look at these novel models and discussions around them is essential for a better analysis of the governance model of platforms, its operationalized techniques over work and workforce, and, of course, the empirical case of Turkey to be analyzed in this study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LOCATION-BASED DIGITAL PLATFORM MANAGEMENT**

Given the location-based digital labor platforms are characterized by the absence of direct physical supervision over a dispersed workforce, the promise of autonomy and flexibility to workers, and the status of independent contractor, the novel aspects of platform management have been the subject of critical attention regarding the shift in the organization of work, novel regimes of management and its substantial effects on the workforce (De Stefano 2016; Vallas and Schor 2020; De Stefano and Aloisi 2018; Gandini 2018; Huws et al. 2017; Shapiro 2018). This chapter will delve into the particular literature on (location-based) platform management regimes and discussions around the conceptualization of their character and techniques. Following these, the focus and contribution of this research will be elaborated in relation to the literature.

### **2.1 Algorithmic Modes of Platform Management**

The platform model's most prominent novel aspect is employing algorithms as the prevalent mode of rational control by replacing "technical and bureaucratic control mechanisms" (Kellogg, Valentine and Christin 2020, 368). An early study by Aneesh (2009) on the growing organizational power of algorithms proposed the term "algoracy", referring to a new management system based on the conduct of algorithms (350). This term has been later extended to algorithmic management, which refers to "a diverse set of technological tools and techniques to remotely manage workforces, relying on data collection and surveillance of workers to enable automated or semi-automated decision-making" (Mateescu and Nguyen 2019, 1). The algorithmic management model is fundamentally based on the functionalization of what underpins the rise of the platform economy - data. As platform providers perpetually collect elaborative data on their workforce, the collected data becomes both a crucial part of their assets and a functional management mechanism over the workforce (Schmidt 2017, 12).

Therefore, data becomes platform firms' primary management resource in the form of algorithmic power which "exerts and mediates power, enabling and constraining social action" (Ferrari and Graham 2021, 814).

The prevalence of algorithmic regime results in "the retreat from direct control" (Vallas and Schor 2020, 274) of the workforce and a shift toward "control by market" (Ivanova et al. 2018, 6), paving the way for the impersonalized and automated decision-making mechanisms (Cram et al. 2022, 47). The credibility of decisions, then, is attributed to the automated nature of algorithms, which act as an "impartial and autonomous" mechanism (Ivanova et al. 2018, 7). However, critics state that this situation does not necessarily entail a reduction and flexibilization on the level of control over the labor force (Griesbach et al. 2019, 3). In contrast, the platform regime generates "what most reasonable observers would define as a strictly managed labor force" (Rosenblat and Stark 2016, 3777).

The particular algorithmic modes of management have been widely discussed in the literature (Wood et al. 2019; Rosenblat and Stark 2016; Kellogg, Valentine and Christin 2020). Based on the contextuality of field studies and particular conceptual frameworks adopted, scholars have identified diverse platform governance mechanisms and analyzed these from distinct conceptual perspectives.

### **2.1.1 Labor Process Theory and Algorithmic Platform Management**

One of the most prevalent frameworks to understand the underlying power relations and techniques of location-based platform management has been Labor Process Theory (LPT). By illustrating platform or app as the "point of production" characterized by "structural antagonism" between labor and capital owners, management regimes are conceptualized as systems that employers inevitably wield to break the relative autonomy of workers in the labor process and transform labor power into a commodity (Gandini 2018 1047-1048). The platform

management is thus comprehended as a novel form of the tight control that the owners of capital have been trying to establish over labor for years.

Gandini (2018), one of the pioneers in the field, argues that the control regime of platform management over the labor process is a “techno-normative control,” referring to a combination of innovative means of “technologically centered-normatively driven” control mechanisms (1051). Normative control is realized through the practices of control centered on customers, functionalizing evaluation and ranking tools to measure worker performance, while workers are exposed to technical controls prompted through gamification strategies to increase profit-maximization (1049). Here, gamification indicates a fundamental technique of algorithmic modes of management enabling platforms to reward high-performing workers with rating, top ranking, and bonus opportunities, thus “transforms wage labor into a game, in an often manipulative, behavioristic manner” (Schmidt 2017,12).

Kellogg, Valentine and Christin (2020), drawing upon Edwards’ (1979) earlier typology, elaborates on six platform algorithmic techniques of control over the labor process: “Algorithms direct workers by *restricting* and *recommending*, evaluate workers by *recording* and *rating*, and discipline workers by *replacing* and *rewarding*” (368, italics in original). Algorithms restrict the scope of critical information displayed to workers, resulting in information asymmetry and manage the workforce’s decisions in the form of nudges and recommendations in line with platform owners’ preferences (Kellogg, Valentine and Christin 2020, 372). Munn (2017) argues that this feature of algorithmic modes is substantial in supervising workers’ behaviors through “motivational messaging techniques” (12). Particular evaluation mechanisms to “review of workers’ activities to correct mistakes, assess performance” (Kellogg, Valentine and Christin 2020, 376) and the critical role of metric power (Beer 2016), which manifests itself in two ways: customer evaluation/ratings and system-derived behavioral calculation (task acceptance rates or delivery speed) in disciplining workers,

has been underlined by many scholars (e.g., Chan 2022; Veen, Barratt and Goods 2020; Griesbach et al. 2019; Sutherland et al. 2020). On the other hand, underperforming workers might be subject to dismissal or restriction of their accounts due to low evaluation or acceptance rates through disciplining mechanisms of gamified techniques of algorithmic replacing and rewarding (Kellogg, Valentine and Christin 2020, 381).

### **2.1.2 Algorithms as Opaque and Panoptic**

Significant work has also been devoted to conceptualizing the power dynamics behind platform management regimes, by placing the relationship between algorithms, surveillance and opacity at the center of the analysis. The role of information asymmetry techniques in restricting workers' access to crucial information about the platform's operations has been focused (Veen, Barratt and Goods 2020; Ivanova 2018; Rosenblat and Stark 2016), and the "Black Box" (Pasquale 2015) metaphor has been put forward. Accordingly, a platform control system based on algorithms operates as a Black Box, meaning that the actual process and inner workings of algorithmic operation are concealed from workers, resulting in opacity in the decision-making tools (Sun 2022, 148). Building on the Black Box metaphor, Rahman (2021) has built an "invisible cage" conceptual framework to elaborate the opaque character of algorithmic evaluations functioning as an invisible cage and making inconceivable for workers to identify the logic, degree or executives of these mechanisms (947).

On the other hand, regarding the vast surveillance aspect of algorithmic management, some scholars, instead, have highlighted the panopticon character of platform control regime (Woodcock 2020, 2022; Delfanti, Radovac, and Walker 2021; Veen, Barratt and Goods 2020). Given the omnipresent and automated surveillance over the workforce's time, activities and performance, Woodcock (2020) advocates an understanding of platform control processes as an "algorithmic panopticon" based on "an automated collection of data that runs throughout the entire work process" in substitution for physical inspection (86). Veen, Barratt and Goods

(2019) also center their analysis of the management regimes on the panopticon character of the technological infrastructure and argue that the panopticon dispositive is reinforced by the “deliberately created information asymmetries and obfuscated nature of performance management systems” (393).

Moore and Joyce (2020) criticize black box and panoptic approaches to algorithmic management regimes of platforms as they lead to “technologically deterministic” explanations and fail to analyze the socially embedded character of the working relationship as two-sided rather than a “one-way control and discipline mechanism” (934). Instead, they further that these approaches are incapable of recognizing the inevitable social aspect embedded in technological strategies, thus underestimating workers’ means of contestation (928,933).

These studies, together with LPT scholars’, doubtlessly have a substantial place in the literature to map and shed light on the emergent algorithm-based platform management regimes and techniques. However, it is also essential to underline some important deficiencies of these studies. Initially, the analysis of platform management regimes is confined mostly to the domain of algorithmic modes. While algorithmic modes compose the most novel and crucial aspects of platforms’ management processes, the discursive aspects of management and variation in management components based on the distinct contextual factors remain unexplored. In addition, by focusing on the technological disciplinary power of algorithms, the normative and non-disciplinary power dynamics, and techniques of algorithmic forms of management may involve are left out of the analysis. This situation is linked to the fact that theoretical debates and approaches to understanding platform governance systems in depth have not developed in parallel with the proliferation of empirical studies. Indeed, Joyce (2020) elaborates on this issue as a “platform work’s theory problem,” resulting in descriptive, over-generalized, and under-theorized research in the field. (543).

## 2.2 Different Facets of Power within and beyond Algorithms

A recent proliferation of studies has emphasized diversified and intertwined power relations by highlighting the variety and interplay of platform management regimes within the literature. Without excluding the antagonistic character of the relationship between capital and labor, the importance of drawing attention to the intricate and complex power dynamics that come with the platform management model has been underscored (Walker 2020, 27).

Walker et al. (2020) employs the notion of Foucauldian biopower to analyze the logic of power relations behind the platform management model relying on algorithms. Based on an empirical study on Uber Drivers in Australia, the authors assert that automated regime of algorithms emerges as a power dynamic that “encompasses the ‘bios’ or life processes of workers, rather than just their formal labor time” with the aid of ‘self-employed’ classification which requires a borderless flexibility in relation to workers’ everyday life processes (Walker et al. 2020, 27). As the algorithmic management techniques lead to isolation and fragmentation of workforce together with impersonalization of authority, it displays the features of biopower in the form of nudges, or gamification strategies, managing all “life processes” of platform workers by blurring the boundaries between work and life (37). On the other hand, by focusing on the subject formation process of biopower in platforms, Gregory and Sadowski (2021) highlight the biopower aspect of location-based platform management to transform individuals into observable aggregation units and requires workers to build up a mode of human capital to maximize their productivity (671–672).

An illuminating and vital study on the power relations operated by algorithmic modes of platform management was put forward by Galiere (2020), who drew attention to the importance of normative power relations embedded in platform management, contrary to the illustration of algorithmic operation as omnipresent and strictly rational control. By employing the Foucauldian notion of dispositive, an analysis is developed that normative power techniques

complements ratio-technical mechanisms with techniques of subjectification within algorithmic management. Based on an empirical case in France, Galiere (2020) argues how algorithms govern workers through techniques of management that prompt “an ideal of hyper-meritocratic justice” (368)

### **2.3 Diverse and Variegated Nature of Platform Management**

It is necessary to put an emphasis on the diverse and variegated character of platform management regimes and, hence, the possibility of distinct theorizations in contrast to the over-generalizing tendency in the literature. Some scholars have acknowledged that while all location-based digital labor platforms functionalize algorithms as their core management regime, there is also a significant variation across platforms and contexts in terms of operational logic and techniques (Griesbach et al. 2019; Huang 2023; Boyer 2022), which requires further research.

In this respect, Griesbach et al. (2019) conceptualizes algorithmic modes as a “spectrum” in which the level and character of the management can vary drastically (8). Indeed, the infrastructure of platforms is not “located in a single or stable entity, practice or hierarchy... they are continually negotiated within complex sociotechnical power relations” (Ferrari and Graham 2021, 817). Thus, it is important to recognize the multiplicity and multidirectional character of forms of power relations embedded in platform governance(s) to avoid a reductionist analysis.

On the other hand, Huang (2023), in his research on food-delivery platforms in China, highlights the contextualized management regimes and the importance “of political economic, societal and ideological components” to better comprehend the power dynamics behind the particular platform governance mechanisms. The dynamics peculiar to the contextual structures may reveal distinct platform governing systems that deviate from the generalized features

described in the literature. As will be emphasized when examining the case of Turkey, given the excessive focus in the literature on the examples of the global north, these interpretations stand out as important that should be underlined.

## **2.4 Contribution and the Case of Turkey**

The existing literature presents notable approaches to certain aspects of the operational logic of location-based digital platform governance. Yet, as mentioned above, a holistic and more profound theoretical framework and a broader understanding of platform governance(s) in relation to the socio-economic contextual factors are often lacking. Moreover, many studies devoid attention to the algorithmic operation and its disciplinary techniques, thus neglecting multilayer character of power relations and factors which equally constitute the platform governance regimes. In this respect, it is important to remember that the components that makeup governance systems are never simple and unidirectional.

The recent literature reveals promising research in this context, particularly in terms of Foucauldian studies, but it is still relatively small. Studies on the co-existence of distinct power operations in the platform governance (s) and normativity embedded in the algorithmic forms of management are rewarding to overcome deficiencies. However, alongside the existence of few research, the intensive concentration on global north as case studies leaves unanswered the question of how the location-based platform governance systems operate in the distinct socio-economic contexts outside the global north (e.g., Franco and Robles 2022).

In this respect, this research addresses the multifaceted and intersectional gap in the literature, aspiring to make both empirical and theoretical contributions. On the one hand, it attempts to put forward a holistic conceptual framework that extends beyond the mere disciplinary considerations of power in the field by incorporating a Foucauldian framework. On the other hand, it aims to enhance the literature with a socio-economic analytical depth, exploring the formation, level and techniques of power relations in tandem with the contextual

factors and beyond the algorithmic confines. This, particularly, addresses the important gap displayed within the few Foucauldian studies in the literature by highlighting the interplay and immanency between platform governance(s) and contextual landscape. Additionally, by focusing on the context of Turkey, the research aims to present a study improving the geographical scope of the literature beyond the global north. Turkey represents unique socio-economic context in which the triumph of the location-based digital platform model has been large-scale and resilient. At the same time, the platform-based delivery work model has spread to large segments of society at an incredible rate. In the Turkish context, studies on both the general characteristics of the rising platform economy and the novel governance regimes of platforms have been few and limited.

The small number of existing studies in the context of Turkey that might be parallel to the scope of this research focus on the discussions around the autonomy of workers, reconfiguration of the labor process, and discursive mechanisms of subject-constitution. In their study on domestic platform workers within the Turkish platform company (Armut), Uysal, and Boyraz (2023) focus on the emerging contradiction between autonomy and control in the platform-mediated gig employment and examine how workers experience autonomy or whether they experience autonomy at all. As one of the first comprehensive crucial studies on location-based digital labor platforms in Turkey, Ceylan's (2022) research reveals critical insights based on the labor process theory about how digital delivery platforms reconfigure labor processes and working conditions. Finally, Uysal (2022), by refocusing workers who are painters and cleaners in the Armut platform, analyzes from a Foucauldian perspective of governmentality how entrepreneurial discourse and status are perceived among low-skilled platform workers and its role in subject construction as entrepreneurial self.

While these studies show great promise, there has yet to be an in-depth study of the underlying power relations and technologies of platform governance regime and their socio-

economic embeddedness in the context of Turkey. In particular, the studies conducted so far have predominantly focused on different platform works rather than specifically addressing on-demand platform delivery work / couriership which has been main frontier of the wide-scale adoption and the face of platform model in Turkey. This underlines the need for a nuanced exploration and study of the distinct power dynamics and contradictions inherent in the platform delivery work model in Turkey.

In this respect, presenting an analysis of the platform governance regime in Turkey through the analytical perspective of neoliberal governmentality and within the framework of its intrinsic relationship with the socio-economic background will hopefully contribute to the literature by rectifying the intersectional gaps and open up distinct areas for further research.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Foucauldian notion of power is distinguished “as something exercised rather than possessed; as existing in relations rather than in things or persons...as operating at all levels of the *socius*” (Schrift 2013, 141). Governmentality emerges as a unique operationalization of power in the form of *governing* and offers a robust tool for understanding the complex and interwoven dynamics of power embedded in a set of processes and relations in the realm of contemporary governance. This chapter delves into the notion of governmentality encompassing the art of governance and the constitutive features of neoliberal governmentality as the prevalent mode of rationality of government today. Exploring the rationality behind the activity of governing will enable us to decode the complexities of power and governance technologies operationalized in the novel means of (location-based) platform management in Turkey through its relationship with neoliberal governmentality.

### 3.1 Governmentality

Governmentality signifies a novel approach to comprehending a new regime of power relations that emerged throughout the eighteenth century and formulated fundamental lines of the contemporary modes of governing. The word governmentality indicates a neologism combining government and rationality. Framed briefly as “conduct of conduct” (Li 2007, 275), governmentality refers to the intricate art of governing revolving around various technologies of power embedded in a particular rationality to direct, influence, and guide the conduct of others and the self (Foucault 2007, 258).

Governing is distinguished from “ruling or reigning” or “being a sovereign” (106) in the sense that it refers to conducting “liberties and capacities of the governed” (Dean 2010, 63) by “restructuring and shaping the field of possible actions of subjects” (Lemke 2002, 52). Accordingly, the government acts upon the domain of present and future actions of the

population rather than exercising power directly over the subjects. Rationality constitutes the underlying condition for characterizing ends and means of government, guiding the conduct of the population for particular behavioral effects. In this respect, the historical emergence of *population* as a complex “set of processes to be managed” in the mid-eighteenth century marks the threshold giving birth to the art of government as a distinct regime of power, transforming the traditional relationship between sovereign and subject into government and population (Foucault 2007, 98).

Governmentality adjuncts to and recode the techniques of discipline and sovereign power around the rationality of government and regards subjects as “resources to be fostered, to be used and to be optimized” (Dean 2010, 45). While disciplinary power seeks to regulate the behavior of individuals through a system of surveillance, hierarchization and segregation, (Foucault 2020, 166-168), and sovereign power enforce authority over the subjects of right through coercive and prohibitory means of juridical and executive mechanisms (Dean 2010, 29), governmentality operates through influencing and shaping the domain of possible actions of subjects of interest. In this context, free subjects, in the sense of having a field of possibilities to act, emerge as the mere condition of governmentality that conducts them by encouraging to exercise their freedoms in specific directions (Keskin 2014, 9-10).

However, Foucault also points out that the emerging power relations that unfold in the form of governmentality should not be perceived as a “successive” dynamic “replacing” disciplinary and sovereign power (Foucault 2007, 142-143). Instead, it is crucial to understand the “triangle” relationship between sovereign, disciplinary, and governmental management types of power (143) to analyze their co-operation and interdependency to perform effectively in various contexts. A model of the art of government might utilize and include legal and disciplinary mechanisms, but the objectives and strategies they serve become contingent upon the rationality of government (Keskin 2014, 4).

Framed principally within its historical specificity by Foucault, the notion of governmentality has evolved to form a more general analytical framework to comprehend power relations embedded in various levels of society to conduct the conduct of others and self, other than the one embodied solely in the institution of state (Foucault 2007, 502-203). An analytical governmentality framework inevitably reveals the multiplicity of forms and localities of the activity of government diffused all through the social body, enabling us to recognize various power resources, governmental interventions, and a variety of parties involved in governing the organized practices, conditions, system of thoughts, or practices of self (Li 2007, 276). Therefore, the governmentality framework necessitates questioning and scrutinizing “who governs what, according to what logics, with what techniques and toward what ends?” (Rose, O’Malley, and Valverde 2006, 3).

However, the ways of conducting conduct or governing can unfold differently concerning the distinct rationalities of government, such as neo-conservatism or communitarianism (Dean 2010, 218). Today, neoliberal governmentality stands out as a particular and dominant rationality of governmental techniques, posing a crucial agenda to comprehend how the practice of governing is occurring at many levels of society.

### **3.1.2 Neoliberal Governmentality**

Since the 1970s, neoliberalism has emerged as “the new truth regime,” thus a novel rationality of governing that substantially differs from classical liberalism in terms of radicalizing and pushing it into its limits (Hamann 2009, 28). Neoliberal rationality strives to remodel all socio-political relations and fabric according to the economic principles of the market, including the domains once characterized as non-economic, in which the state is minimized, arguing that state intervention in the social fabric prevents society from functioning effectively through competition (Foucault 2008, 245; Atalay 2022, 129). The economy then

stops being a separate domain but becomes the conduct of all human behavior, which is “framed and measured by economic terms and metrics” (Brown 2015, 10).

The “economization of the entire social field” (Foucault 2008, 242) is primarily enabled through systematically intervening in and modifying the environmental milieu of individuals to incite them to act and behave in the manners conforming the market rationality (Lorenzini 2018, 155-156). This environmental configuration is achieved through the cultivation of the acquired human capital notion, which allows the model of economic analysis to permeate deeply to the social environment. Unlike classical liberalism’s subject, which should be left alone to pursue self-interest, in neoliberalism, the entrepreneurial self and behavior are actively constituted in the body of homo economicus, which becomes “the subject of economic thinking” (Read 2009, 32). Therefore, with the individual becoming his/her own entrepreneur and sole bearer of responsibilities, risks and failures, there emerges “a society made up of enterprise-units” in which competition operates as “the formative power of society” (Foucault 2008, 225, 148).

This entrepreneurial self becomes both the subject and object of governmentality and is transformed into a “behavioristically manipulable being” (Lemke 2001, 200), “who accepts reality and responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment” (Foucault 2008, 270). Shaped by and for the market, the homo economicus of neoliberalism appears as an atomized individual who thinks and acts within a framework of competitive cost-benefit calculation to maximize his/her self-interest and becomes the “eminently governable subject” (Foucault 2008, 270; Hamann 2009, 42).

The field of freedom of this neoliberal subject comes into prominence for the act of governing to function effectively. In the form of the neoliberal art of government, freedom stops being an inherent quality of homo economicus but becomes an “artefact,” something that should be constructed in the process of the individual becoming the entrepreneur of oneself through the cultivation of human capital (Dean 2010, 226-229). Correspondingly, rather than solely

being a constraint-free field, freedom becomes a certain correlate of governmentality and “an actual relation between governors and governed” (Foucault 2008, 62). In other words, neoliberalism “produces, organizes and consumes freedoms” (Lorenzini 2018, 159) as a broader governmental technique and governs individuals utilizing the culmination of their freedom and desires, thus through “a strategy of enhancement and maximization” (de Beistegui 2016, 33). Power and freedom become implied in each other to attain the government of “each and all” (Dean 2010, 28).

All things considered, by fostering entrepreneurial subjects and competitive behavior, power and management stop being things operated via means of punishment but, instead, are transformed into a seemingly productive capacity of power directed not at what one cannot do but rather at what one *can* do. Yet, the techniques and forms of this neoliberal power might reveal differently regarding the various locales of power and contextual conjunctures as they are inextricably encapsulated in “national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited structures” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 349). Hence, analyzing operational means of power requires paying attention to the contextual factors and the interrelationship of existing governmental techniques with them.

### **3.2 Neoliberal Governmentality and the World of Platform Work**

The spread of precarious, task-based, and flexible models of work embedded in neoliberal restructuring in the world of work is nothing new. The decline of the standard employment relationship and the promotion of self-regulation/individualization of risks and responsibilities through an entrepreneurial discourse and performance strategies have been furthered in various sectors for some time (Morales and Stecher 2023, 233). However, the global expansion of platform model for physical labor has drastically changed the speed and scale of this neoliberal restructuring through novel means of management and value extraction.

In other words, platform companies “have perfected the neoliberal playbook” (Zwick 2018, 682).

The platform model introduces the new strategies of neoliberal accumulation in the world of work, which obscures the structural antagonism between capital and labor by turning workers into their own capitalists (Luis Franco and Robles 2022, 102). Understanding neoliberalism as a particular governmental rationality enables to find out the inextricable relationship between accumulation and management practices, thus the novelty of strategies introduced in the world of platform work as techniques and technologies of governmental power to maximize ‘the value extraction process.’ In addition, an analytical perspective of neoliberal governmentality allows to comprehend the functionalization of “neoliberalism from below” in the world of work by reorganizing the everyday notions and behaviors, hence subjectivities, projecting “a new collective rationality” (Gago 2017, 6).

Certainly, the operationalization of neoliberal policies and restructuring programs on a more macro scale provide space for the effective functionalization of novel platform strategies. States mostly endow platform firms with necessary freedom and impunity from possible regulations, responsibilities or inspections, resulting in the consolidation of firms’ monopoly on the governance of work process (Zwick 2018, 681). The broader neoliberal reconfiguration gives importance and room to the state not for the legitimacy, but “as the efficiency of it” (Günok 2018, 64). Hence, the very social nature of the platform work becomes economized or marketized, giving way for techniques and strategies manifesting modes of neoliberal governmentality to reshape workers’ beliefs, acts, and sense of self to align with the profit-oriented objectives of companies (Fleming 2017, 703).

In this regard, it is essential to build a perspective that analyzes the novel techniques of (location-based) platform management through the lens of neoliberal governmentality. The next

chapter will delve into the case of Turkish (location-based) platform governance to show how and through which techniques neoliberal governmentality underlies power relations within the management processes of Turkish platforms. Therefore, we will look at how the workforce is transformed into human capital through environmental modifications and encouraged to engage in self-calculative and competitive behavior constantly through the particular governing technologies, components and tactics of platform governance.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE (LOCATION-BASED) PLATFORM GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF TURKEY**

This chapter will delve into a comprehensive analysis of management techniques implemented by the location-based digital platforms in Turkey, which will be scrutinized through the analytical framework of neoliberal governmentality, unveiling underlying neoliberal conduct that constitutes platform governance. However, to offer a governance analysis in relation to the contextual socio-economic dynamics, a preliminary exploration of the background of the meteoric rise of on-demand platform firms and the massive expansion of the platform delivery work into diverse segments of society will be examined. Following this, particular algorithmic performance technologies shaping daily conduct and the broader examination of the state policies' (in)action as a formative governmental technique will be analyzed to reveal the neoliberal power relations underlying platform governance in the context of Turkey.

### **4.1 The Boom of Location-Based Digital Platform Model**

The period starting in 1997 saw the birth of many companies providing digital services and e-marketplaces in Turkey with the expansion of the internet and digitalization. Increasing smartphone availability for different sects of society accelerated the growth rate and potential of the industry. However, it was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that platform-based e-commerce became a crucial and transformative sector in Turkey.

The lockdowns and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have prompted critical changes in consumption habits, leading to the in-depth integration of mobile apps-based on-demand services into the everyday lives of large segments of society. According to data from the Turkish Ministry of Trade (2020), e-commerce volume increased by 64 percent in the first six months of 2020 compared to the previous year. Furthermore, there has been a 200 percent

surge in mobile retail sales and a 150 percent rise in digital demand for (location-based) grocery and food services (ILO 2022, 10). In this respect, the Turkish e-commerce sector has become one of the fastest-growing markets (Statista 2023).

The oligopolistic characteristics of Turkey's e-market have led to particular digital platform companies becoming industry giants at short notice. Trendyol, Yemeksepeti, and Getir are the fastest-growing and most robust of these giants, particularly in digital on-demand services. Their concise journey from being a bare start-up to becoming a digital platform giant by leaving behind long-standing major conglomerates reveals the rapid and impactful transformation that platformization has created in Turkey's economic structure and domestic market (9).

The critical structural conditions underlying the meteoric rise of powerful digital platform companies in Turkey portray parallel features to their global counterparts. Nevertheless, in the context of Turkey, these underlying conditions have been accompanied by close 'informal' relations between the state actors and platform giants. While a structured state strategy has not driven the rise of influential digital platform firms, the 'generous donations' of these platform giants, notably Trendyol, to state institutions and the neutralization of legal investigations toward the oligopolistic character of the market through bureaucrat reshuffles (Yeşilbağ 2023) evidently demonstrate the unique interrelationship between the state and ever-growing digital platform owners in the case of Turkey. It is essential to underline that this pattern unleashed in the rise of national digital platform monopolies is inextricably linked to the structural characteristic feature of Turkey's "actually existing neoliberalism" (Cohen and Centeno 2006) in the forms of the crony and rent-seeking capitalism (Aykut and Yıldırım 2018). Therefore, the recent trends point to the monopoly position of these firms, indicating a significant impact on the capital accumulation processes and platform work organization in Turkey (Yeşilbağ 2022, 11).

## **4.2 The Expansion of Location-Based Digital Platform Delivery Work**

The increasing demand for on-demand grocery and food services with the COVID-19 pandemic and the tremendous growth of (location-based) digital platform companies have brought the pressing need for an extensive delivery workforce. In this respect, platform delivery couriers have stepped forth as an indispensable part of the order distribution process. In Turkey, the platform delivery workforce comes to the forefront as the ‘moto courier’ profession, regarding the employment of motorcycles as the primary delivery vehicle.

The immanent dependence of digital platform companies on the workforce for delivery services and the socio-economic conditions experienced by the vast sects of society have given rise to the wave of ‘courierization’ with great speed and intensity in Turkey. In 2020, the increase in courier employment was recorded as 41.53 percent against the 4.95 percent rise in the general employment rate (ILO 2022, 20). Between 2005 and 2020, the rate of employment increase for the moto courier profession was enlisted as 298.3 percent compared to the 37.7 percent general upsurge in the employment rates (20). Despite the absence of any official data on the current number of moto couriers, the ILO (2022) report estimates that there are more than 10 thousand couriers in Istanbul alone, and this number might exceed 900 thousand across Turkey when informal/unregistered couriers are counted (10). Rather than being a mere choice, the extensiveness of the platform-based delivery moto courier profession is directly related to the contextual socio-economic conditions and particular features that characterize location-based platform work, which significantly influences the characteristics of platform governance in the context of Turkey.

### **4.2.1 The Socio-Economic Background of the Rising Moto Courier Profession**

Platform work was born into a labor market shaped by neoliberal policies from the 1980s onwards introduced by a coup-detat regime, which included authoritarian legal and institutional

measures against the labor power and trade unions, resulting in the erosion of essential workers' rights and protections (Uysal and Boyraz 2023, 6). While the long-standing economic stagnation that Turkey has been experiencing since 2018 has intensified precarity and decomposition in the labor market, the ongoing period has witnessed unprecedented levels of the economic crisis never seen before in Turkey's history (IPA 2022, 1). Accordingly, in March 2022, inflation rate has been put as high as 143 percent (Birelma 2022, 2).

Since non-unionized and uninsured work has long been a constitutive element of the Turkish labor market (IPA 2021, 6), large segments of society have been left vulnerable due to rapidly rising inflation, monetary depreciation, and high unemployment. In an economic environment where one in four young people is unemployed (TÜİK 2021), platform moto courier profession has come to the fore as an alternative and sometimes the only option for means of subsistence. IPA's research on platform moto couriers in 2021 shows that 80% of those working as couriers lost their jobs during the pandemic and could not find any job other than couriership (29).

Initially characterized as a "waiting stop" for those unemployed due to the pandemic, the moto courier profession is now becoming a permanent and principal mean of living for many people with increasing inflation and unemployment (IPA 2022, 3). Therefore, this socio-economic picture reveals the structural conditions for the upsurge of the platform-based moto courier profession in Turkey, which also has significant implications for the platform governance regime over work and workforce, as we will see in the upcoming sections.

### **4.3 A Neoliberal Regime of Platform Governance**

The emergence of the on-demand platform moto-courier profession as a new form of precariatization of labor under neoliberal policies is often pointed out (Karadoğan 2022, 8-11; Öz 2023, 93-96; TÜMTİS 2022, 8-10). The flexible, insecure, task-oriented, and very dangerous character of the profession causes moto-couriers to work long hours to earn the bare

minimum income (Kurye Hakları Derneği 2023, 21-24). Nevertheless, the spread of outsourced labor has been a consistent and widespread feature in Turkey's delivery and various sectors since the 1990s (Kıvılcım 2022). In this respect, (location-based) platform delivery work emerges as a unique dynamic due to platforms' novel techniques to *manage* this massive precaritized workforce.

This novelty composes a particular importance in the Turkish context itself. The neo-liberalization process introduced by the military coup in 1980 was accompanied by the development of an "authoritarian corporatism" employing legal and coercive measures toward labor power and management (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 1992, 725; Hayter 2018, 17-19). Under the further securitized and authorized regime of neoliberal government, the overt repression and disciplinary dynamic in the domain of and toward labor management have become a persistent feature hitherto (Erol and Şahin 2023, 12-13). From this standpoint, the extent to which on-demand platform management is characterized chiefly by the functionalization of governing techniques, rather than solely disciplinary or repressive measures, stands out as a distinct phenomenon that needs to be explored in Turkey. Hence, what emerges is the management of an increasingly impoverished and precaritized segment of physical labor in line with the neoliberal rationality of government.

However, this should not be taken to mean that platform governance does not or will not incorporate disciplinary or coercive management mechanisms. As discussed in the literature, on-demand platforms can exercise many disciplinary and repressive mechanisms through algorithms and beyond to control and regulate the workforce. Without excluding the critical role of these dynamics in the present or future conjunctures, the data collected in the scope of this research reveals and concentrates that the techniques operationalized by on-demand platforms to manage their 'independent' workforce are considerably underlined by a neoliberal logic of governance. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, even though some techniques and

technologies of platforms might appear as disciplinary forms of power at first glance, a closer look to the objectives and underlying rationality reveals the governmental character of power.

In this regard, this research argues that the character of (location-based) platform management in Turkey has emerged as a system of governance embedded in neoliberal rationality and operationalized through the distinct techniques of governmentality. As a result of the conducted interviews and the collected data within the scope of this research, I will analyze the operation of these distinct techniques of platform governance mainly under two categories: the algorithmic performance technologies and the (in)action of the state policies giving rise to a reserve army of couriers. Within the category of algorithmic performance technologies of governance, first, it will be analyzed how algorithm-driven performance technologies operate as pivotal techniques of governance overall, and then, the three most operative platform performance technologies in the context of Turkey will be scrutinized. Moving on to the second category of (in)action of the state policies, it will be analyzed how (in)action of legislative procedures function actually as an active form of neoliberal governmentality in Turkey, complementing platform governance. Hence, these dynamics will reveal that the power relations and techniques embodied in the platform management systems do not operate in isolation from the contextual factors; on the contrary, they are interwoven by these factors, leading to effective platform governance(s).

#### **4.3.1 Algorithmic Performance Technologies**

The status of ‘independent contractor’ prompts “radical responsabilization” of moto-couriers in terms of all responsibilities, costs and risks associated with the work process (Fleming 2017). While this feature constitutes the discursive features of governmentality by fostering an ‘entrepreneurial’ self and behavior (Galiere 2020, 365-366), governmental power is most of all manifested through the way work is organized and managed (Franco and Robles

2022, 109). Hence, these discursive features nurture the environmental milieu in which algorithmic performance technologies can effectively function.

Performance technologies of platform governance operate by encouraging the workforce to behave and act per neoliberal rationality, thus, prompting a competitive and productive economic subject of neoliberal ethos in the form of homo economicus (Foucault 2008), placing individual performance as the underlying criterion. As individual performance has become the principal measure for one's financial well-being, success, and personal gains, individuals undergo a metamorphosis into self-calculative, productive, and competitive subjects of neoliberal rationality; thus, their behaviors become manipulable and "eminently governable" (Foucault 2008, 270; Catlaw and Marshall 2018, 9-11).

To optimize the efficiency and productivity to the greatest extent, platforms utilize algorithmic technologies through gamification techniques (Schmidt 2017, 12-13) in which "couriers are constantly evaluated by and evaluating variable offers (substituting for set wages) intended to incentivize them to work" (Van Doorn 2020, 13). Evaluation and ranking of moto-couriers against each other based on the quality of their performance identify each's scope of access to wider earning and flexibility opportunities, encouraging them to be 'higher on the list' (Karadoğan 2022, 9). In the words of one participant, this situation endangers an environment akin to "a cruel and relentless race" (Moto-Courier 1). Indeed, as performance-based income system becomes the norm, the delivery workforce emerges as self-governing subjects "whose govern will be guided by evaluation procedures and sanctions" linked to performance indicators (Dardot and Laval 2014, 251). Moreover, algorithmic power's "hyper-individualization" of tasks intensifies the competition between moto-couriers, leading to a possible fragmentation of collective ties (Franco and Robles 2022, 107). Thus, algorithmic performance technologies overtly exercise governmental power rather than merely being technical or disciplinary, rendering the normative aspects of algorithmic modes of management (Galieri 2020, 358).

In this respect, the moto-couriers are formed as human capital, driven by self-interest and income maximization, “optimizing their relation to both themselves and their work” (Günok 2018, 126). As their decision-making mechanisms and choices are placed within a framework of cost-benefit calculation, their actions and behaviors become malleable in the economic principles of the market through an “environmental interventionism” (Taylan 2013). Thereby, the governmental practices of platforms act upon the field of interest-oriented and calculative actions of the workforce to foster productivity, efficiency, and competition. This external structuring of the field of actions coincides with the self-cultivation and the self-management of the individuals within the parameters of the platform infrastructure and brings together the techniques of subjectification and subjectivation:

They constantly monitor our location and start calling me if I am still waiting at my current location after saying I've received an order and I'm on my way. But, you know, it is mostly about my inner anxiety and worries of making less money, because if I do faster, I'll earn more. (Moto-Courier 6)

This situation underscores that while, as discussed in the literature (e.g., Woodcock 2020; Veen et al. 2020), disciplinary mechanisms clearly exist in platform management systems such as surveillance mechanisms, the underlying rationality and techniques of power are fundamentally rooted in neoliberal governmental strategies forming and governing through self-governed productive neoliberal subjectivities.

As the data of this research reveals, the character of productivity in the case of on-demand platforms is mainly based upon the speed of delivery and package volume, which are the fundamental performance measures for the moto-courier workforce in Turkey. With the competition in the on-demand market to achieve “high and rapid profitability,” platform companies seek to effectively govern their workforce through performance metrics to minimize the delivery time, hence optimize productivity and profit (Morales and Stecher 2022, 233; Gregory 2021, 319).

The importance of speed and quantity of delivered packages for the workforce's performance indicators transform moto-couriers' body into their essential tool to maximize their performance, hence, their 'entrepreneurial self.' (Lazzarato 2015, 185-186). As moto-couriers attempt to deliver more packages in shorter periods, they are metamorphosed into homo economicus who "accept the reality and systematically respond to environmental variables" (Foucault 2008, 270) and whose capacity of bodies becomes the principal capital and maximization mean of self-interest. In this regard, neoliberal techniques of governmentality embodied in the performance metrics direct and incentivize the delivery workforce to align with dangerous behaviors and strategies for themselves, resulting in extreme physical risks, dangers, and vulnerable conditions. An interviewed moto-courier expresses his experience as "narrowly escaping death or an accident every time" (Moto-Courier 3).

The implications of operationalizing platform governance based on algorithmic performance technologies become extreme in terms of working conditions when the factors of recurring economic crisis, structural unemployment, and high levels of precarity in the context of Turkey are taken into account. Given that platform moto-courier work is the primary source of livelihood for many (e.g., IPA 2021), the combination of persistent and high inflation and high unemployment leads to moto-couriers constantly working very long hours on motorbikes and striking to be faster to be able to earn a decent amount of money by maximizing their performance:

When I consider taxes, motor, food and insurance expenses, I start the month in debt of a minimum wage...And, of course, ever-rising inflation erodes our earnings and possible rises in the per-package prices. So, I need to push myself and work more than 12 hours a day to earn a decent money, but, of course, working in traffic with motorcycle more than 8-9 hours already means the high probability of a serious accident. (Moto-Courier 2)

A critical study on platform moto-couriers' conditions reveal that more than 60 percent of participants take place in this sector because they could not find any other job, and at least 64 percent of them work more than 10 hours in the day, even in the extreme weather conditions,

to earn an income corresponding to minimum wage (IPA 2021, 34). On the other hand, through governmental performance techniques, platforms keep incentivizing risk-taking by rewarding moto-couriers who maximize their speed and efficiency with bonus opportunities, high scores, and accessibility to wider flexibility and packages.

Having analyzed the algorithmic performance technologies of platform governance from the neoliberal governmentality framework in general, we can now look at the most prominent and functionalized of these technologies in Turkey's context. Accordingly, the pay-per-delivery income, bonus/promotion schemes, and priority ranking techniques are the most utilized in Turkey's on-demand platform governance in steering couriers' conduct toward heightened productivity, efficiency, and competitive edge. While they all operate through algorithmic power and performance criteria, their differences complement each other and create an efficient performance-based regime of platform governance.

#### ***4.3.1.1 Pay-Per-Delivery Income System***

Location-based platform food or grocery delivery businesses in Turkey, like most of their global counterparts, are characterized mainly by a pay-per-delivery system implying that platform delivery moto-couriers are solely paid based on the number of packages they “successfully delivered” (Pulignano et al. 2021, 2). Given the ‘independent contractor’ status, the dissolution of worker status is accompanied by the vanishing of the notion of wage and rise of the pay-per-delivery “income” system as the norm of the platform economy (Ceylan 2022, 127). It embodies a crucial technique of neoliberal rationality to direct the conduct of the workforce in line with the “managerial objective of efficiency and productivity” (Galieri 2020, 368).

The delivery moto-couriers are steered to respond to the environmental conditions introduced by platforms and internalize a self-governing logic in the pursuit of more earnings.

All interviewed moto-couriers pointed out this character of the pay-per-delivery income system when questions about the existence and level of pressure on speed and efficiency in delivering orders were directed. The participants stated that they are not subject to any kind of overt pressure or coercion to deliver orders faster by the platform firms' managers; instead, they find themselves in a situation where, to maximize their income, they need to deliver the order as fast as possible so that they can go to the next order, namely the next resource of income. As Moto-Courier 1 expresses accurately:

The company does not pressure me to deliver faster. But it approaches me this way: it says that if you move to the next package, you will earn one more. Therefore, of course, I need to deliver fast. At the end of the day, I have to be faster to get more packages and to earn more. (Moto-Courier 1)

Accordingly, platforms effectively *manage* work processes through the technique of a pay-per-delivery income system guiding the moto-couriers' decision-making processes. As their income inevitably depends on being faster and productive, platform delivery moto-couriers become self-regulated economic agents within the parameters of platforms:

Usually, there are no delays on purpose from our side because I have to deliver the package as soon as possible so that I can move on to the next order. Because the next order means the next money. So, I am careful not to make any problems. (Moto-Courier 3)

Hence, the pay-per-delivery income system turns into an essential mechanism of self-governance and individualization of gains and mistakes in line with the platforms' efficiency and profit-centric parameters.

#### **4.3.1.2 Bonus Schemes**

Bonus schemes are vital to steer the conduct and performance of moto couriers within the on-demand platform governance. Bonus mechanisms mainly operate by offering monetary incentives for specific performance metrics and high demand working hours. The algorithmic ability of platforms to identify the peak hours of demand and to track the performance of the

workforce enables them to introduce bonus schemes accordingly in the form of gamified practices (Burak 2022, 73).

On-demand platform firms in Turkey mainly utilize two bonus schemes, namely based on the number of delivered orders per day and the number of orders delivered during peak demand hours. The former offers monetary rewards for moto-couriers who exceed the certain number of delivered packages per day, while the latter, by algorithmically classifying hours following their profitability, presents lucrative bonus opportunities to work during ‘golden hours’, turning the organization of time into a competitive instrument (Kenney and Zysman 2020, 13).

Implementing bonus schemes acts as a catalyst to transform moto-couriers into self-calculative agents by integrating economic rationality into their decision-making process. In Turkey, bonus opportunities become essential sources of income for moto-couriers due to the continuous depreciation of per-package prices and ever-increasing fuel prices in the face of the recurring economic crisis. Therefore, the act of delivering is turned into a ‘strategic game’ as moto-couriers engage in a continuous cost-benefit calculation of their potential earnings and expenses attached to their actions to adjust their performance accordingly:

I mean, I’m trying to increase my income with the method of earning from bonuses...Now we all have mathematics in our heads; after all, our earnings increase with bonuses, and we are constantly doing the math of this. (Moto-Courier 4)

The pursuit of bonuses nurtures an environment in which moto-couriers drive faster to seize the bonus opportunities and disregard fundamental safety factors, leading to the emergence of dangerous practices and precarious conditions for them:

The bottom line is that you have to be fast... You will tell me to stop at red lights, follow every traffic rule and then you will also tell me the more packages you deliver, the more money you will earn. That is not logical. I cannot stop at red lights if I want to earn those bonuses. Every red light means danger and loss of time for me... After all, time is money for us, so we act accordingly. I need to catch a certain amount per hour so that I can continue this work. So, this is not a job you can earn if you follow and obey every rules. (Moto-Courier 2)

Thereby, these financial incentives transform moto-couriers into strategic players within the domain of a calculated game, prompting couriers to engage in risky actions in the face of already economically challenging conditions for couriers in Turkey.

#### ***4.3.1.3 Priority Ranking System***

The priority ranking system is employed as an effective incentivization mechanism of platforms' algorithmic landscape, rather than merely an evaluation tool. The competitive ethos induced by the ranking system encourages moto-couriers' competition in the pursuit of higher scores and earnings, resulting in self-governed economic subjects and further fragmentation of the workforce.

The determining factors of the ranking system consist of delivery speed, volume of delivered packages, customer ratings, rate of compliance with statuses, and the registered working hours in the context of Turkey. However, as noted by all participants, the most essential of these factors are exclusively delivery speed and volume of delivered orders through which one can compensate their low rates for other determinants. The moto-couriers are ranked compared to each other's performance by algorithms, determining the priority for the shift reservation and delivery task assignment. In this context, while this hierarchical and reward-punishment-based ranking system has been predominantly analyzed through a disciplinary power framework (e.g., Griesbach et al. 2019; Kellogg, Valentine and Christin 2020), a closer look reveals that the art of neoliberal government utilizes this disciplinary technique for the operationalization of governmental power's strategies and objectives. Hence, this hierarchical structure functions as a governmentality dispositive by modifying the environment of moto-couriers to extract their maximum productivity capacity.

Moreover, the fact that the possibility to have more flexibility in shift scheduling depends on moto-couriers' ranking frankly indicates a neoliberal understanding of freedom and

its operationalization as a fundamental relationship between the governor and the governed. The freedom of moto-couriers in shift-scheduling appears as an “artefact” that they, as human capital, need to earn and construct through the cultivation of their skills (of being faster, risk-taker, kind to customers), namely by becoming the entrepreneur of themselves (Dean 2010, 226). Hence, the governor acts upon the field of freedom of moto-couriers to influence and shape their behaviors by producing and organizing their freedom (Lorenzini 2018, 159), which turns into a “correlate of governmentality” (Foucault 2008, 62). On the one hand, platforms generate a particular desire for flexible modes of physical work; on the other hand, they functionalize this desire as a critical governing technique.

On the other hand, given the socio-economic conditions in Turkey, the algorithmic ranking system’s effect on priority in the assignment of delivery tasks greatly consolidates the competitive ethos. The ever-increasing recruitment of couriers by platform firms, especially in big cities in Turkey, lessens the number of delivery tasks per courier and directs them to maximize their ranking if they want to receive more tasks:

For example, there are four couriers in the warehouse and one package task. It assigns the package to the courier with the highest score. It pushes you down during package assignments if your scores are not doing well. The higher your score, the more packages you get. So, of course, there is a speed pressure because fast delivery is required for the scoring to increase. (Moto-Courier 6)

Aggravated by economic pressures, moto-couriers are constantly motivated to improve their ranking score. Hence, the ranking technique serves as a nuanced governmental apparatus to govern the conduct of couriers by directing their actions to conform to the rationality of the market economy.

Overall, the pay-per-delivery income system, bonus schemes, and priority ranking system operate as pivotal techniques of the platforms’ governmental apparatus, intricately woven into the fabric of algorithmic performance technologies, effectively governing the workforce and work process in tandem with neoliberal rationality. By unveiling the

governmental power embedded in the algorithmic technologies, this analysis diverges from the studies that exclusively analyze algorithmic modes of platforms within a disciplinary and technical framework, particularly regarding the evaluation of the ranking system. Instead, the analysis here enriches the limited body of literature (e.g., Walker et al. 2020; Gregory and Sadowski 2021; Galiere 2020) that explores algorithms' normative and productive power dynamics, contributing them with a socio-economic and conceptual analytical depth. Placing algorithmic techniques in a socio-economic setting reveals the changing faces, levels, and implications of governmental power regarding distinct contexts. In the case of Turkey, the individual performance-based algorithmic governance of the work process and workforce whose field of action has already molded in many ways by the economic crisis, rising inflation, and unemployment introduces a distinctive form of governmentality, possibly more effective than many other disciplinary techniques, while simultaneously reproduces hazardous and deteriorating conditions for the governed.

Nevertheless, the power of these particular techniques is consolidated and co-formed by the broader contextual dynamics of Turkey in terms of (in)action of state policies, and it is substantial to analyze them to compose a holistic framework of platform governance(s) beyond the platform infrastructure, contributing to the body of the literature significantly. As will be delved into in the next section, this situation demonstrates that platform governance indicates not only the particular governmental techniques exclusively employed by platforms but also the broader contextual dynamics, emphasizing the critical importance of taking these socio-economic structures into account to understand platform governance(s).

#### **4.3.2 (In)Action of the State Policies and Reserve Army of Couriers**

The general character of location-based platform work in Turkey portrays similarities concerning its global counterparts (e.g., Ceylan 2022). However, unlike in many (European)

countries where legislative processes have now been put in place for location-based platform workers to enjoy some basic labor-like protection measures and rights, primarily through court decisions (De Stefano et al. 2021, 18-23), there has been no legislative attempt or attention devoted to the (location-based) platform workers' conditions and vulnerability in Turkey by the state apparatuses (Uysal and Boyraz 2023, 6-7).

The importance of this situation in the context of Turkey is understood better when the high rate of occupational accidents and fatalities among platform delivery moto couriers are considered. Accordingly, it has been reported that up to 200 moto couriers lose their lives annually due to life-threatening risks (IPA 2022, 1; Kurye Hakları Derneği 2022, 11). The fact that the (platform) moto-courier profession is not classified in the status of 'dangerous work' and that the injuries and deaths occurring during the delivery are categorized as 'traffic accidents' rather than 'work accidents' prevents possible initiatives for legal actions on the issue in Turkey.

This legal gap in the sector and the classification problem of the moto courier profession as 'dangerous work' bring along the lack of inspection and minimalization of the barriers to enter to the sector. Accordingly, there are no criteria other than a driver's license to be a delivery moto courier in platforms; thus, a vocational/ professional qualification certificate and institutional training process are not required (ILO 2022, 27). Moreover, this gap persists despite the platform moto-couriers organizations' appeals to the relevant ministries, organized collective actions, and strongly raised moto-couriers voices on the issue (Kurye Hakları Derneği 2023, 28-30; Kaya 2023; Erol 2023, 1103-1105). The participants of this research also drew attention to the importance of this demand and pointed out the deliberate attempts to leave couriers at the mercy of companies:

It is almost like a joke that a profession that we receive news of a death almost every day is not classified as very dangerous professions and that the vocational qualification certificate is not still made compulsory...It should definitely be in the status of dangerous professions. We are on the motorcycle all day, and in the slightest mistake

you may be dead or lose one leg or arm etc. All these things can happen in a second, in a small distraction. (Moto-Courier 5)

Instead of merely a bureaucratic oversight, this governmental (in)action operates as a critical manifestation of neoliberal governmentality, forming a crucial aspect of platform governance in the context of Turkey. The absence of necessary law regulations emerges as a ‘set of strategic tactics’ which forms one of the pillars of the state’s indirect techniques to govern the rising youth unemployment in the body of platform moto-couriering and prioritize market efficiency, concurrently forming an essential component of platform governance (Karadoğan 2022, 18). The state authorities (in)action is accompanied by the ‘recommendations’ on the importance of using personal protective equipment in response to the increase in moto-couriers’ deaths and injuries, shifting the responsibility of the risk management to the moto-couriers, conforming to neoliberal ethos. More importantly, this strategic (in)action enables the consolidation of competitive logic as the formative power of platform governance by complementing the governmental power of algorithmic performance technologies.

As noted above, the expansion of the platform moto-courier workforce inversely influences the number of assigned tasks per courier, heightening the substantiality of achieving higher ranks to be prioritized in the task assignment. The lack of professional qualification document requirement intensifies the risks for the couriers on the one hand and increases the active and potential workforce, reserve army of couriers, of the platforms by reducing entry barriers, hence incentivizing couriers’ competition with each other and themselves in the pursuit of more task assignment:

In Istanbul, for example, orders are intense, but there are many couriers. Even if things are busy due to the excessive courier recruitment, the number of package assignments for you might be few. Especially if your ranking is bad... I think the professional qualification document in the moto-courier job should be compulsory. In this way, both safer working conditions can be provided, and we will not endanger ourselves so much for more packages. (Moto-Courier 3)

Given the compelling socio-economic conditions and couriers' dependence on as many packages assignment as possible to earn a decent income, the state policies' (in)activeness emerges as a governmental power constituting a key component to sustain and reproduce the platform governance by shaping and creating an environment in which market forces and competition are prioritized as the formative forces over the safety and well-being of the workforce. Then, the (in)action of the state legislative policies reveals itself as a potent form of neoliberal governmentality in the sense that they intentionally remain passive to the demands of legal protections by couriers, rather than merely exhibiting ineffectiveness.

This picture clarifies that platform governance systems extend beyond mere algorithmic infrastructures, incorporating contextually particular dynamics, implications, and levels of effectiveness in relation to the socio-economic embedded structures. Hence, it is important to understand the aspects of platformization processes and governance(s) in connection with the broader social, economic and institutional structures, rather than merely analyzing their novelties in isolation. In this regard, the analysis put forward here aims to broaden and augment the various conceptual and Foucauldian studies in the field by providing a relational socio-economic depth and placing the components of platform governance(s) in the broader societal landscape, while uniquely contributing to the very limited body of literature on the diverse and variegated nature of platforms' management processes (Griesbach et al. 2019; Huang 2023; Boyer 2022).

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has comprehensively explored the location-based digital labor platform governance in Turkey within the analytical framework of neoliberal governmentality. Through a Foucauldian lens, the research uncovers complex power dynamics at play, showing how these platforms functionalize a neoliberal rationality of conduct through various governing techniques within and beyond the algorithmic infrastructure. The findings reveal that the effectiveness of these governmental techniques is reinforced by the socio-economic conditions in Turkey, concurrently leading to a deeper state of precariatization with potentially dangerous implications.

Analyzing algorithmic performance technologies through a lens of neoliberal governance has elucidated how platforms manage the conduct of work not through direct control or discipline over the workforce but by incentivizing specific behaviors and shaping their subjectivity by means of environmental modifications. This situation brings forth the subjectivities and everyday behaviors as a point of focus to thoroughly understand the algorithmic governance of neoliberal rationality from below. Following this, it becomes clear how such governance rationality systematically encourages dangerous and unsafe work practices for the sake of greater profits.

The (in)action of state policies have been a crucial aspect of platform governance in the contextual landscape of Turkey. By not acting on the conditions of and regulation demands for the platform moto-courier profession, the state's (in)action forms a foundational element of platform governance, consolidating the power of algorithmic infrastructure and solidifying competition as a shaping force of the conduct. Hence, this characteristic feature sheds light on the intricate dynamics between the state institutions, local dynamics, and platformization

process in Turkey, implicating the necessity of comprehending the regimes of platform governance(s) in relation to the broader neoliberal dynamics.

The implications of twofold analysis focusing on algorithmic performance technologies and (in)action of state policies put forward in the Turkish context are manifold. First of all, by taking the case of Turkey in its own focus, the research has the characteristic of being a precursor work on the novel management processes of the digital on-demand platform model in Turkey. Accordingly, the findings of the research show that the constitutive elements, operational power dynamics, and severity of the implications of the platforms' management processes vary significantly in Turkey comparing the global counterparts. Moreover, operationalization of normative and non-disciplinary power techniques and technologies of neoliberal rationality indicates a shift in the dynamics between the state practices, low-rank labor control regimes, and contemporary economic landscape within Turkey's context, pointing out the transformations that the process of platformization may bring about within the neoliberal strategies in the geography.

On the other hand, the research underlines substantial implications for the empirical and theoretical studies on a global scale. Primarily, it manifests that the components that make up platformization processes and platform governance(s) in different geographies can diversify and differentiate with distinct contextual structures, indicating the importance of diverting attention to different geographies' 'actually existing' platformization processes. Secondly, the research implicates the necessity to transcend prevailing approaches that focus solely on platforms' algorithmic infrastructure as management processes and analyze their components as if they were isolated from contextual socio-economic dynamics. Instead, this research advocates analyzing platform management processes in their contextual embeddedness and beyond the algorithmic modes, which constitutes a crucial aspect of implications for future studies. Thus, the research serves as a stepping stone for further study that explores the global

variations of the platform governance(s), prompting a more comprehensive, socially embedded, and bottom-up approach toward the operational power dynamics and components of these regimes in distinct socio-economic contexts.

On the other hand, employing a neoliberal governmentality framework contributes to previous theoretical advancements in the field by going beyond the disciplinary, neutral, or technical conceptualizations of algorithmic management modes. Indeed, the analysis shows how algorithms are effects of the social relations which they emerge from and govern through neoliberal rationality's normative power techniques. Construing the productive and non-disciplinary power dynamics embedded in the governmental regimes also prepares the ground for further research on the agency and "counter-conducts" (Foucault 2007) of the platform delivery workforce (governed) by moving away from fixed, unidirectional, and top-down understanding of power and management processes.

Finally, it is essential to acknowledge that even though this study interrogates platform governance through the lived experiences of the couriers, it only reflects one facet of a multifaceted phenomenon. Another facet reveals itself in growing contestations and collective actions of delivery couriers/workforce all around the globe against the on-demand platforms, leading to the emergence of fissures in the platforms' governmental power. As a governmentality perspective on the platforms' management processes allows us to build a relational system of power, rather than an all-pervasive force, it also becomes clear that there is more in this story to discover in terms of agencies, resistances and counter-actions of the governed. Given that having a comprehensive account of the current conjuncture constitutes great importance to accurately assess the emerging forms of counter-actions and conducts, this line of investigation can be advanced and deepened building on the findings of this research. As the platformization process continues to unfold, studies that capture the lived experiences, agencies and collective actions of the workers will play a crucial role in making sense of and

shaping the reality in front of us. This research hopefully will serve as a catalyst for further studies exploring the struggle lines and forms of collectivity of the platform workforce echoing from the streets.

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