

Abstract

The precarious existence of Uber drivers operating within Johannesburg's metropolitan area is the primary area of study in which this dissertation has undertaken. Driver precarity, defined in the study as the loss of labour market security in various forms, is argued to stem from Uber's sharing economy-inspired business model. The analysis of Uber's business model, substantively focuses on the service's dynamic pricing model of fare price setting, the implementation of a 'rating' system in which to evaluate driver performance and the use of 'independent contractor' labour. It is argued that each of these three Uber business practices place drivers in a position of precarity in the realm of their income, employment, work and job security. The study mobilises a qualitative research methodology, enlisting the methods of unstructured interviews on eight active Uber drivers, four autoethnographical observations on real-time work behaviour and document analysis to generate data for analysis. The prevailing argument made regarding Uber's precarity-creation, is aided through a consultation of Guy Standing's theorisation on precarity (2011), with Harvey's flexible Accumulation theory (1990), Foucault's Panopticism thesis (1975) and Hochschild's emotional labour theory (1983) broadening the scope of the analysis.