# Power relations in app-based food delivery in Norway

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*To my three children,*
*Einar, Astrid and Ida Olaug*

# Abstract

What happens when companies that use apps and algorithms to manage a pool of workers with non-standard work arrangements enter a well-organised labour market? In this thesis, I analyse Foodora Norway as a critical case, to better understand how actors (companies, workers and unions) in a segment of the Norwegian labour market with weak union organising and low collective agreement coverage contest and shape new forms of work.

Platform companies like Foodora have emerged on the margins of the Nordic labour market model, where non-standard forms of work are widespread and collective representation is weak, in an otherwise well-regulated labour market. The companies' use of self-employed workers, combined with a potential for control through apps and algorithms, challenge labour rights and the collective bargaining framework of the Norwegian labour market model. My research has two aims: to (a) empirically explore the development of app-based food and grocery delivery in Norway and (b) investigate the evolving power relations and implications for working conditions and labour relations when platform companies like Foodora enter a well-regulated labour market like that in Norway.

Building on qualitative methods, interviews, document analysis and observation, my decade-long research project answers the following questions:

- How do platform companies, workers and trade unions' access to and use of power resources shape working conditions in Norwegian app-based food and grocery delivery?
- How do platform companies change their strategies in response to worker mobilisation and market competition, and what are the implications for labour relations?

I understand app-based food and grocery delivery as an emerging field or socially constructed arena lacking clear norms and regulations, where the actors – companies, workers and unions – with opposing views and conflicts of interest try to shape the field to their advantage. Power resources are used by the actors to mobilise and shape the field – e.g., organising collectively, using labour laws and collective bargaining frameworks, building robust organisations, influencing public opinion and governments and building alliances with other actors.

The thesis also includes an analysis of the situation of app-based delivery workers in Germany and France. These two labour markets are distinct from that of Norway, but there are some similarities involving instances of bottom-up mobilisation among delivery workers, which can help us to better understand the Norwegian case.

The thesis builds on four papers. In paper I, I investigate how platform companies influence working conditions and pay, and I develop a typology of employment models emerging in Norway. In papers II and III, my colleagues and I take a worker perspective on power resources and explore how workers in Norway, Germany and France become collective actors, and how they build, use and combine power resources to improve working conditions and pay. In paper IV, using power as a relational concept by exploring the power resources of both workers and companies, I analyse (a) the emerging field of app-based food and grocery delivery in Norway with a focus on the interaction between the field and the broader structure of the Norwegian labour market model and (b) how power relations evolve among the actors and how this affects working conditions and pay.

My findings offer several contributions. First, by combining the concept of an emerging field with power resource and mobilisation theory, I show how the actors use power resources strategically to shape the employment models of platform companies. Second, my research provides insights into how non-standard workers are mobilised in an emerging field, focusing on strategies that workers and unions use to build and maintain power resources. In particular, I show how combining different power resources is crucial, and that workers need to develop the capabilities to effectively use them. This is especially the case when companies consistently challenge the power resources of workers. Third, I offer theoretical reflections on the (non-)settlement of fields in relation to app-based food delivery. This field's inherent characteristic seems to be its fluidity, with companies constantly changing their models to evade regulations. For capital, a fluid field is advantageous, as it enables continual adjustments to employment models and algorithmic management, helping companies to evade regulations. For the workers, it appears that a sector-level agreement and stronger enforcement of regulations could be central in protecting them from negative consequences of purely market-based relationships. However, the fluidity of the field may also allow app-based food and grocery delivery to remain in a state of continuous change (i.e., 'messy') on the margins of the Norwegian labour market model.

**Keywords**: app-based food and grocery delivery, algorithmic management, emerging fields, employment models, Foodora Norway, platform work, non-standard work, Norwegian labour market model, power resources

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# LIST OF PAPERS

This thesis is based on three articles and one book chapter:

I. Jesnes, K. (2019). Employment models of platform companies in Norway: A distinctive approach? *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, *9*(56), 52–73.

II. Jesnes, K., Neumann, D., Trappmann, V., & de Becdelièvre, P. (2021). The role of worker collectives among app-based food delivery couriers in France, Germany and Norway: All the same or different? In J. Drahokoupil & K. Vandaele (Eds.), *A Modern Guide To Labour and the Platform Economy* (pp. 258–273). Edward Elgar Publishing.

III. López, T., Jesnes, K., Alyanak, O., & Karlıdağ, Z. (2024). Building labour power in the platform economy: A comparative analysis of worker struggles in German and Norwegian food and grocery delivery. *New Technology, Work and Employment* [special issue, forthcoming]. 1-23.

IV. Jesnes, K. (2024). Shifting gears: How platform companies maintain power in app-based food delivery in Norway. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, *29*(4), 507–524.

# Preface

In the fall of 2019, I observed the five-week-long strike by couriers employed by Foodora Norway. The strike ended when the parties involved, Foodora and the United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet), signed a collective agreement. This strike – keenly observed by couriers in Europe – attracted significant media attention, partly because this was the first sign of platform companies integrating into the well-organised Norwegian labour market. The collective agreement represented a victory for the workers and the union, as it was the first to be bargained in Norway's 'platform economy'.[1] The agreement included a pay raise, compensation for equipment and for working in winter months, and a pension scheme. Furthermore, it enabled couriers to negotiate with the company on pay each year, and to renegotiate the agreement biannually (2020, 2022, 2024). For the company, it served as an opportunity to position itself as 'best in class' among platform companies, which are often criticised for bypassing labour regulations, avoiding collective bargaining and providing precarious working conditions with little transparency, autonomy or control over the work process.

Had I completed my research at that time, the following text would present a narrative in which platform companies integrate into the fold, adhering to standard labour norms and embracing collective representation within a highly unionised labour market. However, keeping the groundbreaking collective agreement in mind, I paused my research to welcome my first child in March 2020. About a week later, the country faced its first lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and my hiatus coincided with enormous changes in the labour market and the field I was studying. The pandemic had significant effects on the lives of platform workers. Due to lockdowns and measures to prevent contamination, food couriers experienced an increase in deliveries and began delivering groceries, but at the risk of exposure to contamination. Uber drivers, on the other hand, lost customers and income overnight, but eventually were supported by temporary social security schemes for the self-employed.

In addition, in response to heavy competition from the Finnish food and grocery delivery company Wolt – which relied solely on self-employed and freelancers (see appendix I for differences between these two employment models) – Foodora also started using self-employed and freelancers in addition to part-time employees. The self-employed workers did not have access to the same rights and benefits as employees, such as sick leave, collective bargaining or the ability to strike. This right came with the 2022 EU guidelines (adopted in Norway) stipulating that solo self-employed could also negotiate collectively. Foodora's move thus significantly challenged the union, and consequently the collective agreement covered fewer and fewer workers.

[1] The platform, or gig, economy refers to the totality of platform companies (see appendix I for terminology).

These important developments in the field of app-based food and grocery delivery during my leave of absence underline the shifting power relations at play in the emerging field of app-based food and grocery delivery. Following additional parental leaves spanning from September 2021 to April 2022, and again from September 2023 to May 2024, regulatory advancements were made both in Norway in 2023 with amendments to the Norwegian Working Environment Act (implemented in 2024) and at the EU level with the Directive for Platform Workers (agreed upon in 2024). It remains to be seen as to whether these new regulations, a decade after the platform companies started operating in Norway, will limit companies' power in this emerging field.

It would be an understatement to claim that the process of analysis has not been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and three pregnancies, followed by three parental leaves. Papers I and II were published in 2019 and 2021 respectively, while papers III and IV were published in 2024. As a result, there is a clear distinction between the narratives of the first two papers (i.e., 'these companies are being integrated') and the latter two papers, where I had to revisit this analysis. The first narrative emphasises both how structure and worker agency in the form of mobilisation or resistance shape work; the second concerns how company agency and shifting power relations between actors, over time, shape work. Studying these companies over a longer period of time has enabled me to see how power relations play out in this emerging field, where norms and regulations are not yet settled. Therefore, I hope my research can serve as a window into the strategies of workers, companies and unions when shaping new forms of work, and how power relations may unfold in a less organised segment of the labour market.

During my PhD research, I have been fortunate to receive valuable support and guidance from colleagues. I would first like to extend my appreciation to my supervisors, Bertil Rolandsson (University of Gothenburg) and Sissel Trygstad (Fafo). Bertil, thank you for challenging me to theorise and for posing the difficult questions. Sissel, I am grateful for your constructive feedback and generous sharing of practical solutions and guidance whenever I knock on your door. You go above and beyond to assist others! To my previous supervisor, Kristina Håkansson, thank you for believing in me and for your constructive advice. Ylva Ulfsdotter Eriksson, thank you for stepping in when I needed it. To Peter O'Reilly, Jesper Prytz, Anna Davidsson, Anna Ilsøe and Christian Lyhne Ibsen, thank you for reading and commenting on my work during university seminars.

I am very grateful to the Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research for providing financial support for my thesis through the Trade Union Research Programme (Fagbevegelsesprogrammet). I am also grateful for the opportunity to take part in several interesting research projects alongside my work on the thesis. Collaboration with colleagues in these projects, especially the project 'The future of work in the Nordic countries' has been invaluable and has given me ideas and input. To my colleagues in the

working life group at Fafo and all 'Fafoister', thank you for being the best colleagues and friends. I appreciate you sharing your knowledge, providing valuable feedback and always offering encouragement. None mentioned, none forgotten!

I would also like to express my gratitude to the University of Gothenburg for welcoming me at the Department of Sociology and Work Science and for offering an enriching learning environment. To my colleagues at the university – Helena, Ellen, Robin and Jesper – I have truly enjoyed our conversations and *fikas* over the years.

During my work on the thesis, I have been fortunate to collaborate with researchers across Europe. I would particularly like to extend my gratitude to Denis Neumann, Vera Trappmann, Pauline de Becdelièvre, Tatiana López, Oğuz Alyanak, Zeynep Karlıdağ, Kurt Vandaele, Cosmin Popan and Sophie Banasiak for their collaborations on chapters and articles. I look forward to the possibility of collaborating again in the future. Thanks also to my colleagues in Nordic networks on platform work and the future of work. You know who you are – let us continue the conversation and exchanges! Thanks to my colleagues at the Industrial Relations Research Institute (IRRU) at Warwick University and the School of Human Resources (IGS-RH) in Paris for welcoming me through the ERASMUS programme. Thanks also to Akasie språktjenester, Nicole and Margo, for language editing my texts.

To the participants in this study who have contributed with their time, experiences and knowledge, thank you! Without you, there would not have been a thesis, and more importantly, there would not have been a collective agreement.

To my family, thank you for your unwavering support. Magnus, you are my anchor, and I deeply value your perspectives, steadfastness and desire to always move forwards (mostly on your feet). To my three children, Einar, Astrid and Ida Olaug, you light up my day and constantly remind me of the importance of cherishing the small, everyday moments. To my parents and in-laws, siblings and neighbours – it takes a village to raise children while writing a PhD!

I take full responsibility for any errors in my thesis.

Kristin Jesnes
Oslo, December 2024

# 1

# Introduction

What happens when new companies using apps and algorithms to manage a pool of workers with non-standard work arrangements enter a well-organised labour market, like that in Norway? Will the companies adapt to the Norwegian labour market model by accepting regulations, unionisation and collaboration with trade unions? Or will they continue to insist – despite conflicts with workers, norms and regulations – that they are only digital platforms for service exchange, and thus exempt from labour regulation? How would the choices of these companies affect workers? And how would the workers respond?

Platform companies like Foodora match workers and clients through digital technologies, most often on a per-task basis (Piasna, 2021). Such companies entered the Norwegian labour market a decade ago with the taxi platform Uber in late 2014, and the food delivery company Foodora arriving shortly after in 2015. Globally, platform companies had already become widespread. The promise of flexible jobs appealed to many unemployed in economies hard hit by the Great Recession of 2007–2009 (Vallas & Schor, 2020), and the introduction and widespread adoption of the smartphone enabled the rapid growth of app-based services where one could log into the app and find work. However, the spread of platform companies sparked debates internationally that in many cases still linger, addressing the impact on labour markets, raising concerns about regulatory evasion and job insecurity (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017; Vallas & Schor, 2020). Platform companies often assert that they are merely digital platforms facilitating service exchanges between self-employed workers and consumers or client companies, despite the control over workers enabled by apps and algorithms (Adams-Prassl, 2022; Van Doorn & Badger, 2020). While platform companies designate workers as self-employed, exempting them from labour regulations, this may not align with legal definitions (Hotvedt, 2018; Piasna, 2024). Platform work thus may be bogus self-employment where workers are deprived of social protection and employment rights inherent in the employment relationship (Prassl, 2018; Hotvedt, 2018).[2]

Considering this, it is particularly interesting to explore what happens when such companies enter a well-regulated labour market like Norway's, with high union density, institutionalised collective bargaining frameworks, generous welfare benefits and an

[2] Appendix I offers a set of terminology on forms of employment and platform work.

ambitious Working Environment Act[3] with provisions for health and safety, working hours, dismissal etc., and where standard employment is the norm. The platform companies present a way of organising work, with new opportunities for income, which raises concerns about the boundaries between employee and self-employed (see appendix I for detailed definitions). Consequently, platform companies may challenge the purpose of the Working Environment Act, as well as workers' rights to collective bargaining and codetermination, fundamental to the Norwegian labour market model. Central in my research, therefore, is the normative assumption that the Norwegian labour market model improves working conditions and pay for all workers, and the efficiency and productivity within the economy overall (Andersen et al. 2014; Svarstad 2023). This assumption is also documented in several Official Norwegian Reports (see for instance NOU, 2021:9, p. 33).

Today, platform companies are most prevalent within app-based food and grocery delivery and transportation, as is the case in Norway (Bessa et al. 2022; Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2023). In this thesis, I argue that app-based food and grocery delivery is a field still in its nascent stages of development. I use the notion of an emerging field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) to conceptualise this as a socially constructed segment of the labour market lacking clear norms and regulations, where the actors – companies, workers and unions – with their opposing views and conflicts of interest, try to shape the field to their advantage. The power resources that actors mobilise play a key role in shaping their strategies within the field (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Korpi, 1983, 1985; Lukes, 2005 [1974]; Silver, 2003; Wright, 2000); these power resources include organising collectively, using labour laws and collective bargaining frameworks, building robust organisations, influencing public opinion and governments, and building alliances with other actors. Considering that previous literature on platform work has identified its characteristics and attempted to measure its size, my research adds a perspective addressing how the power resources are used, how power relations develop and how shifting power relations between the actors' shape work in an emerging field.

## Aim and research questions

My research has a dual aim: to empirically explore the development of Norwegian app-based food and grocery delivery, and to investigate the evolving power relations and implications for working conditions and labour relations when platform companies like Foodora enter a well-organised labour market like that in Norway.

[3] 'The purpose of the Act is: a. to secure a working environment that provides a basis for a healthy and meaningful working situation, affords full safety from harmful physical and mental influences and always has a standard of welfare consistent with the level of technological and social development of society' https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-62/KAPITTEL_1#KAPITTEL_1.

Based on four papers, my work answers the following research questions:

1. How do platform companies, workers and trade unions' access to and use of power resources shape working conditions in Norwegian app-based food and grocery delivery?
2. How do platform companies change their strategies in response to worker mobilisation and market competition, and what are the implications for labour relations?

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will set the scene by providing an overview of how the Norwegian labour market model is presented in industrial relations literature as an inclusive and well-organised labour market but with some sectors that are less organised. Thereafter, I will address the emergence of new forms of non-standard work, and how unions approach groups of workers in non-standard work arrangements. I will then introduce the case of Foodora Norway and the main actors in Norwegian app-based food and grocery delivery. Next, I will outline the research design, including a few introductory remarks on the methodology and theoretical framework of the thesis, as well as a set of contributions. Finally, I will provide an outline for the remainder of the thesis.

## The Norwegian labour market model

Based on a combination of disciplines, including sociology, political science, economics, history and law, this thesis draws on studies in industrial relations: defined as the study of work, employment and the institutions and regulations that govern the workplace and the employment relationship (see for instance Dunlop, 1958; Marginson & Sisson, 2002). This definition acknowledges the centrality of the employment relationship in protecting the weaker party, while also recognising the interplay between trade unions, employer organisations and governments in governing and regulating the employment relationship.

My research is clearly positioned within the field of industrial relations, as it seeks to address how platform companies that use technology to organise work in a new way challenge the standard employment relationship; and how unions, workers and companies influence the development and characteristics of work. Besides addressing the employment relationship, I use industrial relations theory – specifically, a typology of different labour market models (Gallie, 2007, 2011) – as a background, against which I highlight the characteristics of the Norwegian labour market model, and argue that Foodora Norway is a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Patton, 2014) for studying questions concerning the rise of platform work. A critical case in research investigating this realm of work typically emerges when one can say 'if the platform companies don't integrate into a well-organised labour market, they won't anywhere'.

Within industrial relations literature, the Norwegian labour market model forms part of the broader family of 'Nordic labour market models' (Andersen et al., 2014), which are referred to as 'Nordic coordinated countries' (Gallie, 2011, p. 42). These are characterised by high union density, organised employers, high-trust relations and high collective bargaining coverage (Gallie, 2007, 2011). They are also considered to be inclusive employment regimes, meaning that there is a close collaboration and institutionalised coordination between governments, trade unions and employer organisations in decision-making and wage formation, and that employee rights are widely extended to the working-age population (Andersen et al., 2014; Gallie, 2007, 2011).

In Gallie's typology of labour markets, Norway is compared to 'continental coordinated countries' like Germany. These countries have lower union density and a less institutionalised role for social partners in policy implementation, yet collective bargaining remains more significant than in liberal labour markets like that in the United Kingdom (Gallie, 2011). Germany is referred to as more 'dualistic' than the Nordic countries, as the rights of core workers are often prioritised at the expense of those in non-standard forms of work in less unionised sectors, such as the private service sector wherein we find the platform economy (Emmenegger et al., 2012; Funke & Picot, 2021; Gallie, 2007, 2011).

Other traits of the Nordic labour markets at the macro level include institutionalised, multi-tiered collective bargaining,[4] high employment rates, relatively strong enforcement mechanisms, the presence of a generous welfare state and low wage inequality (Andersen et al., 2014; Dølvik et al., 2015, Esping-Andersen, 1990; Trygstad et al., 2023). Dølvik et al. (2015) identify three pillars of the Nordic model at the macro level: responsible macro-economic policies (with a focus on labour market participation and skill development), coordinated, multi-tiered collective bargaining complemented by statutory regulation, and public welfare based on universal schemes for income security. The Nordic labour market model has demonstrated efficiency in adapting to new technologies, organising work in new ways and navigating crises such as the Great Recession of 2007–2009 and the COVID-19 pandemic (Alsos & Dølvik, 2021; De la Porte & Larsen, 2023; Dølvik et al., 2017; Katzenstein, 1985; Trygstad et al., 2023). Union–company collaboration traditionally facilitates better acceptance and integration of new technologies in ways that enhance productivity and competitiveness (Alsos & Dølvik, 2021; Dølvik & Steen, 2018).

However, there are different ways to conceptualise the Norwegian labour market model. One distinction recognises the analytical level of analysis – from micro to meso to macro – although these levels are closely interconnected (Hernes, 2006; Hilsen & Steen, 2023). At the meso level, pattern wage bargaining, where one sector sets the rate for agreements

[4] Multi-tiered collective bargaining implies that multiple employers are involved in setting wages at the sector level, while adjustments at the company level are also permitted (see Alsos et al., 2019; Dølvik et al., 2018).

in other sectors, is essential. In Norway, wage growth is adjusted to the export-competing industries through the 'front-runner model', with the United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet) leading the way in representing workers (Andersen et al., 2014, p. 17; Svarstad, 2023). The front-runner model ensures that the lowest paid benefit the most, as they receive the wage increases secured by unionised workers with greater bargaining power (Svarstad, 2023). For most workers, wage setting is still determined through sector-level negotiations; in this way, the model is 'centralised', but also 'decentralised' in the sense that it enables company-level agreements to be negotiated (Alsos et al., 2019), as exemplified by the Foodora–Fellesforbundet agreement in 2019.[5]

At the micro level, Hernes (2006) explains how the cooperation between management and unions in the workplace occurs, and how it is facilitated by institutionalised cooperation and agreements at higher levels (Hernes, 2006; Hilsen & Steen, 2024). For instance, the Basic Agreement, an overarching collective agreement between employer associations and confederations for employees,[6] requires management and trade union representatives at the company level to hold regular meetings. They are also obligated to discuss issues such as layoffs, downsizing and working time, as well as to implement the Working Environment Act and collective bargaining outcomes (Løken et al., 2013; Trygstad et al. 2023). Trade union representatives and management at the workplace level negotiate wages annually and agreements every second year, in compliance with sector-level agreements and Basic Agreements. Central parties only intervene if the local negotiations fail, but this rarely occurs. Negotiations are governed by a peace obligation that prohibits strikes (Svarstad & Nymoen, 2022). A collective strike may be carried out to pressure a company to enter into a collective agreement, as was the case at Foodora Norway, or to push demands during revisions of a collective agreement. Prior to a strike, the National Mediator of Norway must be notified, and the parties must undergo formal mediation (Løken et al., 2013), which was the case at Foodora Norway before the strike in 2019.

Union density is seen as an important measure of worker power at the societal level (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013). Moreover, unions are perceived to provide workers with a collective voice, contribute to democratising the employment relationship and constrain the power of capital (Alsos & Trygstad, 2022; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013). Union density in Norway is currently 50%, stable over the past decade but

[5] When Foodora became a member of Virke, the agreement was negotiated between Virke and Fellesforbundet.
[6] The first Basic Agreement was concluded in 1935 between the employers' organisation Norsk Arbeidsgiverforening (N.A.F. – today, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, or NHO) and Arbeidernes Faglige Landsorganisasjon (today, the Confederation of Norwegian Trade Unions, or LO), often referred to as the 'constitution' of the labour market. The parties have revised the Basic Agreement every fourth year, since. The Basic Agreement regulates the interactions between employers and employees (Hilsen & Steen, 2024; Løken et al., 2013). Today, there are Basic Agreements between other confederations as well.

down from 57% in 1990 (Kjellberg & Nergaard, 2022, p. 62; Nergaard, 2024).[7] However, there are important differences between union density at the sector-level in Norway, with 80% being unionised in the public sector and 38% and 34% in the private sector and private service sector, respectively (Nergaard, 2024, pp. 11, 13). Segmentation in the labour market between core workers with stable jobs and opportunities for collective representation and those at the periphery has also been observed within the Norwegian labour market model (Dølvik, 2015). Union density has declined, especially within retail, construction, and accommodation and catering services (Alsos & Nergaard, 2023). Bechter et al. (2012), in their critique of the 'methodological nationalism' of comparative industrial relations, emphasise how important these sectoral differences are in understanding the employment relations and working conditions of different groups of workers. For instance, the private service sector, especially cleaning, has long been considered on the margins of labour relations across Europe and in Norway (Nicolaisen & Trygstad, 2015).

Norway's relatively high collective agreement coverage (71%)[8] combined with mechanisms for legally extending wage terms contribute to decent working conditions and reduced inequality, including in sectors on the margins of the model. While there is no statutory minimum wage in Norway, the mechanism of legally extending wage terms have been applied across sectors such as cleaning, construction, hotels and restaurants (Alsos et al., 2019; Blinkenberg, 2024).[9] While extension of collective agreements allows for potential free riding by non-union members, this system – combined with Norway's compressed wage structure – is assumed to contribute to decent working conditions and low inequality (Kjellberg & Nergaard, 2022; Svarstad & Nymoen, 2022). For instance, this has ensured that low-paid workers in Norway in many sectors earn relatively more than their European counterparts (Aspøy, 2023; Svarstad, 2023).

The private service sector, where union density is low, is where platform companies have emerged and become prevalent (Bessa et al., 2022; Valestrand & Oppegaard, 2022). The app-based food and grocery delivery company Foodora and the personal transportation company Uber are prime examples of platform companies in this context, and they have emerged in these 'fringes' of the Nordic labour market model (Valestrand & Oppegaard, 2022), where non-standard work is more prevalent and there is high turnover and many young and migrant workers (Alsos & Nergaard, 2023; Alsos & Trygstad, 2018; Rasmussen

[7] The lower union density in Norway compared to Sweden (with 69%) and Denmark (with 67%) is often attributed to the Ghent system, where the union is responsible for the unemployment funds and incentivises union membership in Sweden and Denmark, in contrast to the state being responsible for the unemployment fund, which is the case in Norway (Alsos & Nergaard 2023; Kjellberg & Nergaard, 2022).

[8] The collective agreement coverage is 100% in the public sector, 55% in the private sector, and 53% in the private service sector (Nergaard, 2024, p. 24).

[9] Since the Norwegian Mandatory Extension Act was adopted in 1993, collective agreements are extended in the following industries: construction, shipyard workshops, agriculture, cleaning, fisheries, electrical workers, freight transport (above 3.5 tonnes, to cover vehicles down to 2,5 tonnes from mid-2025), passenger transport and accommodation, serving and catering (Blinkenberg, 2024).

et al., 2019). A central issue in my thesis, therefore, is how workers in a labour market segment with less tradition of collective bargaining and scant organisation try to build and use power resources to realise the Nordic model's potential in elevating standards for all workers.

## Non-standard work and platform work

Understanding what is unique about platform work requires understanding the 'standard employment relationship', as well as the various non-standard forms of work – with platform work being an addition to this list (see appendix I for details). 'Non-standard work' refers to work arrangements deviating from the standard employment relationship characterised by its open-ended contracts and full-time and direct employment (Bosch, 2004; Kalleberg, 2000; Rubery et al., 2018).[10] While the development of the standard employment relationship has been complemented by enhanced worker access to social protection and individual and collective labour rights through statutory regulations and collective agreements (Bosch, 2004; Kalleberg, 2000; Rubery et al., 2018), non-standard workers have limited access to benefits and employment protection and do not necessarily have the resources to use and benefit from these rights (Banasiak & Jesnes, 2024; Keune & Pedaci, 2019; Kjellberg & Nergaard, 2022).

Interest in non-standard work in Europe and Norway has increased since the Great Recession, after which new forms of non-standard work spread (Eurofound, 2020, 2024). Emerging forms of non-standard work often associated with platform work – such as disguised self-employment and dependent self-employment – challenge what is called the 'binary divide' between employees and the self-employed (Eurofound, 2024). To understand these new forms of non-standard work, we must take a step back and look at the distinction between employment and self-employment. Employees have employment contracts, exchanging their labour for wages while recognising the employer's role in managing the work (Hotvedt et al., 2020). In contrast, self-employed traditionally operate outside the labour market, and retain the autonomy to take risks, generate surplus and organise their work according to personal preferences (Furåker, 2005; Hotvedt et al., 2020). They are not subordinated an employer, and, in place of wages, they receive income for the completion of shorter or longer assignments (Hotvedt et al. 2020). While most self-employed individuals enjoy favourable conditions and autonomy, some are economically dependent on one or a few clients and have limited autonomy in setting prices, and this is what is called 'dependent self-employment' (Eurofound, 2023, 2024.).[11] Disguised (or false, bogus, masked or sham) self-employment falls in a grey area between

[10] Non-standard forms of work: temporary employment, short part-time (16–20 hours per week) or marginal part-time work (1–15 hours per week), on-call work, zero-hour contracts (prohibited in Norway since 2019), and temporary agency work (ILO, 2016; Eurofound, 2023; Rubery et al., 2018) (see appendix I for details).
[11] This dependency on income from one or a few clients particularly concerns 'solo self-employed' individuals who work entirely on their own (Eurofound, 2024).

employment and self-employment and underlines companies' intentions to circumvent labour law and social security regulations by designating workers as self-employed, thus reducing costs and obligations (Eurofound, 2024).[12] In such cases, workers may take their case to court to determine whether or not they are in an employment relationship (Hotvedt, 2018). In recent years, there have been numerous such cases across Europe involving platform workers (though not yet in Norway), particularly in food delivery, with varying results from different courts and countries (Defossez, 2022).

Despite the attention given to new forms of non-standard work in Europe after the Great Recession, the scope of non-standard workers has remained relatively stable in the Nordic countries over the years (Ilsøe et al., 2021a; Rasmussen et al., 2019). In Norway, about 12.5% of the working-age population (20–66 yrs) are in a non-standard form of work arrangement, but the levels are higher when only considering the private service sector (Cools et al., 2023; Svalund et al., 2018). A few regulatory changes have been established in Norway to 'tame' the emergence of new forms of work. These changes include restrictions on zero-hour contracts (in 2019) and on when companies can use fixed-term contracts (Ilsøe et al., 2021b; Nergaard & Svalund, 2023; Rasmussen et al., 2019).

Many countries, including Norway, implemented temporary social protection schemes for self-employed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns (Spasova & Regazzoni, 2022; Svalund et al., under review). Self-employed have had limited access to collective labour rights, such as the right to strike and bargain collectively (Aloisi, 2022; De Stefano, 2016; Oyetunde & Prouska, 2024). However, with updated EU guidelines from 2022, solo self-employed in Norway may bargain collectively without conflicting with competition law (Alsos & Dølvik, 2021; Eurofound, 2024; Norwegian Competition Authority, 2022).[13] However, this is a recent development and has not yet established a foothold in Norway.

While non-standard work decreased somewhat during the COVID-19 pandemic (those in such positions were the first to lose their jobs), platform work increased, as they were the frontline workers delivering food, for instance to people in quarantine (Eurofound, 2023; 2024). While platform work can increase income opportunities for platform workers with high skills and formal education, workers doing low-skilled tasks through platforms, such as app-based food and grocery delivery, are often categorised as 'precarious' workers: i.e., their work entails insufficient and variable hours, low and unpredictable income, limited individual labour and social protection rights, occupational health and safety risks and limited access to collective labour rights, voice mechanisms and bargaining power (Rubery et al., 2018; Tassinari & Maccarone, 2020).

[12] Dependent and bogus self-employment are now included in the list of non-standard forms of work (Eurofound, 2024).

[13] Traditionally, self-employed individuals were regarded as legal entities or companies, which meant that they were unable to engage in collective bargaining. This was because it would have been seen as a violation of EU competition law, as it involved setting prices between companies.

The understanding of precarity and precarious work remains a subject of ongoing debate (Alberti et al., 2018). It is associated with broader labour market trends such as the dualisation and segmentation of the labour market, implying a division of the labour market where some groups have secure jobs in sectors with high union density and collective bargaining coverage, while other groups are stuck with more precarious jobs in sectors where collective bargaining institutions have eroded (Grimshaw et al., 2017; Kalleberg, 2011; Nicolaisen & Trygstad, 2015; Svalund & Berglund, 2018).[14] While non-standard work refers to deviations from standard employment, precarious work highlights negative aspects found in both standard and non-standard work (Eurofound, 2017; ILO, 2016; Rubery et al., 2018). Non-standard work can be voluntary and financially rewarding, especially for highly skilled individuals (Green & Livanos, 2015; Steen et al., 2019). However, certain forms of non-standard work, such as disguised and dependent self-employment (and platform work), are particularly vulnerable and grant significant power to companies without corresponding employer responsibilities (Eurofound, 2023, 2024).

A shift in focus is recommended by Alberti et al. (2018) from the broad concept of 'precarity' or the 'precariat' as a class, as emphasised by Standing (2011), to examining the drivers and patterns of precarisation. This approach views precarisation as a process rather than a static condition (Alberti et al., 2018; Banasiak & Jesnes, 2024) and enables the study of company strategies. For example, Moore and Newsome (2018) identified the strategic use of contractual status as a driver of precarisation in their study of delivery work in the United Kingdom. They argue that the practice of using solo self-employed workers shifts risks onto workers while cutting costs for companies, resulting in the re-commodification of work, where labour is treated as a commodity (see also Fudge, 2017).

In relation to this, one area of research emphasises how platform companies evade employer responsibilities by automating employer functions (Adams-Prassl, 2022; Prassl, 2018). The term 'algorithmic management', coined by Lee et al. (2015), refers to companies' use of technological tools and digital supervision systems to manage and discipline the workforce with little human oversight (De Stefano & Taes, 2023). Studies show how platform companies direct worker behaviour through three elements: automated work allocation, performance evaluation systems/ratings and variegated price setting or bonuses to steer behaviour (De Stefano & Taes, 2023; Duggan et al., 2020; Oppegaard, 2021). Legal scholars argue that algorithmic management, especially combined with the contract of self-employment, conceals subordination and control,

[14] Labour market dualisation refers to a theory suggesting that 'insiders' hold secure jobs (standard employment relationships) and enjoy the advantages of strong collective bargaining frameworks while 'outsiders' hold non-standard forms of work and face greater insecurity in sectors where collective bargaining is weak – a process that results in a more divided labour market (Emmenegger et al., 2012). This theory also suggests that unions primarily protect labour market insiders at the expense of outsiders. Labour market segmentation is a related process, but with a more intersectional perspective, whereby workers are treated differently in the labour market based on characteristics like gender, ethnicity, skills and employment arrangements (Grimshaw et al., 2017).

allowing companies to avoid employer responsibilities by 'outsourcing' employer tasks to algorithms (Aloisi, 2022; Prassl, 2018).

Another way in which platform work differs from other non-standard work is the way platform companies seek to maximise flexibility in the workforce, by relying only on non-standard forms of work. Since Atkinson's 'flexible firm' (1984), a strand of research has explored how companies combine the standard employment relationships with non-standard forms of work (Atkinson, 1984; Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Nesheim & Jesnes, 2022; Svalund et al., 2018). Non-standard workers in companies where a collective agreement is in place are entitled to various forms of representation and benefits, if the core workers agree to include them (Hotvedt et al., 2020). In contrast, platform workers usually work in companies with only non-standard workers or self-employed that perform services via an app, and the potential for obtaining union representatives and a collective agreement is limited. These workers are therefore easily excluded from mechanisms that facilitate collective representation and voice.

## Unions and the mobilisation of non-standard workers

Unions have traditionally been the primary representatives of organised workers. To understand the mobilisation of non-standard workers, such as platform workers, it is essential therefore to understand how unions typically engage with this group. Yet, it is also important to identify the common traits of platform worker mobilisation, which has thus far tended towards organising outside of unions. In the case of Foodora Norway, we observe an interesting scenario where a mobilisation process begins from the bottom up, but quickly integrates with a powerful union. Thereafter we also witness a top-down effort from a powerful union in mobilising these workers. This case therefore provides valuable insight into a successful mobilisation of non-standard workers, from both a top-down and a bottom-up perspective. Following, I will first address the broader debate surrounding unions and non-standard workers, considering both European and Norwegian perspectives. Then, I will examine the bottom-up approach to mobilisation.

Against the backdrop of declining unions in Europe and the emergence of new forms of non-standard work (e.g., platform work), traditional unions' willingness and ability to organise and effectively address the concerns of non-standard workers have come into question (Bertolini & Dukes, 2021; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2017; Meardi et al. 2019). The balance between unions' prioritisation of narrow economic interests, such as protecting their own core members, versus broader social agendas has varied across time, countries and sectors (Bechter et al., 2012; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013).

However, studies suggest that trade unions are increasingly willing and in the position to represent non-standard workers (Hyman & Gumbrell-McCormick, 2017; Keune, 2015;

Meardi et al., 2019; Simms et al., 2018). Recent research demonstrates how unions actively seek to improve their conditions, with strategies tailored to specific sectors (e.g., shortening supply chains in construction, ensuring more stable contracts in temporary agency work) (Keune & Pedaci, 2019). Other research has studied the conditions under which young precarious workers join unions and find that unions' targeted campaigns, coalition building, membership activism and training activities are innovative union approaches addressing these workers (Simms et al., 2018).

Norwegian unions – including the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), the relevant confederation in this thesis – have traditionally relied on local union representatives to handle recruitment at the company level (Steen, 2018). This approach implies that long-term recruitment efforts outside of the workplace may suffer, particularly in the private service sector where there are fewer workplaces with union representatives (Ibid.; Alsos & Nergaard, 2023). In recent years, however, Norwegian trade unions (including LO) have actively sought to attract new members and strengthen the voices of underrepresented groups – such as young and migrant workers or workers in non-standard work (including self-employed) – through targeted strategies and recruitment efforts (Huseby & Alsos, 2024; Jesnes & Nergaard, 2019; Steen et al., 2019).

Norwegian trade unions can legally include freelancers (see appendix I for a definition of this term) and self-employed workers as members (Huseby & Alsos, 2024). Traditionally, unions for professionals, cultural workers and journalists have organised self-employed and freelancers (Jesnes & Nergaard, 2019). In 2018, LO took a step in this direction by launching 'LO Self-Employed', a specific structure in their organisation with services adapted to this group (Jesnes & Nergaard, 2019; Steen et al., 2019). While some unions have negotiated non-binding agreements or guidelines on the remuneration of self-employed, access to traditional collective bargaining for this group has been restricted (Huseby & Alsos, 2024; Jesnes & Nergaard, 2019). Without collective agreements – unavailable for the self-employed until the 2022 EU guidelines (EU Commission/2022/C 374/02) – unions have provided other services, including legal assistance, networking opportunities, courses and insurance (Jesnes & Nergaard, 2019; Steen et al., 2019).

Many platform workers, including in Norway, have a migrant background (Newlands, 2022; Oppegaard, 2021; Van Doorn et al., 2023). Unions in Norway have reached out to migrant workers, but only 32% of those in the labour market were unionised in 2021, compared to about 50% of the total workforce (Nergaard & Ødegård, 2024, p. 14). Significant labour migration since the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements has contributed to low unionisation rate among migrant workers, particularly in construction. Migrant workers are less likely to join unions due to non-standard work, a short residency in the country, language barriers, high union membership costs, cultural differences and limited knowledge of unions (Huseby & Ødegård, 2024). As a result, the voices of migrant workers often go unheard. Unions have also struggled to integrate migrant workers as

union representatives (Hagen & Jensen, 2019; Steen 2018). In addition to unions, non-governmental organisations (e.g., Caritas and Kirkens Bymisjon) in Norway help migrant workers to understand and exercise their rights (Huseby & Ødegård, 2024).

As platform workers classified as self-employed have limited access to collective bargaining, they have often opted to self-organise or join alternative unions that support their campaigns, protests and legal actions, rather than affiliating with established unions in the European context (Bertolini & Dukes, 2021; Bessa et al., 2022; Cini et al., 2022; Joyce & Stuart, 2021; Woodcock & Cant, 2022). These mobilisation processes are driven by grassroots, or bottom-up, approaches, rather than top-down mobilisation from the union. This underscores the relevance of mobilisation theory.

Mobilisation theory explains how individuals become collective actors (Kelly, 1998, 2018), through the following steps: Workers must first recognise common issues of dissatisfaction, which through a triggering event or practice, such as pay reductions, turns into a feeling of injustice (Kelly, 1998). The process of mobilisation then requires that workers attribute these injustices to a third party (a company); succeed in building social cohesion within the group, led by resourceful leaders; and, together, achieve a sense of efficacy in their efforts (Kelly, 1998). During these mobilisation processes, the workers may decide to join collective organisations, such as established unions (as happened with the Foodora workers in Norway) or grassroots unions, as has been the case in the United Kingdom (Woodcock & Cant, 2022); they may also choose to establish works councils, as is typical in the German labour market. Having addressed how platform workers mobilise and the willingness of unions to support groups of non-standard workers, we will now turn to our case study, which demonstrates how these two perspectives can converge.

## The case of Foodora Norway

The app-based food and grocery delivery market in Norway is dominated by two main actors: Foodora and Wolt. Foodora, a German company owned by DeliveryHero, entered the Norwegian market in 2015, and has remained the largest company in terms of revenue, according to publicly available data.[15] Meanwhile, Wolt, a Finnish company owned by DoorDash, established its presence in Norway in 2018. Both companies offer delivery services from restaurants as well as from their own warehouses, as they began doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Foodora is the main object of study in my research. Foodora is an interesting case, as the company hired couriers on part-time contracts, at 10 hours per week, when the company

[15] Proff.no

started its operations in Norway in 2015. This contrasted with the prevailing notion of platform companies at the time – i.e., that they only engaged self-employed. The employment relationship gave the workers (whom I also refer to as 'couriers', 'platform workers' and 'app-based delivery workers') the possibility to organise, to bargain collectively and to strike to get a collective agreement. The parties Foodora and the United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet) concluded a collective agreement in 2019.

Wolt serves as a secondary object of study in my research due to its impact on the market after it rapidly expanded in Norway during the COVID-19 pandemic, relying solely on freelancers and self-employed. This change in the market significantly influenced Foodora's employment strategies. I have therefore revisited the field several times to get a grasp of the developments and how the market changes have influenced working conditions and labour relations in app-based food and grocery delivery.

Political actors and regulators are also relevant to this field, as they ultimately establish the structural frameworks (i.e., rules and regulations). However, while there have been several commissions conducting research (e.g., 'Official Government Reports: The Sharing Economy: Opportunities and Challenges' (NOU 2017: 4) and 'The Norwegian Model and the Future of Work: Investigation on Forms of Employment and Organisational Structure' (NOU 2021: 9) – the Norwegian government has adopted a cautious approach to the platform economy and joined the conversation later in my research. This happened with the adjusted Working Environment Act in 2023, in which the employee definition was broadened and the presumption rule – which assumes that there is an employment relationship unless proven otherwise by the company – was introduced.[16] These changes were implemented in January 2024, and their effects remain to be seen. Therefore, political actors and regulators are viewed as coalitional partners in my research.

[16] An employee is defined in the Norwegian Working Environment Act (2005) updated on the 1st of January 2024 as 'anyone who performs work for and is subordinate to another. When determining this, emphasis shall be placed on, among other things, whether the person in question makes their personal labour available on an ongoing basis, and whether the person in question is subordinate through management, leadership, and control. It shall be assumed that an employment relationship exists unless the client shows it to be highly probable that an independent contractual relationship exists' (§1-8-1 Act relating to the working environment, working hours and employment, 2005).

## This thesis's contributions and design

By studying the case of Foodora, my research provides a set of contributions. First, by combining the concept of an emerging field with power resource and mobilisation theories, I show how the evolving power relations between companies, workers and unions shape the employment models of platform companies. This provides an alternative understanding of 'emerging forms of non-standard work', deliberately constructed by companies and permitted by states not enforcing existing regulations or developing new/adapting regulations. Through the case of Foodora Norway, I highlight how workers and unions contest these companies – operating on the margins of the Nordic labour market – by building collective power to improve working conditions. Platform companies arguably undermine the potential for worker collective action through fostering market-driven competition among workers within and between companies, through strategic use of employment models and through algorithmic management.

Second, my research contributes with insights on mobilising non-standard workers, focusing on strategies that workers and unions use to build and maintain power resources (e.g., the ability to organise collectively, to use labour laws or to build robust organisations to advance their interests). I show that the interaction between different power resources is crucial, and that resources at various levels (workplace–society) can strengthen one another (e.g., accessing institutional power can enhance associational power at the workplace level, which in turn can amplify societal and structural power). Further, I show that workers also need (to develop) the capabilities to effectively use the power resources available, especially considering that the companies consistently challenge the power resources of workers by changing their strategies and employment models.

Third, I offer theoretical reflections on the (non-)settlement of fields in relation to app-based food delivery. This field's inherent characteristic seems to be its fluidity, with companies constantly changing their employment models to evade regulations. For capital, a fluid field is advantageous, as it enables continual adjustments of employment models and algorithmic management, helping companies to evade regulations. For the workers, the 2019 company-level collective agreement between Foodora and the private sector union Fellesforbundet was an important first step towards integrating platform workers into the Norwegian labour market model. However, the agreement is unlikely to provide sufficient protection on its own, as it will remain subject to continued market pressures from competing companies (and workers) unbound by agreements. Thus, it appears that a sector-level agreement and stronger enforcement of regulations could be central in protecting them from the negative consequences of purely market-based relationships. However, the fluidity of the field may also allow app-based food and grocery delivery to remain in a state of continuous change (i.e., 'messy') on the margins of the Norwegian labour market model.

To lay the groundworks for these contributions, I have used qualitative methods: specifically, interviews, observation and document analysis to explore how the actors in question (platform companies, workers and unions) build power resources and forge strategies to shape the field. Platform work is still limited in Norway (Alsos et al., 2017; Statistics Norway, 2023), making qualitative methods suitable for exploring this nascent field. In addition, my research refers to Germany and France – two labour markets distinct from Norway's – to provide context and enhance our understanding of the Norwegian case (Gallie, 2007, 2011). The explorative approach has also enabled me to be sensitive to platform companies as 'moving targets' in my analysis (Fabo et al., 2017; Steen et al., 2019), whereby they change their employment models and algorithmic management systems continuously. While the four papers in my thesis each constitute a snapshot of the situation at a specific moment in time, in the following, I attempt to describe the developments over time.

To do so, I also engage with theory by combining different ideas and concepts to gain a better understanding of the case (Mouzelis, 1995) of Foodora Norway. More precisely, I use the concept of an emerging field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) and apply it to Norwegian app-based food and grocery delivery. I then make use of theories on fields and power resources to understand the actors' strategies and how power relations evolve over time in a new segment of the labour market.

## Structure

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents previous research on platform work, focusing on its scope and heterogeneity, characteristics, challenges in mobilising app-based delivery workers, and development scenarios within the Nordic context. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework, combining the concept of an emerging field with power resource theory and mobilisation theory. Chapter 4 details the research design, data and methods. Chapter 5 summarises the findings of the papers, while chapter 6 consists of a concluding discussion. Following these chapters are a Norwegian summary of the thesis, appendices and the four papers.

# 2

# Previous research

In this chapter, I discuss research on platform work, conceptualising it as a new form of non-standard work. Considering the growing literature on platform work, I have selected research on platform work from a European/Nordic context; however, glimpses from the United States are inevitable, as the phenomenon emerged there. First, I present research on the scope and heterogeneity of platform work. Second, I outline the characteristics of platform work and how it can be distinguished from other forms of non-standard work. Third, I outline challenges in mobilising app-based delivery workers. Finally, I explore some scenarios of change concerning platform work in the Nordic countries. My contribution to this literature is on how shifting power relations shape work and influence the platform companies' development of different employment models.

## Scope and heterogeneity in platform work

Crises such as the Great Recession (2007–2009) and COVID-19 pandemic have been considered as 'windows of opportunity' (a term used in Nicolaisen & Trygstad, 2015) for platform companies to rapidly expand on a global level (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017; Vallas & Schor, 2020). Studies show the diverse range of platform companies and services, highlighting the heterogeneity of platform work. Location-based services like transportation, delivery and cleaning (e.g., Uber, Foodora and Wolt) are often referred to as 'work on demand via a platform' or 'gig work' (Aloisi, 2022; De Stefano, 2016; Vallas & Schor, 2020).[17] Platform work also includes services delivered online (e.g., Upwork), often referred to as 'crowdwork' or 'online labour' (Howcroft & Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019; Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018).[18] Tasks mediated via platform companies also vary in length and required skill level, with routine tasks needing minimal skills and specialised work demanding advanced skills and significant experience. The process of matching workers and consumers/clients through digital technology varies significantly, according to the task in question (Eurofound, 2020). For instance, high skills and task complexity make services such as graphic design, information technology and the creative industries less suitable for algorithmic management, as they require more active human resources in the matching process (Azzellini et al., 2022; Nesheim & Jesnes, 2022).

[17] In my research, I refer to app-based food and grocery delivery.

[18] Within crowdwork or online labour, there is a range of different types of work ranging from 'microtasks', which are small tasks completed online, to more complex and longer-term projects submitted online (Vallas & Schor, 2020).

While platform work has received significant attention from researchers and policymakers over the past decade, due to its blurring of lines between employment and self-employment, estimates suggest that only about 1 to 3% of the working-age population in OECD and EU countries engage in platform work (Schwellnus et al., 2019; Urzì Brancati et al., 2019). In the Nordic countries, estimates range from 0.1% to 2.5% of the working-age population (Alsos et al., 2017; Ilsøe & Madsen, 2017; SOU, 2017; Statistics Norway, 2023). Through the Labour Force Survey, Statistics Norway measured how many individuals, ranging from 15 to 64 years and registered in Norway, earned money through what they termed 'digital platforms'[19] in 2022. As we see in table 1, Statistics Norway found that about 5% (141,000 individuals) of the total number of employed had sold goods or services through a digital platform at least once in the previous 12 months (Statistics Norway, 2013). Within parcel delivery, where the app-based food couriers are positioned, approximately 2,000 individuals earned money from it on a weekly basis, 2,000 monthly, and 8,000 annually. Among those working in parcel delivery, only about 25% were born in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2023).

**Table 1: Platform work in Norway, 2022**

| Employment type | Number of persons | % of employment |
|---|---|---|
| Total employment | 2,732,000 | |
| Platform work in the last 12 months | 141,000 | 5.2 |
| Platform work in the last four weeks | 41,000 | 1.5 |
| Platform work in the last week | 16,000 | 0.6 |
| Platform work as main job | 9,000 | 0.3 |
| Platform work as main source of income | 4,000 | 0.1 |
| Platform work as full-time job | 3,000 | 0.1 |

*Note.* Source: Statistics Norway, 2023

However, accurately measuring platform work is challenging, due to diverse contractual arrangements, difficulties in surveying hard-to-reach populations, varied definitions and a lack of clarity about what to measure (Piasna, 2020, 2021; Piasna et al., 2022). The numerous concepts in use – e.g., platform work, gig work, crowdwork and work on-demand via a platform (Aloisi, 2016) – highlight the lack of conceptual clarity. These numbers are therefore only indications of the scope of platform work and may underestimate the scope, given the numbers reported by companies.

The challenges of measuring the scope of platform work are also due to platform companies' use of various forms of contracts, as well as ambiguous contracts. While

[19] Including Airbnb, which implies a broader definition than mine.

platform companies in Europe have increasingly adopted non-standard work arrangements, such as part-time work and short-term or zero-hour contracts (Banasiak & Jesnes, 2024; Lamannis, 2023; Vieira & Mendonça, 2024), the solo self-employment model remains the most prevalent. According to De Groen et al. (2021), 9 out of 10 platform companies operating in Europe classify their workers as self-employed. Research suggests that many of these are genuinely self-employed, with the corresponding autonomy (Eurofound, 2023, 2024). However, research also suggests that this is not the case for all, and these workers shoulder the risks while lacking autonomy in choosing hours and tasks, creating a precarious situation (Aloisi, 2022; Eurofound, 2023, 2024). This is also why Eurofound, the EU's research agency, now defines 'bogus self-employment' and 'dependent self-employment' as part of non-standard forms of work (Eurofound, 2024).

Platform companies are often depicted in the literature as either offering flexible income opportunities or as accelerators of precarious work (Vallas & Schor, 2020). On the one hand, research does indicate that platform work serves as an additional income source for many workers, providing flexible income opportunities (De Groen et al., 2021; Ilsøe et al., 2021b; Pesole et al., 2018). According to Eurofound (2023), platform work provides a supplementary income for as many as 70% (p. 5). Many platform workers, including students, engage in 'multiple jobholding' or work on multiple platforms simultaneously (Ilsøe et al., 2021b; Kristiansen et al., 2022; Pesole et al., 2018), also indicating that it is one income source among many. In addition, migrant workers often engage in platform work as this is an accessible job option compared to what they can access in the traditional labour market, where they often meet barriers regarding language, discrimination and a lack of professional networks (Newlands, 2022). On the one hand, Schor et al. (2020) argue that the flexible income opportunities offered – and the supplementary nature of platform work – may reduce precarity and labour market segmentation. On the other hand, the authors found that those dependent on platform work to fund basic living expenses are dissatisfied and experience greater precarity. This finding also aligns with studies on the experiences of the self-employed in general, indicating that those who rely on income from only one or a few clients face greater precarity (Eurofound, 2024).

In recent years, scholars have highlighted how migrant workers have different labour market opportunities, living conditions and opportunities for collective representation that set them apart from native platform workers (Altenried, 2024; Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2024; Schaupp, 2022; Van Doorn et al. 2023). While platform work is an easy-access job for migrant workers, Mendonça et al. (2023) argue that migrant status adds to the risk of exploitation by platform companies. These workers face barriers in negotiating better conditions due to poverty, debt and a familial obligation to send money, in addition to the complexities represented by their self-employed status. In this way, platform work may feed into trends towards more segmented labour markets. Van Doorn et al. (2023) argue that platform work provides essential income for migrant workers but

comes with poor working conditions. They further suggest that reclassifying self-employed workers as employees is insufficient to address these issues, and advocate for a re-evaluation of how immigrants are integrated into labour markets.

In both official documents and academic articles, platform work – like other forms of non-standard work – has been suggested as a stepping stone into the labour market and into more secure jobs (see for instance NOU, 2017:4; NOU, 2021:9; EU COM(2021)762). The stepping stone theory was tested among platform workers in Sweden by researchers who submitted fictitious job applications to employers (Adermon & Hensvik, 2021). They found that platform work experience increased callback rates compared to unemployment, though less so than traditional work experience. However, neither platform nor traditional work experience improved callback rates for workers with a migrant background, suggesting (similar to Svalund and Berglund's (2018) findings and as discussed in the previous paragraph) that non-standard work, such as platform work, can be a stepping stone for some but a dead end for others – particularly migrants.

## Characteristics of platform work

According to Aloisi (2022), 'there is no clear consensus on the definition of "platform work" due to the extreme heterogeneity of the phenomenon' (p. 5). Therefore, researchers commonly highlight characteristics to describe platform work, given its diverse contractual arrangements and forms. Stewart and Stanford (2017) delineate four characteristics of platform work:

(a) flexible working hours and work periods
(b) no furnishing of equipment by the workplace to carry out the job
(c) lack of company-provided office
(d) task mediation facilitated by digital technology (e.g., apps and algorithms)

Eurofound (2018; 2020) highlights the following characteristics of platform work: paid work through online platforms involving three parties (platform, consumer/client and worker), where the aim is to carry out a specific task. Eurofound (2020) further emphasises this as a form of outsourcing, a breakdown of traditional 'jobs' into tasks or projects, and that the services are on-demand.

Many of these characteristics of platform work overlap with those of other non-standard work arrangements (see Table 2). For instance, a triangular relationship between a platform company, a worker and a consumer or client company rather than an employer–employee relationship is also found in temporary agency work, but there, the human's role in the matchmaking is much stronger (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015; Meijerink & Arets,

2021). Platform work resembles bogus and dependent self-employment in the way these work arrangements blur the lines between autonomy and subordination (Hotvedt, 2018; Oyetunde & Prouska, 2024). Platform work shares similarities with on-call work, zero-hour work (prohibited in Norway) and marginal part-time work, as these arrangements lack guaranteed income and offer minimal hours (Ilsøe et al., 2021a; Oyetunde & Prouska, 2024). Fixed-term contracts (temporary employment) resemble platform work in the lack of long-term commitment, little competence development and limited career advancement (Oyetunde & Prouska, 2024). Platform work, like other non-standard forms of work, also offers limited social protection and opportunities for building collective rights (Rasmussen et al., 2019).

**Table 2: Characteristics of different work arrangements**

| **Employment characteristics** | **Standard employment** | **Platform work** | **Other non-standard work** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Employer–employee relationship | Yes | Ambiguous contractual relations | Yes, except dependent and sham self-employment and temp agency work |
| Employer allocates work | Yes | Task allocation through algorithms | Yes |
| Triangular relationship | No | Yes (platform, worker, consumer/client company) | Yes, in temp agency work, not in others |
| Guaranteed wage | Yes | Compensation per task at piece-rate most often | Varies, often not in on-call work |
| Open-ended contract | Yes | Often no | Often no |
| Work equipment paid by the employer | Yes | Workers often required to supply their own equipment | Varies |
| Competence development | Yes | Few skill requirements, little competence development | Varies, often not |
| Health and safety standards | Ensured by management | Not ensured, worker shoulders risks | Varies |
| Collective representation | Yes | Rarely | Varies, often not |

*Note.* Own development, building on Rubery et al.'s (2018) SOFL framework.

What distinguishes platform work from other forms of non-standard work, as mentioned in the introduction, is the combination of technology in managing work and the companies' reliance solely on non-standard workers, which limits access to voice mechanisms and collective representation (see Table 3). First, the use of apps and algorithms to manage the work process (read: algorithmic management) sets platform workers apart from other non-standard workers. Second, platform work differs from other non-standard forms of work because platform companies prioritise workforce flexibility over stability to maximise profits. Unlike non-standard workers who are typically employed alongside standard workers within a company and have access to collective representation and sometimes also collective agreements (see Atkinson, 1984;

Svalund et al., 2018), the platform workforce is only engaged in non-standard work arrangements or self-employment (Hotvedt et al., 2020).

**Table 3: What distinguishes platform work from other forms of non-standard work**

| Platform company | 'Traditional' company |
|---|---|
| Tasks allocated through algorithms | Human oversight in task allocation |
| Limited access to collective representation | Coexistence with workers in standard employment, providing certain opportunities for collective representation |

Platform companies are also not homogeneous. Vallas and Schor (2020) outline five perspectives on platform companies, based on the existing literature. First, as mentioned, platform companies are perceived as entrepreneurial incubators, providing flexible and occasional income (a perspective associated with e.g. Schor et al. [2020]). Second, they are perceived as digital cages, in which workers, misclassified as self-employed, are subject to automated decision-making and exploitation (a view associated with e.g. Prassl [2018]). Third, they are perceived as accelerants of precarious work, characterised by uncertainty and insecurity. Tassinari and Maccarrone (2020) claim that platform work is the 'new frontier of precarious work' (p. 36). Fourth, they are considered as chameleons, adapting to the institutional context (a perspective associated with Thelen [2018]). Vallas and Schor (2020) then outline a fifth view on platform companies: as permissive potentates, where they maintain control over central aspects (e.g., data, task allocation and pricing) and cede control over other aspects (e.g., work schedules). These different views of platform companies are not mutually exclusive, and I argue in my research that companies can move in and out of these different roles. Specifically, in a Norwegian context, I explore whether they alternate between acting as institutional chameleons and permissive potentates (which will be discussed in paper IV).

## Challenges in mobilising app-based couriers

In this section, we turn to app-based food and grocery delivery workers, as this is the form of platform work that has become the most widespread (Bessa et al., 2022; Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2023) – and experienced the most labour unrest (Bessa et al., 2022; Trappmann et al., 2020). Vandaele (2018) argues that this is because app-based couriers possess significant 'structural power', allowing them to disrupt the 'just-in-time' operations of platform companies by collectively logging off, making it difficult for the companies to deliver services on-demand (Schmalz et al., 2023; Vandaele, 2018). Another explanation may be that couriers are more 'geographically tethered' than other platform workers (Joyce et al., 2023), hence they have more opportunities to meet and discuss working conditions and pay. Nevertheless, despite widespread labour unrest in this part

of the platform economy, Woodcock and Cant (2022) highlight the lack of significant victories from these types of bottom-up initiatives.

This raises questions about what conditions facilitate collective mobilisation, voice and representation in platform work. Research indicates that couriers face significant challenges in organising and achieving collective representation (Heiland, 2020; 2022; Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). These workers face legal challenges, as they are often designated as self-employed, despite the platform companies' potential for control through algorithmic management (Aloisi, 2022; Heiland 2022). They are also geographically dispersed, without a fixed workplace provided by the company, making it difficult for them to be organised from the top down (through union initiatives at the workplace) and through bottom-up initiatives (by the workers themselves) (Heiland, 2022). The jobs are broken down into smaller tasks, further isolating workers, and work is managed and distributed through algorithms and apps without human oversight, limiting voice mechanisms (Duggan et al., 2020; Heiland, 2020). Platform workers also vary in their dependence on platform work as a source of income. This fragmentation in the workforce makes it challenging to create a unified front, as some are dependent on this work for a living while others (i.e., students) see it as an extra source of income (Heiland, 2020). Additionally, 'intra-platform algorithmic changes', where companies adjust their algorithmic management systems in ways to increase control and power, significantly impact working conditions, pay and the opportunities for voice and collective representation (Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2023, p. 1). Examples include relaxing app entry requirements or prioritising couriers based on their means of transport, often without notifying workers. This practice 'black boxes' important income-related information and creates further fragmentation among workers, undermining their ability to collectively organise (Ibid., pp. 16–17).

Recent shifts by delivery companies across Europe towards employing platform workers, as mentioned earlier – together with the 2022 EU guidelines on collective bargaining rights for solo self-employed – opens avenues to collective rights and bargaining for this group of workers; this has also facilitated collaboration with traditional unions (Heiland, 2022; Lamannis, 2023; Vieira & Mendonça, 2024). However, it is still too early to say how this will play out in the field. Traditional unions across Europe continue to struggle to engage with platform workers, particularly those with migrant backgrounds (Altenried, 2024). The unions might be hesitant to build collective agreements for the self-employed, as this would still break from the traditional employment relationship. Additionally, the Riders' Law, implemented in Spain in 2021 – whereby app-based delivery workers were classified as employees by law through a rule of presumption – has not necessarily lead to improvements in working conditions (Vieira & Mendonça, 2024), indicating that enforcement may be just as important as legal adjustments.

## Platform work in the Nordic countries and scenarios of change

When considering the impacts of platform companies on the Norwegian labour market, there are differing perspectives regarding their emergence and effects. One perspective supports Schor et al.'s (2020) argument that platform companies, in addition to providing new and more efficient services for consumers, improve matching between workers and consumers/clients, provide flexible income opportunities and contribute to a more efficient and innovative working life (Kjekshus & Øvrelid, 2024; Krokan, 2018). From this perspective, there is also an argument that the labour market model should be adjusted to recognise the innovative aspects of the platform economy, even if it means making compromises on employment rights and labour regulations (Kjekshus & Øvrelid, 2024).

However, there are also critical perspectives suggesting that platform companies may contribute to further 'erosion' at the 'fringes' of the Nordic labour market model (Valestrand & Oppegaard, 2022). The researchers who argue this have focused on low-skilled platform work, specifically in the personal transportation and app-based food delivery sectors, rather than skilled work (Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2020; Oppegaard, 2021; Staalhane & Vassenden, 2021). Valestrand and Oppegaard (2022) argue that the spread of platform companies in Norway has already resulted in a more segmented labour market, with platform workers experiencing lower wages and poorer working conditions compared to workers in more traditional sectors. Newlands (2022) also highlights the challenges of labour market integration, particularly for couriers with migrant backgrounds. Another perspective is that parts of the labour market, including in Norway, are already driven by precarious working conditions, and this, combined with limited access to welfare benefits, makes platform work a refuge for some workers (Corrales-Øverlid, 2024).

A third perspective acknowledges the challenges with platform work, but also explores how the social partners, through collective agreements, make the Nordic labour market models prone to 'taming' platform companies (Dølvik & Jesnes, 2018; Jesnes et al., 2019; Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2020). For instance, Ilsøe and Söderqvist (2022) argue that platform companies in the Nordic countries engage in collective bargaining and comply with regulations because they perceive doing so to be a competitive advantage in this context. In addition, the adjustments in the Working Environment Act – and potentially also the practice of collective agreement extension of wages – may limit the growth of the typical platform model with self-employed, as the extensions also often set norms for self-employed workers (Huseby, 2024).

The relevance of a scenario depends on the type of platform work. Additionally, it relies on the growth trends of different forms of platform work. While platform work overall

is expected to grow (EU COM(2021)762), this also depends on several elements. First, in the small, open, Nordic economies, growth potential may be constrained by a limited supply of available workers and consumers, due to a tight labour market. The potential for scaling up business is not as significant in Norway as it is in countries with larger economies: e.g., the United States, where these platform companies originated. Second, platform companies matching workers who can perform high-skilled tasks with consumers/client companies have received less attention in the literature. This is perhaps because these workers generally have more resources to negotiate their pay and autonomy in choosing their tasks, as well as better labour market options (Steen et al., 2019), making high-skilled platform work less controversial. The extant scholarship on high-skilled platform work also indicates that algorithmic management is less applicable, as human involvement is essential for matching and shaping non-standardised and complex tasks (Azzellini et al., 2022; Nesheim & Jesnes, 2022) – suggesting that it will not grow in the same way as low-skilled platform work. Third, online platform labour may be less common in Norway due to high salaries and a generally high-skilled society, leading to a greater tendency to outsource such small tasks requiring fewer skills (Jesnes & Braesemann, 2019; Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018). These tasks may also eventually be handled by artificial intelligence, indicating that this segment of platform work is unlikely to grow exponentially.

In sum, these elements suggest that the spread of platformisation seen in the taxi industry (Oppegaard, 2020, 2023) and in food delivery is less likely to occur in other sectors. Also, while app-based food delivery experienced growth during the pandemic, the continuation of this trend in the current situation with high energy prices, high rents and market uncertainties remains unlikely (Vandaele, 2024).

# 3

# Theoretical framework

In this section, I present the concepts and theories that I combine in this thesis and explain how I use them in my research. First, I will introduce different perspectives on fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) and how the concept of 'an emerging field' will be applied to app-based food and grocery delivery in Norway. I will then discuss power resource theory (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Korpi, 1983, 1985; Silver 2003; Wright 2000) as a framework for understanding how the actors operationalise their strategies. I then introduce mobilisation theory as a component of associational power (Kelly, 1998, 2018). This combination will highlight a bottom-up perspective on mobilisation, exploring how individuals transition into collective actors, in addition to a top-down perspective concerning how unions organise workers. The combination of concepts addressing both theories on fields and power resources makes it possible to bring in a relational aspect of power. Finally, I outline some theoretical reflections.

## The concept of fields in the social sciences

Drawing on the insights of Fligstein and McAdam (2012) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), I use the concept of 'fields', particularly 'emerging fields', as a starting point to analyse the empirical case of Foodora as part of the Norwegian app-based food and grocery delivery sector. The concept of fields is used in various strands of literature, ranging from sociologists like Bourdieu, widely regarded as the originator of the concept, to neo-institutional theorists such as DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Wooten and Hoffman (2017). It offers a lens through which one can explore the socially constructed arenas where multiple actors, often with conflicting interests, interact (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). In recent literature, the concept of fields has also been expanded to include the formation of fields around specific issues, such as climate change or business and human rights (Buchanan et al., 2022). Thinking in terms of fields is helpful when exploring social stability and change; the interaction between the field and its surroundings; the interplay between social structures and individual and collective action; and power relations (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; DiMaggio, 1979; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

Within the literature, fields may also be referred to as 'institutional environments' (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), 'organisational fields' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1991; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017), the 'societal sector' (Scott & Meyer, 1991) or 'strategic action fields' (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Neo-institutional theorists like Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) initially considered fields as arenas where organisations

were shaped by structures (or 'myths' or 'social facts') that have a 'taken-for-granted' and 'rule-like status' in shaping action (see also Wooten and Hoffman [2017] for a historical review of neo-institutional theory). However, alternative theories allow for a greater appreciation of (collective and individual) agency in shaping fields, which gives more space to the perspective of power and power relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

Bourdieu (1990) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) view fields as arenas of contestation, or as battlefields, and use the metaphor of a game to highlight how actors either play by the rules or attempt to change them.[20] Martin (2003) notes that the game metaphor implies the existence of winners and losers within the field. In a Nordic context, Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) view of fields as arenas of both confrontation and cooperation may be more fitting. In relation to the Nordic labour market, Huzzard and Nilsson (2004) use the metaphors of 'boxing' for confrontations between the social partners and 'dancing' for collaboration. These metaphors resonate with how a field, or a segment of the labour market in Norway, may constitute both confrontation and collaboration.[21]

### Fields in the making

Established fields with clear norms and regulations are different from fields in the making that are not yet institutionalised (see for instance DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).[22] Fligstein and McAdam (2012) discuss 'emerging fields', which they define as 'a socially constructed arena occupied by two or more groups whose actions are oriented to each other but who have yet to develop a stable order that effectively routinises field relations' (p. 86). Emerging fields, rather than having developed a stable order, are instead characterised by mobilisation and conflict (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). The authors further outline four characteristics of an established field and state that emerging fields have not yet attained these four features of stability. In other words, the 'level of maturity' of emerging fields differs from that of established fields (David et al., 2013). The four features defining the level of maturity are as follows:

First, a fundamental aspect of a field is that actors recognise that they have a stake in the field, as this implies that actors actively participate in the field and engage with each other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam 2012; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). Bourdieu highlights that actors in the field commit to the game by acknowledging its stakes, competing with one another while recognising the value of being part of the field:

[20] Mahoney and Thelen (2010) identify different actors of societal change, including the 'opportunist', who prefers 'making use of existing possibilities over the riskier strategy of mobilizing for change' (p. 23), which can be compared to what has been termed 'chameleonic behaviour', adapting to the institutional environment (Vallas & Schor, 2020).

[21] I will revisit this aspect in the next section on power resources, specifically in the context of coalitional power.

[22] Meyer and Rowan (1997), in their work marking the beginning of what is called 'neo-institutional theory', define institutionalisation as a process 'by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take a rule-like status in social thought and action' (p. 341).

'Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a "contract", that the game is worth playing' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98).

Second, in an established field, the actors and their positions are clearly defined, whereas in an emerging field, there may still be plenty of actors entering and exiting the field, and the positions of actors and their power resources may change swiftly (David et al., 2013; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

Third, in established fields, there is a common understanding of the rules (e.g., the field is institutionalised with a 'stable order'), while in emerging fields, actors may interpret and try to change the rules to a greater extent (Fligstein & McAdam 2012). Agency and power thus become more explicit. Mahoney and Thelen (2010) argue that change is a gradual and continuous process driven by struggle and tension between actors who may be opportunistic and seek to change the rules of the game. When structures are still evolving (i.e., as in an emerging field), the prospects for change are greater, as shifts in the power balance between actors are likely; actors can strategically change or reinterpret their strategies and the rules to align with their interests.

Lastly, there must be a way for actors to interpret the actions of others and frame their own interests and strategies as the game is being established (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). This is about how the actors relate to each other. In emerging fields, the actors must interpret and reinterpret each other's positions and strategies constantly, as the positions are not yet set and the field not institutionalised, and hence power becomes more apparent (Trygstad, 2004).

There is a lack of theoretical and empirical work on emerging fields, how fields develop, which actors in the field develop and maintain the fields, and how fields change over time (Wooten & Hoffman, 2017) – including how and when fields settle and what settlement implies (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Applying field thinking to app-based food and grocery delivery helps us to explore the actors' strategies, the interplay between social structures and agency, the interaction between the field and its surroundings and power relations, and how a field may form and potentially settle (or not). While the field of app-based food and grocery delivery is not yet institutionalised in the sense that there are clear norms and regulations, the field is instead in the making, as the actors – companies, workers and unions – try to shape the field to their advantage.

### App-based food and grocery delivery as an emerging field

Drawing on the criteria for defining an established field, I argue that app-based food and grocery delivery may be considered an emerging field where multiple actors interact but

lack consensus on the rules that govern their interactions.[23] The widespread mobilisation of workers in this field (Bessa et al., 2022) indicate an ongoing process of field formation (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). The field is perhaps undergoing institutionalisation,[24] akin to the process observed in the temporary work agency industry over recent decades (Alsos & Evans, 2018; Jordhus-Lier et al., 2015). In the following, I will examine the connection between my case and the four elements of an established field outlined above, thereby exploring app-based food and grocery delivery as an emerging field.

First, the main actors in the field of app-based food and grocery delivery that contribute to its development are the app-based food and grocery delivery companies (Foodora dominates in Norway, but Wolt is challenging its position) and their associated employer associations, the couriers and the unions (the Transport Workers Union, Fellesforbundet). These actors have recognised their stake in the field by committing to joining it. Other actors that would be considered in a full field analysis (e.g., consumers, restaurants and political parties) are considered in my research as coalition partners (potentially power resources) of platform workers/companies. Political actors and regulators are indirectly central to my research, as they ultimately establish the structural frameworks (i.e., rules and regulations) of this field, as mentioned, but they have taken a 'wait-and-see' approach and entered the stage late in my research (Dølvik & Jesnes, 2018; Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2020, p. 43).

Second, the actors in app-based food and grocery delivery are changing their positions and strategies swiftly. The delivery companies have changed employment models over the years and made considerable changes in their algorithmic management systems (paper IV). Unions are deliberating their role in representing platform workers, who are not considered employees; for instance, as mentioned earlier, LO established a section for self-employed in 2018, signalling that they also organise self-employed workers and have tailor-made them memberships (Jesnes & Nergaard, 2019; Steen et al., 2019). These changing strategies of the actors indicate that the field is still in the making and the changing power relations become more apparent than in more established fields (Trygstad, 2004). In other words, positions are not yet thoroughly defined.

Third, app-based food and grocery delivery, like the platform economy in general, operates within established labour markets but is characterised by an 'absence of a clear regulatory framework for digital platform activities' (Schmalz et al., 2023, p. 210). As stated earlier, platform companies often argue that they are technical platforms facilitating the exchange of services (Adams-Prassl, 2022; Van Doorn & Badger, 2020). Piasna (2024) notes that platform companies have strategically created an image of 'exceptionalism',

[23] Here, I do not attempt to conduct a comprehensive field analysis, but rather view app-based food and grocery delivery as an emerging field, and analyse the role that workers, unions and companies play in forming this segment of the labour market.
[24] This will be discussed more thoroughly in the concluding discussion.

positioning themselves as operating outside existing labour regulation, and as central figures in ongoing debates on the future of work and technological innovation (Piasna, 2024, p. 1). Opposing the platform companies' claim, workers, unions and legal scholars argue that self-employed workers should be regarded as employees, considering that the algorithms seem to control behaviour and price setting (Hotvedt, 2018; Prassl, 2018). Workers have taken part in demonstrations, self-organised, joined collective organisations such as trade unions or works councils, pursued legal action and advocated for stricter enforcement and new regulations, such as the EU Directive on platform work agreed upon in 2024[25] (Prassl, 2018; Piasna, 2024). Hence, in this emerging field, the key actors shaping its development in the Norwegian context – companies, workers and unions – do not necessarily agree on the rules that govern and seek to influence them through different strategies, which indicates that it is not yet an established field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

When defining an emerging field, I argue that it is also important to explore its relationship with other fields or the broader structures (fields vs. social space in Bourdieu's terminology; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 94–115). In the words of Fligstein and McAdam (2012), fields are 'embedded in complex webs of other fields' (p. 18). For example, a socially constructed field like app-based food delivery in Norway is dependent on the broader structure of the Norwegian labour market model, in the sense that the actors must take into consideration labour market regulations (e.g., the employed workers' access to institutional power resources such as collective bargaining), even if the actors still disagree on how to interpret these rules.

Fourth, although the actors have different perspectives on issues such as algorithmic management and employment relations, they are forced to interpret and (re)interpret each other's strategies considering their relative positions in the field – they are forced to relate to each other (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

Considering these four features of an established field, I argue that app-based food and grocery delivery is a field still in its nascent stages of development. I use the concept of an emerging field as an analytical tool to examine how companies, workers and unions operate within and shape the emerging field of app-based food and grocery delivery in Norway. The actors' power relative to each other is central in defining their strategies. This leads us to the power resource theory, which I will outline in the following section.

[25] The EU Directive on platform work includes (a) a rebuttable legal presumption: the relationship between a platform company and a platform worker will be considered an employment relationship by default. If the platform company wants to contest this presumption, the company, rather than the worker, must provide evidence that the relationship is not an employment relationship; and (b) algorithmic management provisions: workers must be informed about decision-making systems and automated monitoring; there are limits to what information the companies can process (e.g., no data on union activity) (accessed from "Platform Workers: Council Adopts New Rules to Improve Their Working Conditions – Consilium").

## Perspectives on power and power resources

The concept of power is widely studied in the social sciences, and it has been defined in different ways (Hernes, 1975; Lukes, 2005 [1974]). The Weberian understanding of power is to view it as one actor's ability to compel another actor to do something against their will. Lukes (2005 [1974]) moves beyond this view, distinguishing between 'power over' and 'power to' (Göhler, 2009; Lévesque & Murray, 2010). While 'power over' refers to individual or collective actors' ability to control or influence others, 'power to' refers to the ability to act and create change independent of another (Göhler, 2009; Lévesque & Murray, 2010). 'Power to' is thus not only about the actor's realisation of their options to act, but also the options or resources needed to be able to exert power (Göhler, 2009). Actors usually invest their resources in areas that benefit them the most and where their efforts have the greatest impact, rather than distributing them equally everywhere. Therefore, power is also related to the actors' interests and strategic choices (Hernes, 1975).

Within power resource theory, power is understood both in the sense of 'power to' and 'power over'. Initially developed by Korpi (1983, 1985) and subsequently expanded by Wright (2000) and Silver (2003), power resource theory suggests that labour can best protect its interests by collectively leveraging power resources and, through these, forge strategies to challenge the employers' advantage, driving societal change. Workers can draw on individual resources such as skills, cognitive abilities and opportunities for job mobility; for example, high-skilled workers or those with in-demand expertise may negotiate directly with their employers. However, the power resource approach argues that collective resources are more critical for improving workers' conditions and welfare benefits (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Korpi, 1985).

Traditionally, power resource theory has predominantly focused on workers' power and their collective efforts to build power. This is a perspective still adopted by researchers such as Schmalz et al. (2018, 2023), and is the one I employ in papers II and III. However, recent literature also considers the power resources used by companies and the interplay between the power resources of different actors (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024). Arnholtz and Refslund (2024) define power as 'the capacity of social actors to promote, accommodate or resist societal change in accordance with their interests', and power resources are defined as 'resources actors can mobilise to amplify this capacity' (p. 4). When workers and unions use their 'power to' mobilise, disrupt business, leverage labour laws to improve conditions, form coalitions, frame issues and influence public opinion with the aim of counteracting companies' power, they build and use power resources (Korpi, 1985; Silver, 2003; Wright, 2000). For workers, possessing the skills and knowledge to combine and mobilise these resources is crucial (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Lévesque & Murray, 2010; Refslund & Arnholtz, 2022).

With regards to the platform companies, they have power over workers in the sense that they set the working conditions and pay (as discussed in paper I), and they also have power to shape regulations by influencing state policymakers (see for instance Busemeyer & Thelen, 2020; Piasna 2024; Thelen, 2018). One may also argue that there is power in collaborating with the union, and that collaboration may allow companies to work more efficiently with workers under the common aims of productivity and employment (see for instance Dølvik, 2015). Power resource theory also underlines how worker mobilisation can benefit company interests (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Wright, 2000). Wright (2000) introduced the 'positive class compromise', suggesting that increased working-class power can benefit capitalist interests, such as enhancing productivity. This aligns with the views of Korpi (1985) and Esping-Andersen (1990), who argue that a disciplined labour movement can advance capitalist aims and help resolve macroeconomic challenges. This is considered a quality of the Nordic labour market model, where collaboration between unions and companies at different levels is said to enhance productivity (Andersen et al., 2014). Workers' coalition with employers may therefore also be seen as a (coalitional) power resource for the two parties (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Thelen, 2014).

The evolving configuration of power, understood as 'the distribution of various power resources among various actors' (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024, p. 7) and the conflicting interests between capital and labour are central in my analysis. Power is understood here in terms of both power to and power over, contingent upon the relations between the involved actors. For example, as shown in figure 1, companies have power to vis-à-vis the state, but they have relative power over workers, whereas they have limited power to alter the competitive conditions in the markets in which they operate.

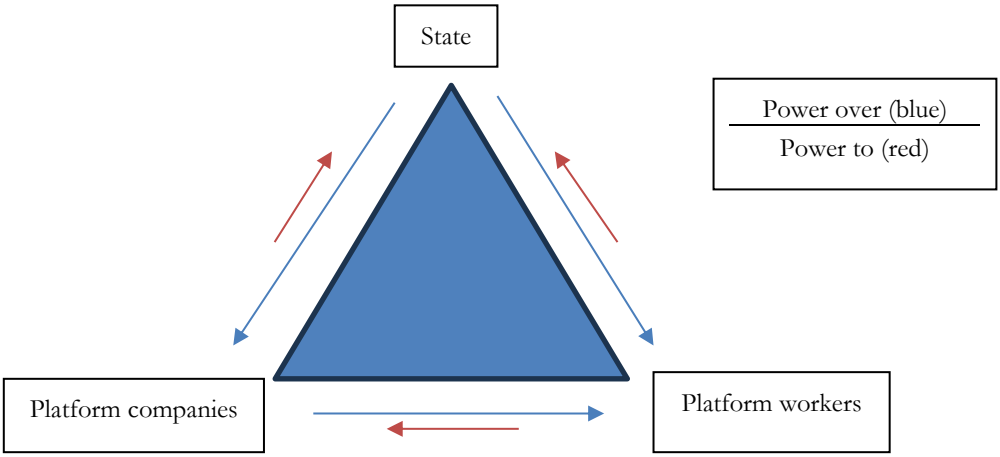


**Figure 1: Power to and power over vis-à-vis other actors**

### Different sources of power

Four power resources – associational, structural, institutional and societal – are central in my research, as they are relevant from the workplace to the societal level. Different power resources interact, by complementing or substituting each other (Refslund & Arnholtz, 2022). In addition, the importance and applicability of these resources may vary across analytical levels and over time. For instance, workers lacking structural and associational power resources may resort to societal and institutional powers (Ibid.).

First, associational power arises from workers' capacity to form collective organisations, such as unions, works councils or other forms of collective organisations and institutionalised forms of worker representation (Korpi, 1983, 1985; Wright, 2000). These collective organisations strengthen associational power through increasing the number of members, and union density has therefore traditionally been an important indicator of worker power. In addition, recent research emphasises how creating internal solidarity and building infrastructural resources (e.g., organisational, economic and human resources) also aid in building associational power (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2023; Lévesque & Murray, 2010).

Faced with several challenges to collective representation, as mentioned, grassroot activism has dominated the field of app-based food and grocery delivery (see for instance Heiland, 2020, 2022; Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2024). The perspective of mobilisation theory – how individuals transform into collective actors – therefore becomes highly relevant, adding a bottom-up perspective of how workers become collective actors (Kelly,

1998, 2018). By integrating the steps of mobilisation mentioned introductory[26] with associational power, we obtain a more dynamic understanding of how associational power is built.

Second, Wright (2000) defines structural power as 'power that results simply from the location of workers within the economic system' (p. 962). Structural power is further divided into marketplace and workplace bargaining power. Marketplace bargaining power, from a worker perspective, derives from tight labour markets with low levels of unemployment where workers are not that easily replaceable. Workplace bargaining power derives from workers' location within the economic system (e.g., Are the workers able to disrupt company operations through collective action?). Algorithmic management combined with self-employment and geographical dispersion of work presents platform workers with little structural power from the outset (Joyce et al., 2023; Schaupp, 2022). Yet, as mentioned, Vandaele (2018) notes that app-based couriers have better opportunities than other platform workers to disrupt platform companies' 'just-in-time' operations by collectively logging off the app. However, without alternative income sources, such as union-provided strike funds that enable longer-term withdrawal from the labour market (Greer, 2024), it is difficult for workers to leverage this structural power over time. Platform companies also seem to ensure easy replacement of workers through algorithmic management, through the sanctioning and deactivation of workers, and by requiring minimal training and language skills and rapid recruitment of workers through the app (Altenried, 2024; Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2024).

Third, institutional power is defined as 'the capacity of workers to influence the behaviour of an employer by invoking the formal or informal rules that structure their relationship' (Brookes, 2013, p. 188). Institutional power arises from statutory labour rights and established collective bargaining frameworks (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). This is where agency meets structure, and where the industrial relations perspective and the Norwegian labour market model become highly relevant. Actors can either leverage the available institutional power resources to their advantage, or they lack the necessary institutional power resources to support their agency. For instance, self-employed platform workers have until recently lacked the institutional power to collectively bargain, but these workers have still had the institutional power to bring an employer to court for misclassification of employment status (Heiland, 2022; Joyce et al., 2023), as they have done in other countries than Norway (Defossez, 2022). Employed platform workers have more access to institutional powers of bargaining collectively than self-employed, as has been the case with Foodora Norway and others (Banasiak & Jesnes, 2024; Lamannis, 2023). The

[26] As a reminder, the steps (according to Kelly [1998]) are as follows: For workers to become collective actors, according to mobilisation theory, they must recognise common issues of injustice, where dissatisfaction turns into a perception of injustice. An important event often becomes a catalyst for workers to mobilise. The workers must then attribute these injustices to a third party (the company), build social cohesion within the group and have leaders who drive the mobilisation efforts. Furthermore, it is crucial for the group to feel a sense of efficacy in their doings as this helps sustain mobilisation over time.

institutional differences in the countries' collective representation systems may also shape the action repertoire available to workers, and hence also their agency (papers II and III). Yet, in addition to having access to institutional power resources, workers must also have or build the skills to leverage these power resources (Lévesque & Murray, 2010). From an employer's perspective, institutional power resources also include collective bargaining frameworks and access to legal court systems. Platform companies, in particular, are known to invest heavily in legal expertise (Piasna, 2024).

Finally, societal power has emerged as a 'new' power resource, focusing on actors' ability to collaborate with other actors and to gain public support (Brookes, 2013; Schmalz et al., 2018, 2023). This power resource has developed as part of the literature addressing precarious work in informal labour markets, where workers lack access to associational, structural and institutional power resources from the outset (see e.g. Nowak, 2018; Schmalz et al., 2023). Societal power is divided into coalitional power and discursive power. Coalitional power is defined as the workers' capacity to involve other actors to influence, for instance, an employer's behaviour (Brookes, 2013). In the context at hand, these other actors could include consumers, restaurants, political parties or non-governmental organisations. Discursive power is defined as workers' ability to frame labour issues to gain public support (Schmalz et al., 2018). This power resource involves leveraging shared moral values and norms of justice, for instance those of the Nordic countries to ensure work for all, basic income security and that everyone pays their taxes (Andersen et al., 2014; Dølvik et al., 2015). Societal power has been considered especially crucial for platform workers, as they lack access to institutional and structural power resources (Moares et al., 2023; Weghmann, 2023).

## Theoretical reflections

Refslund and Arnholtz (2022) have called for more attention to the interplay between the different power resources 'since they are not equally important across time and space and are being constantly reshaped' (p. 1972). The field approach, combined with conducting research over an extensive period of time, has enabled me to explore how different power resources are combined and how they amplify each other or weaken as the field is evolving (see paper I-IV). It has also allowed me to investigate how workers, unions and companies use different power resources over time, depending on availability, to shape an emerging field.

Furthermore, Refslund and Arnholtz (2022) have emphasised the importance of considering the analytical levels at which actors operate. Similarly, Fligstein and McAdam (2012) have acknowledged the embedded nature of fields within other fields. Consequently, adopting a field perspective and combining it with power resource theory enables us to establish connections across analytical levels. In this thesis, I explore the

workplace level (specifically, Foodora Norway) and the market dynamics between Foodora and Wolt, as well as their interaction with and influence on the Norwegian labour market model, which is characterised by social dialogue and collective bargaining. The four power resources I have investigated operate at both the workplace and societal levels and are therefore relevant in my case.

Refslund and Arnholtz (2022) have also called for a better understanding of how power resources are changing with union decline (see also Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013). This requires research on a successful case of unions mobilising new and emerging forms of non-standard workers, such as with the app-based food and grocery delivery workers in Norway, where we also get the bottom-up perspective by bringing in mobilisation theory. Through this case, I show how unions can still make themselves relevant by combining different power resources, at different levels – while I also show how difficult it can be for them to maintain the power resources they have built over time.

Finally, applying the concept of an emerging field to app-based food and grocery delivery has allowed me to reflect on the meaning of field formation. I will elaborate on this more thoroughly in the concluding chapter.

# 4 Research design, data and methods

In this chapter, I outline the research design, data and methods. The uncharted nature of this field makes qualitative methods ideal for exploring how the actors in question (platform companies, workers and unions) build power resources and forge strategies to shape the field. Previous attempts to quantify platform work in Norway, research in which I participated (Alsos et al., 2017), revealed challenges in defining and measuring platform work. Internationally, ongoing challenges remain in quantifying platform work (see chapter 2, as well as Piasna, 2021; Piasna et al., 2022; Statistics Norway, 2023). Using a qualitative approach—interviews triangulated with document analysis and observations of the Foodora workers' 2019 strike—my research examines Foodora as a case study of how actors (companies, workers and unions) in a segment of the Norwegian labour market characterised by weak union organisation and low collective agreement coverage contest and shape new forms of work. See table 4 for an overview of the research design, methods, focus and analysis.

**Table 4: Overview of design, methods, focus and analysis**

| Paper | Design | Method | Focus | Theoretical framework | Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | Qualitative | Interviews | Platform companies in Norway | Norwegian labour market model, commodification of work, employer strategies | Thematic, abductive |
| II | Qualitative, case study, comparative | Interviews, observations | App-based food delivery in Norway, Germany and France | Industrial relations, mobilisation theory | Thematic, deductive, comparative |
| II | Qualitative case study, comparative | Interviews, documents, observations | App-based food and grocery delivery in Norway and Germany | Power resource theory | Thematic, deductive, comparative |
| IV | Qualitative case study | Interviews, documents, observations | App-based food and grocery delivery in Norway | Power resource theory, field theory, Norwegian labour market model | Thematic, abductive |

This chapter is structured as follows: I begin by discussing Foodora Norway as a critical case, as well as the comparisons I make with Germany and France in papers II and III. I then provide an overview of the data collected. Next, I describe my approach to analysing the collected material. Finally, I present some methodological reflections on the generalisability of case studies, ethics, the development of my research design and the sequencing of the papers.

## Research design – a case study with a comparative twist

A case study is a valuable tool for obtaining in-depth contextual knowledge about a phenomenon and for contributing to developing concepts and theory (Bratberg, 2024; Flyvbjerg, 2006). There are different strategies for case selection, including the selection of a 'critical case' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229; see also Patton, 2014) for obtaining in-depth knowledge. A clue to identifying a critical case is the notion that 'if it doesn't happen here, it won't happen anywhere', echoing the line in Frank Sinatra's song 'New York, New York', 'if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere' (Patton, 2014, p. 229).

In my research, I consider Foodora Norway to be a critical case 'with strategic importance in relation to the general problem' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229): i.e., how companies relying on workers in non-standard work arrangements and new technologies to organise work integrate into national contexts. Foodora Norway hired couriers on part-time contracts in 2015; as noted earlier, this contrasted with the prevailing notion at the time that platform companies only used self-employed. The workers organised in a union and secured a collective agreement. Despite low union density in the private service sectors, the Norwegian labour market model is known for its relatively high union density, coordinated collective bargaining and high collective bargaining coverage, a generous welfare state, low inequality, good social mobility prospects and well-developed union–company collaboration on new technologies (Andersen et al., 2014; Dølvik et al., 2015), as outlined in the introductory chapter. Given these characteristics, the Norwegian labour market model can be considered well-equipped to integrate platform companies. Thus, Foodora Norway, which chose from the beginning to use employment contracts, serves as a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Patton, 2014), in the sense that if platform companies don't integrate here, they won't anywhere.

Funke and Picot (2021) have taken the opposite approach to case selection, using Germany as a 'least likely' case for the spread of platform work. They find that institutional mechanisms limit the growth of platform work in Germany. This supports my argument for using Norway – an even more institutionally coordinated labour market – as a critical case of 'if platform companies don't integrate here, they won't anywhere'.

One might, of course, question whether Foodora Norway is indeed a critical case, especially when considering the case of Foodora Sweden, where the Swedish Transport Workers' Union negotiated a collective agreement on behalf of the workers in 2021 (Banasiak & Jesnes, 2024). The Foodora Norway case nevertheless stands out, as it was a combination of a bottom-up and top-down mobilisation process, compared to the top-down process in Sweden (Ibid.). I argue that this is a unique example of mobilisation – a

critical case – which despite its challenges can provide valuable insights for other platform workers and unions aiming to organise workers in non-standard wok arrangements.

### The comparative twist

In addition to the case study I conducted of Foodora Norway, I collaborated with researchers for papers II and III who analysed worker mobilisation in the German and French app-based food delivery sector, to further enhance my understanding of the Norwegian case. The cases from Germany and France are as follows:

- Germany: Foodora/Lieferando and Deliveroo and their workers' campaign 'Liefern am Limit' (Deliveries at the Limit) and efforts to establish works councils in 2018–2019; Gorillas' workers striving to establish works councils in 2021–2022.
- France: Deliveroo workers organising through the Collectif des livreurs autonomes de Paris (the Independent Couriers Collective of Paris; CLAP), 2017–2019.

Using purposeful sampling, these cases were perceived to be 'information-rich' (Patton, 2014), as they involved significant worker mobilisations among app-based couriers across Europe's labour markets. First, the cases of worker mobilisation in Norway (#rosastreiken), France (CLAP) and Germany (Liefern am Limit and Gorillas worker mobilisation) are notable for starting from the bottom up and because social partners play a significant role in shaping labour relations in these countries (Dølvik et al., 2018). Second, Germany, France and Norway operate within the EU/EEA framework and share significant similarities from a global perspective yet differ in forms of collective representation, which may affect the outcomes of these mobilisation processes (Doellgast & Wagner, 2022).

In Gallie's (2007, 2011) typology of industrial relations models, differences in the power of labour, institutional structure and inclusiveness in terms of bargaining coverage are emphasised (see table 5). For example, France differs from Germany in its high level of state intervention in labour market policies, as well as its high collective bargaining coverage but weak social partners with low union density. Further, the Nordic countries differ from continental coordinated economies in the intensity of coordination among social partners and in extending employee rights to the broader working-age population (Gallie, 2011). Although Germany is also characterised by institutionalised collective bargaining between social partners, it is described as a more dualised labour market than that of the Nordic countries, as noted, with a core workforce covered by collective agreements and holding secure jobs and peripheral workers in insecure jobs, outside of the realm of organised labour relations (Refslund & Wagner, 2018). Norway and Germany differ significantly in unionisation rates and collective bargaining coverage, which are

considered key indicators of associational power at the societal level (see paper III for details).

**Table 5: Countries and regime type**

| Nordic | Continental Coordinated | State Coordinated |
|---|---|---|
| Denmark, Finland, **Norway**, Sweden | **Germany**, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia | **France**, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal |

*Note.* Source: Gallie, 2011, p. 11

How do these national differences affect worker mobilisation? Although there are reasons to claim that the sector level is more important for determining working conditions and pay among these workers (Bechter et al., 2012), this is, as I argue, a new field that differs from the logistics and transport sector due to platform companies' use of algorithmic management and reliance on non-standard work. For instance, when trying to negotiate a collective agreement, the company in question was unwilling to accept one of the existing agreements – the area was considered an 'empty area'. Additionally, Germany and Norway differ in terms of institutional frameworks for collective representation at the workplace level, which makes this an interesting comparison. In Norway, unions serve as the main representative channel for workers, whereas in Germany, works councils play a significant role. These institutionalised differences in the two labour markets may therefore shape the range of actions available to workers. Comparing and contrasting these cases provides additional insights into the case of Foodora Norway. Notably, these comparisons highlight how important the institutional power resources of collective bargaining and union resources (e.g., organisational, economic and human resources) are for building associational power and for improving the working conditions of workers in the Norwegian labour market. Thus, my research design is a case study with a comparative twist.

## Data

After initially taking a broad perspective on platform companies in Norway (Alsos et al., 2017 [paper I]; Jesnes et al., 2016), the subsequent work on this thesis focused on the case of Foodora Norway. This case – including its workers, union, managers and employer associations – may be considered a product of the research[27] as it developed (Patton, 2014; this is elaborated upon in the methodological reflections section) and represents the

[27] 'Case studies are often talked about as a product. The case study stands on its own as a detailed and rich story about a person, organization, event, campaign or programme – whatever the focus of study (unit of analysis). From this perspective, the prime meaning of a case study is the case, not the method by which the case is created' (Patton, 2014, p. 259).

primary object or unit of analysis. Table 6 provides an overview of the interview data used in the analysis, gathered by me (rows 1 and 2) and by my colleagues (rows 3 and 4).

**Table 6: Overview of interview data and their use in the analysis**

| Source | Type of data | Use in the analysis |
|---|---|---|
| **Interviews with managers** | Interview with managers from 10 platform companies in Norway | Used in paper I to show the variations in employment models among platform companies in Norway. |
| **Case study interviews, Norway** | 24 food and grocery delivery couriers from platforms Foodora and Wolt<br>5 union officials<br>4 platform management representatives<br>2 employer organisation representatives | Used in papers II–IV to analyse working conditions and pay, worker mobilisation and the power resources and strategies of the different actors. |
| **Interviews from Germany and France for paper II collected by colleagues** | France: interviews with 15 Deliveroo couriers and 10 union representatives, 2017–2019<br><br>Germany: interviews with 17 Foodora/Lieferando and Deliveroo couriers and 3 union representatives, 2018–2019 | Used in the analysis of paper II on how individuals become collective actors. |
| **Interviews from Germany for paper III collected by colleagues** | Interviews with 35 food and grocery delivery couriers from Lieferando, Gorillas, Flink, Getir and Wolt, as well as 3 platform management representatives, 2021–2022 | Used in the analysis of paper III on worker mobilisation. |

### Interviews in paper I

The purpose of paper I was to examine the employment models of platform companies operating in Norway. The study involved 10 interviews with managers from platform companies, conducted in 2016 and 2017 as part of a research project mapping the platform economy in Norway (Alsos et al., 2017). At the time, around 30 platform companies were operating in Norway, most of which had launched from 2014 onwards and were relatively new to the Nordic labour market (Ibid.). We selected companies for interviews using theoretical sampling, which involves choosing cases that exemplify the concept (Patton, 2014). We aimed to capture a representative sample of typical platform companies in Norway. To do so, we aimed to include companies representing differences in the type of activity mediated by the platform companies, the skill level required for tasks and whether the services were provided locally or online.

The final sample of platform companies in our study included 10 companies with workers based in both Norway and abroad, with some companies having a 'Nordic profile'. Two companies mediated services only online and one provided services both online and locally; the rest mediated services in the local labour market. The customers included both private consumers and client companies. Eight interviews were conducted face-to-face, while two took place over the phone or via webcam. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. We promised confidentiality to the companies, as we believed this would

facilitate easier access. The interviews were semi-structured (see appendix IV),[28] ensuring that topics in the interview guide were covered in all interviews while allowing for in-depth discussions when appropriate.

### Interviews for papers II–IV, Foodora Norway case study

From 2018 to 2022, I conducted a series of interviews with various participants, constituting the core of the case study on Foodora Norway:

- 24 food and grocery delivery couriers from platforms Foodora (mostly) and Wolt
- 5 union officials
- 4 platform management representatives
- 2 employer organisation representatives

Of the 24 couriers interviewed, 19 were male and 5 were female, ranging in age from 20 to 60. Among the participants, 11 were locals (including 6 students), 8 were EU migrants (including students and others) and 4 were non-EU migrants (including 1 non-EU student). Most of them were couriers on bikes, but some used electric bikes and others motorbikes. The recruited participants included a mix of union members, non-union members and individuals who eventually served as local union representatives. These participants are regarded as key informants, with substantial knowledge on worker mobilisation, working conditions and pay, company practices and changes over time, and were interviewed several times (see appendix IX; Patton, 2014).

I used purposeful sampling to capture insights from different groups of workers, such as union members, migrants and solo self-employed individuals (Patton, 2014). This sampling involved a combination of recruitment techniques. Initially, I collaborated with the union to recruit workers for mini focus-group discussions, comprising two to five participants. Focus-group discussions are time-efficient and useful for revealing insights through group dynamics that may not be as accessible in individual interviews (Ringdal, 2018). This approach was useful especially when interviewing participants involved in the mobilisation process, as they could exchange perspectives on their motivations for joining the union (or not) and how the collective agreement came about.

After the initial recruitment, I was also interested in gathering perspectives from more migrants outside of Europe and solo self-employed workers, as I knew there were many couriers in these categories. I achieved this sampling by leveraging the union's support in disseminating information about the research project through their dedicated Slack

[28] The interview guide drew inspiration from the preparatory work on the Working Environment Act regarding the employment relationship.

channel[29] and by directly approaching couriers in the streets. I approached couriers outside of 'hot-spot' restaurants with high delivery volumes in Oslo on Saturdays and Sundays, based on information provided by the union. I also tried using snowball sampling by asking participants if they knew others who might be willing to participate (this approach did not result in additional interviews).

Approaching workers on the streets required a substantial time commitment, particularly during weekends when demand is high and more couriers are working. Nonetheless, it was useful for engaging participants with diverse perspectives and backgrounds (Patton, 2014). This approach also involved trial and error, such as testing shorter interview guides for on-the-spot interviews, which primarily provided background information rather than the in-depth insights I sought on topics like worker mobilisation, organising and health and safety. I therefore chose to exclude the few on-the-spot interviews I had conducted. I eventually found that scheduling interviews in the moment, to be conducted later, increased participant commitment and allowed more time to cover my intended topics. Unfortunately, I did not track all recruitment attempts, which might have provided important data on methods for recruiting non-standard workers for interviews.

The interviews were primarily conducted face-to-face, with some conducted over the phone (during the COVID-19 pandemic) and one via email to accommodate the participant's preference. A semi-structured interview guide was used, including background information, platform work experiences, motivations (whether driven by opportunity or necessity) and worker representation/union engagement (see appendix II). Following Patton (2014), this guide ensured consistent coverage of essential themes while allowing for in-depth exploration of specific issues; the follow-up interviews were more direct, focusing on topics like mobilisation.

I also conducted interviews with five trade union officials, two representatives from employer organisations and four representatives from food delivery companies, ensuring 'multivocality' – a diverse range of perspectives within the field (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). The interviews with trade union officials were also based on purposeful sampling, selecting those involved in the strike and negotiations for a collective agreement in the Transport Workers' Union and the United Federation of Trade Unions (which merged in 2019),[30] or officials working on organising non-standard workers in general within the LO. These semi-structured interviews (see appendix III) provided insights into union resources and strategies for supporting and representing delivery workers, as well as their views on the platform economy and challenges with organising in this field. The first interviews were conducted in 2018, before the merger, allowing me to capture its

[29] Slack is a communication platform for groups and team work.
[30] In my work, I mostly refer to the United Federation of Trade Unions for clarity, since they are now merged.

significance for the couriers' case and the union's role in negotiating a collective agreement.

Furthermore, I interviewed representatives from employer associations, such as the Federation of Norwegian Enterprise (Virke), of which both Foodora and Wolt eventually became members, and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO). These interviews provided insights into these organisations' perspectives on platform work, as well as their strategies for engaging with platform companies and involvement in collective bargaining. The interviews also touched on broader policy debates regarding the regulation of platform work and labour rights. I recruited participants from the social partner organisations through email, selecting them based on purposeful sampling criteria as 'information-rich' (Patton, 2014, p. 264), including their knowledge of the platform economy or their involvement in the Foodora workers' strike or collective bargaining.

Additionally, I conducted separate interviews with four representatives from Wolt and Foodora, approaching them at different points during my research. After Wolt's considerable expansion in Norway, Foodora modified its employment model by increasingly engaging self-employed workers. Wolt thus became a secondary object of study, as it significantly influenced Foodora's practices. Through interviews with company managers, I obtained detailed insights specific to the field of app-based food delivery as well as their strategies.

The timing of the interviews was crucial in my research, perhaps even more so than the concept of saturation, which involves collecting data until no new information emerges (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The timing of interviews – before and after the collective agreement was signed, after the COVID-19 pandemic following Wolt's expansion – enabled me to capture developments in power relations over time in the field (see appendix IX).

### Other interviews

From 2016 to 2022, I conducted a total of 80 semi-structured interviews with workers, trade unions, companies and employer associations, primarily in Norway, but also in France, England and Sweden – all aimed at understanding what happens when platform companies enter a well-regulated labour market with strong unions, and more dualised and/or liberal labour markets. About half of these interviews were with actors (workers, unions and companies) in app-based food and grocery delivery and are part of the case study on Foodora Norway. Although I did not directly include interviews from the other countries in my papers, they provided valuable reference points in my analysis. These interviews also facilitated collaboration with German and French researchers, including our shared analysis of the cases.

### Triangulation of interviews with document analysis and observation

'Triangulation of data sources within and across different qualitative methods means comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means from interviews, observations, and documents'. (Patton, 2014, p. 662)

In addition to the interviews, I collected and analysed various relevant documents – including contracts, screenshots of app dashboards, media articles, web pages and collective agreements – to support the analysis. In some instances, the documents, such as companies' consultation responses, revealed company logics and strategies that were valuable alongside the interviews. As Patton (2014) notes, data triangulation is useful for comparing and cross-checking information across different sources and times. This method has also helped me to develop a comprehensive understanding of both the subjective perspectives of participants and the objective assessment of working conditions and events (Tracy, 2010). Most documents used were primary sources, such as contracts, collective agreements between Foodora and Fellesforbundet, consultation responses from companies and pictures of the app shared by workers. These primary sources provided direct, unfiltered evidence of the situation (Patton, 2014). For instance, the screenshots of app dashboards and contracts served as important information on working conditions. Secondary sources, such as media articles, gave me a better overview of the situation and different interpretations of developments. (See table 7 for an overview of documents used to support the analysis.)

The purpose of observation is to 'see firsthand what is going on rather than simply assume what we know' (Patton, 2014, p. 331). I also actively observed the Foodora workers' strike in 2019 by visiting the square in Oslo where they held their strike activities. While there, I engaged in conversations with the strikers, took notes on their daily activities and observed how they demonstrated for a collective agreement through both traditional and new methods. Additionally, I participated in a support event where other unions were present, documenting the event through photographs and notes on their slogans and arguments. Though my role as an observer was primarily as an 'onlooker' (Patton, 2014, p. 336), my presence at the square could also be interpreted as that of a sympathetic observer. To supplement my firsthand observations, I collected and analysed media articles about the strike during that period. Further, I organised a seminar about the strike activities at Fafo with colleagues (which included the participation of some of the strikers to discuss the future of strikes in Norway), where I presented my initial analysis.[31] Throughout my research, I monitored the strikers' Facebook page (Foodoraklubben) to gain an understanding of their grievances and their strategies for mobilisation. This

[31] See Fafo-breakfast #Rosastreiken: et bud om framtidens streik? (#Thepinkstrike: A sign of future strikes?) at https://www.fafo.no/en/events/previous-events/streiker-i-framtidens-arbeidsliv

information proved valuable in shaping and informing my subsequent interviews and analysis.

**Table 7: Overview of data, documents and observations**

| Source | Type of data | Use in the analysis |
|---|---|---|
| **Documents** | | |
| Collective agreements | Collective agreements between Foodora and Fellesforbundet, 2019, 2020, 2022 (not full version). The Basic Agreement between Virke and LO, 2022–2025 | Obtain insight into working conditions and pay |
| Official documents | Documents related to NOU 2021:9 (Proposition to the Parliament, Recommendation from the Work & Social Committee), consultation responses from the companies and the unions | Gather information on institutional developments and the positions of the actors |
| | Labour inspection in Foodora, 2016, 2021 | Obtain insight into safety and health issues |
| | EU Commission proposal to improve the working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms (2021) & EU Guidelines on solo self-employed workers (2022) | Obtain insight into EU-processes and its potential consequences for workers |
| Documents from the workers | Contracts between workers and companies | Obtain insight into working conditions and pay |
| | E-mail exchanges with delivery workers after interviews. Some of them sent me pictures of the app, contracts or other relevant information | Gather data about algorithmic management and working conditions |
| Documents from/about the companies | Company websites, Wolt survey of freelancers, 2022, Wolt Algorithmic Transparency Report 2022 | Obtain insight into the company strategies |
| Data from the union | Data from the union about members in late 2019; Fliers from the union (2) | Obtain an overview of union members, aggregated data |
| Media articles | From different sources | Obtain an overview of the field |
| Social media | Facebook page (Foodoraklubben), union | Gather data on union work |
| **Observation** | Foodora workers' 2019 strike | Obtain insight into the workers' mobilisation and union perspectives |

## Analysis

In the following section, I describe the analysis conducted in the four papers. Papers I and II were published in 2019 and 2021 respectively, while papers III and IV were published in 2024. Consequently, there is a progression in both the methods used for analysis and the analytical reflections made before and after 2019 (or perhaps more accurately, 2020 – with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic). Figure 2 provides an overview of the research questions in each paper and how they contribute to the overall thesis.

| Paper | Research question |
|---|---|
| I | In what ways does platform work in Norway differ from standard employment relationships?<br>Do different employment strategies of platform companies place workers in precarious situations? |
| II | How have food delivery workers in France, Germany and Norway developed into collective actors?<br>How do the action repertoire and strategies reflect the industrial relations systems in place at the national/sectoral level? |
| III | How are barriers and opportunities for building delivery workers' collective power vis-à-vis platforms shaped by institutionalised industrial relations frameworks?<br>How do workers in German and Norwegian delivery industries build and strategically combine different power resources in their struggles? |
| IV | How do strategies of different actors […] affect working conditions and pay in app-based food delivery?<br>How do these actors use power and power resources strategically? |

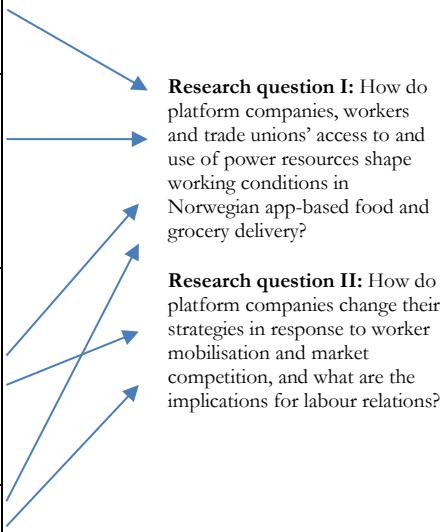


**Figure 2: The papers' research questions and contributions to the thesis**

For paper I, published in 2019, the interviews with company representatives went through several rounds of analysis. The initial round of coding was thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006), aligning with the topics covered in the interview guide (see appendix IV). The coding process involved using colour codes, Post-It notes and restructuring the data in Word according to themes. As the analysis progressed, it became evident that certain companies adopted specific elements of the standard employment relationship, leading to the emergence of an inductively derived typology of employment models. To analyse these employment models, Rubery et al.'s (2018) SOFL framework, which focuses on security, opportunity, fair treatment and life beyond work, was used deductively to explore the employment models further. However, this framework did not fully capture characteristics of platform work described by Stewart and Stanford (2017), such as the use of technology in organising work. To address this, platform work characteristics were emphasised throughout the analysis. The SOFL framework also does not consider occupational health and safety, an important aspect of platform work, which will be discussed further in chapter 5, where the findings are presented.

For paper II, we (Jesnes, Neumann, Trappmann and Becdelièvre) conducted a comparative deductive analysis using Kelly's (1998, 2018) framework on mobilisation as a starting point. We formulated questions based on Kelly's framework and steps towards mobilisation (issues of injustice, social cohesion, placing blame, leadership and efficacy). We then developed a matrix with the questions, empirical data and how the data corresponded to the theory. Researchers responsible for each country case filled in the matrix. I completed my coding of the interviews in Atlas, which helped me to select and retrieve different text segments to complete the matrix. For me, observing the 2019 Foodora workers' strike was important for the analysis, though it is not explicitly mentioned as a method in the paper. We held several digital meetings to compare the cases and presented our work at workshops, receiving feedback from other researchers. See table 8 for an overview of the empirical data and the analytical process presented at a workshop in early 2020.

In retrospect, I find Kelly's (1998) framework useful for identifying elements that lead to worker mobilisation and for pinpointing the tipping point for mobilisation and increasing associational power (Korpi, 1983, 1985; Silver, 2003; Wright, 2000). Combining mobilisation theory and power resources allows for a unique integration of bottom-up and top-down perspectives, which is important in this case, as trade unions have not been the initial choice for platform workers (Bessa et al., 2022).

**Table 8: Simplified matrix used in analysis**

| Questions from matrix | Empirical data | Corresponds to theory |
|---|---|---|
| What forms does the collective representation of the workers take? | Norway: trade union, collective negotiations; France: new organisation with union support, mass protests, direct action; Germany: unconventional cooperation between unions and other worker representation | Trade union strategies, industrial relations |
| What are the issues of discontent? | Deteriorating working conditions and poor pay | Identifying common issues of injustice |
| Where do they direct their claims? | Towards the company | Placing blame |
| Key individuals involved? | Yes | Leadership |
| How did they mobilise people? | Small victories along the way, such as couriers in Norway obtaining more hours in their contracts with help of a union | Social cohesion, feeling of efficacy |
| What were the results of the collective action? | Various results depending on the country and approach taken | Trade union strategies, industrial relations |
| How were obstacles to collective action overcome? | The lack of a traditional workplace for couriers, was overcome by focusing on visibility | Not directly related to theory. Visibility and positivity/social cohesion, workplace not being a prerequisite for organising. |
| What are the means of protest? | Traditional and/or new methods | Not directly related to theory |

For paper III, we (López, Jesnes, Alyanak and Karlıdağ) aimed to explore how workers build power resources. We used different sources of power – including structural, associational, institutional, coalitional and discursive – as deductive categories when analysing data from Norway and Germany. NVivo was used to code the data from interviews,[32] though observations and documents also played an important role in supporting the analysis. The power resources were used as categories guiding the initial data structuring, followed by a comparative evaluation between the two countries. One limitation of this article, similar to the book chapter, was the research design: The article and analysis were developed after the interviews were conducted. To address this challenge, we held several digital meetings among the four researchers, during which we analysed the material collected from both countries. We created timelines of events and reconstructed the narrative as methods for analysing the data. This paper takes a worker-centred perspective on power resources, distinguishing it somewhat from paper IV.

For paper IV, I wanted to explore the developments in power relations in app-based food delivery in Norway. The interview material was coded in NVivo at two levels to understand both the material conditions of the workers and the actors' strategies and regulations, as shown in table 9 below. An abductive approach was taken to the analysis, involving an iterative process of analysing the material and connecting it with existing theoretical frameworks (Patton, 2014) on power resources and emerging fields. The triangulation of data was crucial in this analysis, as documents – especially consultation responses from companies – provided details on company strategies that complemented the interviews. This paper adopts a relational perspective on power resources by considering the power resources of both workers and companies.

**Table 9: Analytical and empirical level coding of interview material**

| Analytical level | Empirical level |
|---|---|
| Algorithmic management | Deactivation, declining orders, performance evaluation, onboarding |
| Working conditions | Contracts, distance, fixed workplace, income, social security benefits, upgrading, waiting, working hours |
| Union | Union influence, union organising, union work with the company, why (not) unions? |
| Strategies | The working environment committee, changing conditions, demand increase and fall, health and safety, management, resistance, Slack, strike, turnover, Foodora, Wolt |
| Regulations | Working Environment Act, basic agreement, collective agreement |

*Note.* Source: paper III

[32] I had to redo my codings in NVivo due to parental leaves, as well as changes in computers and programmes, resulting in the loss of my previous work. The data material for paper I was coded by means of colour coding and Post-It notes on paper, and in Word. The data for paper II were coded in Atlas, and in NVivo for papers III and IV.

## Methodological reflections

### … on case studies and generalisability

One element of critical cases, according to Patton (2014) and Flyvbjerg (2006), is that a critical case 'permits logical generalization' [...] if it's true of this one case, it's likely to be true of all other cases in that category' (Patton, 2014, p. 266). This would be an overstatement of my case; rather, I suggest the opposite, that 'if it doesn't work here, it won't work anywhere' (Patton, 2014, p. 266). If platform companies and workers do not integrate in Norway, which has both a robust and ambitious Working Environment Act and a relatively high levels of collective agreement coverage and union density – a well-regulated labour market – it is unlikely to happen elsewhere.

Furthermore, although the generalisability of the case study may be limited in its classical sense, I argue that the case offers transferability by allowing readers (especially platform workers, unions, governments and platform company managers) to relate it to their own experiences and benefit from its insights (Tracy, 2010). For instance, workers in different contexts can gain valuable insights and lessons from the Foodora Norway case study, including their struggles in building and maintaining power resources and understanding platform companies' practices. In addition, the case gives important insight into the changing nature of platform companies, shifting between chameleonic behaviour and permissive potentates (this is elaborated further in the chapters presenting the findings and conclusions). The changing nature of platform companies is also emphasised in research by Vieira and Mendonça (2024) and Fabo et al. (2017). However, the observation on mobilising platform workers may primarily apply to platform workers engaged in low-skilled work. In cases where high-skilled work is mediated through platform companies, different power resources and power relations may come into play (see Nesheim & Jesnes, 2022; Steen et al., 2019).

It is important to recognise the significance of the insights (and perhaps generalisability) gained from exploring algorithmic management and how the workers and union negotiated parameters in the algorithms in the Foodora Norway case (papers III and IV). These insights may serve as valuable lessons for the broader labour market, which is likely to witness increased adoption of technology in the organisation of work. Companies like Foodora, Wolt and Uber are at the forefront of experimenting with big data and technology-driven organisation of work, and the Foodora Norway workers have pioneered efforts to negotiate the algorithm to minimise its potential negative effects (see also Collins & Atkinson, 2023; Doellgast & Wagner, 2022; Todolí-Signes, 2021 for a few other examples of this).

… on ethics

My research was granted ethical approval from the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT, previously NSD) for conducting qualitative interviews (see appendix VI). On behalf of Fafo, SIKT determined that the processing of personal data in this research was in accordance with privacy regulations, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679; SFS 2018:218) and Norwegian law (the Personal Data Act). The data have been stored in closed, encrypted folders at Fafo.

In accordance with ethical guidelines (NESH, 2021), researchers are required to obtain informed consent from participants to protect personal integrity and voluntary participation. Given the vulnerable position of couriers, it was particularly important to ensure that they were well-informed about their rights and the study's purpose (NESH, 2021). Before participating, individuals received written information outlining the project's purpose, data storage at Fafo, their rights and contact information (see appendix V). These information sheets were distributed in both English and Norwegian to ensure the information was understood.[33] Key points from the information sheet were reviewed at the start of each interview to ensure participants understood the research and voluntarily consented. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, even after completing the interview. Consent was obtained orally at the beginning of interviews.

Couriers were also guaranteed confidentiality due to the precarious nature of this work. Personally identifiable data were avoided when possible, and recorded interviews were deleted after transcription to maintain confidentiality. Care was taken when selecting quotes to protect identities. However, some participants may be identifiable due to their union activism. I have not compensated the workers for participating in my research: While, ethically, this might ensure voluntary participation, it may also be considered problematic when interviewing precarious workers. Are they not to be compensated for the time they spend participating in research when they otherwise could have earned money?

In my research, I may have downplayed the stories of particularly vulnerable participants (Peter & Friedland, 2017), as I chose not to use quotes from those I considered particularly vulnerable. This decision was partly due to my focus on the couriers' collective efforts in mobilising, rather than on their individual precariousness. However, it was also an attempt to safeguard their confidentiality, as I worried someone might recognise them because of their stories. In hindsight, I reckon that I may have been overly protective, as more research over the years has revealed that the most precarious stories are not necessarily exceptional. Many couriers can likely relate to experiencing injuries, or even

[33] However, I was unable to reach out to those who did not speak Norwegian or English/French, which is a limitation in my work, as I could not engage the most vulnerable workers.

having to go to the hospital, given what we know about occupational health and safety in this sector (see for instance Oppegaard, 2024; Eurofound, 2023).[34] I could also have involved the participants in considering their own vulnerability compared to other platform workers, instead of making the decision myself and underplaying their stories (Peter & Friedland, 2017). This could have neutralised the hierarchical power relations between me as a researcher and them as participants in the research. It could also have given me an improved understanding of their agency in forms of resilience and not only their collective practices of resistance (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2023; Rikala, 2020).

Another reflection related to interviewing vulnerable groups is that, in some instances, I could perhaps have done more to assist the participants while conducting my research (Peter & Friedland, 2017). For some participants, I mentioned how they could contact their safety deputies and trade union representatives to get help in solving their problems, such as not receiving income during sick leave. This is one way to empower participants (Burgess-Proctor, 2015). However, I could have developed more comprehensive strategies regarding whom they could contact in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) to aid them with welfare services.

Furthermore, after interviews, some participants in my research reflected on how the interview process helped them to give meaning and interpretation to their experiences (Birch & Miller, 2000). This was especially the case with interviews focused on how the collective agreement came about and the participants' efforts in achieving it. As I perceive it, this was an opportunity for the couriers to reconstruct a narrative of their own story, and telling one's own story can have empowering effects (Ibid.).

Managers in paper I were promised confidentiality due to legal ambiguities around the business model. In retrospect, this may have been unnecessary, as the information they shared about their companies was also available through news articles, websites, podcasts and conference presentations. Nonetheless, 'researchers must ensure that anonymity is protected when it has been agreed upon or otherwise is prudent' (NESH, 2021). Food delivery companies were identified with their consent in papers II, III and IV.

### … on the development of my research design, analytical levels and time

From the start of my research on platform companies, my aim was to enhance knowledge about the influence of platform companies and platform work on a labour market like Norway's. I was also curious about how a country's existing labour market model could either facilitate the development of platform work or potentially 'tame' the platform companies. When beginning my work on this thesis, I had already conducted interviews with managers of platform companies and mapped platform work quantitatively in

[34] In 2023, a courier in Norway tragically died in a traffic accident while on the job. Because the courier was classified as self-employed, the family did not receive any compensation (NRK, 2024a).

Norway (Alsos et al., 2017 [paper I]; Jesnes et al., 2016). I therefore planned to do more qualitative work and conduct interviews with platform workers, trade unions and employer associations, taking a holistic micro- to macro-level perspective. However, the specific selection of participants in my research depended on access.

Shortly after starting my thesis, I encountered news reports that Foodora couriers had organised within the Transport Workers' Union. Recognising this as an opportunity, I saw it as a good starting point for my qualitative research. Thus, while I began with a broader approach to the platform economy (in paper I), ongoing developments in the field – particularly the growth of app-based food delivery work relative to other forms of platform work and the process of worker mobilisation in Norway – led me towards a case study on Foodora Norway. Hence, the research design of this thesis evolved along the way. According to Patton (2014), 'design is a process and a way of thinking,' not a 'contained, bounded, do-it-and-be-done step' (p. 244).

In this thesis, I have chosen a holistic approach to understanding how actors (companies, workers and unions) in a segment of the Norwegian labour market with weak union organising and low collective agreement coverage contest and shape new forms of work. By this, I mean that I explore power resources and strategies of the actors at workplace, sectoral and national levels, and examine how power resources at these levels interact and how power relations evolve. The risk in doing this lies in attempting to cover too much and potentially losing focus. However, limiting the analysis to the worker or company perspective alone would yield a different type of analysis. The strength of this holistic approach is that it provides a comprehensive overview of the power relations in the field.

The initial interviews with platform company managers in paper I were conducted in 2016, nearly a decade ago. Considering how platform companies continuously evolve and change practices – as 'moving targets' (Fabo et al., 2017) – this could be seen as a limitation of my research. Throughout the papers, I provide only snapshots of working conditions and pay. However, considering the time I have spent in the field (a decade) and the body of work represented in the papers, this combined effort offers an overview of how these companies' practices change over time in response to market developments, institutional contexts and worker mobilisation, reflecting their changing character. Interviewing various actors over time provides a historical perspective on how this field has developed.

### … on the sequencing of the papers

The papers are not arranged in chronological order of publication. Below, I explain the reasoning behind their sequencing, while also outlining what they are about.

Paper I builds on qualitative interviews conducted in 2016 with 10 CEOs from the approximately 30 platform companies in Norway at the time (Alsos et al., 2017) – in the

initial phase of the platform economy. In this paper, I explore how platform companies set working conditions and pay, exerting power over workers while also being influenced by the institutional context. This first paper therefore provides an overview of 'the whole platform economy' in Norway at the time. The hybrid employment model is particularly interesting, both in terms of workers' access to institutional power resources and the companies' decision to employ workers, given the prevailing notion at the time that platform companies rely on the self-employed. This also explains why I explore Foodora Norway – which employed their couriers (i.e., used the hybrid employment model) – in my subsequent work.

Papers II and III are arranged sequentially, due to their shared focus on worker power in a comparative perspective. In paper II (Jesnes et al., 2021), we examine app-based delivery workers and their bottom-up process of transforming from individual to collective actors in a comparative perspective. Using Kelly's (1998, 2018) framework on mobilisation, we studied how food delivery workers in France, Germany and Norway developed into collective actors by (a) identifying issues of discontent that turned into a perception of injustice, (b) blaming a third party, the company, (c) building social cohesion, (d) taking leadership and (e) the group obtaining a sense of efficacy. We then compared the similarities and differences across the three cases and tried to find some explanations for differences in strategies and outcomes within the industrial relations framework.

While paper II explicitly examines how individuals become collective actors across three countries, in paper III we analyse how workers build and combine various power resources in their struggle for better working conditions and pay in Germany and Norway. Mobilisation theory – including tipping points for worker mobilisation – forms part of how workers build associational power from the bottom up. Thus, while paper II takes a bottom-up perspective on the transition from individuals to collective actors, paper III adopts a more holistic approach to organising and power resources by also examining the establishment of works councils in Germany and union efforts in Norway.

In paper IV, I shift focus from worker power to a more relational view on power relations, also bringing company power and strategies into the analysis. By combining the concept of an emerging field with power resource theory, this paper brings a clear relational aspect to the analysis of power. I analyse the emerging field of app-based food and grocery delivery, exploring how workers, unions and companies build and use power resources, the interplay among these resources and how power relations evolve in this emerging field. A key difference between papers III and IV is that, in paper III, I align with Schmalz et al. (2018, 2023) by viewing power resources as pertaining primarily to workers. In paper IV, I take a broader view, considering power resources as tools that social actors, including companies, can use to 'promote, accommodate or resist societal change in accordance with their interests' (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024, p. 4). The concept of an emerging field is instrumental in making this shift in perspective on power and power resources.

# 5

# Summary of findings

We may remind ourselves that this is a study about a field in the making. If we consider the different papers this thesis includes, I have identified four main themes allowing us to deepen our understanding for this field in the making. In this section, I summarise the findings from the papers thematically. The following themes derive from the thesis's research questions:

- working conditions
- worker organising, building of power resources and the role of the union
- company power and changing strategies in response to market competition
- institutional context and the role of the state

## Working conditions

Paper I contributes to the literature on platform work through the development of typologies of two employment models among platform companies in Norway.

1. The typical platform company, exemplified by Uber, depends on labour from self-employed individuals in combination with algorithmic management.
2. The hybrid platform company either hires workers on marginal, part-time contracts or maintains a relatively stable relationship with their workforce, in combination with algorithmic management. Foodora is a prime example.

These typologies were developed by comparing different platform companies' employment models with the idealised standard employment relationship outlined in the SOFL framework (Rubery et al., 2018). This framework describes the standard employment relationship as one that provides income security, access to competence development, fair treatment through employment rights and voice mechanisms and recognition of life beyond work through regular hours and a clear division between work and nonwork time (Ibid.). My choice to use this framework was driven by its clear categorisation of the different components of the standard employment relationship, allowing for comparison with platform company employment models and highlighting precarious work gaps, such as a lack of collective representation. At the time of the paper's writing (2018–2019), discussions on platform work mainly revolved around Uber and its reliance on self-employed workers; it therefore made sense to use the SOFL framework as the standard against which other forms of platform work could be compared – the

idealised standard employment relationship at the one end, the typical platform company model at the other, and other forms of non-standard work in between.

One limitation of the SOFL framework (identified in paper I), in addition to the lack of attention to technology in organising work, is its relatively limited attention to occupational health and safety, as mentioned (also noted by Sollien & Solvang, 2022). Occupational health and safety is an important aspect of the working conditions in platform work – especially in app-based food and grocery delivery, where the rate of accidents is high (see for instance Oppegaard, 2024). The companies cannot instruct self-employed and freelancers to wear helmets, for instance, as they fear this might be considered an exercise of management (Jesnes & Rasmussen, 2024). Due to its importance for working conditions, I have included health and safety in Table 10, which is a moderated version of table 5 from paper 1, applied to app-based food and grocery delivery (see also Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2023).

**Table 10: Employment models of platform companies in app-based food delivery**

| SOFL | SER | Typical platform companies | Hybrid platform companies |
|---|---|---|---|
| Security | Stability of employment | Solo self-employed. 'Log on log off'. | Non-standard form of contract or relatively stable freelance relationship. |
| | Guaranteed wage income | Piece rate pay with bonus systems when demand is high. No guaranteed hours. Depends on demand and algorithmic management. | Few guaranteed hours, possibility of extra hours. |
| | Social security | Not covered by Working Environment Act. Own responsibility. | Covered by the Working Environment Act (except freelancers). Access to social security (see table 2, paper I). |
| | Decent pay | Limited bargaining power and no legal minimum wage. Equipment expenses borne by workers. | Little opportunity for wage negotiations. Equipment expenses often borne by workers. |
| Opportunity | Competence development | Low. | Low. |
| Fair treatment | Framework for collective representation | Limited workplace representation and voice mechanisms. | Workplace representation mechanisms may be present, e.g. safety representative. |
| | Workplace | No fixed workplace. | No fixed workplace. |
| | Job stability | Risk of unfair dismissal or suspension. | Risk of suspension from the app. |
| | Collective rights | No right to strike or collective bargaining (prior to 2022). | Collective negotiations may be possible. |
| Life beyond work | Division between work and nonwork time | Work and nonwork time often blended. Work on weekends, evenings in 'unsocial hours', dependent on demand. | Some guaranteed hours, but still subject to employer flexibility and the on-demand nature of platform work. Risk of working in unsocial hours. |
| Safety and health | Employer takes responsibility for safety and health | High risk of accidents and physical strain due to high-speed in traffic which yields more income. Reporting options through service department of companies. | High risk of accidents and physical strain due to high-speed traffic. Reporting options through service department of companies. Safety representatives. |

*Note.* Moderated version from paper 1 (table 5). Other sources: Jesnes and Oppegaard (2023) and Sollien and Solvang (2022)

The employment models chosen by the companies have implications for collective rights and social protection. Both employment models – the typical and the hybrid – differ from the standard employment relationship and provide limited access to guaranteed wage income and social protection, as we see in Table 10. However, the hybrid employment model also grants workers access to institutional power resources in the form of individual and collective labour rights and social protection. Platform companies' choice to use algorithmic management in combination with self-employment contracts therefore recommodifies work and obscures the companies' role as employers.

The use of algorithmic management in combination with non-standard forms of work and particularly self-employment greatly influences working conditions and pay. The SOFL framework does not account for algorithmic management and its impact on employment models, other than how it may affect the components of the standard employment relationship. However, considering its relevance for working conditions, and especially changes in the algorithmic management system, it becomes important to continually assess how the company's employment models change over time, to understand the level of precarity at which they place their workers (see paper IV). Platform companies use different algorithmic management systems: For instance, Wolt leans on variable pricing, while Foodora uses performance-based evaluation (paper IV). Even minor changes made on a computer in an office, termed 'intraplatform algorithmic changes' (Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2023, p. 2), may have severe consequences for working conditions and pay. Paper IV, as an example, discusses how the introduction of a performance evaluation system at Foodora – and particularly speed as a parameter – negatively affected working conditions by increasing safety and health risks for workers.

In 2019, the typology (the hybrid employment model, especially) challenged the prevailing notion that platform companies exclusively relied on self-employed individuals (see for instance De Stefano, 2016). While initially framed as distinctive to the Nordic model, recent developments suggest that the hybrid model is also emerging across Europe, especially in app-based food and grocery delivery, in response to regulatory developments, such as the Riders Law in Spain and court cases in Germany (Banasiak & Jesnes, 2024; Defossez, 2022; Heiland, 2022; Lamannis, 2023; Vieira & Mendonça, 2024). This highlights that this is indeed an emerging field where the different actors may still influence working conditions and labour relations.

## Worker organising, building of power resources and the role of the union

In paper III, we outline several barriers to worker organising among app-based couriers in food and grocery delivery, which also builds on existing literature (Heiland, 2020, 2022; Joyce et al., 2023; Schmalz et al., 2023). These barriers include the companies' avoidance of employer responsibility and the duties outlined in the Working Environment Act by use of the self-employment model in combination with algorithmic management. This also leaves workers unsure of whom to hold accountable for what happens at work or with whom to negotiate to achieve representation. There is no apparent counterpart with whom to negotiate working conditions. Further, platform companies avoid fixed costs related to employees, workplace or equipment, and they can easily adjust operations and subject workers to competition against each other around job tasks (in our case, deliveries) and earnings, even within the company. Algorithmic management allows companies to sanction, suspend or exclude workers and to apply these measures to many workers simultaneously, weakening workers' structural power. Further, by not setting specific

language or skill criteria, companies can easily substitute workers and recruit from the unemployed, student or migrant population – even in tight labour markets like Norway's. During the pandemic, the shift to online training also enabled couriers to start immediately, further enhancing their replaceability at minimal cost. In the case of Germany, we have seen the exit of several platform companies – Deliveroo and Gorillas – which can also be considered as a countermeasure against worker mobilisation (paper III). This illustrates how the companies retain the option of leaving if it becomes 'too difficult' to operate in the market.

The case of Foodora Norway demonstrates that couriers can indeed organise and be mobilised, despite the odds against them. They have done so through a combination of bottom-up organising efforts and top-down approaches supported by unions (papers II–IV). First, from a bottom-up perspective, low pay and deteriorating working conditions due to intraplatform algorithmic changes have been triggers for mobilisation, the tipping point (Kelly, 1998) whereby the workers have moved from experiencing common issues of dissatisfaction to a feeling of injustice (see papers II–III). Second, in Norway, couriers' trust in the ability of the unions at the societal level in improving their working conditions was another trigger for worker mobilisation (paper II). Third, social media platforms have facilitated communication among workers, helping them to overcome spatial barriers to mobilisation in their efforts to achieve greater associational power (papers II–III). Fourth, the ability of employed workers to access institutional power resources – such as the provisions in the Norwegian Working Environment Act to include more hours in contracts and thus an increased guaranteed wage – proved to showcase union efficacy, which triggered others to join the union (paper II). Lastly, the power resources of the largest private sector union in Norway, Fellesforbundet, gave the couriers the support they needed (with regards to negotiating, human resources, communication officers, a strike fund etc.) during the strike, again showcasing efficacy, which was a further trigger of mobilisation of other couriers to the union (paper III). The combination of the bottom-up perspective, pioneered by Kelly (1998), and the more top-down perspective on associational power (Korpi, 1985) gives a more in-depth understanding of how associational power comes about in this nascent field.

Refslund and Arnholtz (2022) underline how power resources are 'not equally important across time and space […]. They may be complementary, but they may also be substitutes' (p. 1,962). The findings of this thesis support this understanding of power resources and report on an empirical case of the interplay between actors' strategic use of power resources. Paper III underlines how app-based delivery workers use a combination of power resources and alternate between them, to overcome obstacles in organising (see Figure 3 below, from paper III). In Norway, Foodora couriers built associational power through organising within a large and powerful union and made use of the institutional framework granting employed workers the right to strike. The union's strike fund provided an alternative income source, allowing for a prolonged strike, improving

structural power and amplifying associational power. The impact on Foodora was further strengthened by mobilising discursive and coalitional power resources (societal power), including social media campaigns to address consumers and to gain support from LO and local politicians. In this case, discursive and coalitional power went hand in hand, amplifying other power resources. Societal power – which has been considered crucial in studies on platform workers' organising efforts in other countries (see e.g. Moares et al., 2023; Weghmann, 2023) – has thus also proven important in the case of Foodora Norway, but in combination with other power resources. Building the skills and capability to combine different power resources and strategically alternate between them (seeing where they complement and substitute each other) appears to be crucial for platform and other non-standard workers that from the outset have limited access to power resources.

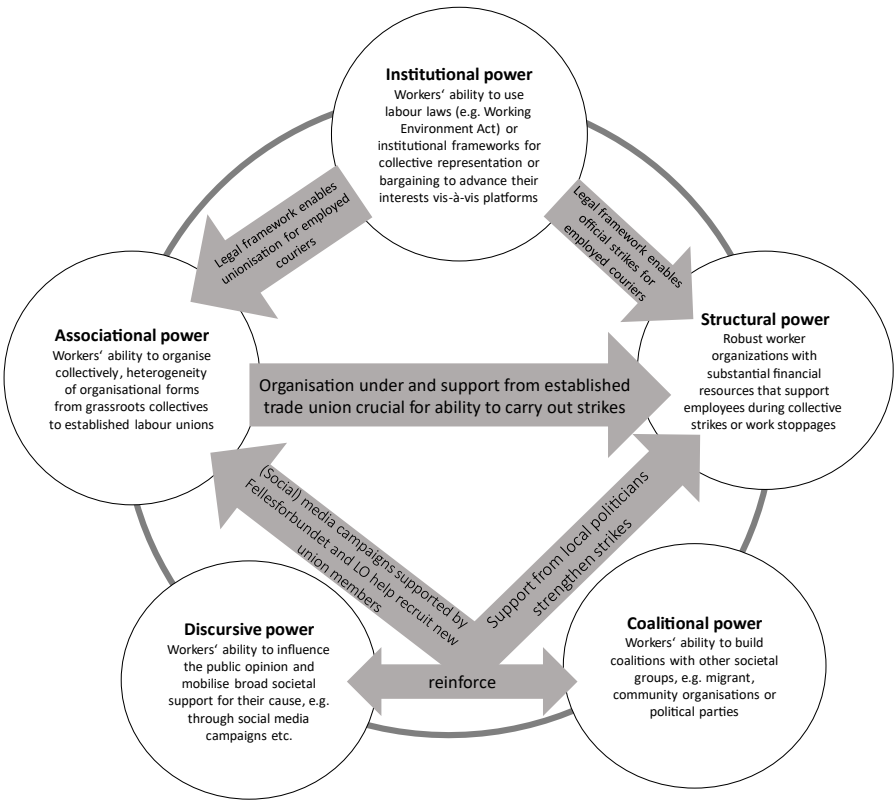


**Figure 3: Interplay between different power resources in the case of Foodora Norway**

Paper IV finds that the presence of safety representatives and unions was crucial in putting pressure on the company to change the parameters of algorithmic management systems, mitigating their detrimental effects on health and safety. The case of Foodora Norway therefore also illustrates the potential of unions – and the Norwegian labour market model at the workplace level – in curtailing company power and minimising the risks associated with algorithmic management, adding to the literature discussing this (see also Collins & Atkinson, 2023; Doellgast & Wagner, 2022; Todolí-Signes, 2021).

Foodora Norway shifted from a hybrid employment model to a mix of the two employment models. This development had significant implications for working conditions and worker power. The use of different employment models within the same company has created diverging interests among workers, as they must compete for jobs and pay within the same company, which again fragments the workforce, puts pressure on working conditions and hinders mobilisation (papers III–IV). Workers' ability to secure decent working conditions within individual companies largely depends on their success in regulating competition terms within the market. Without obtaining collective agreements in other delivery companies, it will remain difficult for Foodora workers to maintain the successes achieved with the collective agreement. This challenge intensifies when companies retain the option to exit the market: a strategy often used in delivery services (see paper III).

## Company power and changing strategies in response to market competition

Platform companies set working conditions and pay when choosing an employment model. In that sense, they have power over workers, as shown in paper I. Companies hold significant power in determining which institutional power resources workers can leverage. Unlike many platform workers across Europe who lack access to institutional power resources due to their self-employed status (Vandaele, 2020), employed Foodora couriers in Norway initially benefited from access to institutional power resources. In this case, the company's decision to employ couriers enabled them to leverage provisions in the Norwegian Working Environment Act to extend their contract hours. This is a concrete example of how workers can leverage institutional power at the workplace level, as determined by the companies when deciding on employment model. In addition, platform companies – through intraplatform algorithmic changes (Kougiannou & Mendonça, 2021; Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2023) – hold significant power in their ability to change workers' working conditions and pay, from one day to another; this gives them a structural advantage over workers, as discussed in papers II–IV.

In paper IV, I also demonstrate how societal power is an important part of the strategy for platform companies. For example, Foodora initially leveraged power to portray itself as playing along with the norms and rules of the Norwegian labour market model and societal expectations – giving the company market advantages. For the company, employing couriers was a rational move when they entered the market in 2015; in 2019, it was a rational move to reach a collective agreement in response to a five-week strike, when the couriers mobilised and gained significant support from consumers and politicians. Moreover, the collective agreement gave the company publicity and market power as a 'responsible' company. Foodora also debated in the newspapers, as they had to do so to influence public opinion and consumers. Their framing of this strategy was that they had always supported the values of the Nordic model by hiring workers as employees, instead of using self-employed workers. This finding aligns with Ilsøe and Söderqvist's (2022) argument that platform companies in the Nordic countries tend to engage in collective bargaining and comply with regulations because they perceive it to be a competitive advantage to follow the standards and norms of the Nordic labour market model. Wolt, on the other hand, has a strategy of advocating for better social protection for the self-employed (paper IV). This strategy, in contrast to Foodora's, highlights the competition within the field over shaping societal discourse (thereby also preventing the spread of collective bargaining to other companies) and political responses.

Paper IV also shows how Foodora Norway made strategic changes to their employment model, including their algorithmic management system, in response to market competition. The expansion of Wolt and the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the landscape, leading Foodora to transition from the hybrid employment model to the typical employment model with self-employed individuals; this resulted in considerable consequences for the workers. The company economically incentivises self-employment, even though employment status is a legal matter, not a choice to work longer hours on weekends when demand and income are higher. Employed workers are restricted by the Working Environment Act from working excessive hours on weekends. This could, therefore, be seen as a strategy from the companies' side to curtail organised worker power, as workers must compete and are pitted against each other. It also shows how companies have great leverage in shaping the rules of the game in emerging fields, as well as significant influence over what power resources are available to workers. Thus, paper IV expands on Vallas and Schor's (2020) analysis of the various images of platform companies, illustrating how companies can shift between roles. In this case, Foodora shifted between the roles of chameleons – adapting to the context – to permissive potentates, taking and ceding control where they see fit, depending on strategic considerations and the surrounding institutional framework (paper IV).

## Institutional context and the role of the state

The institutional context and the state have a role in shaping the strategies of Foodora Norway. The Norwegian labour market is well-regulated, with high union density and a high rate of organisation on the employer side, and strong enforcement mechanisms. Foodora Norway and Wolt are both members of the employer association Virke. However, when it comes to the platform economy, the state's role in shaping the Nordic platform economies has been described as a 'wait-and-see attitude' (Dølvik & Jesnes, 2018; Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2020, p. 43), with the approach of setting up committees to investigate the sharing economy (NOU, 2017: 4), the Norwegian model and the future of work (NOU, 2021: 9), with occasional inspections by the Labour Inspectorate in companies where they had access.[35] The liberalisation of the taxi sector, which removed market entry barriers, was an important exception to the wait-and-see approach (Oppegaard, 2020).

Nevertheless, in paper I, I establish that institutions matter as to why some platform companies adopt elements of the standard employment relationships as they appear in the Nordic labour market model. This suggests that these companies would integrate into the model because of norms, pressure from unions, enforcement mechanisms and regulators – essentially arguing in line with neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). I also discuss the implications of this: for example, that the institutional contexts curtail company power, adding to the perspective of the Nordic labour market model 'taming' the platform companies. Furthermore, the impact of industrial relations on the strategies of platform workers is highlighted in paper III. It demonstrates how industrial relations offer distinct institutional power resources to delivery workers and shape their collective action approaches. A crucial distinction observed between the two countries is how Gorillas workers in Germany sought representation through works councils, whereas in Norway, union representation emerged as the preferred choice.

In paper IV, I further discuss how the enforcement mechanisms of the state – the Labour Inspectorate – played an important role in shaping the working conditions at Foodora Norway. For instance, the Labour Inspectorate made sure that Foodora Norway had safety representatives. The unionised workers, together with the safety representatives, managed to 'negotiate the algorithm' (Collins & Atkinson, 2023) by changing which parameters were to be included in the algorithm, to ensure a safer working environment for the couriers. In the Nordic countries, therefore, employed platform workers have more options for leveraging different institutional power resources, both due to their employment status and the power resources provided by the Working Environment Act and the health and safety standards and enforcement mechanisms established by the state.

[35] The Labour Inspectorate have not had the mandate to inspect companies with only self-employed. However, if I have interpreted the presumption rule correctly, this may change with the EU Directive on platform work.

However, at that time, the Labour Inspectorate did not have the mandate to inspect companies with only self-employed workers, such as Wolt.

Following the Norwegian Working Environment Act, which was updated in 2024 to broaden employee status, the state has taken a more active role in shaping this emerging field, but it remains unclear as to what this will imply for platform workers – specifically, app-based delivery workers – since this has not yet been tested in the courts. Fellesforbundet has only recently turned to the courts, exercising institutional power by filing a lawsuit against Wolt concerning employment status (NRK, 2024b). This indicates that the union may prefer to go to court to challenge the classification of workers as self-employed rather than negotiate a collective agreement for them. It also remains unclear as to how Norwegian regulatory agencies will implement the new EU Directive on improving working conditions for platform workers, and how strong the enforcement mechanisms will be.

# 6

# Concluding discussion

The aim of my research was to empirically explore the development of Norwegian app-based food and grocery delivery, and to investigate the evolving power relations and implications for working conditions and labour relations when platform companies enter a well-organised labour market. Foodora Norway was approached as a case of what happens when new companies enter a well-organised labour market. I theorised app-based food and grocery delivery as an emerging field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012), where multiple actors build and use their power resources (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Korpi, 1983, 1985; Lukes, 2005 [1974]; Silver, 2003; Wright, 2000) to forge strategies and shape the field to their advantage. I have used qualitative methods – a combination of interviews, document analysis and observation – to explore the power resources and strategies of companies, workers and unions in app-based food and grocery delivery.

Building on the four papers comprising the thesis, in this section, I will present four concluding reflections from my research, which also address my primary research aim. The first reflection is about how new forms of work emerge or are constructed. The second reflection concerns how actors combine different power resources at different levels to shape the field in their interest. The third reflection centres around whether or not these companies will integrate into the Norwegian labour market model. The fourth reflection is more theoretical and concerns how to conceptualise the (non-)settlement of fields.

## Reflection I: How new forms of work emerge

'Phenomena that are of the same kind, but still different, are often bunched together in everyday words; and one way to disentangle things is to use a typology'. (Swedberg, 2016, p. 11)

Platform companies are often 'bunched together', but research has shown how platform companies, and platform work, are highly heterogenous (Howcroft & Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019, see chapter 2). I have developed a typology in order to 'disentangle things'. In paper I, I develop a typology of platform company employment models emerging in the Nordic countries, which allows us to make one important distinction between very different forms of platform work, notably in their relationship with the company. This typology

consists of the typical employment model (with self-employment combined with algorithmic management) and the hybrid employment model (with non-standard work arrangements combined with algorithmic management).

Recognising platform companies as heterogeneous affects not only the working conditions of the platform workers, but also how we approach regulations and reflect on the mobilisation (prospects) of these workers. The hybrid employment model allows workers to leverage institutional power resources (e.g., collective bargaining, using labour laws to their advantage and making use of the institution of trade union and safety representatives at the workplace level) to a greater extent than self-employed, to address the asymmetrical power relations between them and the companies. Here, again, we see how access to institutional power resources is crucial, and the comparative approach highlights what power resources are accessible to the couriers in Norway. Paper IV shows how, in the context of Norway, collaborating with companies through a company agreement and regular meetings – coalitional power – have also given workers the tools to 'negotiate the algorithm' (see also Collins & Atkinson, 2023). The typical employment model, with self-employed and algorithmic management, seems to require regulation, enforcement and court cases, again institutional power, to enable these workers to address the asymmetrical power relations collectively.

Combining the perspectives of an emerging field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) and power resources (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Korpi 1983, 1985; Silver 2003; Wright 2000) and applying them to app-based food delivery has helped me to further theorise this typology: in other words, to explain how these different employment models come about, and how companies may move back and forth between the models, considering what is convenient to them. In that sense, the platform companies are opportunistic and behave as permissive potentates (taking and ceding control where they see fit) (Vallas & Schor, 2020). Thinking in terms of fields implies thinking relationally, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) – hence, the concept of an emerging field helps us to see the relational aspect of power resources and how companies also use them to shape work to their advantage. I thus align with Arnholtz and Refslund (2024) in their view on power resources as something not only pertaining to workers, but also to companies and other actors in society. This view differentiates from, for instance, Schmalz et al. (2018, 2023), who see power resources as only pertaining to workers. Power is always relational, and we risk missing many insights when only exploring the worker perspective.[36]

In paper IV, I show how power and the evolving power relations between companies, workers and unions shape the employment models in this field in the companies' own

[36] While papers II and III primarily consider power resources from a worker perspective, paper IV applies field theory, which proves helpful for seeing the relational aspect. This progression thus reflects a development in my thinking around this.

interests. By actively promoting market-driven competition among workers within companies – particularly by use of self-employed and freelance workers – and in the broader market, platform companies effectively undermine the conditions necessary for building worker solidarity and collective action. This strategy hinders workers from building and maintaining power resources, even in the Norwegian labour market, where adhering to the norms of the standard employment relationship and collective bargaining could be advantageous (Ilsøe & Söderquist, 2022). In doing so, these companies contribute to precarisation (Alberti et al., 2018) by enhancing competition among workers (Moore & Newsome, 2018), both within the company and across the sector. A consequence of this is a shift of risks from the companies to the workers, which reduces company costs and accelerates the normalisation of precarious work (Alberti et al., 2018; Moore & Newsome, 2018). As mentioned earlier, platform work, with the typical employment model, thus signifies a resurgence of the pure market-based relationship, contrasting Rubery et al.'s (2018) idealisation of the standard employment relationship.

The issue of change is crucial in theories on fields (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014). As mentioned, Mahoney and Thelen (2010) view institutional change as a continuous process driven by struggle and tension between actors. And as illustrated, this is even more the case in an emerging field, because the actors (here, the companies) swiftly identify opportunities to use power to change strategies and reinterpret rules to their advantage. The state/governments seem to allow companies to do this by not enforcing existing regulation or not adapting regulation. Thus, how company power shapes new forms of non-standard work becomes more apparent. If the typical employment model of platform companies with self-employment in combination with algorithmic management spread, this may have implications for inequality in certain sectors, in turn leading to further segmentation of the Norwegian labour market – where some sectors and groups of workers fall behind, in terms of working conditions, labour relations and regulations.

## Reflection II: The interplay between different power resources and levels

By examining the mobilisation of Foodora workers and the changing power relations in this field, my research shows how different power resources interact with and strengthen each other across levels, contributing to both theories on fields and power resources.

First, the case of Foodora Norway demonstrates how actors combined different power resources in an emerging field. In my research, workers' access to institutional power resources complemented associational power, which in turn strengthened structural power. Delivery workers in my case, backed by a strong union, extended their contract hours by using provisions in the labour law. This highlighted the effectiveness of organised labour in accessing institutional power and motivated more workers to organise, strengthening associational power (papers II and III). This has implications for how we

understand the interplay between different power resources: They not only 'complement' or 'substitute' each other (Refslund & Arnholtz, 2022), they also amplify each other. This implies that when considering power resources, the actors' skills in using different ones and capabilities in shifting between them when available is as crucial as the power resources in themselves (see also Lévesque & Murray, 2010).

Second, the case of Foodora Norway shows how unions play an important role for workers in emerging non-standard forms of work, when building and combining different power resources. In the case of Foodora Norway, the union used their economic and organisational power resources to strengthen app-based couriers' structural power. They further empowered the workers using institutional power resources, giving them a sense of efficacy – an important aspect of mobilisation theory (Kelly, 2018). In Norway, the union has thus been critical in maintaining and enhancing workers' power resources and showed their relevance by helping workers organise. The case of Foodora Norway shows how the combination between a bottom-up and top-down process of organising workers can contribute to building worker power and to shaping new forms of work. It also adds to the literature on union efforts in organising and addressing the concerns of non-standard workers (Keune, 2015; Meardi et al., 2019; Simms et al., 2018).

Third, while traditional power resources – associational, structural and institutional – are effectively combined in the case of Foodora Norway, 'newer' resources like societal power (discursive and coalitional) also play an important role. In Norway, coalitional power extends associational power, and associational power amplifies coalitional power, whereas in other contexts (like France and Germany), coalitional power emerges as a distinct resource that workers with less access to collective bargaining leverage on their own. Therefore, I would also argue that workers' access to institutional power, such as collective bargaining, is perhaps most important in the case of platform workers, for being able to build associational and structural power. However, when institutional power is weakened, as also happened in the case of Foodora Norway, workers turn to a greater extent to discursive and coalitional power, as well as to another form of institutional power: the courts, much used elsewhere across Europe (see for instance Defossez, 2022). This again has implications for how we understand workers' and unions' use of power resources as heuristic tools, requiring skills and knowledge (Lévesque & Murray, 2010) to shift between different power resources and strategies, depending on what is available and strategic at that time. In this emerging field, workers, unions and companies have shown to be opportunistic in their strategies to form the field in their interest.

Refslund and Arnholtz (2022) emphasise the need to examine the interplay between power resources at the different analytical levels at which actors operate, and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) observe that fields are nested within one another. The case of Foodora Norway shows how there is a strong interplay between power resources at different levels in this emerging field, such as the workplace (Foodora), the market (Foodora and Wolt)

and the Norwegian labour market model. The high unionisation rate and strong collective bargaining model in Norway was key in the couriers' choice to join a union (papers II–IV), demonstrating how societal-level associational power interacts with and influences workplace-level associational power. The union in question, Fellesforbundet, contributed substantial organisational and economic resources, significantly enhancing the associational power of these workers (papers II–IV). This implies that unions still have an important role in informing workers, particularly with non-standard work arrangements, about rights and possibilities within the context. One might say that with new forms of work emerging, unions still have a role to play in informing young and workers in non-standard work of the resources available in the labour market model, if they want and have the resources to maintain or expand their social agenda. However, the case of Foodora Norway also demonstrates how the sector level is crucial for workers' power at the workplace level, as I will discuss in the following.

## Reflection III: Will the companies integrate?

If we consider that this thesis initially raised the question as to whether app-based platform companies integrate or become part of the institutionalised mode of regulating work, when they try to establish themselves in a well-organised labour market like that in Norway, we may now conclude that there has been a shift in my analysis from 'Yes, these companies will integrate' (papers I and II) to 'or perhaps they will contribute to a more segmented labour market' (papers III and IV). In the following, I will elaborate more on this.

Foodora Norway's company collective agreement was an important step for the workers in improving their terms. The interaction between the union and the company, at times – switching between 'boxing' (renegotiating terms in algorithmic management, renegotiating pay and the agreement itself) and 'dancing' (regular meetings and collaboration on company practices) when needed – displayed the many resources inherent in the Nordic labour market model (Huzzard & Nilsson, 2004). After obtaining the collective agreement, they have renegotiated it three times, and the trade union representatives and management cooperate in regular meetings and exchanges. The regular meetings and cooperation due to the presence of the collective agreement (and the Basic Agreement) show how collaboration with companies may also be a power resource (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Thelen, 2014) – in the form of societal power – for employed workers, with the aim of improving their terms and working conditions. The workers have partly succeeded with this when adjusting wage levels and making other adjustments in their working conditions through the renegotiated collective agreements. As a company, Foodora Norway has shown chameleon-like behaviour (Vallas & Schor, 2020), adapting to the context, and learning the ways and practices of the Norwegian labour market model.

However, the collective agreement at Foodora Norway is only at the company level, it only covers the fraction of workers with employee status and it has no impact on platform workers in other companies. According to Hernes (1975), to understand power, one must also describe situations where groups do not achieve their goals and the reasons why they are unable to realise their interests. The case of Foodora Norway is also a case where the workers have not succeeded in achieving their goals over time, with fewer and fewer being covered by the collective agreement, as more couriers are freelancers and self-employed; this has placed additional pressure on the employed workers' pay and working conditions. Why is this happening? Market pressure has intensified Foodora's use of freelancers and self-employed. It seems as if it will remain difficult for the workers and the union to effectively leverage the full range of power resources latent in the Nordic labour market model without multi-employer collective agreements regulating the terms of competition in the industry. As long as competing companies and workers remain free to offer cheaper services under inferior conditions, the (shrinking share of) workers covered by the Foodora agreement in Norway will continue to lose bargaining power. They also risk losing protection against market pressures. A comparable scenario appears to be unfolding in Sweden, where the 2021 company-level agreement between Foodora and the Swedish Transport Workers' Union is struggling to uphold working conditions amid market competition and a growing reliance on self-employed workers (Banasiak & Jesnes, 2024).

Recalling the images of platform companies as chameleons (adapting to the institutional context) and permissive potentates (attaining and ceding control where they see fit) (Vallas & Schor, 2020), we can describe the companies' behaviour as shifting between these images (paper IV). For example, Foodora Norway initially benefited from a chameleonic approach, but with increased market pressure, they modified both their employment models and system of algorithmic management, taking on the role of permissive potentates, adjusting their control over certain elements (Vallas & Schor, 2020). My research thus adds to the literature on platform work by demonstrating how the companies strategically shift between the different images presented by Vallas and Schor (2020) in order to maintain their exceptionalism, preferably outside of the realm of labour law (Piasna, 2024).

We must remember that the emerging field of app-based food and grocery delivery is still in its nascent stages, and the power relations between actors will continue to evolve. In Norway, the upcoming court case between Wolt and Fellesforbundet in February 2025 may be important for further developments in this field (NRK, 2024b). However, the outcome is uncertain. The myriad court cases across Europe determining whether there is an employment relationship have pointed in different directions (Defossez, 2022; Nittmar & Nilsson, 2023).

Yet, one might argue that the broadening of the legal category of employee in Norway to encompass more workers (e.g., the changes in the Norwegian Working Environment Act of January 2024) constitutes an adjustment in labour law – or, in other words, a small adjustment in the Norwegian labour market model. Maybe this could even be termed 'layering', in the words of Mahoney and Thelen (2010), which constitute 'the introduction of new rules on top of or alongside existing ones' (p. 15). This adjustment or layering may, perhaps, turn the workers into winners in the upcoming court case. The Norwegian labour market model is perceived as being adjustable to new technologies and new ways of organising work, as discussed in the introduction (Katzenstein, 1985; Dølvik et al., 2017; Alsos & Dølvik, 2021; Trygstad et al., 2023). This small adjustment in the labour law is perhaps an example of such an adjustment or layering, which may have an important impact on workers and prove to counteract a more dualised labour market – both in terms of counteracting deteriorating working conditions and labour relations.

Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether these revisions in labour law – together with the collective agreement(s) emerging in the Nordic countries and the EU Directive on platform work – will be accompanied by further agreements, and ultimately sector-wide or multi-employer accords, to become integrated into the Norwegian labour market model. If companies and workers cannot agree on/lack the resources to regulate competition beyond individual companies, it is difficult for workers to achieve more equal power relations at the company level. Since there is little indication that such a development is on the horizon (and some companies actively seem to counteract it) the prospect that the Norwegian platform economy will be integrated into the collective bargaining framework of the Nordic labour market model appears rather bleak.

Some studies on platform work emphasise the importance of legal enactment over collective bargaining (Joyce et al., 2023). It also appears, in the critical case of Foodora Norway, that company power – and market dynamics – maintains the upper hand, and that legal adjustments and court cases may be necessary to adequately safeguard worker interests. Although platform workers in Norway initially had greater access to power resources than their counterparts in Germany and France – such as employment relations, collective bargaining, supportive labour laws and backing from a well-funded trade union – it seems that collective bargaining alone is insufficient to fully protect workers' rights in the Nordic countries. This scenario suggests a shift in parts of the labour market where the Norwegian model is weak towards the direction of more continental models, like those in Germany and France – as has happened in the cleaning sector (Nicolaisen & Trygstad, 2015). Here, legislation plays a more dominant role than voluntary collective bargaining. This development could also involve more court cases, increased reliance on grassroots activism to promote workers' interests and additional 'islands' of company-level collective agreements (Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2020). As such changes are unlikely to take place in the core areas of Norway's labour market, where the social partners still play a dominant role in setting the rules and agenda (Nicolaisen & Trygstad, 2015; Valestrand & Oppegaard,

2022), it could lead to a more segmented regulatory framework – with legislation dominating over voluntary collective agreements in some sectors with weak union organising. This would imply a slightly more dualised model of labour market regulation.

When addressing the question of how these companies integrate, it is also important to consider the potential growth of platform companies. An exponential growth of the platform companies is unlikely in the Norwegian labour market due to elements such as regulation and enforcement, strong unions, the extension of collective agreements, the limited market size and a shortage of workers (see scenarios in chapter 2). However, the algorithmic management introduced by platform companies will likely spread to 'more traditional companies' and other parts of the labour market (see also Alsos & Dølvik, 2021). This case study therefore provides important insights into how algorithmic management is used and how it may be negotiated and adjusted, in conversation with workers and unions, to mitigate its most negative effects (see also Collins & Atkinson, 2023; Doellgast & Wagner, 2022; Todolí-Signes, 2021). This might be of importance for the broader labour market, which is on the verge of a new technological era and where algorithmic management is an issue of concern.

## Reflection IV: On the (non-)settlement of emerging fields and fluid fields

When discussing app-based food and grocery delivery in theoretical terms as an emerging field, several questions arise: Will this field eventually 'settle', and what does the settlement of the field mean? How long will it take before the field settles? For instance, consider the court case scheduled for February 2025, between three couriers (as for now) aided by Fellesforbundet and the platform company Wolt (NRK, 2024): Will this case settle the field, where either the platform company model of self-employed workers and algorithmic management prevails, or will the workers win the case and gain employment contracts? Will this case set precedence for other similar cases? Or will we see more court cases, and more worker mobilisation? Will other companies follow suit? Or will they make new business models, leading to new forms of work that also fall in the grey zone between employment and self-employment? Will the Labour Inspectorate face increased enforcement duties? How will the EU Directive on platform work be implemented in Norway, and how will this shape the field? Here, the questions are many, which calls for more research.

One of the challenges in theorising fields touched upon in the questions above is how to conceptualise the settlement of a field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Neo-institutional theory argued that field settlement is achieved when a broad agreement on a set of rules and norms is shared by most actors in the field, and where one can expect certain behaviours from other actors (Scott, 1991). However, this view does not take into consideration that fields may also continue to be characterised by conflict and a

continuous struggle of and for power, instead of cooperation and playing by the norms and rules (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) – in this case, a struggle between capital and labour. On this note, the Norwegian labour market model is designed for the actors to both cooperate and contest each other (Huzzard & Nilsson, 2004), what Dølvik (2013) refers to as a 'partnership of conflict' (*konfliktpartnerskap*) with rules and norms for how to handle the conflict between labour and capital (pp. 14-15). This implies that even settled segments of the Norwegian labour market involve conflict and power struggles between the actors (although in organised ways, considering the rules for strikes in particular). In other words, conflicts between organised workers and companies are part of the game.

However, in app-based food and grocery delivery, there will be a different form of conflict and power struggle, as the workers are mostly self-employed and freelancers and are outside the realm of the organised. This conflict will therefore have a different expression than those in the more organised parts of the labour market. One of the questions, as we have explored in this thesis, is whether the workers and unions can build power to contest capital in this emerging field, and what strategies the companies use to hinder collective worker power. We can therefore observe more similar examples of conflicts in parts of the private service sector – such as cleaning, which in Europe has long been described as '[an arena] where the hollowing out of the standard employment relationship have come furthest' (Bosch, 2006, p. 44 in Nicolaisen & Trygstad, 2015, p. 180). In these segments of the labour market, we see different forms of conflict and power struggles between labour and capital compared to what takes place in the more regulated segments. For instance, cleaning is characterised by many small companies, low start-up costs and rapid turnover (Nicolaisen & Trygstad, 2015). Addressing concerns over an industry with weak labour relations and deteriorating working conditions, the state and social partners implemented hard regulation in 2011 and 2012 (including the extension of collective agreements and introduction of identity cards) to counteract dualisation (Ibid.). This approach differs from the voluntary collective bargaining and soft law approach normally characterising the Nordic labour market model. However, even though the cleaning sector is more regulated, whether it is 'settled' is still questionable. Thus, we also may talk about industries or fields that never fully materialise or settle (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

Returning to app-based food delivery and the extensive use of new technology in organising work, we face a field that is likely to remain fluid (i.e., never settle). Typically, an emerging field becomes institutionalised or fails to materialise, but in this case, the field persists in a fluid state, with companies constantly changing their models to evade regulations – much like in the cleaning sector, but with an additional layer of high-intensive technological change. The field's inherent characteristic seems to be its fluidity. The platform companies have had an interest in defining their exceptionalism from labour law since arriving on the scene more than a decade ago (Piasna, 2024), and they seem to be resisting institutionalisation/settlement across Europe (Defossez, 2022). Consider the

Riders Law (Ley Rider) introduced by the Spanish Government in May 2021, classifying app-based couriers as employees. Recent research suggests that, by changing the algorithmic management system, the companies are still finding ways to adapt to the new regulatory situation in ways that do not necessarily improve working conditions. As Vieira and Mendonça (2024) state, 'platforms adjustments to regulations are not driven by a pre-established script that all companies follow in a similar way, but rather that they are adept at finding creative ways through which they try – yet again – to explore the hyper-flexible labour context in which they operate' (p. 18). For capital, a fluid field is advantageous, as it enables continual adjustments to employment models and algorithmic management, helping companies to evade regulations. By remaining exceptional and avoiding strict regulatory constraints, platform companies can adapt their behaviour to suit their interests. This fluidity prevents the field from solidifying, allowing app-based food and grocery delivery to remain in a state of continuous change (i.e., 'messy') on the margins of the Norwegian labour market model, with regulations perpetually lagging.

Another perspective is that app-based food and grocery delivery may not materialise into a field on its own, as other companies may adapt the platform companies' algorithmic management techniques, leading to difficulties in distinguishing between platform work and other forms of work. New fields often emerge near established ones, and do so quite rapidly with new technologies (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). App-based food and grocery delivery, for instance, is closely related to the broader service and logistics industries, especially parcel delivery (Jesnes & Svarstad, 2023; Moore & Newsome, 2018). However, as I have argued, platform companies' intensive use of technology and sole reliance on non-standard forms of work distinguish this area as an emerging and 'fluid' field in the labour market. The core concept behind platform companies, which involves outsourcing more employer tasks to algorithms, may also spread to other companies. Defining platform work today is difficult enough as it is (as we have seen in chapter 2). Should algorithmic management spread extensively to other companies within transport and logistics, app-based food and grocery delivery would exemplify a field that never fully materialised (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) but did disseminate its practices. We may face increased regulatory and enforcement challenges as we strive to keep up with technological developments and the companies' attempts to remain 'exceptional' and outside of the realm of labour law (Piasna, 2024).

## Limitations and directions for future research

Although the case study's generalisability may be limited, Foodora Norway provides transferability (Tracy, 2010) by offering insights into mobilising non-standard workers, building and sustaining worker power resources, and understanding platform companies' practices, as discussed in the methods chapter. It should be noted that these insights may primarily apply to platform workers engaged in low-skilled work. In cases where high-

skilled work and work demanding greater competence is mediated through platform companies, different dynamics and power relations will most likely come into play (Nesheim & Jesnes, 2022; Steen et al., 2019).

In the Nordic context, it is crucial to explore how platform workers can expand single-company agreements into multi-employer framework agreements. This shift is essential to mitigate intense market competition in platform work, as well as to improve pay and working conditions. Additionally, examining how the state can contribute to unions' efforts in mobilising non-standard workers may be crucial for fostering a more supportive environment for worker power. While unions strive to recruit new members, they face significant challenges due to the lack of fixed workplaces and the diverse nature of the platform workforce, which complicates collective representation, as detailed here. The state can also contribute by establishing a level playing field among companies through the facilitation of multi-employer accords that benefit both platform and traditional companies, as well as by enforcing existing regulations. As noted by Dølvik and Jesnes (2018), 'it takes two for tango, but also a good bandleader' (p. 49).

Furthermore, the case offers insight into companies' use of algorithmic management, and workers'/unions' attempts to influence the algorithms to mitigate the negative effects. The use of algorithmic management and technological developments in management techniques will most likely spread to 'more traditional' companies and the broader labour market. However, which techniques will be adopted by other companies, as well as their effects on workers and working conditions/pay, requires attention in future research. The EU Directive on platform work contains some requirements on transparency in the use of algorithmic management (as do other regulations, like the AI Act and the General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR]), but how well is this being implemented by companies, and are the enforcement mechanisms following up with developments? It is crucial to be attentive to these issues –and to how algorithmic management may be used differently and have varied implications across occupations and sectors.

# 7

# Norsk sammendrag (Norwegian summary)

Hva skjer når digitale plattformer kommer inn i et velorganisert arbeidsmarked som Norge? Begrepet «digitale plattformer» (heretter: plattformer) viser til virksomheter som kobler arbeidere på atypiske kontrakter, som korte deltidskontrakter og selvstendig næringsdrivende uten ansatte, med kunder. Kunder kan være bedrifter eller privatpersoner. Plattformene bruker digital teknologi, som apper og algoritmer, for å styre arbeidet og arbeidsprosessen (ofte omtalt som algoritmisk styring[37]). Denne styringsformen gjør det lettere for virksomheter å tilpasse arbeidsstokken etter behov uten høye kostnader, da alle aspekter av relasjonen til arbeideren – fra rekruttering, opplæring og tildeling av oppdrag, til avslutning av forholdet – foregår digitalt. Algoritmisk styring skaper samtidig utfordringer knyttet til arbeidernes rettigheter, særlig for plattformarbeidere med kontrakt som selvstendig næringsdrivende, samt til arbeidsmiljø, velferdsgoder, medvirkning, og muligheten til kollektiv organisering og representasjon. Det norske arbeidsmarkedet er godt organisert, med sterke parter både på arbeidsgiver- og arbeidstakersiden, og generøse velferdsordninger. Plattformene har imidlertid vokst fram i de delene av arbeidslivet hvor atypisk arbeid er mer utbredt, organisasjonsgraden er lavere og tariffavtaledekningen svakere. I denne delen av arbeidslivet vil det trolig være mer utfordrende for plattformarbeidere å organisere seg for å påvirke virksomhetene. Samtidig, hvis de ikke klarer det i det norske arbeidsmarkedet, vil det trolig heller ikke finne sted andre steder.

Min forskning har som mål å empirisk utforske utviklingen av plattformarbeid i den app-baserte mat- og dagligvarebransjen i Norge. Videre er målet å analysere maktforholdene mellom arbeid og kapital, og hvordan disse utvikler seg over tid og bidrar til å forme arbeidsvilkårene til plattformarbeiderne. Basert på kvalitative metoder, besvarer min forskning følgende spørsmål:

- Hvordan former ulike aktørers (plattformer, arbeidere og fagforeninger) tilgang til og bruk av maktressurser arbeidsvilkårene i app-basert mat- og dagligvarelevering?
- Hvordan tilpasser plattformene sine strategier som respons på mobilisering og økt konkurranse i markedet, og hvilke konsekvenser

[37] Algoritmisk styring er definert som en 'styringsform der virksomhetene samler inn data om arbeideren, arbeidsprosessen, kundene og markedet og bruker algoritmer for automatisk å tildele oppdrag, vurdere, styre oppførsel, sette pris på oppdrag og optimere produksjonsprosessen' (Oppegaard & Jesnes, 2024:278).

har disse tilpasningene for maktrelasjonene mellom arbeid og kapital og arbeidsvilkårene?

App-basert mat- og dagligvarelevering kan betraktes som et framvoksende felt (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Et felt kan forstås som en sosialt konstruert arena der flere aktører forsøker å bygge og bruke sine maktressurser (Arnholtz & Refslund, 2024; Korpi, 1983; 1985; Lukes, 2005 [1974]; Silver, 2003; Wright, 2000) for å forme feltet til sin fordel. To eksempler på maktressurser å kunne dra nytte av lover, regler og det kollektive forhandlingssystemet for å styrke sin posisjon, eller å organisere seg for å bygge organisatorisk makt og fremme sin sak. Jeg tar utgangspunkt i Foodora Norge som et kritisk case som bidrar med mye informasjon (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Patton, 2014): Hvis en plattform som Foodora, som har ansatt budene fra starten av, ikke blir integrert i den norske arbeidslivsmodellen, vil det være vanskelig å integrere plattformer andre steder også. Sammen med forskere i andre land sammenligner jeg mobiliseringen av app-baserte bud i mat- og daglivarelevering i Norge, med lignende mobiliseringsprosesser i Tyskland og Frankrike (Gallie, 2007; 2011). Målet med sammenligningen er å få en bedre forståelse av den norske casen, og hvilke maktressurser de norske matleveringsbudene kan dra fordel av.

Avhandlingen består av tre artikler og et bokkapittel, referert til som 'papers'. Metodene som benyttes er kvalitative, og inkluderer intervjuer triangulert med dokumentanalyse og observasjon av Foodora-arbeidernes streik i 2019. Feltarbeidet og forskningen har pågått siden de første plattformene etablerte seg i Norge i 2015 fram til 2024, men en stor del av datamaterialet ble samlet inn mellom 2018 og 2022. I paper I utforsker jeg hvordan plattformer bestemmer arbeidernes lønns- og arbeidsvilkår. Ut fra dette utvikler jeg en typologi over plattformbaserte ansettelsesmodeller som oppstår i de nordiske landene. Til tross for at de fleste plattformer benytter seg av selvstendig næringsdrivende i kombinasjon med algoritmisk styring, er det også tilfeller av plattformer som belager seg på deltidskontrakter som gir arbeiderne tilgang til flere rettigheter og ytelser, som for eksempel Foodora Norge. I paper II undersøker jeg, sammen med forskere i Tyskland og Frankrike, hvordan plattformarbeidere i app-basert matlevering går fra å være individer til å bli kollektive aktører, og at den norske arbeidslivsmodellen er med på å forme hvilke mobiliseringsstrategier plattformarbeiderne velger. I Norge valgte budene å organisere seg i en fagforening, streike og forhandle fram en tariffavtale med Foodora, fordi de mente at denne tilnærmingen ville forbedre lønns- og arbeidsvilkårene deres. I paper III undersøker jeg, også sammen med kolleger i Tyskland, hvordan plattformarbeidere bygger, bruker og kombinerer maktressurser for å forbedre lønns- og arbeidsvilkår i et sammenlignende perspektiv. I artikkel IV analyserer jeg det framvoksende feltet av app-basert mat- og dagligvarelevering i Norge og ser nærmere på både arbeidernes og virksomhetenes maktressurser og strategier for å fremme sine interesser i feltet. Jeg undersøker hvordan dette feltet blir påvirket av den norske arbeidsmarkedsmodellen og hvordan markedet og maktforholdene mellom aktørene utvikler seg og former arbeidsvilkårene.

Det er et skille i analysen mellom de to første paperene og de to siste. De to første paperene har et narrativ om at plattformvirksomheter lar seg innlemme i den norske arbeidslivsmodellen, med tariffavtalen mellom Foodora og Fellesforbundet som en indikasjon på dette. I de to siste paperene, utgitt i 2024 etter koronapandemien, måtte jeg revurdere denne analysen. I paper III og IV undersøker jeg hvordan skiftende maktforhold mellom arbeid og kapital over tid påvirker arbeidsforholdene i en mer negativ retning. Grunnet mangel på en bransjeavtale, kan virksomheten stort sett uforstyrret drive fram sine forretningsmodeller med algoritmisk styring i kombinasjon med bruk av arbeidskraft fra selvstendig næringsdrivende. Dette har konsekvenser for arbeiderne, spesielt for arbeidsinnvandrere som utgjør en stor andel av arbeidsstyrken innen plattformøkonomien, og hvor plattformarbeid ofte representerer en sårt tiltrengt inntekt. For andre, som har plattformarbeid som en ekstrainntekt, slik som for studenter, er dette kanskje ikke mer dramatisk enn at de finner seg en annen jobb.

Min forskning har tre bidrag til litteraturen rundt plattformarbeid. For det første viser jeg, ved å kombinere begrepene framvoksende felt, maktressurser og mobilisering, hvordan maktforholdene mellom plattformer, arbeidere og fagforeninger er med på å konstruere nye former for arbeid. Disse nye formene konstrueres bevisst av virksomhetene for å maksimere mest mulig profitt. Dette er muliggjort på grunn av en kombinasjon av manglede regulering eller håndheving av eksisterende regelverk. Gjennom caset Foodora Norge framhever jeg hvordan arbeidere og fagforeninger jobber for å bedre vilkår og for å beholde den posisjonen de har opparbeidet seg med tariffavtalen fra 2019. Det ser ut til at plattformene til dels får drive fram sin modell for organisering av arbeid med atypiske ansettelsesformer i kombinasjon med algoritmisk styring. Plattformene søker å undergrave potensialet for kollektiv handling ved å fremme markedsbasert konkurranse internt i virksomheter og mellom virksomheter. Dette gjør de ved å bruke arbeidstakere og frilansere/selvstendige side om side og la de konkurrere om oppdrag, både internt i plattformene, og mellom disse.

For det andre bidrar forskningen med innsikt i hvordan fagforeninger kan mobilisere de som har atypiske ansettelsesformer i arbeidslivet, og hvordan mobilisering blant plattformarbeidere også tar form nedenfra og opp. I forskningen min viser jeg hvordan ulike aktører kan bygge og kombinere maktressurser for å forme et framvoksende felt. For eksempel kan tilgang til institusjonell makt, som lover, regler og kollektiv forhandling, forbedre mulighetene for organisering på arbeidsplassen. Dette kan igjen styrke den strukturelle makten gjennom større streiker som har gjennomslagskraft i form av å påvirke virksomheten, og ikke minst offentligheten. Samspillet mellom ulike maktressurser er avgjørende for arbeiderne, og det er også avgjørende å spille på maktressurser på ulike nivåer (arbeidsplass–samfunn). Videre kreves ferdigheter og kompetanse til å ta i bruk og kombinere ulike maktressurser på flere nivåer for å kunne vinne fram sin sak, spesielt i møte med plattformer som til stadighet endrer ansettelses- og styringsform.

For det tredje, bidrar jeg med teoretiske refleksjoner rundt hva et framvoksende felt er. Hva betyr det for eksempel dersom dette framvoksende feltet forblir uregulert og uten klare normer og regler, og hvor aktørenes strategier forblir skiftende? App-basert matlevering ser ut til å være et framvoksende felt med en vedvarende 'flytende' tilstand, med virksomheter som kontinuerlig tilpasser ansettelses- og styringsform på en måte som gjør at de unngår regler om arbeidstakerrettigheter for å maksimere utbytte. Selv om tariffavtalen mellom Foodora og Fellesforbundet fra 2019 (reforhandlet i 2020, 2022, 2024) var et viktig første skritt mot å innlemme plattformarbeidere i den norske arbeidsmarkedsmodellen, er det lite sannsynlig at avtalen på egen hånd vil gi tilstrekkelig beskyttelse for arbeiderne. Feltet vil fortsatt være utsatt for vedvarende markedspress fra konkurrerende virksomheter (og selvstendige) som ikke er bundet av tariffavtaler. Vi kan komme til å se, også i Norge, en økning i søksmål mot plattformvirksomheter, mer grasrotorganisering, og muligens også ulovlige wildcat streiker med sikte på å unngå et 'race to the bottom'. Selv om endringer i Arbeidsmiljøloven fra 2024 og et EU-direktivet kan bedre vilkårene for plattformarbeidere, kan det likevel se ut til at en bransjeomfattende tariffavtale er nødvendig for å beskytte arbeidstakerne mot et rent markedsbasert forhold. Dersom dette ikke finner sted kan det tyde på at app-baserte bud fortsetter å være i randsonen av den norske arbeidslivsmodellen, og et mer todelt arbeidsmarked. Et 'flytende felt' kan også vise seg mer utfordrende å regulere og håndheve, noe som kan føre til vedvarende mobilisering og uro i feltet.

# 8 Appendix

## Appendix I: Terminology

In this thesis, I employ several definitions that fall into two categories: terminology related to forms of employment and terminology related to platform companies.

**Terminology related to forms of employment**

When considering forms of employment, a distinction is made between the standard employment relationship, defined as open-ended employment contracts, full-time[38] and direct employment, and non-standard forms of work, which is an umbrella term for work arrangements that differ from the standard employment relationship, often also referred to as 'atypical work' (Bosch, 2004; Kalleberg, 2000; Rubery et al., 2018). Non-standard forms of work include temporary employment, short part-time (16–20 hours per week) or marginal part-time work (1–15 hours per week), on-call work, zero-hour contracts (prohibited in Norway since 2019) and temporary agency work (ILO, 2016; Eurofound, 2020; Rubery et al., 2018).

In contrast to employees who are under the subordination of an employer, self-employed individuals perform work on a contract of services, and have the autonomy to take risks, generate surplus and organise work according to personal preferences (Furåker, 2005; Hotvedt et al., 2020). They are outside of the labour market, defined as 'a system or arena for hiring labour power', but still part of working life, defined as 'all activities covered by the notion of gainful employment, including those of the self-employed without employees' (Furåker, 2005, p. 20). The Norwegian labour market model with its collective bargaining framework is built on the binary divide between employees and self-employed (Hotvedt et al., 2020).

In terms of Norwegian tax and social security law, Norway has a third residual category of workers – in addition to employee and self-employed – which is that of freelancer, defined as individuals who are paid per assignment without being permanently employed nor fully self-employed (Alsos et al., 2022; Altinn, 2024; Hotvedt et al., 2020). In everyday speech, the categories of freelancers and self-employed are often used interchangeably, but there are important differences. In the National Insurance Act, freelancers are treated more like self-employed, giving freelancers fewer social benefits than employees (see paper I; Alsos et al., 2022). In tax law, freelancers are treated more like employees. The

[38] Substantial part-time, working between 21 and 34 hours per week, is often considered as part of standard employment.

employer deducts taxes for employees and freelancers (Alsos et al., 2022; Hotvedt et al., 2020).

Emerging forms of non-standard work include disguised and dependent self-employment (Eurofound, 2023, 2024). Disguised, false, bogus, masked and sham self-employment all fall in a grey area between employment and self-employment, underlining companies' intentions to circumvent labour law and social security regulations to reduce costs and obligations by designating workers as self-employed (Eurofound, 2024). Dependent self-employment refers to self-employed individuals who are economically dependent on one or a few clients and have limited autonomy in setting prices (Eurofound, 2023). Often, disguised and dependent self-employed are solo self-employed, meaning that they work entirely on their own, without employees.[39] Traditionally, self-employed do not have access to collective labour rights such as bargaining collectively, nor can they strike. However, with the 2022 EU guidelines (EU Commission/2022/C 374/02), solo self-employed may now engage in collective bargaining, including in Norway (Norwegian Competition Authority, 2022).

**Terminology related to platform companies**

Platform companies[40] match workers and clients through digital technologies, most often on a per-task basis (Piasna, 2021). A triangular relationship is formed between the platform company, the platform workers and the consumers or client company, rather than an employer–employee relationship (Dølvik & Jesnes, 2018). The platform, or gig, economy refers to the totality of platform companies. Huang (2024) considers algorithmic management as the main characteristic of platform companies. Platform companies use algorithmic management – defined as technological tools (such as apps) and digital supervision systems (including automated job allocation, performance evaluation systems and/or customer ratings and variegated price setting/bonuses) – to manage and discipline the workforce without human oversight (De Stefano & Taes, 2023; Duggan et al., 2020). The European Union (2024) states the following about platform companies and algorithmic management: 'Digital labour platforms use algorithms for human resources management. These systems are used to organise and manage the people performing platform work through their applications or websites'.

[39] However, this is not entirely accurate, either. As a solo self-employed individual with an 'ENK' (sole proprietorship), you bear personal, economic and legal responsibility for any risks associated with hiring others to work for you. However, this does not imply that individuals are unwilling to take on that risk (Jesnes & Svarstad, 2023).

[40] In recent publications, the EU, ILO and OECD refer to platform companies as 'digital labour platforms'. However, throughout my research, I have consistently used the term 'platform companies' to emphasise their role in mediating tasks and workers (as discussed in Dølvik & Jesnes, 2018; Jesnes & Oppegaard, 2020). Although 'digital labour platforms' is a suitable term, I will continue using 'platform companies' in this context to maintain consistency with my previous papers.

The term 'platform workers' refers to those working via platform companies, regardless of their contractual relations. While platform companies often designate workers as self-employed, this may not align with legal definitions (Hotvedt, 2018; Prassl, 2018). Despite appearing as self-employed in labour statistics and perceiving themselves as such, platform workers could still be considered employees from a legal point of view (Hotvedt, 2018, see also discussion on disguised/dependent self-employment above).

There are many perspectives on platform companies. Vallas and Schor (2020) outline five of these, based on the existing literature. Platform companies may be perceived as:

- entrepreneurial incubators, providing flexible and occasional income
- digital cages, in which workers, misclassified as self-employed, are subject to automated decision-making and exploitation
- accelerants of precarious work, characterised by uncertainty and insecurity
- chameleons, adapting to the institutional context
- permissive potentates, a new governance system where companies maintain control over central functions (e.g., data, task allocation and pricing) and cede control over other aspects

In paper I, I develop a typology of two types of platform companies: the typical platform company and the hybrid platform company. Typical platform companies depend on labour from self-employed individuals in combination with algorithmic management systems, epitomised by the taxi platform Uber. Hybrid platform companies hire workers on non-standard forms of work, other than self-employment, and/or maintain a relatively stable relationship with workers, also in combination with algorithmic management systems. Foodora Norway is a prime example of the hybrid platform company.

# Appendix II: Interview guide – platform workers

1.Background

- Can you start by telling me a little bit about your background? – age, education, previous and current jobs/studies and for how long you have worked through the platform xx?

2. Your work via a platform

- What do you do for work through this platform? What kind of competence is required to do your work?
- How much do you work through this platform? For how long have you been doing it? Do you work for several platforms?
- Could you tell me about a typical day at work? How do you get assignments? How long are they? How many a day? How much do you earn?
- How does the digital platform work? ratings? How does the rating system work? what happens if you get a low rating?
- Can you decide the price of your service or is it the platform? What decides the price? Can you influence it in any ways? If relevant, how do you relate to fluctuation in prices?
- Are you in touch with the people behind the platform, and in what ways? Or is all communication through the digital platform? Can you tell me about one situation where you approached the platform?
- Are you in touch with a third party? (customer, employer). In what ways?
- Do you have a contract? What kind of contract? Does the contract say anything about working hours, salary? Or are you self-employed?

3. Opportunity or necessity?

- How come you started this type of work? What is your motivation (hobby/ extra income/needed income)?
- Do you see any opportunities to develop yourself and your abilities through this work?
- Would you say that you are able to influence/develop the way you do your work, and if so, is it something that the company may draw advantage of?
- Are there any opportunities for you to participate in developing the company's services/products?
- What are your aspirations/will you continue with this work or move over to something else?
- What are the most positive aspects of your work?
- What are the most negative aspects of your work?

- What are your greatest worries, and have you done anything to make the situation better?
- Is there some kind of fairness problem that you struggle with at work?

4. Representation

- Is there someone representing you and the others who work through the platform? Trade unions or alike? Could you describe them and how they work?
- Have you been involved in meetings or discussions about the working conditions or pay? Could you describe these? What was the outcome? If not, would you like to discuss such issues collectively?
- Do you have another means of voicing your opinions (social media)? Part of any groups?
- Have you been contacted/approached by a trade union? Which one, can you describe the meetings/discussions. Any results? What is your opinion about the trade unions?

5. Other

- Anything else you consider relevant that we did not talk about?
- Do you know anyone who would like to participate in an interview?

## Appendix III: Interview guide – social partners

**Debate within trade unions**

- Have you discussed and worked with digital platforms in your organisation so far? In what way - could you describe the main topics of your discussions? What would you say is your main topics: salaries, work environment, participation in the development of services, co-determination of work? If any of these are less articulated/debated, why is that so?
- In what way would you say that platform work is shaping/fostering how you are able to tackle concerns for an unfair labour market?
- Are there different views on platform work within the union? How do you tackle such disagreements?
-

**Connecting with platform workers**

- Have you approached those working through platforms? Can you describe how this work has been conducted?
- What type of responses did you receive from these platform workers? What were the main topics?
- Have this meant that you have made any adjustments to your model/what you offer workers/self-employed?
- Do you have any strategies for recruiting those working through platforms/platforms? What are the obstacles/considerations?
- Would you say that it is difficult to get in touch with platform workers? Why?

**Negotiations, alliances and challenges**

- Are you in dialogue with other social partners about this topic? Could you describe the extent/content of the dialogue?
- What is your main aim with getting in touch with other social partners?
- Are there different views on platform work within this dialogue?
- How do you tackle such disagreements? / alt. why do you think you are able to agree?
- Has there been any negotiations with employee representatives/platforms in your area?
-

**The state/legal arrangements**

- Do you consider a need for new regulations concerning those working through platforms?
- How do you think the current legal framework for working conditions in the platform economy is?
- What legal proceedings have been concerning the platform economy in your area?
- What framework do you regard as crucial for the development of the platform economy?

# Appendix IV: Interview guide – companies

The interview guide was tailored to each specific company at the time of the interview, and it has evolved over the years. Published in Norwegian in Jesnes et al. (2016, p. 56-59). This is a translated overview of the themes evoked in the interview guide.

Overview of the company

- When established, industry focus, growth, operations in other countries, services offered by the company, identification with other companies within the "sharing economy," main competitors

Workers

- Description of typical workers (age, gender, background, education, experience, employed or unemployed), primary occupation or not, number of active/registered workers, possibility of workers engaging with other companies or competitors, work assignments and contracts, contract types.

Wages/pay

- Payment structure (through the company or directly from the consumer/client), deductions for taxes, insurance, variations in pay, distinctions between employees and self-employed.

Working conditions

- Average duration of typical assignments, number of assignments/hours worked by each worker, job security, flexibility, regulation of work hours, distinctions between employees and self-employed, personal duty to perform the assigned task, consequences for refusal (lower priority in job allocation, exclusion?), flexibility regarding logging in at preferred times and locations.

Occupational health and safety

- Risk responsibility, risk assessments, challenges to occupational health and safety, training, experience with work accidents, communication with workers, feedback and improvements, supervision of tasks, data collection and privacy, building community between workers, differences from 'traditional' companies.

# Appendix V: Information sheet in English

**Would you like to participate in the research project:**

**'When your boss is an app: labour market responses to the platform economy in France, the UK and Norway?'**

The purpose of the research project is to understand how new business models and new forms of work influence working life and how labour markets influence companies and their business models. In the following, you can read about the aims of the project, and what participation in the project implies for you.

**Background and purpose**
This research project is about studying the platform economy and labour market responses in three very different labour markets: France, the UK and Norway. I will investigate employment relations and the working conditions of those who work through platforms, and study the various actors (trade unions, employer' associations and authorities) and their reactions to new business models and new forms of work.

**Who is responsible for the research project?**
The research institute Fafo and researcher Kristin Jesnes is responsible for the study.

**Why do I want to interview you?**
I want to interview you because you work through a platform, is a leader in a platform company, work in a trade union, an employer organisation or you are a government representative who is concerned with new business models and new forms of work.

The questions I ask will be about employment relations and working conditions, opportunities and challenges in this form of work, and expectations of how this affects the working life.

During the interview, I will take notes, and possibly record the interview if you give me permission to do that.

Time and place for the interview will be arranged between us.

**What happens to your information?**
All personal information will be treated confidentially. This means that only those who work with the project will have access to the information you provide. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2023 (later extended to 2024). The sound recording will be deleted and the notes will be anonymised when the project is finished. When we write reports and articles from the project, we will make sure that it is not possible to recognise people who are interviewed.

**Voluntary participation**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may at any time withdraw your consent without giving any reason. All information about you will then be anonymised. It will have no negative consequences for you if you do not want to participate or later choose to withdraw.

**Your rights**
As long as you can be identified in the data material, you are entitled to:
• get insight into which personal information is registered about you,
• getting personal information about you,
• get your personal information deleted,
• get a copy of your personal information, and
• to send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority about the processing of your personal data.

**What gives us the right to process personal information about you?**
We process information about you based on your consent. On behalf of Fafo, NSD - the Norwegian Center for Research Data (now SIKT) has considered that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the privacy regulations.

**Where can I find out more?**
If you have any questions about the study or would like to exercise your rights, please contact:

• The research institute Fafo and Kristin Jesnes, krj@fafo.no, +47 97721897
• Our Data Protection Officer: NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data AS, by email (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or telephone: + 47 55 58 21 17.

Sincerely,
Kristin Jesnes,
researcher at Fafo and PhD-student at the University of Gothenburg
krj@fafo.no
+47 97721897

# Appendix VI: Approval from SIKT



Sikt

Meldeskjema / When your boss is an app: labour market responses to the platform e... / Vurdering

## Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

| Referansenummer | Vurderingstype | Dato |
|---|---|---|
| 484726 | Standard | 19.01.2023 |

**Prosjekttittel**
When your boss is an app: labour market responses to the platform economy

**Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**
FAFO Institutt for arbeidsliv- og velferdsforskning AS

**Prosjektansvarlig**
Kristin Jesnes

**Prosjektperiode**
15.03.2018 - 31.12.2023

**Kategorier personopplysninger**
Alminnelige
Særlige

**Lovlig grunnlag**
Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)
Uttrykkelig samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 31.12.2023.

Meldeskjema

**Kommentar**
Personverntjenester har vurdert endringen i prosjektsluttdato.

Vi har nå registrert 31.12.23 som ny sluttdato for behandling av personopplysninger.

Vi vil følge opp ved ny planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

# Appendix VII: Co-author declaration I

**Co-Author Declaration I:**

This is a co-author declaration for the book chapter "The role of worker collectives among app-based food delivery couriers in France, Germany, and Norway: All the same or different?" published in A Modern Guide To Labour and the Platform Economy (pp. 258-273) by Edward Elgar Publishing (2021).

We hereby declare the following contributions:

Kristin Jesnes had the idea of using Kelly's theory of mobilization and its four categories as a framework for common data analysis. In addition, Jesnes was responsible for collecting data and analysing the Norwegian case.

Denis Neumann and Vera Trappmann together were responsible for the German case.

Pauline de Becdelièvre was responsible for the French case. However, Jesnes assisted in the analysis of the French case.

To analyse the data across countries, we used a matrix based on Kelly's theory of mobilization, including four categories, which each of us filled in for our country. We conducted online meetings to collectively analyse the data across the three countries.

Vera Trappmann took responsibility for the final wording and writing of the article.

Pauline de BECDELIEVRE

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# Appendix VIII: Co-author declaration II

**Co-author declaration II:**

We, the authors of the article "Building labour power in the platform economy: A comparative analysis of worker struggles in German and Norwegian food delivery," published in the journal New Technology, Work and Employment in 2024, have made the following contributions:

Kristin Jesnes initially suggested the idea of combining the power resource approach with industrial relations theory and applying it to the case of the UK and Norway. She presented this concept at a PhD summer school on platform work in Berlin in September 2022. However, after discussions with Tatiana López, one of the organizers of the summer school, we decided to co-write an article and focus on Germany and Norway as case countries instead. López then invited Oğuz Alyanak and Zeynep Karlıdağ to join the article project, which had conducted extensive research on Gorillas in Germany, and together the four of us developed the overall idea for the article. Our approach involved conducting a comparative analysis using power resource theory and the industrial relations framework. We held digital meetings to analyse the material we had collected from both countries, which we had coded based on the four power resources. Additionally, we created timelines of events and reconstructed the narrative as methods for analysing the data.

López, as the lead author, took responsibility for guiding us through the analytical process. López was also in charge of finalizing the wording and writing of the article, as well as submitting it to the journal and overseeing two rounds of revisions.

Jesnes was responsible for analysing the Norwegian case and drafting the initial version of the power resource theory section and the method section. She also handled the final round of revisions.

Alyanak, Karlıdağ, and López collectively took responsibility for analysing the German case. Specifically, Alyanak contributed extensively to the introduction section and played a crucial role in the editing process. Karlıdağ made important contributions in the analysis as she had been a member of the Gorillas Workers Collective (GWC), prior to becoming a research assistant in the Fairwork project, tasked with assisting in the recruitment and conducting of interviews. The author's personal connections with the GWC were crucial for trust-building and opened doors for the participation of the Fairwork Germany lead researcher (Oğuz Alyanak) in GWC meetings and protests. By the time of data analysis and results publication, none of the authors had any organisational or personal ties to the GWC or the Gorillas platform.

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Fafo/Gothenburg University Kristin Jesnes

# Appendix IX: Overview interviews with couriers

| *Informant ID* | *Company/Role of interviewee* | *Recruitment method* | *Language of interview* | *Year of interview* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *I3* | Foodora courier, union rep | Through the union | Norwegian | November 2018, October 2019, April 2021, August 2022 |
| *I4* | Foodora courier, union rep | Through the union | Norwegian | November 2018, October 2019, April 2021, June 2022 |
| *I5* | Foodora courier | Through the union | Norwegian | November 2018 |
| *I7* | Foodora courier, union rep | Through the union | English | December 2018 |
| *I8* | Foodora courier | Through the union | English | December 2018 |
| *I9* | Foodora courier | Through the union | English | December 2018 |
| *I10* | Foodora courier | Through the union | English | December 2018 |
| *I11* | Foodora courier | Through the union | English | December 2018 |
| *I12* | Foodora courier | Through the union | English | December 2018 |
| *I14* | Foodora courier | Through the union | Norwegian | May 2019 |
| *I15* | Foodora courier | Through the union | Norwegian | May 2019 |
| *I16* | Foodora courier | Outside hot spot restaurant | English | June 2019 |
| *I17* | Foodora courier | Outside hot spot restaurant | Norwegian | June 2019 |
| *I18* | Foodora courier | Outside hot spot restaurant | English | June 2019 |
| *I19* | Foodora courier | Info on Slack | Norwegian | October 2019 |
| *I20* | Foodora courier, union rep | Info on Slack | Norwegian | October 2019, September 2022 |
| *I21* | Foodora courier | Info on Slack | Norwegian | October 2019 |
| *I25* | Foodora/Wolt courier, freelance | Outside hot spot restaurant | English | October 2022 |
| *I26* | Foodora courier | Outside hot spot restaurant | Norwegian | October 2022 |
| *I27* | Foodora/Wolt courier, freelance | Outside hot spot restaurant | English | October 2022 |
| *I29* | Wolt/Foodora courier, freelance | Outside hot spot restaurant | English | June 2022 |
| *I30* | Foodora courier, market & restaurants | Outside hot spot restaurant | English | June 2022 |
| *I31* | Foodora courier | Outside hot spot restaurant | Norwegian | June 2022 |
| *I32* | Foodora courier, union rep | Through the union | English | October 2022 |

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