

Taxi driving: Surveillance & Resistance in the Age of AI and Surveillance Capitalism



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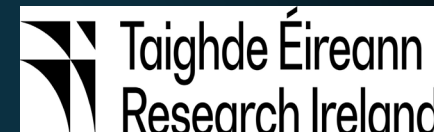
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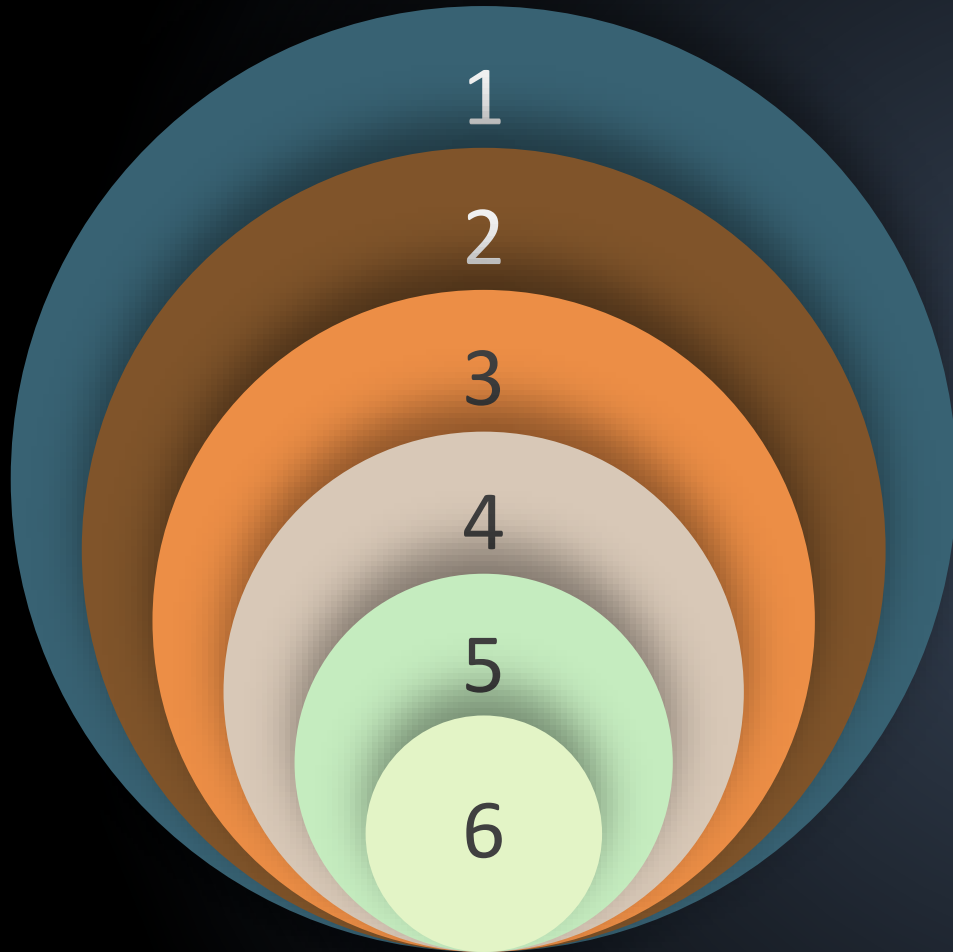
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Agenda



Project

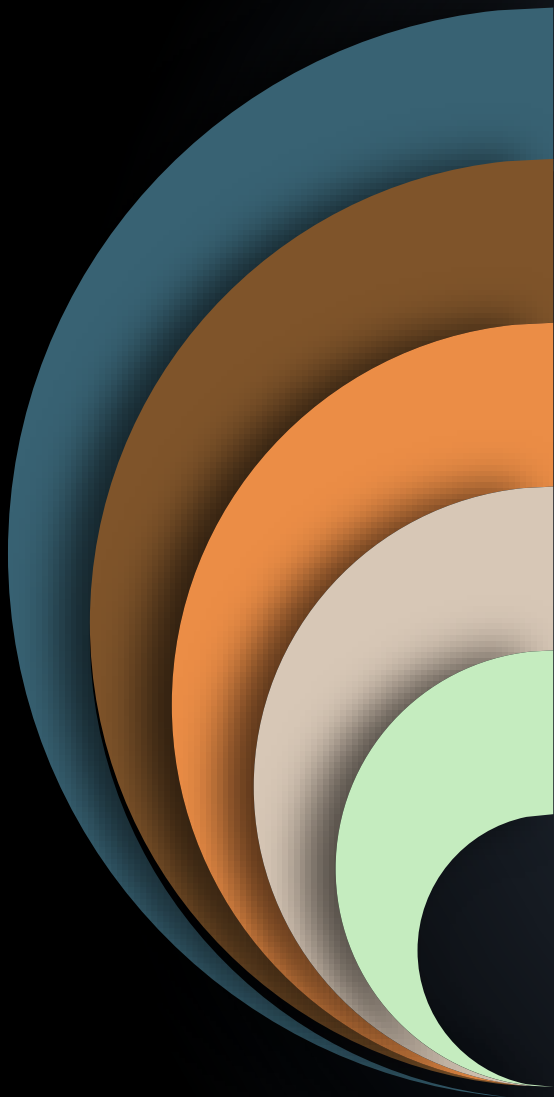
Prior Work

Research Design

Methodology

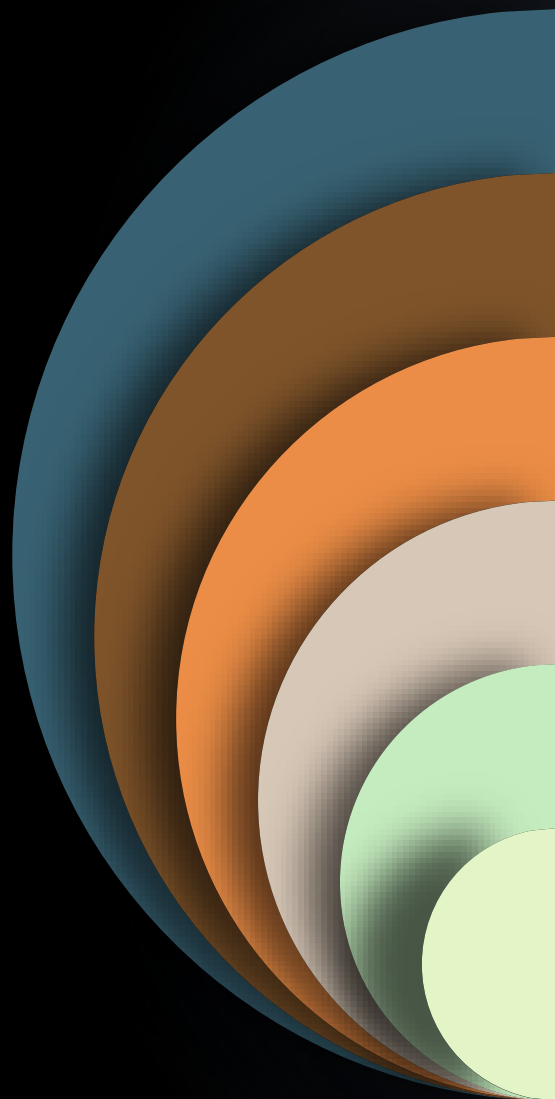
Theoretical Framework

Early Findings



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- 01 Platformisation
- 02 Digital Labour
- 03 Algorithmic control
- 04 Regulatory environment



01

Maguire and Murphy (2014)

Examined the effects of neoliberal policies on Ireland's taxi industry during deregulation in 2000 and reregulation in 2013.

02

O'Keefe (2023)

Examined the racism faced by Nigerian taxi drivers during and after the regulatory shift in 2013.

03

White and Larsson (2023)

Proposed using "data disruption" as a conceptual framework for understanding the digital transformation of Dublin's taxi industry.

04

Nordli Oppegaard (2024)

Explored the effects of the platformisation of the Norwegian taxi industry

05

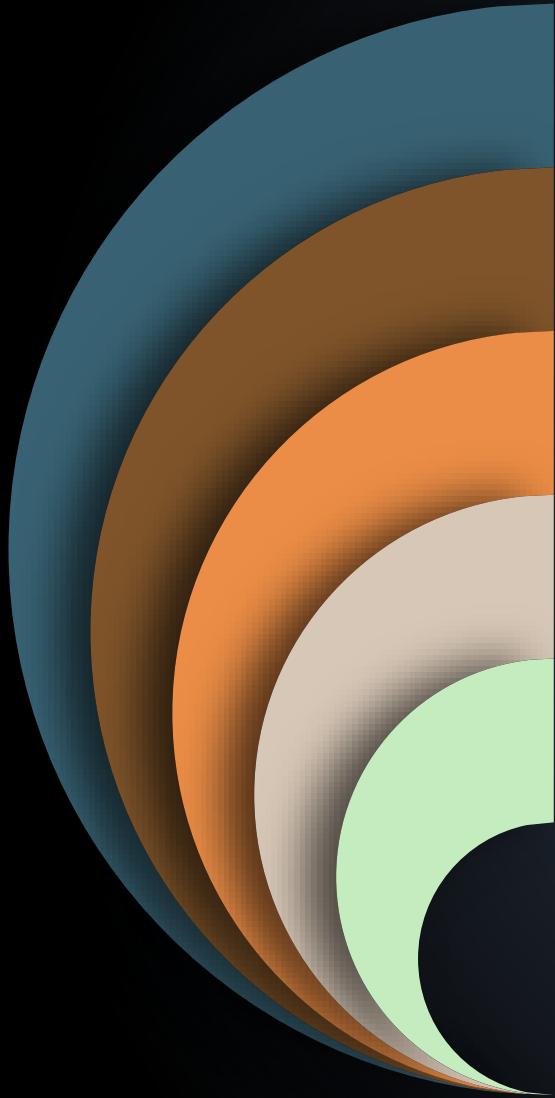
Rosenblatt (2019)

Examined the "Uberisation" of low paid work across North America

06

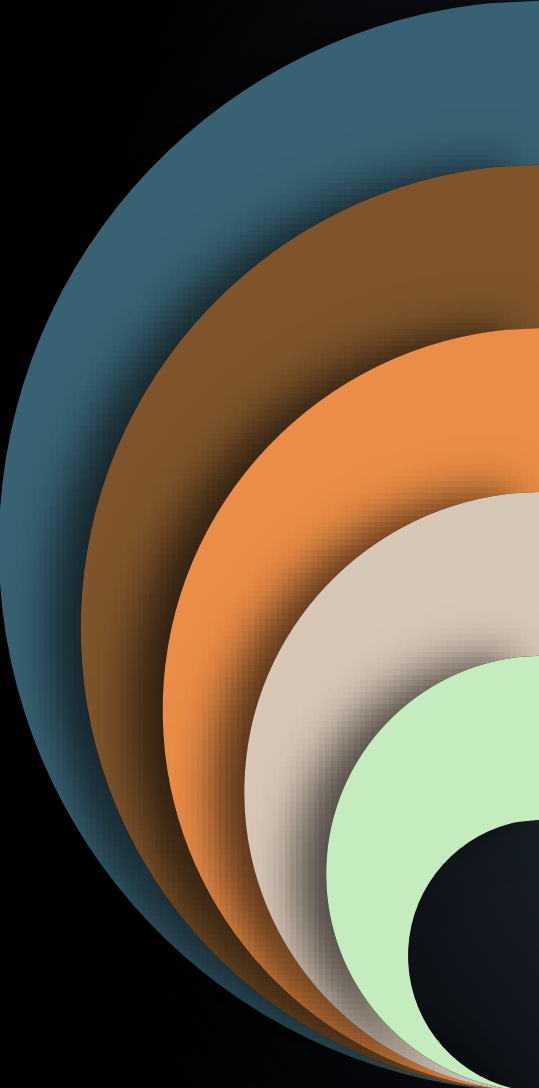
Del Nido's (2022)

An ethnographic study of both taxi drivers and Uber drivers during the violence that characterised the introduction of Uber services to Buenos Aires.



Research Questions

- 01 How does algorithmic Surveillance impact workers?
- 02 Does AI inhibit workers from collectively organising?
- 03 Do regulatory controls impact precarity among workers?
- 04 Do workers develop strategies to circumvent algorithmic surveillance?



Methodology

- 01 Comparative case study: London & Ireland
- 02 Survey questionnaire
- 03 Content analysis of digital taxi platforms
- 04 18 Semi structured interviews with taxi drivers and 18 with private-hire (Uber) Drivers

Theory



Subsumption (Marx)

Formal –

Capital takes over production as it finds it inserting itself between producers and consumers (Taxi Companies, Taxi Rentals)

Real –

Capital fundamentally alters the labour process (Dynamic Pricing)



Governmentality (Foucault)

Neoliberalism encourages people to see themselves as self governing, economic beings, making personal investments in their skills and health to increase their value to capital. It encourages “responsibilisation”-

If things go wrong- *“it’s your fault, not the system.”*

Bills too high- *“Buy an electric taxi, its cheaper.”*

Not earning a living wage? – *“Chase the bonuses.”*

“Work harder!”

Early Findings

Interview extracts



Finding 1

Algorithmic management adds extra layers of stress and overwork to the job.

“I am hyper focused on getting them jobs done, I wouldn’t go home for my dinner or anything until I got it (the bonus), it keeps me motivated to keep working”

“Yeah, I mean, I think the bonus thing makes the job more difficult. So, you’re out there chasing this acceptance rate, 12 jobs in a certain timeframe, and your head is fried. You’re in this chase, when actually, for the sake of €30 you could have just gone around the corner and instead of chasing a job from FreeNow, someone puts their hand out and then that is a €50 job.”

“you feel like they are forcing you to work them more. The main point I came to is that they just want you to feel like you are not your own, you know, that you don’t do your own job, you are doing a job... so, sometimes I work hard to pick people from the streets and do my other jobs, because if you just rely on that thing, you will even forget to do your own jobs.”



Finding 2

Taxi Drivers in Ireland express a belief that collective action is necessary to curb the excesses of digital taxi platforms- but believe that other drivers will undermine their efforts.

If my dad knew I went to work while there was a taxi strike on, he would say that I am a “greedy little pox” because that was what he stood for. And when there was strikes, we done it, and we done it together, we put our plates sideways...

I seen them all working, and it was Irish guys as well”

“...let's say we have a union, and jack is the head of the union, jack comes out and says, “on the 21st of April we are not going to take app jobs between 7pm and 11pm. The driver is going to say, “who the fuck does he think he is, telling me I can't do this?””



Finding 3

Drivers that opt out of driving on digital platforms do so as a form of resistance.

"...like I said, my main problem, first of all - it was the percentage, and I am not stressed for a job, and like I said I downloaded the app during covid when there was no jobs, but now I ask myself, why would I give a percentage to someone when I can pick up a job at the airport and get 100% of the money. So, it doesn't make sense to me."

"Taxi drivers have become so dependent on them that they have lost the ability to see that they can work independently."



Finding 4

Platforms use dynamic pricing to pay drivers in the absence of regulatory price controls.

*"I'm not sure whether **** told you or not.
In it, they tested it, him and another two, two people. Yeah, and all of them- Three of them - different prices."*

"So, what Uber did here- they saw an opportunity. The drivers, when they're waiting in the queue, they won't take this work. Well, let's give it to him. 'cause. He just arrived. Dropped off. He's been doing that all the time, so he goes to town. He doesn't wait. He doesn't hang around; he just goes back straight to town. But if I gave him 20 quid, 30 quid £40, he would take anything because he's going better than empty."

Next Steps:

- Complete outstanding interviews
- Data Analysis
- Present findings to industry stakeholders
- PhD write up

Thank you for your time.

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