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# International Labour Review



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### 1 **Digital platforms and the changing freelance workforce in the Russian Federation: A ten-year perspective**

Andrey SHEVCHUK and Denis STREBKOV

This article traces the development of the online labour market in the Russian Federation and across the wider post-Soviet space. The authors draw on the unique data of four waves of an online survey for 2009, 2011, 2014 and 2019 on the leading Russian-speaking general-purpose platform for creative and knowledge-based work. The results shed light on key trends, such as spatial decentralization, occupational diversification, feminization, maturing, rising educational attainment and educational mismatch, the consolidation of freelance careers, platformization and legalization. The article discusses these findings and their potential policy implications for the future development of online platform work in the Russian Federation.

Keywords: gig economy, digital labour platforms, non-standard employment, self-employment, freelancers, Russian Federation.

### 23 **“There is no future in it”: Pandemic and ride-hailing hustle in Africa**

Mohammad Amir ANWAR, Jack ONG’IRO ODEO and Elly OTIENO

This article examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ride-hailing drivers in Africa. It argues that, although ride-hailing offers paid work to some African workers, the commodified and informalized nature of this work results in poor job quality, the effects of which were greatly amplified during the pandemic. Drawing on a mixed methods approach involving in-depth interviews with ride-hailing drivers in Nairobi and digital ethnography, it also provides accounts of drivers’ hustles to demonstrate strategies of resilience, reworking and resistance among informal workers. The article concludes by highlighting the need for adequate regulatory frameworks and on-the-ground solidarity networks to ensure decent working conditions, and to push back against precarity in the gig economy.

Keywords: gig economy, digital labour platforms, ride-hailing, Uber, COVID-19, informal workers, Africa.

- 45 **The role of local stakeholders in transforming economic into social upgrading in Ethiopian textile and garment firms**  
Telaye Fikadu MULUBIRAN and Asbjørn KARLSEN
- The authors examine the links between economic and social upgrading in a developing country with stringent industry policy and employment legislation, focusing on the strategies of local firms participating in global apparel production networks. Based on the 2015 case studies of five textile and garment firms in Ethiopia, they find that employment security and physical well-being were driven mainly by government labour regulations negotiated by local employers, workers and trade unions rather than by global buyers and conclude that upgrading and downgrading can occur simultaneously within a firm.
- Keywords: economic upgrading, social upgrading, institutions, labour regulations, supplier strategies, apparel industries, Ethiopia.
- 69 **Assessing companies' decent work practices: An analysis of ESG rating methodologies**  
Céline LOUCHE, Guillaume DELAUTRE and Gabriela BALVEDI PIMENTEL
- Environmental, social and governance (ESG) rating agencies, as non-financial data providers, have become central actors in the field of responsible investment. Although research has explored the construction of ESG metrics, little is known about how agencies evaluate decent work. Building on the analysis of six rating agencies, this article investigates how these actors measure and assess companies' performance in terms of decent work and related areas and identifies the challenges they face in this endeavour. The authors seek to better understand the capacity of responsible investment and ESG ratings to promote and improve decent work within companies.
- Keywords: ESG rating, responsible investment, decent work, measurement, corporate social responsibility.
- 99 **Promoting the associational power of workers in globalized production networks: A missed opportunity**  
Clément SÉHIER
- The author discusses the capacity of labour NGOs to strengthen the associational power of Chinese workers in globalized production networks by using their leverage to pressure multinationals into launching programmes to elect workers' committees in factories. Based on an empirical survey conducted between 2012 and 2019 in southern China, he shows that such programmes helped to raise workers' awareness of collective action and strengthen their agency, but that they ground to a halt in the face of the structural inequality of the production system, the lack of institutional protection for elected representatives and a hardening regime.
- Keywords: worker empowerment, globalized production networks, corporate social responsibility, associational power, non-governmental organization, agency, survey, China.
- 123 **Freedom of association and collective bargaining in the platform economy: A human rights-based approach and an ever-increasing mobilization of workers**  
Charalampos STYLOGIANNIS
- This paper examines the exercise of the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining of platform workers. It focuses on several significant developments involving the collective organization of platform workers worldwide, and considers the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining as human rights. It contends that the shifting context of work has led to changes in modern workplaces, which, in turn, have generated a novel interest in the adoption of a human rights-based approach towards labour protection. This approach considers that all workers are entitled to rights, such as the right to collective bargaining, which derive from international human rights instruments.
- Keywords: digital labour platforms, human rights, labour rights, collective bargaining, freedom of association, trade unions.

147 **Union collective action, social movement unionism and worker freedom in New Zealand**

Jane PARKER and Ozan ALAKAVUKLAR

Freedom of association can include the right of labour unions to take collective action in the interest of their members. In this regard, it is presumed that unions increase worker freedom. However, there is little literature on how worker freedom as self-actualization is linked to union collective action involving coalition-building with civil society. This article uses the notions of freedom according to Berlin (1969) and MacCallum (1967) to assess the meaning of such coalition-building for worker freedom. It then employs a radical democratic perspective (Laclau and Mouffe 2001) of union engagement with the Just Transition in New Zealand to explore how unions enhance worker freedom.

Keywords: freedom, collective action, trade unionism, social movement, worker rights, New Zealand.

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