'Ghost Accounts', 'Joki Accounts' and 'Account Therapy': Everyday Resistance Among Ride-hailing Motorcycle Drivers in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

WENING MUSTIKA AND AMALINDA SAVIRANI

Abstract

This article shows how motorcycle taxi drivers in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, deal with labour insecurity, tighter competition, minimum social welfare, decreased tariff and bonuses and longer working hours. The article finds that drivers employ diverse strategies to obtain more orders and therefore also more income. Drivers use prohibited mobile application-based technologies, which resemble those of their platforms, as well as non-technological strategies to boost their account's performance. The article argues that whereas these prohibited practices can be understood as 'everyday resistance' (Scott 1985), as oppositional acts against the holders of power and capital, they are also pragmatic survival tactics. Furthermore, the article shows that although the drivers' resistance is about individual acts, their knowledge and strategies are sourced and shared collectively through social media platforms. Being widely distributed between drivers and commonly applied by drivers, these strategies have nonetheless not been able to transform driver-company relationships in any significant way.

Keywords: app-based workers; gamification; gig work; platform economy; politics of algorithm

Introduction

The world economy has become increasingly coordinated and integrated into a 'platform capitalism' that operates within the digital economy (Srnicek 2017). In this context, the word 'platform' refers to companies that convey customers' demands to 'independent contractors' (or 'partners') through mobile phone applications (apps), which positions the contractors with minimum workers' rights. These contractors serve as

micro-entrepreneurs and suppliers, capitalising their assets (including motorcycles, cars, homes, etc.) to earn extra income, although many of them depend on the platform as the main source of income. In Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, this platform economy contributes significantly to economic growth. Bloomberg reports that Indonesia has been the region's largest contributor to the growth of the internet economy, with a total investment estimated at USD 100 billion in 2019; this figure is predicted to triple by 2025 (Wagner and Lee 2020).

One prominent platform company in Indonesia is the motorcycle taxi fleet known as Ojek, visible by the drivers' green coloured helmets and jackets.[1] This fleet belongs to the company PT Aplikasi Anak Bangsa (popularly known as Gojek). It has become the most popular platform company in Indonesia. Apart from motorcycle taxies, which is the most popular service, Gojek provides more than twenty types of services to fulfil Indonesians' daily needs, including transportation (by both car and motorcycle, Go-Ride), food delivery (Go-Food), house cleaning (Go-Clean), courier services (Go-Send), online shopping (Go-Mart and Go-Shop) and e-money (Go-Pay). One study found that Gojek contributed USD 87 billion to Indonesia's economy in 2019, with a multiplier effect of USD 17.5 billion. This amount was equivalent to one per cent of Indonesia's total domestic growth (Fitri 2020). The company has expanded its operations to other Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand. Gojek became a Decacorn company in 2019, with a total investment of USD 100 billion (Wagner and Lee 2020). Its application on the Google Playstore has been downloaded 15 million times, which is an indication of the high valuation of the company. Its founder, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, currently serves as Minister of Education in President Joko Widodo's cabinet.

While we see a growing and successful platform economy, exemplified by Gojek, there is also another aspect to consider: the labour that goes into this flourishing economy (Fuchs 2014: 5). There is a proliferation of studies into the social and political aspects of workers in the digital economy, including app-based online transportation drivers. Malin and Chandler (2017) unfold the 'splintering precarity' of app-based workers that leads to 'a feeling of insecurity and instability in regard to work' (2017: 384). Hua and Ray (2018) explore the social hierarchy between the full-time Uber drivers, who are mostly male immigrants, and the part-time drivers. Kumar et al. (2018) argue that app-based companies, such as Uber, have reinforced the existing modes of oppression in the Global South, such as Bangladesh, through the politics

of algorithm. Here, algorithm refers to 'encoded procedures for transforming input data into a desired output, based on specified calculations' (Bellanova 2017: 330). In app-based companies, an algorithm is a way to distribute service orders among the company's partners (i.e. the drivers) based on a combination of factors that include drivers' performance. The data owner, i.e. the company, has the power to decide which desired output and specified calculation in their algorithm can benefit the company, i.e. increase the company's earnings. In other words, the politics of algorithm is a form of power that emerges from a system controlled solely by the company, and that determines the working life of the drivers, including who will get orders and who will not. Here, power circulates and is exercised through the design and use of devices (Latour 1986 in Bellanova 2017: 330). Such online transportation service systems have, of course, impacted workers (Ford and Honan 2017, Nastiti 2017) and the urban poor population (Peters 2020). Ford and Honan (2017) find that drivers have faced increased working vulnerability, and Aulia Nastiti (2017) argues that app-based companies have been 'super exploitative' towards drivers through their algorithm, gamification and welfare policies. Drivers have responded to this situation with a series of short-lived protests between 2017-2018 in several big cities in Indonesia.[2]

This article explores the increased insecurity of ride-hailing motorcycle taxi drivers in Yogyakarta and their everyday resistance towards the company that exploits them. We present the main strategies that these drivers employ, which include technological means (using a hacked application technology system and 'account therapy') and non-technological means (having or commercialising a '*joki* account'). Our investigation shows that drivers persistently exercise these forms of individual, small-scale resistance even though they are prohibited by the platform company, and despite the threat of suspension (violations are often quickly detected).

Yogyakarta, the location of this study, is situated in the south-central part of Java. It is popularly known as a 'city of students' (hosting about 120 higher education institutions with more than 350,000 students) and a 'city of culture' (being Indonesia's second-most popular tourist destination). Gojek began offering its services in Yogyakarta in 2015, and by 2018 it had 200 drivers in the city. The number of drivers increased significantly in 2019, with motorcycle taxis making about 1.5 million trips per day (Kusumo 2019). Gojek's impact on Yogyakarta's economy is substantial, contributing IDR 2.5 trillion (USD 178.8 million)

to the local economy in 2018 (Walandouw et al. 2018). We have conducted fieldwork in Yogyakarta between September and October 2019, and July and August 2020. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with drivers, and also participant observation and conversing with drivers while using Go-Ride services (before the COVID-19 pandemic). One of the researchers, Mustika, also joined an open group on the social media platform Telegram, which included Gojek drivers from around Indonesia. In the following, we will first discuss current scholarship on the ways in which, in an institutional void, the platform economy has impacted workers. Then we will turn to our own findings, focusing on the various strategies used by Gojek drivers. In conclusion, we will discuss the impact that drivers' everyday resistance has on the platform economy.

Platform Capitalism and Institutional Voids

Some scholars have viewed the platform economy, also dubbed the 'sharing economy', as a form of labour flexibility due to its reliance on gigworkers or 'crowdworkers' (Fuchs 2014). Many experts, particularly economists, have argued that this flexibility is good because it grants workers autonomy in determining what they do, when, where and how they do their work (Scholz 2016: 52; Sundararajan 2016). Platform companies, meanwhile, connect customers with service providers, generally via digital and mobile systems, in a flexible work-on-demand system that involves specific tasks such as transport, cleaning and clerical work (Friedman 2014: 171). The companies create mobile application systems to link providers and customers, and they set the ground rules, mechanisms and sanctions that regulate partner operations (such as cost per kilometre, available bonuses, etc.). They also own and control the data on all transactions and can capitalise data for their own interests. As will be clear in this article, power is exercised asymmetrically through the algorithms created by platform companies (Curchod et al. 2020).

The service providers are not employees as such, but 'independent contractors' or 'partners' (*mitra*), which means that companies are exempt from providing workers' welfare and rights like health insurance, employment insurance, paid holiday, pension and so forth (Schmidt 2017). The absence of social protection and the deterioration of workers' rights are the main reasons why many scholars are critical of the platform economy. They argue that, as platforms shift risks and

costs—including human resources and healthcare (*ibid.*) to service providers—these contractors face increased vulnerability, unpredictable income and welfare insecurity (Hewison and Kalleberg 2012: 2; Schmidt 2017: 3; Prassl and Risak 2017). Ultimately, this may exacerbate economic inequality and threaten the foundation of the middle class (Tucker 2018; Hill 2015). Guy Standing (2011: 6) even suggests that this situation has created a new 'precariat' class, which he defines as those who 'do not have a stable and predictable salary, or status and benefits that middle-class people were supposed to possess'. Clearly, the platform economy is part of the capitalist system, as its infrastructure is privately owned and exploited to extract profit (Tucker 2018: 648).

Moreover, we argue that the platform economy in Indonesia operates in an institutional void, which has detrimental effects on the drivers. Formal institutions, such as governments, play a major role in market regulation and operations (North 1999), and importantly, governments provide policy frameworks that ensure business certainty in market activities. When the government fails to do so, there is an 'institutional void', i.e. the absence or shortcoming of formal institutions. In the context where platform economies are burgeoning, institutional voids may promote de-institutionalisation by bypassing or undermining formal government rules and regulations under the pretext of economic growth (Heeks et al. 2020).

In Indonesia, where online workers are practically microenterprises operating in an informal sector, the existing law on manpower cannot be used to regulate the platform economy. The former Indonesian Minister of Labour, Hanif Dhakiri, explained this in an interview with the Indonesian online newspaper *Tempo,* saying they are not entitled to the workers' rights established and regulated in Articles 99 and 100 of the 2013 Labour Law (Sianipar 2015). Instead, they are covered by ministerial regulations on 'time-specific contract work' (*Perjanjian Kerja Waktu Tertentu*) and 'time-non-specific contract work' (*Perjanjian Kerja Waktu Tidak Tertentu*) that are ministerial regulations with a lower standing than laws. Unlike workers in the formal sector, Gojek's drivers do not have a union, and this is regulated by law. They have a *paguyuban,* an informal community with very modest aims, such as providing a forum for communication where drivers share their experiences, tips and tricks, rather than acting as a political formation advocating for its members' interests. Despite this void, President Joko Widodo has supported the platform economy and digital business in general, encouraging and facilitating the establishment of new start-up

companies. In August 2019, he officially announced the 1000 Start-up Digital Initiative programme to boost this sector. One of the reasons that the President supports the platform economy is that the sector helps decrease the rate of unemployment in Indonesia; the platform economy involves 2.5 million Indonesians (Wagner and Lee 2020).

Company Policies

When it was first established in 2015, Gojek sought to increase its valuation by attracting as many drivers and customers as possible. It offered large bonuses and good pay that was two or three times the local minimum wage standard (Nastiti 2017). After experiencing a steady flow of customers and drivers to the company, from September 2015 Gojek started to focus more on maximising company profit. The company has recruited more drivers, increased the competition among them and at the same time decreased bonuses by inflating and toughening the requirements for drivers to get bonuses. The position of Gojek's drivers has become increasingly vulnerable.

In addition to decreasing the drivers' access to tariffs and bonuses, the company has become a broker for social rights rather than providing them. One example is insurance: Gojek has provided drivers with the means to voluntarily purchase insurance products through their mobile applications, with payment deducted from their Go-Pay balance (e-money). During fieldwork, one driver told us that he had bought an insurance product for his wife and three children with the transaction facilitated by Gojek, meaning that the cost of the family insurance was deducted from his Go-Pay account every day, and it was up to the driver to secure his insurance rights. The company also facilitated other saving schemes for drivers and used Go-Pay to control the circulation of the money.

Gojek also controls and disciplines drivers through 'gamification', an algorithmic management tool that allows platform providers to reward the behaviour of its drivers by awarding virtual credit points and by ranking their performance (Schmidt 2017: 12). Credit points and ranking has become a foundation for the categorisation of each driver into a class that determines whether they will easily pick orders or not. A poorly ranked driver will thus receive fewer orders than a driver that is ranked higher, as we discuss below. Customers play significant roles in this algorithmic management. After services are provided, drivers receive a customer evaluation in the form of stars.

They can receive between one and five stars. Customers' evaluation results are recorded in the app providing a basis upon which drivers' performance is reviewed, often without the opportunity for drivers to provide clarification. The evaluation criteria are set by the company; they include the politeness and timeliness of the drivers. If drivers decline three orders in one day, their accounts will be suspended for five minutes; and if drivers refuse two orders within one hour, their accounts will be suspended for the next thirty minutes (Nastiti 2017: 23). 'Accounts' here refer to the ID of the driver, with which one can log in and operate as drivers. Once an account is downgraded or suspended, a driver cannot access the account and cannot work to earn money.

The company uses this rating system together with a point system. Points are based on the types of services provided by drivers: one point for a ride, two points for food delivery and three points for courier services. When drivers achieve a certain number of points set by the company, they are eligible for bonuses. As the tariff per kilometre has dropped, drivers have increasingly relied on these bonuses. This is what we can call gamification—with the company controlling the data and the 'game'. Drivers have no access to either data or the customers' evaluations. The company exercises power, we argue, through this gamification that is based on an algorithm and readily manipulated due to customers' evaluation and the company's awards and punishments. Nevertheless, as we shall learn in the following, drivers have found ways to resist.

Everyday Resistance

To deal with the insecurity and vulnerability that comes with the flexible platform economy, particularly the lack of welfare rights, workers have exercised different forms of resistance, such as strikes and street demonstrations. In the context of the United States and Europe, many lawsuits and litigation cases have emerged to determine gigworkers' legal status (Schmidt 2017: 21). Similarly, gigworkers have begun to establish unions in the US. In countries with weak systems for enforcing and protecting legal rights, such as Indonesia, protests against companies' bonus and tariff rate policies have not yielded any substantial changes (Nastiti 2017). In such precarious settings, gigworkers can apply what James Scott (1985: 28) calls 'everyday resistance':

> Here I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth. These Brechtian forms of class struggle have certain features in common. They require little or

no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms.

The forms of resistance applied by Gojek drivers differ from those applied by Scott's farmers in Malaysia. They include technological means (using a hacked application technology system or 'account therapy') and non-technological means (having or commercialising a '*joki* account'). We identify these strategies as 'everyday resistance' because they involve the mundane use of everyday tactics (i.e. the applications used by drivers in their everyday work) to assert their interests. Drivers apply these strategies because they have difficulties getting orders in an increasingly competitive market. Apart from being a means to secure survival, they also constitute an oppositional act against power holders—although it is a small-scale and only a short-term resistance against the increasingly exploitive patterns of the platform company. This app-based resistance is not spectacular, but an ordinary part of drivers' daily life.

Whereas inspirational studies have not situated resistance in the context of platform economy and the use of app-based technology (Tria Kerkvliet 2009; Mannell 2017; Scott 1985), they provide useful insights on how resistance operates. For instance, Kate Mannell (2017) explores resistance through text messages. Mannell (2017: 46) argues that the discussion on technology resistance refers mostly to the 'self-reflexive act of limiting and rejecting particular technology', hence positioning the subject (people) and technology as opposing positions, rather than exploring how people work through technology and gain benefit from it. This is a more productive position and one that we have chosen to apply in our own study.

Let us now turn to the everyday resistance by Gojek drivers. Their strategies are essentially different ways to work around their accounts through technological means (using a hacked application technology system, i.e. 'ghost account', and 'account therapy') and non-technological means (having a duplicate account or commercialising a '*joki* account'). As mentioned above, the term 'account' refers to the ID of a driver. Drivers use their ID to log in to the company system to pick orders. The drivers whom we interviewed distinguish between three types of accounts according to how an account is experienced by a driver. An account can shift categories by being upgraded or downgraded according to the algorithm of the company that relies on customer ratings and the drivers' performance history, such as acceptance and rejection of orders. The

first category is the high-ranking account, which drivers call the *gacor* account—*gacor* being an abbreviation of *gampang cari order*, 'easy to find orders'. This kind of account easily picks up orders, and the waiting time between orders is short. To be upgraded to a *gacor* account, drivers must pick up every order coming to the app—even if they are far away from the location, which usually drivers are reluctant to respond to. In this way, drivers can boost their account performance calculated by the company system. The second category is *anyep* (meaning 'cold'), an account that receives orders less frequently; the third is *gagu* ('silent' or 'mute' in Javanese), which rarely receives orders. Accounts become 'cold' or 'silent' because of the drivers' performance (e.g. they are too picky) or if their mobile phone is old and has limited memory, which makes it hard to pick up orders in the system.

It is the company that operates the algorithmic management. One driver explained that he was uncertain why his account was *anyep* at one time and *gacor* at another time, even though his performance was the same – he received good ratings from customers and never rejected orders. Likewise, another driver reported that her account had always been *gacor*, but after the COVID-19 pandemic, her account became *anyep*, receiving few orders for no apparent reason. She guessed that the company prioritised male over female drivers during the pandemic. As these examples show, the algorithm's sorting of the drivers' accounts into categories occur without the drivers' knowledge and understanding. This sorting was a source of frustration for the drivers because it influenced the account ranking, their choice of orders and therefore also their prospects of generating an income. Everyday resistance is used by drivers to deal with the increasingly exploitative system, tighter competition and reduced income that this algorithm organises. It does not mean that drivers always apply strategies with the intention to resist,[3] yet we argue that the perspective of everyday resistance is productive in that we focus on drivers who individually attempted to increase their revenue at a time when the company had started to rationalise the tariff per kilometres and decreased bonuses. We turn now to discuss ghost accounts, account therapy and *joki* accounts as everyday resistance.

Ghost Accounts

Drivers label modified or hacked versions of the official Gojek application as *akun tuyul*, a term that translates as 'ghost accounts' and is also used to refer to the making of 'fictive orders' (*order fiktif*). Such

modified applications are not available through the Google Play store, but links are circulated amongst drivers through various channels, including social media platforms like Telegram and Facebook. One of the researchers, Mustika, joined an open Telegram group called 'Gonas' (an abbreviation of *Gojek Nasional*) that has more than 28,000 members. Mustika observed numerous activities—particularly the sharing of 'ghost account' applications. Different versions are available, the most recent released in 2020 after the outbreak of COVID-19. Technically savvy individuals share links and files through anonymous accounts. Because the Telegram group is open, company employees could readily access it, but we did not observe any postings that represented company interests. Most members shared tips, information on recent company policies, as well as ghost applications. Some application versions required a lot of data, while others did not; some were available free of charge, while others followed a paid model. Similarly, there are many brands, and drivers who are caught using one can easily download a different brand: 'We usually share the latest technology, this modified account', one driver told us. If a driver installs and operates such an application on their mobile phone, the company's system will register drivers as working because the GPS tells the system that the taxi is operating. In that way, it appears as if drivers are working even when they stay at home, and drivers become entitled to bonuses much faster.

Gojek is fully aware of the existence and usage of modified applications and prohibits them. In 2019, the company began a campaign with the hashtag #HapusTuyul 'get rid of ghost accounts'.[4] In an official statement posted on Gojek's website, the company's Vice President of Regional Corporate Affairs stated that the drivers who were detected by the system downloading fake applications on their mobile phones would automatically be asked to uninstall the illegal application. Drivers who failed to do so after seven days would lose their bonuses, and after another twenty-one days, the company would permanently suspend the account and end the driver's contract. Drivers are aware of the risk they take by downloading these apps, but such practices endure. Gojek periodically updates its official application, after which it can detect the illicit activities of drivers. We can call it an 'app war' between the official application provided by the company and the prohibited, modified application that is widely used by drivers. Every time the company updates its application, a new modified application follows. As it usually takes time for the system to identify a new modified application, drivers have a window of opportunity before being

caught. The drivers' use of modified accounts, the 'ghost accounts', offers them a means of dealing with the company's algorithms, which determine the type of account available to drivers. This form of resistance offers drivers, particularly those with 'cold' (*anyep*) and 'silent' (*gagu*) accounts, a means of dealing with the tyranny of algorithm.

Another strategy is manual usage of 'ghost accounts' without having to rely on hacking the system. Drivers (usually working in teams) can ask other drivers, as well as friends and relatives, to order a ride in their location. They must make the order using the exact location of the driver, otherwise the order may reach another driver in a similar location. If their order reaches another driver (i.e. the wrong target), the fictional customer will cancel the order. This negatively impacts the wrongly targeted driver and could potentially result in their account being downgraded. This practice is despised by those who have experienced being wrongly affected.

Account Therapy

The second strategy used by drivers is 'account therapy' (*terapi akun*), which seeks to transform underperforming accounts (i.e. the cold and the silent, *anyep* and *gagu*) into *gacor* accounts, the accounts readily receiving orders. The notion 'therapy' in Indonesian refers to the practice of bettering one's ill condition. According to our research, drivers believe that poorly performing accounts can be improved: 'You just need to be patient', one interlocutor said. To facilitate this, some drivers—usually those with a long experience, an understanding of how orders are received and knowledge of the techniques for upgrading accounts—offer 'therapy services' in return for payment. One therapist, ZR (aged 42), explained that his account suddenly had difficulty receiving orders from the system and was ultimately suspended. He had done nothing wrong, so he decided to carefully study and educate himself in order to improve the account:

> It is not too clear [the reason why an account has sudden difficulty in receiving orders]. Some drivers say that it is because their mobile phone is old, with limited memory capacity. Others say it is because the company has made it like this. I learned that the type of mobile phone can indeed be a reason. Activity history can consume a mobile phone's memory, and this makes your mobile phone slow. Others say that it is because there are more drivers in the company and the competition is getting stiff. Still, others say it is because of the [company] algorithm. The fact is, it happened to my account, and I wanted to know why. So I

> learned what caused it and how to solve it. I slowly accumulated more knowledge on it. Some friends came to me to ask for help to fix their account. Then it spread from mouth to mouth that I can solve problems. I then decided to earn extra income for this service as I spent time to fix it.

Usually, a therapist will operate an 'ill' (*anyep* or *gagu*) account and use it for a week to pick up orders via that account. While doing so, the therapist will find problems and potential solutions, such as increasing the phone's capacity. Once the account has been treated, the therapist will return the mobile phone to its owner. The income earned while curing the 'ill' account is shared between the therapist and account owner; the therapist is also paid for his or her services (ZR, for instance, was paid IDR 250,000 or USD 18).

ZR has done this service since 2019, when orders became difficult to obtain and waiting times increased. That year, Gojek recruited more drivers in Yogyakarta, thereby increasing competition and reducing access to orders. As a consequence, drivers started to search for alternative sources of income, including fixing 'ill' accounts for other drivers. There are many reasons why accounts become stagnant: some drivers blame company algorithms, while others attribute these issues to the mobile phones that they use. If it is due to the algorithm, it is necessary to understand these patterns and stay up to date by sharing tips with other drivers through social media platforms. Albeit account therapy is prohibited by the company, drivers perceive it less negatively and less risky than the use of ghost accounts.

Joki Accounts

The third strategy that Gojek drivers apply involves '*joki* accounts'. By regulation, drivers are only allowed one account each. However, we have found that some drivers use multiple accounts in order to earn extra income. This account is popularly known as *akun joki,* 'double account'. There are two dimensions of this account: drivers who use it and drivers who sell or rent it. Based on our fieldwork data, both the users and the sellers and renters of *joki* accounts claim that this is a strategy that increases one's ability to compete for income. The competition among drivers has become fierce: drivers need more orders in order to get bonuses and need more mileage for the tariff per kilometre. In the words of driver BA: 'I would not get enough money if I only operated one account; I need two. I have three kids and a wife'. Reasonings like this were common among our interlocutors. BA

explained that, when waiting for an order, he turned on both accounts. When one of the accounts received an order, he turned off the other one until the order was completed. Using both accounts, he could earn IDR 700,000 (USD 50) per day by working from dawn to 10 PM, almost doubling his income. Other drivers operate two accounts at different times, using one in the morning and another in the afternoon. As one driver explained: 'I get confused if I operate both of them at the same time'.

One of the drivers, Ms. S, operated two accounts. When orders were slow because of the COVID-19 pandemic, she began using two accounts, each with a different name. When one account received an order, she turned off the other, turning it on again after the order was completed. This saved her from the long waiting times between the orders. Although it was quite tiring for her to operate this way, it allowed her to earn an income comparable to what she earned before the pandemic.

Gojek has changed its bonus policy during the COVID-19 pandemic. If drivers operate between 8 AM and 5 PM, they automatically receive six points—a 'closing' amount—and are entitled to a flat bonus of IDR 65,000 (USD 4.7), yet without income from tariffs. If drivers work before or after this period, they only receive money based on the number of kilometres travelled. Ms. S related how this new policy forced her to operate a *joki* account. She said:

> Having a double account is my strategy for dealing with the decline in orders and income during this pandemic. With these two accounts, I can reach two closing points, allowing me to have a double bonus per day [IDR 130,000 or USD 9.4]. Otherwise, with only one bonus per day, it wouldn't be enough to feed my family. My husband is only a parking man with no stable, daily income. Before the pandemic, I could bring home at least IDR 200,000 [USD 14.3] per day [in bonus and tariffs].

To deal with drivers using double accounts, Gojek has implemented a new face-recognition policy. Before drivers begin their day, they must verify their accounts. Verification happens randomly, usually two or three times a week, and is conducted at Gojek's offices. Drivers call it *vermuk*, a short version of *verifikasi muka* ('face verification'). Some drivers have been able to bypass these measures; whenever they receive a notification from the system, they ask the former account owner to be ready. Another driver told us that he was unable to trace the previous owner of his account, and this made it difficult for him to operate or re-sell it. 'I have three accounts I can't use because of this new policy

on face recognition'. Another driver, Ms. W, told us that she operated two accounts on the weekend using her husband's account:

> My husband does seasonal labour on the weekend, so I operate his account. [Before the pandemic,] I did not seek to get a bonus on that account, just to get a small additional income. I told my customers, if the account gets orders, it is me, a female driver, who is operating the account, not my husband. So, I don't lie. If they don't want it, it is fine with me.

From the perspective of those who rent out accounts, this is a good way to get an extra income. One interlocutor has been a Gojek driver for two years. When his friend wanted to become a driver, and there were quota limitations to join Gojek, he took the opportunity to rent out his own account and developed a business of hiring and selling accounts. He bought accounts from other drivers who no longer used them or 'quiet' accounts with unstable and unpredictable orders. He related:

> When orders were not as good as I hoped, around 2019, I rented my account—including Gojek's green jacket and helmet—to my friend at the price of IDR 600,000 [USD 43] per month. I didn't mean to do it continuously, but people started knowing that I had rented out my account, so I continued to do that. I also bought a quiet account for IDR 1.6 million [USD 115], used account therapy to make it a good one and re-sold it for IDR 3 million [USD 215]. This is what I do now; the money I get from re-selling is much higher than my bonus.

Another driver, ZR, told us that he started hiring his account when it became slow to pick up orders (*anyep* account): 'I had no money to operate, to buy petrol or paying for account therapy. I was not sure what to do and I needed money. I started to hire the account to some friends who wanted to use it'.

Renting accounts has become quite popular because many people want to be Gojek drivers but they do not have a Yogyakarta-issued identity card, which is a requirement for becoming a Gojek driver in the city. Furthermore, because Yogyakarta is a student city, many students are seeking means of earning money without permanent employment. For them, renting an account is a quick way to earn money. The going rate is IDR 600,000 (USD 43) per month, including the green Gojek helmet and jacket. Even more so, as related by BA, Gojek drivers can make good money from selling accounts, and this is an alternative to earn extra money in times of difficulty:

> If I can sell one account in one month, the money I get is equal to 28 days' driving if I manage to reach a closing amount [of 16 points] every day

for 28 days. I will get IDR 2.5 million [USD 200], which is equal to what I get from re-selling an account, sometimes more. Usually, I buy an *anyep* [bad] account. Before re-selling it, I will do therapy so it becomes *gacor* [a good account]. Nobody wants to buy a bad account, because it is not ready to use.

To sum up, a *joki* account is a strategy applied by Gojek drivers in dealing with decreased tariff and bonuses. It is everyday resistance practised both by drivers who sell and rent accounts and also by the drivers who use it—all of whom aim to increase their income. The Gojek company forbids this practice through mechanisms of control, including *vermuk*, 'face recognition'. By operating double accounts, drivers can earn at least one and a half income daily, although it comes with a risk and it requires an arrangement with the former account owner.

Conclusion

This article has explored 'everyday resistance' among app-based workers in the platform company Gojek in Indonesia. We have argued that their strategies are forms of resistance exercised against the company's policies on tariffs, bonuses and algorithm management. The drivers' aim was to make some extra income in order to survive, rather than to make 'big business'. Although the company was aware of this resistance and sanctioned drivers who were caught, there was always leeway for drivers to continue what they were doing or to switch to other strategies. Having investigated the forms that these strategies took, as well as the drivers' motivations and the effects on their working lives, in conclusion, we would like to highlight four points.

First, in a country that encourages and supports the platform economy across all sectors, the government tolerates these 'subversive' practices: gigwork is considered better than unemployment. Moreover, the government lets the platform economy operate within an institutional void that, in some ways, facilitates the exploitation of gigworkers. They face longer working hours, tighter competition, minimum workers' rights and various application-based techniques of measuring performance and disciplining drivers.

Second, there are various forms of resistance, including using modified versions of the company application ('ghost account') although drivers generally argue that it is difficult to resist the company's centralised and fully technologised algorithm. Other app-based resistance forms, namely 'account therapy' and '*joki* account' are exercised by following the existing algorithm but also manipulating it, thereby transforming driv-

ers' accounts from *anyep* (few orders) to *gacor* (many orders). Although the Gojek company attempted to counteract these strategies by prohibiting alternative apps and requiring face recognition, drivers found ways around it and still operate these strategies today.

Third, while there exist cases of drivers who have reaped significant profits by systematically employing these strategies, most drivers exercised the strategies in attempts to increase their income in order to survive ('act of pragmatism') and to work the system ('act of resistance'). However, while we are inspired by Scotts's concept of everyday resistance, his framework seems somewhat insensitive to pragmatic considerations, including the money-making, and the overlap between acts of resisting, acts of surviving (pragmatism) and acts of free-riding (opportunism). Indeed, the pragmatism of powerless groups is intended to ensure survival, and opportunism is a means of increasing revenue streams. Their strategies fan out over a spectrum with blurred boundaries.

Finally, our study demonstrates that although the drivers apply these strategies individually, they collectively share their knowledge and experience with these strategies. Still, these strategies have not been able to transform driver-company relationships, hierarchies, company control, the exploitation of drivers and so forth in any significant way. Yet, they make a difference to the drivers, helping them to 'navigate' the system of exploitation even if only by providing a little more money to survive.

WENING MUSTIKA is a junior lecturer at the Department of Public Administration, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan. She recently graduated from the master program at Department Politics and Government, Universitas Gadjah Mada. Email: wenzmustika@ gmail.com.

AMALINDA SAVIRANI is an associate professor at the Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada. She was the head of department (2016-2020) and currently serves as the PhD program coordinator. Her research interest is on social movement in the context of urban area, labour movement and civil society in Indonesia. Email: savirani@ugm.ac.id.

NOTES

1   In Indonesia, a motorcycle taxi is known as 'ojek'. When the company was founded, it provided only one service, spelled 'Go-Jek', a short version of 'Go-Ojek' that was the motorcycle taxi service. When the company expanded and introduced other services, the motorcycle taxi became known as 'Gojek'.

2   For instance, they protested against the decreasing rate per kilometer and decreased bonuses. See Wijaya (2016).

3   One recent case in East Java is a great example of the motivation being profit rather than resistance: a man was detained after having been caught with 41 Gojek accounts, as well as more than 8,000 SIM cards and 40 mobile phones. The amount of accounts, SIM cards and phones indicate that this man operated systematically with the aim to increase income through illegal means (Faizal 2020).

4   See Gojek's homepage: 'Download Tuyul, Pasang APK Fake GPS, Aplikasi Mod Gocar? Yuk Hapus sekarang Juga! #HapusTuyul' (Download Tuyul, Install Fake GPS APK, Gocar Mod Application? Let's Uninstall Now! #Uninstall-Tuyul'). https://www.gojek.com/blog/gojek/hapus-download-aplikasi-apk-tuyul-gacor-mod-fake-gps/ (accessed 23 February 2021).

REFERENCES

Bellanova, Rocco 2017. 'Digital, Politics, and Algorithms: Governing Digital Data Through the Lens of Data Protection'. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 20 (3): 329-347. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431016679167.

Curchod, Corentin, Gerardo Patriotta, Laurie Cohen and Nicolas Neysen 2020. 'Working for Algorithm: Power Asymmetries and Agency in Online Work Settings'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65 (3): 644-676. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839219867024.

Faizal, Achmad 2020. 'Gojek Tuyul Ditangkap Polisi, Punya Akun 8.850 Nomor Telepon dan 41 Akun Gojek (Gojek Tuyul was Arrested by The Police, Had an Account of 8,850 Telephone Numbers and 41 Gojek Accounts)'. https://surabaya.kompas.com/read/2020/02/26/17365591/gojek-tuyul-ditangkap-polisi-punya-8850-nomor-telepon-dan-41-akun-gojek?page=all (accessed 17 September 2020).

Fitri, Amalia Nur 2020. 'Riset UI: Ekosistem Gojek Menyumbang Rp 104,6 Triliun ke Ekonomi Indonesia di 2019 (UI Research: The Gojek Ecosystem Donates IDR 104.6 trillion to the Indonesian Economy in 2019)'. https://industri.kontan.co.id/news/riset-ui-ekosistem -gojek-menyumbang-rp-1046-triliun-ke-ekonomi-indonesia -di-2019 (accessed 23 February 2021).

Ford, Michele and Vivian Honan 2017. 'The Go-Jek effect'. In E. Jurriens and R. Tapsell (eds.) *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Divergence*. Singapore: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, pp. 275-288.

Friedman, Gerald 2014. 'Workers without Employers: Shadow Corporations and the Rise of The Gig Economy'. *Review of Keynesian Economics, 2*(2): 171-188.

Fuchs, Christian 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York and London: Routledge.

Heeks, Richard, Karsten Eskelund, Juan Erasmo Gomez-Morantes, Fareesa Malik and Brian Nicholson 2020. *Digital Labour Platforms in the Global South: Filling or Creating Institutional Voids*? Manchester Centre for Digital Development Working Paper, 86: 1-14. https:// papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3645389 (accessed 1 September 2020).

Hewison, Kevin and Arne L. Kalleberg 2012. 'Precarious Work and Flexibilisation in South and Southeast Asia'. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(4): 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764212466235.

Hill, Steven 2015. *Raw Deal: How the 'Uber Economy' and Runaway Capitalism are Screwing Americans Workers*. New York: St.Martin's Press.

Hua, Julietta and Kasturi Ray 2018. 'Beyond the Precariat: Race, Gender and Labor in The Taxi and Uber Economy'. *Social Identities*, 24 (2): 271-289. https://.doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1321721.

Kumar, Neha, Nassim Jafari Naimi and Mehrab Bin Morshed 2018. *Uber in Bangladesh: The Tangled Web of Mobility and Justice*. Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction 2: 1-21. https://dl.acm. org/doi/abs/10.1145/3274367 (accessed 23 February 2021).

Kusumo, Herlambang Jati 2019. 'Paguyuban Minta Jumlah Driver Ojol Dikontrol Berkala (Paguyuban Asks for the Number of Ojol Drivers to be Controlled Periodically)'. https://ekbis.harianjogja. com/read/2019/08/14/502/1012062/paguyuban-minta-jumlah -driver-ojol-dikontrol-berkala (accessed 23 February 2021).

Malin, Brenton J. and Curry Chandler 2017. 'Free to Work Anxiously: Splintering Precarity Among Drivers for Uber and Lyft'.

Communication, Culture & Critique, 10 (2): 382-400. https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12157.

Mannell, Kate 2017. 'Technology Resistance and de Certeau: Deceptive Texting as A Tactic of Everyday Life'. *PLATFORM: Journal of Media & Communication,* 8 (1): 40–55.

Nastiti, Aulia 2017. *Worker Unrest and The Contentious Labor Practice of Ride-hailing Services in Indonesia.* Paper presented in the Arryman Symposium at Buffett Institute, Northwestern University. www.isrsf.org (accessed 2 September 2019).

North, Douglass Cecil 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Peters, Robbie 2020. 'Motorbike-taxi-drivers as Infrastructure in the Indonesian City'. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 85 (3): 471-490. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2018.1541917.

Prassl, Jeremias and Martin Risak 2017. 'The Legal Protection of Crowdworkers: Four Avenues for Workers' Rights in the Virtual Realm'. In P. Meil and V. Kirov (eds.) *Policy Implications of Virtual Work.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 273-295.

Schmidt, Florian 2017. *Digital Labour Markets in the Platform Economy: Mapping the Political Challenges of Crowd Work and Gig Work.* Friedrich-Edbert Stiftung. http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/wiso/13164.pdf (accessed 7 June 2020).

Scholz, Trebor 2016. *Uberwork and Underpaid: How Workers are Disrupting Digital Economy.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Scott, James 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sianipar, Tito 2015. 'Soal Kasus Go-Jek, Ini Pendapat Menaker Hanif Dhakiri (Regarding the Go-Jek Case, This is the Opinion of the Minister of Manpower, Hanif Dhakiri)'. https://nasional.tempo.co/read/717793/soal-kasus-go-jek-ini-pendapat-menaker-hanif-dhakiri/full&view=ok (accessed 19 August 2020).

Srnicek, Nick 2017. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge Polity Press.

Standing, Guy 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Sundararajan, Arun 2016. *The Sharing Economy: The End of Employment and the Rise of Cloud-based Capitalism*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Tria Kerkvliet, Benedict J. 2009. 'Everyday Politics in Peasant Societies (and Ours)'. *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 36 (1): 227-243.

Tucker, Eric 2018. 'Uber and the Unmaking and Remaking of Taxi

Capitalisms: Technology, Law and Resistance in Historical Perspective'. In D. McKee, F. Makela, T. Scassa and S. Tremblay-Huet (eds.) *Law and the 'Sharing Economy': Regulating Online Market Platforms*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, pp. 357-392.

Wagner, Kurt and Yoolim Lee 2020. 'Facebook, PayPal Back Gojek's Asia Digital Payments Push'. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-03/facebook-invests-in-indonesia-s-gojek-in-whatsapp-push (accessed 23 February 2021)

Walandouw, Paksi, et al. 2018. *Dampak GOJEK terhadap Perekonomian Yogyakarta Tahun 2018* (*The Impact of Gojek on the Yogyakarta Economy in 2018*). Jakarta: Lembaga Demografi Universitas Indonesia. https://ldfebui.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/LDUI-Dampak-GOJEK-pada-Perekonomian-Yogyakarta-2018.pdf (accessed 22 September 2020).

Wijaya, Calista Anggun 2016, 'Hundreds of Go-Jek drivers protest 'unfair policy', *The Jakarta Post*, https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/10/03/hundreds-of-go-jek-drivers-protest-unfair-policy.html (accessed 11 February 2021).