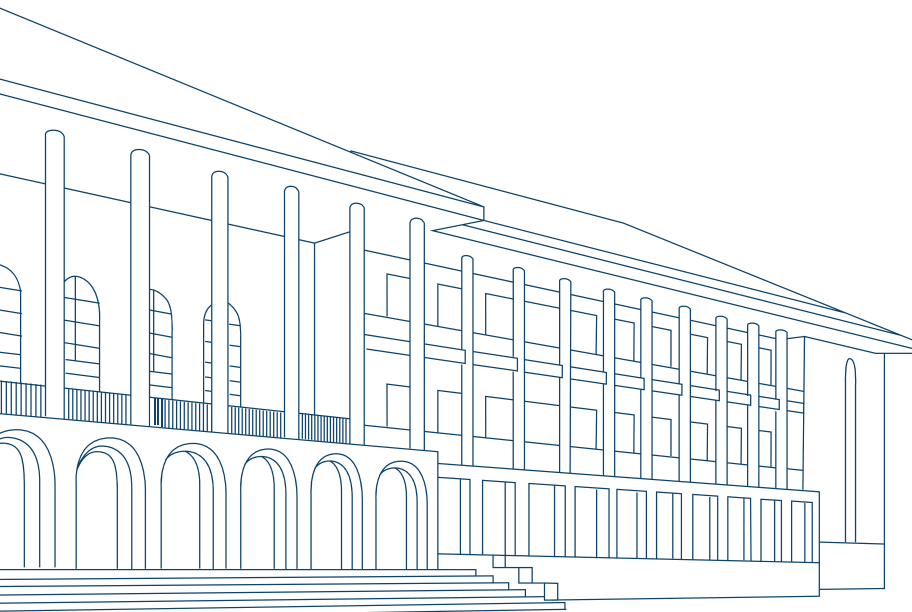




UNIVERSITAS
GADJAH MADA



Regulating Platform Work from the Global South: AI Colonialism, Gendered Inequalities, and the Politics of Digital Labour

Dr. Suci Lestari Yuana

Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and
Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

LOCALLY ROOTED,
GLOBALLY RESPECTED

ugm.ac.id

Global South's Perspective



Global South, regions that have a **colonial history**, exhibit diverse ontologies and epistemologies, and have not been able to secure access to **basic services for a significant part of its population**.


The term represents specific socio-political-economic characteristics, e.g. **ill-functioning institutions** that protect the privileges of a few, while undermining the well-being of many.

Hence, large portions of the population often **rely on clientelist** and exclusive provision systems that reproduce patterns of social exclusion.

Heavily **influenced by their colonial past** in physical and aspirational forms, and pursue 'development'

Yet many Global South countries are in fact ahead of the developed North in **ecological resilience, social solidarity, and sustainable living**

Decolonising transitions in the Global South: Towards more epistemic diversity in transitions research

Bipashyee Ghosh ^a  , Mónica Ramos-Mejía ^b, Rafael Carvalho Machado ^c,
Suci Lestari Yuana ^d ^e, Katharina Schiller ^f

^a Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), University of Sussex Business School, Brighton, United Kingdom

^b Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombia

^c Universidade Positivo, Curitiba, Brazil

^d Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, the Netherlands

^e Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

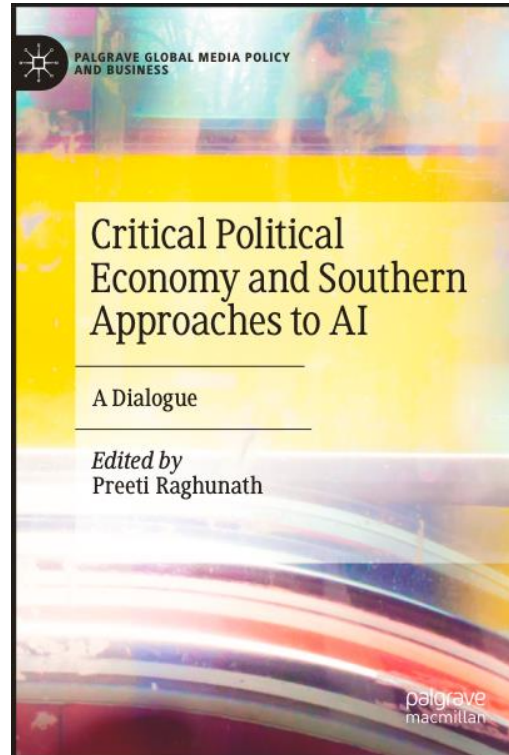
^f Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, Karlsruhe, Germany

Received 30 July 2021, Revised 19 October 2021, Accepted 25 October 2021, Available online 10 November 2021, Version of Record 29 November 2021.

In mainstream discourse, digital risks are often understood as surveillance, manipulation, or data theft (Zuboff, 2019). However, in the Global South, digital risks also mean **exploitation, exclusion, and the deepening of inequalities, particularly in the informal labor sector**.

AI Colonialism and Gig Workers

- AI colonialism refers to the perpetuation of colonial power dynamics through the deployment and control of artificial intelligence technologies (Yuana, 2026)
- Indonesian gig economy illustrates how digital platforms mediate informalisation, control, and labour segmentation in ways that benefit capital while undermining worker rights.
- The gendered nature of this process must be central to any critical analysis.
- AI colonialism operates at the micro-level: through mis-recognition, opaque governance, exploitation, and the neglect of reproductive labour.



If I received a request from a male passenger, I often asked through the chat app: "I am a woman, is that okay with you?". (Focus Group Discussion, 4 August 2023)



Capability Approach, Platform Work, Feminist theories

CA concepts	Categories
Capabilities	Individual and collective
Conversion factors	Personal, social, environmental, structural
Agency	Input and outcome

Gendered Capability Constraint – Indonesia and India (1)



CA Concept	Category	Shared Pattern (Across Contexts)	Indonesia (Illustration)	India (Illustration)
Capabilities	Individual capabilities	Access to platform work provides income opportunities, but does not translate into stable, safe, or self-determined livelihoods.	Women avoid night shifts due to safety concerns, limiting access to peak earnings; work is fragmented around childcare and household responsibilities.	Workers must comply with strict scheduling and ratings systems; missing or cancelling tasks reduces future job allocation, limiting flexibility.
	Collective capabilities	Collective practices emerge as coping mechanisms to manage risk, uncertainty, and lack of institutional protection.	WhatsApp/Telegram groups share safety alerts, customer information, and provide mutual aid such as loans, childcare support, or account-sharing strategies.	WhatsApp groups and protest networks coordinate boycotts, share grievances, and exchange resources, though less embedded in daily routines.
Conversion Factors	Personal	Care responsibilities and economic pressure shape participation, often pushing women to accept unstable or exhausting work conditions.	Single mothers work long, fragmented hours while caring for children, sometimes bringing them along during shifts.	Workers accept consecutive bookings despite fatigue or long travel distances to avoid income loss and penalties.
	Social (incl. dignity & recognition)	Gender norms, stigma, and customer bias undermine dignity and constrain acceptable forms of work.	Women drivers face harassment and stigma for working in public spaces; refusing unsafe orders may reduce ratings.	Women entering clients' homes face moral scrutiny and biased ratings linked to appearance, caste, or behaviour.

Gendered Capability Constraint – Indonesia and India (2)

CA Concept	Category	Shared Pattern (Across Contexts)	Indonesia (Illustration)	India (Illustration)
Conversion Factors	Environmental	Safety risks and urban conditions restrict where and when women can work.	Avoidance of poorly lit streets and certain neighbourhoods reduces access to high-demand areas.	Late-hour bookings and unsafe urban peripheries increase vulnerability, especially in dispersed service work.
	Structural (algorithmic management)	Algorithmic systems incentivise constant availability and penalise refusal, indirectly constraining women's choices.	"Always-on" notifications, acceptance-rate thresholds, and surge pricing push women to stay online and accept orders even during unsafe or care-conflicting times.	Slot systems, cancellation penalties, and rating mechanisms enforce strict compliance, limiting ability to refuse tasks due to emergencies or safety concerns.
Agency	Agency as input (voice, participation)	Women exercise agency through everyday coping strategies, but formal participation remains limited.	Refusing unsafe orders, coordinating via peer networks, sharing strategies to manage algorithmic penalties.	Participating in protests, petitions, and WhatsApp coordination, often facilitated by NGOs or unions.
	Agency as outcome (control, influence)	Agency remains fragile, intermittent, and largely defensive, with limited influence over platform governance.	Collective action emerges in moments of crisis (e.g., COVID-19 protests) but rarely translates into sustained institutional influence.	Public mobilisation is more visible but difficult to sustain due to risk of retaliation (e.g., ID blocking, reduced job allocation).

Bounded Imaginaries

- The 'bounded imaginaries' concept introduced by Smith et al. (2016) presents a vantage point to explore how social dynamics and power relations intersect with temporal perspectives, shaping the prominence of particular future narratives.
- The articulation of future storylines is not solely a product of individual imaginings, but a complex result of dialogues, interactions, and contextual considerations. (Yuana et al., 2023)
- 'bounded imaginaries,' highlights how the power dynamics inherent in articulating the future can influence the convergence and divergence of perspectives

Futures 154 (2023) 103260


 Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)
Futures

 journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/futures


Pluralizing urban futures: A multicriteria mapping analysis of online taxis in Indonesia

 Suci Lestari Yuana ^{a,b,*}, Wouter Boon ^a, Rob Raven ^{a,c}, Maarten A. Hajer ^{a,d}, Frans Sengers ^a, Bipashyee Ghosh ^e
^a Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, the Netherlands

^b Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

^c Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Monash University, Australia

^d Urban Futures Studio, Utrecht University, the Netherlands

^e Sciences Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

 Future storylines
Multi-criteria mapping
Urban mobility
Digital platform
Online taxis

ABSTRACT

The exploration of urban future storylines of transformative change is subject to socio-political processes rather than a mere, objective envisioning of the desirable city. Approaches in urban imagination and planning processes should thus consider plural perspectives across a range of actors and stakeholders beyond the usual suspects of experts and professionals. This paper mobilizes the case of the emergence of online taxis in Indonesia to embrace a more inclusive approach to the assessment of urban mobility futures by employing multi-criteria mapping (MCM) analysis and combining it with an open dialog on future storylines. We answer the question of what insights can be derived from diversifying future storylines in the online taxi industry in Indonesia? From applying a more inclusive approach in constructing future imaginaries we derive four insights: 1) criteria to appraise the future are never purely technological; 2) there is a difference in perceptions of time horizons among actors when imagining futures; 3) perceptions of time horizons are shaped by actor backgrounds and social interactions; and 4) the MCM method contributed to helping individuals to focus and explore their future storylines.

19 Criteria of Online Taxis Regulations

Economy



- Business competition
- Business ecosystem
- Added value to consumers
- Partnership
- **Tariff**

Government Regulation



- Legal protection
- Consumers protection
- Human resources
- Regulation for startup
- Strategic planning

Social



- Labour exploitation
- Health and pension insurance
- Driver organisation
- Consumers organisation
- Gender empowerment

Technology



- Digital Infrastructure
- Digital talent
- Public facility/ transportation
- Transportation Quota

Referensi: Yuana, S. L., Boon, W., Raven, R., Hajer, M. A., Sengers, F., & Ghosh, B. (2023). Pluralizing urban futures: A multicriteria mapping analysis of online taxis in Indonesia. *Futures*, 154, 103260.

Proposed Provisions for the Indonesian Platform Workers Bill (RUU Pekerja Platform Indonesia)



No	Proposed Points	Core Substance
1	Clarity of the Relationship between Platform Workers and Platform Companies	Affirming the definition of platform workers, clarifying the definition of partnership relationships, and distinguishing them from partnership arrangements under the MSME Law
2	Social Protection	Transforming the social protection scheme from voluntary to mandatory, and establishing a more equitable cost-sharing scheme between platforms and workers
3	Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)	Establishing OHS standards and defining platform responsibilities in the event of workplace accidents
4	Income Transparency and Fairness	Requiring disclosure of commission or deduction calculations, and preventing unilateral commission setting
5	Working Time Flexibility	Preserving flexible working hours while setting maximum working hours and mandatory rest periods
6	Right to Organize and Collective Representation	Guaranteeing platform workers the right to form organizations and engage in collective bargaining
7	Data Recording and Reporting	Requiring platforms to record the number of workers and their earnings, and to report them periodically
8	Dispute Resolution Mechanisms	Determining mechanisms for resolving disputes within partnership relationships, whether through the Industrial Relations Court or other channels
9	Equal Partnership Relations and Social Dialogue	Prohibiting unilateral changes to partnership clauses and providing bipartite or tripartite dialogue forums

Ref: Izzati, N. R., Yuana, S. L., & Adha, I. A. F. (2025). *Narik tiap hari, hak perlu dihargai: Rekomendasi untuk RUU pekerja platform Indonesia*. Jakarta: Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (INDEF). <https://indef.or.id/publikasi/narik-tiap-hari-hak-perlu-dihargai-rekomendasi-untuk-ruu-pekerja-platform-indonesia/>



UNIVERSITAS GADJAH MADA

Thank you

sucilestari.yuana@ugm.ac.id

