

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRANSPORT UNIONISM IN LAGOS STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKERS, COMMUTERS AND URBAN MOBILITY

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Abstract

The rapid diffusion of smartphones, mobile applications, digital payments, GPS-enabled navigation, online platforms and algorithmic management is transforming the organisation of urban transport and the character of labour relations in Lagos State, Nigeria. For decades, transport unionism in Lagos State has been closely associated with informal public transport, motor parks, route allocation, fare collection, worker discipline and collective representation. The emergence of digital mobility platforms, particularly e-hailing services, has introduced new organisational arrangements in which passenger demand, pricing, driver allocation, performance evaluation and payment are increasingly mediated through digital technologies. This transformation creates opportunities for greater efficiency, transparency, accessibility and formalisation, but it also introduces new forms of worker surveillance, income uncertainty, algorithmic control and fragmentation of collective representation. This paper examines how digital technology is reshaping transport unionism in Lagos State and evaluates the implications for transport workers, commuters and urban mobility. Drawing on recent literature on informal transport, platform work, algorithmic management, labour organisation and Lagos State transportation, the paper adopts a qualitative conceptual review approach. The analysis demonstrates that digitalisation does not necessarily eliminate transport unionism; rather, it changes the sources, mechanisms and sites of worker power. Traditional physical organisation around garages and motor parks is increasingly complemented by digitally mediated organisation through WhatsApp groups, social media, mobile communication and platform-based networks. The paper argues that the future of transport unionism in Lagos State will depend on its capacity to move from predominantly territorial and gatekeeping functions towards digitally enabled representation, social protection, skills development, data governance and constructive participation in transport regulation. It recommends an inclusive regulatory framework that recognises platform workers as legitimate transport stakeholders, promotes social dialogue, protects workers against exploitative algorithmic practices, improves commuter protection and integrates informal and digital transport operators into metropolitan mobility planning.

Keywords: digital technology, transport unionism, Lagos State, platform work, e-hailing, informal transport, labour relations