



The International Journal of Human Resource Management

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rijh20>

Having their cake and eating it too? Online labor platforms and human resource management as a case of institutional complexity

Jeroen Meijerink, Anne Keegan & Tanya Bondarouk

To cite this article: Jeroen Meijerink, Anne Keegan & Tanya Bondarouk (2021): Having their cake and eating it too? Online labor platforms and human resource management as a case of institutional complexity, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, DOI: [10.1080/09585192.2020.1867616](https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2020.1867616)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2020.1867616>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 11 Jan 2021.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 2340



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



Citing articles: 1 [View citing articles](#)

Having their cake and eating it too? Online labor platforms and human resource management as a case of institutional complexity

Jeroen Meijerink^a , Anne Keegan^b and Tanya Bondarouk^a 

^aHuman Resource Management Group, School of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands; ^bHRM and Employment Relations Group, College of Business, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown that online labor platforms want to have their cake and eat it too by implementing human resource management (HRM) activities to control gig workers who ought to be autonomous in their work. Our empirical study shows that using HRM activities to control gig workers creates institutional complexity and explores the strategies adopted by platform firms to address this complexity. Based on case studies of two meal-delivery platforms in the Netherlands (Uber Eats and Deliveroo), we identify freelance-related HRM activities that create tensions between the market and corporation logics. We show that online labor platforms rely on response strategies that integrate/balance, rather than rule out competing logics, including creating novel forms of HRM outsourcing, HRM devolution, and covert HRM implementation to control gig workers while simultaneously upholding their freelance status. Furthermore, we show that these response strategies are enabled by information technologies and the marketplaces that online labor platforms create, allowing for more experimental and dynamic approaches to HRM than so far theorized. The main implication of these findings is that the HRM activities for gig workers are simultaneously the source of, and the solution to, the institutional complexity associated with HRM for controlling freelance gig workers.

KEYWORDS

Human resource management; online labor platforms; gig work; freelancer; institutional complexity; institutional logics; response strategies

Introduction

In this study, we explore how online labor platforms such as Uber and Deliveroo respond to the institutional complexity associated with their use of human resource management (HRM) activities for controlling

CONTACT Jeroen Meijerink  j.g.meijerink@utwente.nl  Human Resource Management Group, School of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands.

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

self-employed ‘gig’ workers that ought to be autonomous in their work (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Institutional complexity occurs when organizations face tensions that arise from competing institutional logics, that is, ideal-type, taken-for-granted social prescriptions of what constitute legitimate goals and activities (Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Through their use of HRM activities, we expect that online labor platforms create tensions between two competing institutional logics: (1) the *market logic* that legitimizes profit-making through free, unregulated competition among self-employed workers, and (2) the *corporation logic* that legitimizes market share and revenue growth through coordination and control of employees by an employer (Frenken et al., 2018).

On the one hand, online labor platforms emphasize the market logic as they are for-profit labor market intermediaries that create online marketplaces where self-employed ‘gig’ workers and requesters (i.e. organizations or consumers) transact (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Accordingly, gig workers are framed as independent entrepreneurs that compete, for example on price or service offerings, which may be evidenced by HRM activities such as autonomy offered to gig workers (Aloisi, 2016; Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). On the other hand, online labor platforms also use HRM activities such as performance-rating schemes (Rosenblat et al., 2017), algorithm-based compensation (Duggan et al., 2020), and narrowly defined jobs (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017) which afford control over gig worker performance and institute the corporation logic. Control-enhancing HRM activities emanating from the corporation logic contradict autonomy-enhancing HRM activities that reinforce the market logic, creating institutional complexity, and generating tensions. Institutional complexity can cause conflicts with relevant stakeholders, loss of legitimacy, and ultimately organizational failure (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Greenwood et al., 2011). In a gig context, such tensions and conflicts are evident in the various court cases against online labor platforms around the globe, which center on the issue whether gig workers should be classified as autonomous freelancers (i.e. market logic) or employees that are controlled by an employer (i.e. corporation logic) (Frenken et al., 2018; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019).

To address such challenges and ensure organizational survival, online labor platforms – like other organizations – can adopt response strategies that alleviate tensions between competing logics. Although extant research discusses response strategies to institutional complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2019; Pache & Santos, 2010), these strategies may not translate well to online labor platforms as they involve favoring one logic over others. As corporations that organize markets, online labor platforms are unlikely to opt for a single logic since they see working with freelancers as desirable (a market logic) while

simultaneously wanting to control these freelancers (a corporation logic) (Frenken et al., 2018). Our study therefore explores the institutional complexity of HRM for controlling freelance gig workers, and the response strategies adopted by online labor platforms for integrating competing institutional logics.

This study makes three contributions to the literature. First, we disentangle the institutional complexity associated with HRM for freelance gig workers by examining which HRM activities reinforce the market logic and which reinforce the competing logic of the corporation. Although researchers have frequently studied how institutions impact HRM activities (Lewis et al., 2019), our study reveals that HRM activities of online labor platforms are a source of institutional complexity and therefore, best conceptualized as hybrid systems. Second, while institutional complexity in the gig economy has been theorized (Frenken et al., 2018), less is known about how stakeholders experience it. The adoption of response strategies to institutional complexity depends on how it is perceived (Pache & Santos, 2010). As such, we contribute by showing how gig economy actors experience institutional complexity associated with HRM for freelancers. Finally, we illustrate the response strategies adopted by online labor platforms for balancing the tensions associated with HRM practices for freelancers. We add to institutional theory by showing how the technologies and online marketplaces, created by online labor platforms, afford novel response strategies for addressing institutional complexity in cases where organizations cannot favor one institutional logic over another.

This paper is structured as follows. We start by discussing the business model of online labor platforms and how this can be understood from an institutional complexity perspective. This is followed by outlining how HRM for freelancers may create institutional complexity and the response strategies for addressing this complexity. After presenting our methodology and the results from the case studies of two online labor platforms, we conclude by discussing the implications of our work for institutional theory and HRM research into online labor platforms.

Literature review and theoretical background

Online labor platforms' business model and the gig economy: Freelancing or employment?

Online labor platforms are for-profit labor market intermediaries that use technology to create online, multi-sided marketplaces that together make up the so-called gig economy. Although there is no consensus on a definition of the gig economy, the term is generally used to describe an economic system that consists of online labor platform firms that

connect requesters (i.e. organizations or consumers) with on-demand gig workers in industries such as transportation (e.g. Uber), cleaning (e.g. Helpling) and food delivery (e.g. Deliveroo) (Duggan et al., 2020; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Although paid for their services, gig workers do not have an employment relationship with an organization (Aloisi, 2016; Daskalova, 2018). Rather, they are classified as independent freelancers by platform firms who facilitate their access to requesters. As such, rather than being employers to gig workers, online labor platforms claim that they are brokers providing intermediation services between self-employed gig workers and consumers/organizations that wish to out-source fixed-term activities that gig workers are willing to perform (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Stanford, 2017; Veen et al., 2020).

The business model of online labor platforms is based on charging fees for their intermediation services (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Stanford, 2017). In practice, this involves gig workers and/or requesters paying the platform for each successful match made. For instance, the ride-hailing platform Uber operates an online platform where passengers – by means of a smartphone application – can hail a taxi that is driven by a freelance driver. Uber algorithmically matchmakes between the two by dispatching a passenger's requests to one of its freelance "partners". After the freelance taxi driver accepts the passengers' requests and drops him/her off at the final destination, Uber charges passengers the fare for the taxi ride, which Uber transfers to the taxi driver after deducting a commission fee that ranges between 20% and 30% (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). To increase the number of transactions and thus their revenue, platform firms like Uber must grow the number of gig workers and requesters willing to transact. Online platform firms seek to create so-called network externalities that occur when increased numbers of platform users improve the value of the intermediation service (Lin & Lu, 2011) by scaling up both sides of the online market place: more active requesters means that gig workers can more easily acquire gigs (and thus income); more gig workers allows requesters to more easily and efficiently out-source their activities. Network externalities improve the revenues for the platform firm by increasing workers' and requesters' willingness to pay for intermediation services (Lin & Lu, 2011; Tanriverdi & Lee, 2008).

The creation of network effects however comes at a cost. Particularly in their early stages, online labor platforms expend significant effort to scale up both sides of their online marketplaces. They do so by offering discounts on intermediation services to the freelance workers and requesters (Frenken et al., 2018; Kessler, 2015; Rosenblat et al., 2017). The financial resources that enable this mainly come from venture capital offered by early investors (Liemann, 2018). The venture capital-based

discounts may however prove unsustainable over time if rival platforms also seek to create network externalities. In such cases, the online platform with the largest financial resources is likely to drive competitors out, which creates a monopsony/monopoly allowing the remaining platform to reduce subsidies and increase commission fees to grow revenue (Daskalova, 2018; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019).

Online labor platform firms allegedly benefit from not formally employing gig workers in ensuring their future profit. Some argue that online labor platforms work with freelancers to avoid having to apply labor laws, thereby avoiding the associated costs (taxes, social security, paid holidays, etc.) (Aloisi, 2016; Daskalova, 2018; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). Working with self-employed workers also enables platform firms to exit a market at a low cost (by not having to terminate employment contracts of their workers) if they cannot outcompete rival platforms. Although working with freelancers may lower costs to a platform, it also presents challenges as sustaining network externalities requires online labor platforms to control gig workers as if they were employees in an employment relationship. These actions go against the freelance model, flouting the self-employed status of gig workers propagated by platform firms (Veen et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019). It is precisely this tension between platforms controlling gig workers on the one hand, and having to offer them autonomy to uphold their freelance status on the other, that has sparked numerous court cases on the legal status of gig workers (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). To understand this tension and the consequences this has for online labor platforms, we draw on the concept of institutional complexity.

Institutional complexity in the form of competing institutional logics

Institutional complexity occurs when organizations face incompatible prescriptions from different institutional logics (Greenwood et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2019; Pache & Santos, 2010; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Institutional logics amount to “socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999: 804). As such, institutional logics are ideal-type representations of an organization’s institutional field in terms of taken-for-granted social prescriptions as to what is seen as legitimate (Battilana & Dorado, 2010).

Thornton (2004) outlines six ideal-type institutional logics that may conflict: the state logic, market logic, family logic, religious logic,

corporation logic, and professional logic. Each of these institutional logics describe what is seen to be a legitimate goal and legitimized actions to realize this goal, such as profit through free/unregulated competition (i.e. market logic), reputation through expertise development (i.e. professional logic), and market share/revenue growth through organizational control and coordination (i.e. corporation logic). These different logics may contradict one another to produce institutional complexity that manifests itself as tensions between, or incompatible prescriptions from, different institutional logics (Greenwood et al., 2011). For example, this will occur when a bank (and its shareholders) propose a pay raise or bonus for its CEO to remain competitive on the international labor market (i.e. market logic) since this is incompatible with the state logic which holds that banks serve a greater, community good.

In line with the work of Frenken et al. (2018), we posit that online labor platforms experience conflicting logics, and thus institutional complexity, as they apply HRM practices for self-employed gig workers to implement their business model. As discussed below, this complexity is rooted in incompatible prescriptions from the market and the corporation logics associated with the use of HRM activities by online labor platforms.

Online labor platforms use of HRM practices to institute the 'market logic'

Gig workers are rooted in the market logic. Actors that draw on the market logic view profit and shareholder value as legitimate goals that are achieved through free and unregulated competition without control by a single corporation or the state (Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Thornton, 2004). At least two of the actors in the gig economy are likely to propagate the market logic. First, there are the early investors that provide online labor platforms with the venture capital to create network externalities in the hope this will result in profits. Second, platform firms propagate the market logic and, specifically, the free and unregulated competition among self-employed gig workers (Frenken et al., 2018). By framing gig workers as freelancers that generate profit through free and unregulated competition based on price or service offering, online labor platforms can increase profit to the platform firm by reducing (or avoiding) costs such as taxes, social security payments and worker benefits (Aloisi, 2016; Daskalova, 2018).

Online labor platforms may implement several HRM activities to enable free and unregulated competition among freelance gig workers. First, they offer gig workers the autonomy to make decisions on where to work, which requesters to serve, which services to offer, and what

prices to charge (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Shapiro, 2018; Wood et al., 2019). This reinforces the market logic as it offers gig workers the freedom to compete on the basis of price and/or service offering as well as to work for requesters that are willing to pay a premium price. Moreover, to ensure free competition without control by the platform firm, gig workers should be free to join and to leave the online marketplace. Although online labor platforms do implement HRM practices related to gig worker recruitment and selection (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019), they may be inclined to set very few selection/admission criteria for gig workers to support the market logic of free and unregulated competition.

HRM practices of online labor platforms for instituting the 'corporation logic'

Online labor platforms simultaneously institute the competing logic of the corporation. Actors that draw on the corporation logic view market share and revenue growth as legitimate goals that are achieved through encoding work into the routines of the organization and subjecting workers to administrative control through HRM activities (Frenken et al., 2018; Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Thornton, 2004; Van Mierlo et al., 2018). The corporation logic is embedded in online platforms in two ways. First, platforms control and coordinate their online marketplaces to create network externalities that help to attract and retain gig workers and requesters, which ultimately will grow the market share of that online labor. Second, platform firms aim to become the largest online market place in their respective industry, creating a monopsony or monopoly situation that enables them to charge higher prices and increase revenue (Frenken et al., 2018).

To institute the corporation logic of market share and revenue growth, online labor platforms need to attract, retrain, and control gig workers as if they were employees subject to organizational routines, hierarchy, and control. As discussed by Meijerink and Keegan (2019), online labor platforms can utilize a range of HRM activities to attract, retain and control gig workers. For instance, platforms like Uber, Deliveroo, and Fiverr engage in HRM practices that are similar to those seen in recruitment: “employer” branding and the creation of “employee” value propositions to attract people to work with them (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Veen et al., 2020). Moreover, platforms implement HRM practices related to motivation through employing compensation schemes such as piece-based reward schemes to incentivize gig workers to work long hours (Chen et al., 2015; Lieman, 2018). Other HRM activities include surge pricing,

paid worker referral schemes, and higher compensation for gig workers in new areas where the online platform starts up (Chen et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2015; Lieman, 2018). Online labor platforms also implement performance appraisals (e.g. five star ratings) that build a gig worker's online reputation that cannot be taken to another platform and therefore creates lock-in effects that serve to retain workers (Rosenblat et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2019). Furthermore, platforms may provide training – alongside appraisal practices – to ensure gig workers offer high-quality services so that they meet requesters' expectations and retain them on the platform (Rosenblat et al., 2017).

Institutional complexity of HRM for freelancers

The use of HRM activities for freelance gig workers, which simultaneously institutes the market and corporation logics, likely creates institutional complexity in the form of tensions that stakeholders draw on to challenge the legitimacy of online labor platforms (Frenken et al., 2018). That is, the use of HRM activities such as compensation, appraisal, and job design reinforces the corporation logic by serving to control self-employed gig workers. This goes against the use of HRM activities like providing autonomy which aligns well with the market logic's principles of self-employment and free, unregulated competition. Institutional complexity caused by HRM for freelance gig workers comes the fore when HRM activities such as offering autonomy reinforce the market logic while other HRM activities for committing, controlling and limiting worker discretion through compensation, incentives, appraisal and discipline simultaneously challenge the market logic and instead institute the corporation logic where workers are treated like employees and not self-employed agents (Aloisi, 2016; Daskalova, 2018; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016).

Online labor platforms represent a novel organizational type that reconfigures institutional logics (Frenken et al., 2018). This makes them highly salient to societal stakeholders and vulnerable to judgements that their actions are not legitimate due to combining contradictory logics. For instance, journalists and other social commentators have reported on the incompatibility of the market and corporation logics manifest in the platforms' usage of HRM activities. They argue that online labor platforms, by means of HRM activities that align with the corporation logic, exercise control over nominally self-employed gig workers and, therefore, should be classified as employers and cease instituting an inappropriate market logic of unregulated competition among gig workers (Frenken et al., 2018).

Strategies for responding to the institutional complexity of HRM for freelancers

To avoid being seen as illegitimate, online labor platforms need to respond to the institutional complexity associated with their use of HRM activities for self-employed gig workers. Research shows that although it creates challenges, institutional complexity can be addressed, and in some cases resolved, by organizations through various response strategies (Smets et al., 2015). Organizations may do this by determining which logic can be most easily ignored (D'Aunno et al., 1991), which logic can best be adhered to in order to achieve the greatest reward (Greve & Man Zhang, 2017), or which can be undermined/delegitimized by a competing logic (Raaijmakers et al., 2015).

Online labor platforms may use such strategies to manage workers through HRM practices without employing them. At the same time, such response strategies may not necessarily resolve institutional complexity as they involve making 'either/or' choices through approaches like acquiescence (i.e. habitual adoption of one logic), avoidance (of an 'undesirable' logic), or defiance (i.e. delegitimizing a selected logic) (Greenwood et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2019; Pache & Santos, 2010). Online labor platforms may not be willing to adopt response strategies that require choosing/favoring a single logic given the inherently complex nature of their business model that relies on combining contradictory market and corporation logics in HRM activities. To create revenue and profit, platforms cannot favor the market logic over the corporation logic, or vice versa.

According to Greenwood et al. (2011), institutional theorists have shed little light on response strategies to institutional complexity that involve marrying two competing logics. Moreover, a recent literature review by Lewis et al. (2019) reveals that little is known about the means through which HRM addresses the competing prescriptions of different institutional logics. This is particularly relevant for online labor platforms which traditionally are not viewed as having HRM responsibilities (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). The new intermediation-based business model online labor platforms does not comply with existing norms and regulations (Aloisi, 2016; Frenken et al., 2018; Kessler, 2015). At the same time, research has shown that institutional complexity may serve as a push toward new organizational developments (Lewis et al., 2019). By working through this complexity, organizations may find new operating models, work practices, or business strategies. In fact, the online marketplaces that online labor platforms create, and the powerful information technologies they develop, may provide new possibilities for addressing institutional complexity that have not been conceptualized or empirically uncovered by previous studies. To contribute to a better

understanding of these issues, we empirically explore the institutional complexity associated with HRM for self-employed gig workers (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019), and the response strategies that online labor platforms adopt to cope with this institutional complexity.

Methodology

We conducted in-depth case studies of the Dutch operations of two major online labor platforms, Uber Eats and Deliveroo. We chose these platforms for the following reasons. First, Deliveroo and Uber Eats fit our definition of online labor platforms as they match freelance gig workers to requesters that wish to outsource meal delivery activities. Second, these platforms likely create institutional complexity by combining market and corporation logics. They align with a market logic by classifying the workers on the platform as self-employed, but also use HRM activities to coordinate the efforts of multiple parties including requestors, individual consumers and restaurants (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Veen et al., 2020). Finally, the ‘independent/self-employed’ status of the gig workers and the ‘intermediary’ role of Deliveroo and Uber Eats is highly contested by Dutch labor unions and the media as well as in several court cases. Our choice of cases allowed us to explore the institutional complexity these platforms face, and if and how they respond to this complexity.

Data collection

The empirical study was carried out between January 2018 and March 2019, and relied on 37 semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders, approximately 16 h of gathering ethnographic accounts of real-life gig worker activities and a court hearing, and document analysis (see [Table 1](#) for an overview of the data collection techniques).

Data collected through interviews

To collect data from all the relevant actors involved, and for purposes of triangulation, the first author and three master-level students conducted interviews with the management of Deliveroo and Uber Eats, gig workers, requesters, and labor union representatives.

The interviews with the platform firms’ management (11 interviewees in total including with managing directors, requester support managers, gig worker support managers, IT specialists, and gig worker engagement managers) served to gain insights into the HRM responsibilities of the online labor platforms, gig workers, and requesters, the functioning of

Table 1. Empirical research methods.

	<i>Sample (N)</i>	<i>Total duration</i>
Deliveroo		
Interviews with Deliveroo managers	8	7h 45 min
Interviews with gig workers	10	9h 00 min
Interviews with requesters	3	2h 30 min
Interviews with labor union representatives	3	4h 15 min
Ethnographic accounts (i.e. 'gigs' performed)	5	2h 45 min
Uber Eats		
Interviews with Uber Eats managers	3	4h 00 min
Interviews with gig workers	2	1h 15 min
Interviews with requesters	3	2h 30 min
Interviews with labor union representatives	5	5h 45 min
Ethnographic accounts (i.e. 'gigs' performed)	20	14h 30 min

the online applications that match labor supply and demand, and the promotion of institutional logics. Moreover, these interviews with the Deliveroo/Uber Eats management provided information on the HRM activities that gig workers are subject to, and the responses adopted to mitigate the institutional complexity associated with HRM activities for freelancers.

Since HRM practices may not be implemented as intended (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018; Nishii & Wright, 2008; Van Mierlo et al., 2018), we also interviewed 12 gig workers (i.e. meal deliverers) and 6 requesters (i.e. owner-managers of restaurants) to obtain information on their experiences with the use of HRM practices. To avoid depending fully on Uber Eats and Deliveroo to recruit interviewees, we contacted gig workers and requesters directly. Lacking a sampling frame for gig workers, we searched on social media for gig workers, approached gig workers we came across in the street, attended gatherings of gig workers, and engaged in snowball sampling. As a result of these efforts, 70% of the interviewees were sampled independently of the management of Uber Eats and Deliveroo. The gig workers we interviewed were students, freelancers looking for side-gigs, or those “in-between” jobs. These represent the types of gig workers reported to be active on online meal-delivery platforms (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018; Katz & Krueger, 2019). The owner-managers of the restaurants were identified and contacted through the Web/mobile applications of the two platforms, and interviewed to reveal their involvement in the HR management of gig workers.

Finally, eight representatives of the three largest labor unions in the Netherlands were interviewed on the legal activities they undertook to influence the HRM activities of Deliveroo and Uber Eats. This was helpful in obtaining data on institutional complexity and which logics are propagated by societal stakeholders.

All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were sent to the interviewees for verification to ensure the reliability of

our data. In a number of cases, interviewees proposed corrections which resulted in minor changes to the transcripts to better reflect their interpretation of the issues.

Data collected through ethnographic accounts

Alongside these interviews, the first author also signed up as a gig worker and performed 5 ‘gigs’ (i.e. meal deliveries) for Deliveroo and 20 gigs for Uber Eats. Besides providing an understanding of the functioning of the meal delivery process, these ethnographic accounts also served to gather data on the HRM practices of both platforms. This supplemented the information gathered from the interviews and enabled first-hand experience to fill in gaps resulting from interviewee recollections and reports. The ethnographic accounts involved signing up as a gig worker, taking part in the ‘onboarding process’, making use of the mobile application and performing meal deliveries. Screenshots of the mobile application were made to capture data on HRM practices such as recruitment and selection, incentives and workforce planning, job design, and performance appraisal.

The first author also attended a court hearing on the legal status of Deliveroo gig workers that took place during the period of empirical research. Besides providing data on Deliveroo’s HRM practices and how this creates the institutional complexity, this also helped to recruit gig workers (those that attended the court hearing) for an interview. Field notes on HRM activities, institutional logics, and responses to institutional complexity were taken during the court hearing.

Data collected through document analysis

Finally, we analyzed documents which we found online or received from Deliveroo and Uber Eats. These documents – which included emails, text messages, webpages, newspaper articles, press releases, worker contracts with Deliveroo/Uber Eats, and rulings in the Deliveroo court cases – provided additional data on HRM activities such as recruitment and selection, workforce, job design, and training.

Ultimately, using multiple data sources helps substantiate the data and safeguards the trustworthiness of the findings (Sandberg, 2005). Furthermore, interviewing different actors allows for data triangulation, by enabling cross-checking of data among multiple stakeholders (Denzin, 1987), and the development of richer insights into issues that reflect the institutional complexity of HRM for freelance gig workers. Having conducted 37 interviews, performed 25 meal delivery ‘gigs’, read hundreds

of pages of text, and attended a court hearing, data saturation was achieved.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in three phases. First, a deductive approach was taken. We used directed content analysis to code the transcripts based on a set of preliminary descriptive codes derived from the literature on HRM activities, institutional logics/complexity, and responses by the online labor platforms for addressing institutional complexity (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). During the second phase, we analyzed the data using additional inductively generated codes and sub-codes to identify themes. As an example, the HRM activity code ‘recruitment and selection’ was further sub-coded to cover the different recruitment and selection techniques used for gig workers. To strengthen the trustworthiness of our findings, we debriefed the management and workers of both platforms and carried out member checks by presenting and discussing the research results and gaining feedback on insiders’ perceptions of the adequacy of our categories and terms used to describe the findings (Morse et al., 2002; Sandberg, 2005). During the final phase, we carried out a cross-case analysis by listing and comparing the Deliveroo and Uber Eats cases to identify core similarities and differences (Miles et al., 2018). These similarities and differences are presented in Table 2 and discussed below.

Results

Case descriptions: The context of institutional complexity for uber eats and deliveroo

Uber Eats and Deliveroo operate in the takeaway meal industry and match freelance ‘gig’ workers (i.e. meal deliverers), restaurants, and individual consumers. Both platforms are strongly rooted in the market logic of profit and shareholder value. For instance, Deliveroo has managed to attract approximately \$1.5 billion from venture capitalists around the globe, hoping Deliveroo will enter a monopsony/monopoly position enabling it to secure high levels of future profitability. Despite making an \$8.5 billion loss, Uber went for an initial public offering (IPO) on Wallstreet in 2019, raising \$8.1 billion from institutional investors banking on Uber making profits in the near future. The embeddedness of Uber Eats and Deliveroo in the market logic is further evidenced by their creation of an online marketplace where self-employed gig workers, restaurants, and consumers transact freely. Deliveroo and Uber Eats neither ‘own’ these restaurants, nor employ the meal deliverers they work with.

Table 2. Summary of the empirical results and comparison between uber eats and deliveroo.

	Deliveroo	Uber Eats
<i>Background and history</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move from employment to freelance model • Stand-alone organization • Workers offering a service to Deliveroo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freelance model since Dutch operations started • Part of wider Uber Technologies Inc. • Workers receiving a service from Uber Eats
<i>HRM practices for instituting the market logic</i>	<p>Autonomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace autonomy • Worktime autonomy • Job resource autonomy (e.g. gear, bike, phone) • Job demand autonomy (e.g. which activities, how to perform activity) <p>Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited selection criteria 	<p>Autonomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace autonomy • Worktime autonomy • Job resource autonomy (e.g. gear, bike, phone); • Job demand autonomy (e.g. which activities, how to perform activity) <p>Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited selection criteria
<i>HRM practices for instituting the corporation logic</i>	<p>Recruitment and selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Use of branded gear • Referral schemes • Screening of identification form (e.g. passport) <p>Training and instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job-related training prior to joining platform • Instructions from requesters via app • Training for personal development <p>Workforce management and compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed pay per order, determined by platform • Incentives: 'Do X, Get Y' bonuses • Algorithmic restriction of delivery area • Shift system <p>Performance appraisal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal of workers • Appraisal of restaurants 	<p>Recruitment and selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Use of branded gear • Referral schemes • Screening of identification form (e.g. passport) • Online test <p>Training and instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job-related training prior to joining platform • Instructions from requesters via app <p>Workforce management and compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable pay per order, determined by platform • Incentives: hourly guarantees • Algorithmic restriction of delivery area <p>Performance appraisal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal of workers • Appraisal of restaurants
<i>Experienced institutional complexity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gig workers favor market logic • Deliveroo managers report need to balance logics • Legitimacy of Deliveroo challenged by labor union representatives • Multiple court cases challenging status of Deliveroo riders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gig workers favor market logic • Uber Eats' managers report need to balance logics
<i>Response strategies to institutional complexity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejection of corporation logic • Covert HRM implementation: tips and tricks, providing gear for free etc. • HRM devolution of appraisal and instructions to requesters • HRM outsourcing to third parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejection of corporation logic • Covert implementation: tips and tricks, providing rent-free gear, etc. • HRM devolution of appraisal, instructions, and compensation to requesters

Instead, restaurants and meal deliverers are seen to be independent actors (or, so called 'partners' to the platform) that freely engage in transactions with consumers. These transactions are enabled by Deliveroo's and Uber Eats' online platform that users access through a

mobile (or web) application. The application presents a list of restaurants, and their menus, from which consumers can make choices. Once a meal is ordered through this so-called consumer app, the online platform algorithmically dispatches the order to the restaurant and to a potential meal deliverer who can accept or reject the order through the restaurant app or delivery app respectively. Once a transaction is completed, Uber Eats and Deliveroo collect the payment from the consumer, pay a portion of this to the restaurant and freelance meal deliverer, and keep the remainder as a service fee charged for each successful match made.

In the Netherlands, the main competitors of Uber Eats and Deliveroo are Takeaway.com (in Dutch: Thuisbezorgd.nl) and Foodora. The four meal delivery platforms are strongly rooted in the corporation logic and engage in competition for market share. The rivalry between these four meal delivery platforms was evident during the interviews with Deliveroo and Uber Eats representatives who were hesitant to disclose detailed information about the strategies used to grow the size of their respective online marketplaces:

Interviewer: “When starting a meal-delivery platform, how do you ensure that a sufficient number restaurants and meal deliverers join the platform and are available to serve consumers?” Interviewee: “I would say that is part of the Uber secret versus our competitors. So, everyone has a different strategy in terms of launching cities. I don’t want to share this information.” (...) Interviewer: “What is the balance between organic growth and targeted growth of Uber’s online marketplace?” Interviewee: “I think we are getting into another portion of the secret sauce here.” (Manager Uber Eats)

“Obviously, the working of our algorithms for efficiently dispatching orders is a trade secret. This is a core competence of our company for outcompeting rivals.” (Manager Deliveroo)

In terms of instituting the corporation logic of market share growth, the creation of network externalities for outcompeting rival platforms turned out to become very salient as one of the rival platforms – Foodora – decided to cease its operations in the Netherlands in August 2018, due at least in to failure to create sufficient market share to ensure profitability.

Uber Eats and Deliveroo differ in terms of three organizational aspects that have implications for the institutional complexity experienced. First, whereas Uber Eats has worked with freelance deliverers since starting operations in the Netherlands, Deliveroo initially employed the people delivering meals. When it started its Dutch operations in 2015, Deliveroo offered its meal deliverers an employment contract, assigned them ‘shifts’, and paid them hourly wages. In the summer of 2017, Deliveroo

started to gradually replace employee-deliverers with freelance deliverers who are paid per order and are free to decide if and when, for whom, and nominally how they will perform their work. This implies a shift by Deliveroo from the corporation logic (i.e. employment relationship) to the market logic (i.e. freelance status).

Second, Deliveroo is a stand-alone organization that operates in the food delivery industry, whereas Uber Eats is part of the wider Uber Technologies Inc. organization. Besides Uber Eats, Uber Technologies Inc. also operates Uber Rides that matchmakers between taxi drivers and passengers. While the legitimacy of Uber Eats is only discussed in a very limited way, and not subject to widespread public debate, the legitimacy of Uber Rides is frequently challenged. In fact, the Dutch operations of Uber Rides (i.e. UberPop) was initially seen as illegitimate and therefore temporarily banned.

Finally, the contracts that Deliveroo and Uber Eats have with the freelance deliverers differ. In instituting the market logic, Deliveroo established a freelance contract for its meal deliverers stating they are providers of services to Deliveroo:

“You are a supplier in business on your own account who wishes to arrange the provision of delivery services to Deliveroo. Parties merely wish to enter into an agreement on the basis of a supplier agreement (...) You are completely independent in carrying out the agreed work. You carry out the agreed work at your own discretion and without the supervision of Deliveroo.” (Freelance contract of Deliveroo, version May 1st, 2018)

Uber Eats has terms and conditions that gig workers need to accept before joining the platform. Rather than viewing gig workers as freelancers that offer services to the online labor platform, Uber Eats’ terms and conditions portray gig workers as users that receive services from the online platform: Uber Eats frames itself as an actor in the market for intermediation services (aligning with the market logic) and treats meal deliverers as “independent” consumers of its “technology services”, while rejecting the corporation logic by denying that it controls any of its meal deliverers:

“[Uber Eats] offers services in terms of generating leads to the providers of transportation services [i.e. gig workers]. (...) You wish to enter into this agreement to access and use Uber’s services. (...) You confirm and agree that [Uber Eats] is a supplier of a technology service that does not provide [meal] delivery services. (...) [Uber Eats] is not supposed to direct, manage, or have control over you or your performance under this agreement. (...) You retain the sole right to determine when, where, and for how long you will use the Provider App and the Uber services.” (Uber Eats’ terms and conditions, version September 5th, 2016)

HRM practices of online labor platforms for instituting the 'market logic'

The gig workers of Uber Eats and Deliveroo are subject to a range of HRM practices that are used to institute a market logic and imply that gig workers are freelancers who can engage in free, unregulated competition.

Selection

To ensure their online marketplaces are freely accessible to everyone who meets minimal standards set mainly by state laws, Uber Eats and Deliveroo apply a very limited set of selection criteria for allowing access to their platforms. According to the management of both platforms, meal deliverers can join the platform when they (1) are entitled to work in the Netherlands, (2) speak Dutch or English, and (3) are at least 18 years of age. Employees of Uber Eats and Deliveroo (e.g. operation associates) screen potential workers according to these criteria. Prospective meal deliverers go to a platform's office where they have to identify themselves using a valid form of identification. Through this light-touch selection process, the platforms reinforce a market logic where gig workers are more or less free to join (and leave) when they wish.

Job design and autonomy

Gig workers are autonomous in many respects. Deliverers on both platforms have the autonomy to decide when to login to the delivery app and be available to perform work. In addition, meal deliverers are free to decide in which location (i.e. city) they wish to work. They can select the working times and locations which are most lucrative to them in terms of making a profit, which fits the market logic of free and unregulated competition. Gig workers have the autonomy to decline orders that are assigned to them by the dispatching algorithm. Some meal deliverers told us that they use this autonomy in particular circumstances such as when they feel the restaurant and consumer are too remote. This aligns with the market logic, as travelling to a remote restaurant and consumer reduces the profit a gig worker can make as return commutes are not financially compensated.

Uber Eats and Deliveroo grant gig workers the autonomy to enact their job demands/responsibilities as they wish, and to use whatever job resources they prefer. Both platform firms try to avoid giving instructions on 'how' gig workers should perform their job. Meal deliverers receive no instructions from Deliveroo or Uber Eats on which type of transport to use (e.g. bike, scooter, car) or which route to take. The representatives of Deliveroo in effect reinforce the market logic by avoiding

instructions which would imply that they have an employment relationship with their meal deliverers:

“Legally, this is a very grey area because, as a platform, we are not allowed to give instructions to freelancers, because they are independent, so they are allowed to decide for themselves how they interpret the assignments, so we cannot say you should do your job in such a way. So, in terms of instructions, nothing is allowed.”
(Manager Deliveroo)

Online labor platforms’ HRM practices for instituting the ‘corporation logic’

Although the platforms reinforce the market logic as outlined in the previous section, Deliveroo and Uber Eats simultaneously reinforce the corporation logic of growth through control and coordination which are required due to the interdependence of meal deliverers, restaurants, and consumers. Deliveroo and Uber Eats face difficulties to balance supply and demand for labor to avoid dissatisfaction on the side of the meal deliverers (too little demand for their services and thus low incomes) and/or requesters (too little supply of workers causing meal deliveries to be delayed):

“One of the biggest challenges for us is the continuous quest for balance. There are either too many meal deliverers which is bad because then they earn too little, or we receive too many orders which cannot be processed quickly. The balance is never perfect.” (Manager Deliveroo)

Meal deliverers and restaurants are expected to offer high-quality services to attract and retain (new) platform users for growing the market share of the platform (i.e. a legitimate goal under the corporation logic). To realize this, Deliveroo and Uber institute the corporation logic of growth and control/coordination through HRM practices for gig workers as outlined below:

Recruitment and selection

Uber Eats and Deliveroo invest significantly in recruitment. They recruit through Facebook, Google, and Instagram to reach one of their main target populations (i.e. students). They also provide the current workforce with clothing and gear (such as thermal bags for transporting meals) that display their logos in an effort to create brand awareness among potential workers and consumers. Finally, both platforms implement referral schemes offering up to 200 euro per hire.

An online application process is used where workers receive instruction videos, sign a contract, upload a copy of their passport and bank

account, and can order their delivery gear (e.g. a thermal food transportation bag). In line with the corporation logic of control, Uber Eats requires potential meal deliverers to complete a brief test during the selection process. Our ethnographic study revealed that this test could be failed and retaken indefinitely until 75% of the test questions are answered correctly. Rather than *rejecting* potential workers, this ‘test’ is meant to be instructive in nature and should ensure that meal deliverers “understand the app” and “know about the ratings that will be used”. This way of ‘selecting’ reinforces the corporation logic in two ways. First, it ensures workers are ‘trained’ to meet customer needs and second, it ensures a steady and swift supply of workers, which is needed to grow the market share of the platform firm:

“The registration process is done online, and that should be arranged so that if you log in tomorrow, then basically you could work tomorrow.” (Manager Uber Eats)

Training and instructions

Besides some video instructions on safety issues and the working of the delivery app, meal deliverers receive very little training. In comparison, when Deliveroo employed its meal deliverers, it offered training (e.g. on-the-job training for new hires) This was soon abandoned when Deliveroo started working with freelance meal deliverers. Nevertheless, Deliveroo does offer training services consistent with the corporation logic of growth and worker commitment, including workshops on issues which are not directly work-related (such as cooking classes, presentations skills, and bike clinics):

“Most meal deliverers are young and want to develop themselves. We organize workshops on how to set up your own business or improve your presentation skills. Also, we offer bike clinics and cooking classes to create a community.” (Manager Deliveroo)

Workforce management and compensation

To ensure a steady supply of meal deliverers, both platforms implement highly dynamic compensation practices. In line with the corporation logic, compensation rates are fully determined by the platform firm, leaving meal deliverers with no autonomy to compete on the basis of price. In the case of Deliveroo, meal deliverers were paid a set amount per delivery (€5 at the time of writing), while Uber Eats pays a base rate per delivery to which a so-called distance fee is added (€3.70 and €0.80 per kilometer driven respectively). Platforms change their compensation scheme at times when demand outstrips supply (such as during evening

meal times). Deliveroo increases its fee up to €7 per delivery to attract more deliverers and grow the platform. Uber Eats' approach to safeguard supply when demand peaks is to offer so-called 'hourly guarantees' which are "a set level of gross fares" that meal deliverers earn. This is aligned with a corporation logic, resembling an hourly wage that might be offered to employees. To induce longer working hours and thus control gig worker behavior, the platforms offer workers additional incentives (so-called 'Do X, Get Y' bonuses) if they deliver a minimum number of orders:

"We work with a bonus system. For instance, if a worker delivers five orders, they will receive a 10 euro bonus. We prefer this system above increasing the fee per order as we see that meal deliverers log out after 3 or 4 orders, because they feel they have earned enough. By offering a bonus after 10 deliveries are completed, we encourage them to reach these performance levels." (Manager Deliveroo).

Besides balancing demand and supply through varying compensation, Deliveroo also requires its workers to work in agreed blocks (that each last an hour). To avoid an oversupply of workers during off-peak hours, Deliveroo restricts the number of workers who can receive orders through the delivery app. Workers will only receive orders when they sign up for shifts and are free not to sign up for shifts:

"At Deliveroo you book your shifts, you don't have to book any if you can't fit them in. You can even not work for three months and then just come back." (Meal deliverer Deliveroo)

Each Monday at 3 pm, the booking system in the delivery app opens, such that shifts for the coming week can be booked. Depending on a worker's past performance, and as an incentive to those who deliver regularly and achieve high performance scores, some meal deliverers are entitled to sign up earlier for shifts. Deliveroo's need for a reliable supply of workers, especially during peak hours, is evident from the criteria used to define performance: (1) percentage of booked shifts a worker actually attended, (2) percentage of late cancellations (i.e. signing off from a booked shift less than 24 h before the shift starts), and (3) number of high-peak participation shifts performed (i.e. on Friday, Saturday and/or Sunday from 17:00 to 20:00). The shift system therefore aligns with corporation logic by controlling worker performance and access to the platform.

Finally, where demand for meals outstrips the supply of meal deliverers (often in periods of bad weather), representatives of Uber Eats and Deliveroo explained that they may algorithmically restrict the number of restaurants that consumers can choose. In effect, consumers can only

order from nearby restaurants such that meal deliverers' travel times are curtailed and the number of meals they can deliver in increased:

“When very few meal deliverers are available, but many customers are ordering meals, the algorithm restricts the number of restaurants that consumers can choose from. On busy days I only receive orders from consumers who are close to me, while during off-peak periods the area I service is much bigger.” (Restaurant owner)

Performance appraisal

Besides performance criteria related to availability, meal deliverers are also evaluated by consumers and restaurants using an online “Thumbs Up/Down” rating scheme. Dissatisfied consumers and restaurants can indicate what performance dimensions require improvement. Deliveroo and Uber Eats reported to keep track of the rate of orders declined by workers to control restaurants, rather than workers:

“There are no consequences for workers who decline orders. They are free to do as they please. It is our responsibility to ensure they have no good reasons to decline orders. (...) We use data on order acceptance to evaluate how well the process functions. If riders decline orders coming from a certain restaurant, this might be an indication of how the restaurant is performing.” (Manager Deliveroo).

Aligned with the corporation logic, platform firms control the efforts of the restaurants, by allowing meal deliverers and consumers to evaluate meal quality using a “Thumbs Up/Down” rating scheme. Meal deliverers can flag problems related to restaurants which start preparing meals too late or those treating gig workers inappropriately. Consistently poor consumer or gig worker ratings have consequences. Restaurants are put lower down the list presented to consumers in the consumer app (with fewer orders and thus less income as a consequence). Another key performance indicator is the speed at which restaurants accept orders and prepare their meals. Again, aligned with the corporation logic, the listing of restaurants in the consumer app is used to incentivize/sanction restaurants:

“The speed at which restaurants prepare their meals has implications for how high they are placed in the ranking. (...) This is important for restaurants to know: you go down in the ranking if you do not perform well.”(Manager Deliveroo)

“We have to work as fast as possible. You climb in the rating if (...) you accept within 6 seconds. It's all about seconds. It is quite hysterical, because the faster and better you work, the higher you end up in the ranking. (Restaurant owner)

Finally, the restaurant owners shared with us that multi-homing (working with multiple platforms) is discouraged by Deliveroo and Uber Eats through increased commission fees, which reinforces the corporation logic of growth and market protection.

Institutional complexity of HRM for freelancers

Although the HRM activities described early reinforce competing institutional logics for the freelance meal deliverers, the majority of the meal deliverers we interviewed seem to experience little institutional complexity, articulating few tensions between competing institutional logics. Their almost full alignment with the market logic of autonomy may explain this fact. Some meal deliverers switched from the rivalry platform Takeaway.com, that employs its meal deliverers (for reinforcing the corporation logic), to Uber Eats and/or Deliveroo because they align with the market logic:

“With Uber Eats and Deliveroo I can work whenever I want. (...) That option is better for me [than Takeaway] so that I can study and also manage my expenses.”
(Meal deliverer Deliveroo and Uber Eats)

“The major reason for switching from Takeaway to Deliveroo is the flexibility. At Takeaway, I had to work at least two weeks a month. This was not very flexible for me. Also, Takeaway imposed many rules like which clothes I should wear, and I had to ride at least 25 km/hour on average. I like it that Deliveroo does not have these rules.” (Meal deliverer Deliveroo)

At the same time, some meal deliverers criticized the legitimacy of Deliveroo’s business model by referring to the institutional complexity associated with HRM activities for freelancers. Specifically, they felt the control exercised by Deliveroo’s shift system, and the performance criteria used to give priority access to shifts, contradicted the autonomy/flexibility propagated by Deliveroo. As such, the shift system creates tensions between the corporation (i.e. control over working hours by the platform) and market logic (i.e. autonomy of workers to determine working hours themselves):

“There are some snags to working with Deliveroo. They promise you can work whenever you want, because technically speaking, you are a freelancer. However, Deliveroo works with a shift system. I understand why they do this but this restricts the freedom I should have as a freelancer.” (Meal deliverer Deliveroo)

While workers did not really challenge the legitimacy of online labor platforms, others including labor unions, journalists, and politicians do pose questions regarding their legitimacy because of the tensions and institutional complexity associated with the use of HRM practices for freelance gig workers. Specifically, they criticize online platforms for creating false self-employment, for controlling freelancers through compensation rates set by the platform firms (i.e. corporation logic) and for controlling workers in ways that flout the autonomy and flexibility they claim to offer gig workers (i.e. market logic):

“In our view, the meal deliverers of Deliveroo are falsely self-employed. (...) They are freelancers, but they are not free to set their own prices.” (Labor union representative).

During interviews with the managements of Uber Eats and Deliveroo, tensions arising from aligning HRM practices with both market and corporation logics also became evident. Platform firms’ attempts to institute the corporation logic in terms of growing their online marketplace and their market share through training gig workers, appraising their performance, and using dynamic compensation schemes, clash with other HRM activities that align with the market logic, such as worker autonomy to make decisions and engage in free, unregulated competition. Platform firm managers reported an ongoing quest to navigate tensions between HRM activities for managing gig workers in terms of the emphasis on controlling/committing freelancers (i.e. corporation logic) versus offering them autonomy (i.e. market logic):

“The government may fine us for false self-employment of freelancers. That is a shame. We want to offer them freedom and flexibility, but this limits the support and training we can offer to meal deliverers. That is a challenge. (...) It is difficult that we cannot provide the support we would like to offer. (Manager Deliveroo).

“Look, these are freelance meal deliverers. We will not instruct them how to do their work. Back in the days, when we employed the meal deliverers, we did provide them with training and instructions. (...) We would like to do more for them – training and supporting the meal deliverers. We decided not to do this, as this is, legally speaking, very challenging. We want to avoid meal deliverers being reclassified as employees.” (Manager Deliveroo).

The level of institutional complexity at Uber Eats is less than at Deliveroo. One of the reasons for this is that Uber Rides (the associated taxi service) faces significant institutional pressures, and this seems to shelter Uber Eats from institutional complexity-based critiques. For instance, Uber Rides was heavily criticized in the Dutch media for how it treats its taxi drivers and how it failed to take responsibility after several Uber drivers were involved in traffic accidents in which cyclists were killed. Indeed, during the interviews, the labor union representatives repeatedly criticized Uber Rides, while remaining silent on Uber Eats at the expense of Deliveroo:

“It is painful to see how jobs are being replaced by freelance work. Taxi jobs are taken by Uber, meal delivery jobs by Deliveroo.” (Labor union representative)

Politicians, labor unions, and the media more frequently questioned the legitimacy of Deliveroo, because it creates institutional complexity by marrying the corporation and market logics, which is more readily observable because they changed from employing deliverers (corporation

logic) toward working with freelancers (market logic). As noted by a labor union representative, this change was the catalyst for undertaking legal action against Deliveroo:

“Last year we undertook actions against Deliveroo, because Deliveroo indicated it wanted to replace their employees with freelancers. Together with another labor union, we are considering how to make sure these people can be decently employed and have a labor contract.” (Labor union representative)

“We took actions against Deliveroo to ensure that these workers are being employed again. We try the best we can, but cannot go against all platforms. If we want to initiate court cases, we have to initiate multiple cases. You cannot summon Deliveroo and Uber to court at the same time.” (Labor union representative)

The same switch by Deliveroo was reported and criticized in the Dutch media, something which was also felt by the representatives of Deliveroo who equated marrying the market logic with the corporation logic (and the tensions this creates) with walking a tightrope:

“During the crisis period, when we switched from employees to freelancers, both the employees and the media gave us the feeling that suddenly we no longer cared for our meal deliverers. That was not the intention: we want to care for them, but the law does not offer that many opportunities. (...) It is a very fine line.” (Manager Deliveroo)

“I try to support the meal deliverers. This is where public opinion is against us. We are always so negatively received, with people claiming that we try to control meal deliverers as if they are employees. No, we try to support them and offer a good service. Where Deliveroo is concerned, people always assume the worst.” (Manager Deliveroo)

The institutional complexity experienced by Deliveroo was also salient in two court cases taken against Deliveroo. In both cases, the plaintiffs (a meal deliverer formerly employed by Deliveroo and the labor union FNV) drew on the tensions between the corporation and market logics to build a court case that centered on reclassifying freelance gig workers as employees. Here, the saliency of institutional complexity came to the fore, as a key legal condition (under Dutch law) for the presence of an employment relationship is control over workers by a corporation (i.e. corporation logic). The complexity is further evidenced by the fact that one court case led to the conclusion that meal deliverers are indeed freelancers while, in the other case, meal deliverers were seen as having an employment relationship with Deliveroo. In the latter court case, the judge ruled that Deliveroo controls its meal deliverers and, therefore, they ought to have an employment relationship with Deliveroo. According to the judge, the organizational control over the freelancers is evidenced by Deliveroo’s use of HRM activities, highlighting the institutional complexity associated with HRM for freelancers:

“[The use of the roster system by Deliveroo] offers Deliveroo the ability to adjust the availability of deliverers in the direction desired by Deliveroo. (...) Deliverers who perform well according to the Deliveroo standards are given “priority access” to reserve a time slot and are therefore more likely to be offered orders at desired times. [This] justifies the conclusion that (...) there is no complete freedom for a deliverer who wishes to generate a (sufficient) income. (...) In combination with the bonus system, a deliverer is therefore encouraged to work as much as possible and perform well (...) and this significantly limits the freedom to reject orders. (...) When working, there is undoubtedly a relationship of authority and control. (...). As a result of technological possibilities, there is a great deal of freedom when it comes to availability for work, but this still fits within the nature of the employment contract, even if work is done at times to be chosen by the employee. (...) The judges consider the dependence [of workers] on Deliveroo to be more weighty than the independence of the deliverers. (Court ruling)

Response strategies to the institutional complexity of HRM for freelancers

Uber Eats and Deliveroo implement a range of response strategies to address the institutional complexity associated with HRM for freelancers. Both implemented defiance and avoidance strategies by rejecting the corporation logic in favor of the market logic. These response strategies could be best described as ‘steering the discourse’ where meal deliverers are portrayed as consumers, riders, or hobbyists that seek maximum flexibility and autonomy (i.e. market logic), while rejecting the argument that they wish to be full-time employees or workers (i.e. corporation logic), and ‘framing’ the platform as a neutral intermediary (rather than as an employer). In propagating the market logic over the corporation logic, Deliveroo holds that meal deliverers value the freedom and flexibility associated with the freelance status:

“Riders work less than 10 hours a week, making this type of work a hobby-like activity. The majority of the deliverers do this as a side job. Riders will leave the platform if they are not granted maximum flexibility. Moreover, if there are too few riders, Deliveroo will offer higher compensation. These are mere market forces/dynamics. The plaintiff (i.e. the freelance meal deliverer in the court case) does not represent the large number of riders that value the flexibility offered by Deliveroo. At the same time, the plaintiff makes maximum use of the flexibility possibilities: he reserved 403 sessions and cancelled 259 of them, of which 201 at the very last moment. Freelancers are allowed to do this. Under an employment contract, the plaintiff would have received two warnings and been fired.” (Deliveroo’s lawyer, summarized in notes taken during court hearing)

During one of the court hearings, Deliveroo framed itself as an “optimizer of supply and demand in the food delivery market”. Similarly, Uber Eats’ representatives framed the organization as an intermediary that takes care of transferring payments from the restaurants to flexible,

autonomous freelancers. Accordingly, meal deliverers are referred to as ‘delivery partners’ (or ‘riders’ in the case of Deliveroo) that work ‘with’ Uber Eats and ‘for’ the restaurants:

“The delivery partners are paid by the restaurant. On behalf of the restaurant, Uber Eats collects from the consumer the payment for the meal and its delivery. Uber then transfers this to the restaurant partner after deducting a marketplace fee that Uber Eats charges. Delivery partners receive the turnover they make minus a 10% marketplace fee.” (Manager Uber Eats)

Besides response strategies related to framing and discourse, platform firms also implement response strategies to institutional complexity associated with specific HRM activities.

Recruitment

The use of Uber Eats’ and Deliveroo’s gear (i.e. thermal bag and coat with the platform firms’ logo) by meal deliverers is an important recruitment method for the platform firms to recruit new deliverers for reinforcing the corporation logic of growth. In line with the market logic, the freelance deliverers are free to decide not to use this gear:

“Since Deliveroo started working with freelancers, it was clearly communicated that deliverers do not have to use the thermal bag offered by Deliveroo. When I was employed by Deliveroo, they really made an issue out of the bag and coat: I was obliged to put on the Deliveroo coat, because – as I was told – consumers and potential workers should see you work for Deliveroo.” (Meal deliverer Deliveroo)

While Uber Eats and Deliveroo would like those delivering on their behalf to wear branded gear, they cannot force freelance meal deliverers to do so. This incompatibility of the corporation logic (i.e. growth through recruitment by means of branded gear) and market logic (i.e. autonomy of freelancers not to use branded gear) is remedied by each platform in a different way.

Deliveroo shadows its alignment with the corporation logic, and instead motivates meal deliverers to utilize its gear, by “selling” the gear at a 100% discount through a third party vendor:

Interviewee: “Deliverers are expected to buy the gear in an online web shop.”

Interviewer: “How much does the gear cost?” Interviewee: “Nothing, the bag and coat are for free.” (Meal deliverer Deliveroo)

“The gear is not offered for free but sold at a 100% discount. The gear and discount is not offered through our website, but sold via Shopify, which is an external web shop. For us, this is a workaround, because directly selling gear to our riders is not possible.” (Manager Deliveroo)

Uber Eats resolves the tension by renting out its gear to meal deliverers. Although they do not charge a fee to deliverers, they do ask for a

€50 deposit. Meal deliverers are expected to compensate for the ‘free’ gear by offering a marketing service to Uber Eats. This marketing service is formalized in a contract that helps the Uber Eats’ platform grow as a result of delivery workers promoting their business by using branded gear (i.e. corporation logic) while the renting scheme means gig workers are not forced to buy gear and are nominally allowed to maintain their independence and autonomy (i.e. market logic):

“You agree to render advertising services for Uber by using these Devices [i.e. insulated delivery bag and/or clothing and wearing gear such as a rain jacket and other accessories] while providing on-demand food delivery services to end consumers via the UberEATS platform (the ‘Advertising Services’). You hereby confirm and agree that use of the Devices is not intended to create any employer-employee relationship with Uber. (...) Uber hereby grants you a limited, non-exclusive and non-transferable license during the Term to use and publicly display the Uber Marks on Devices provided by Uber on a royalty-free basis” (Terms and Conditions of Advertising Services of Uber Eats, accessed on December 6th, 2019)

Training

We came across four response strategies to institutional complexity associated with training and instructing freelance deliverers. First, both platforms ‘steer the discourse’ to avoid implying a corporation logic of control. On this point, platform representatives note that offering training and instructions is complicated due to the self-employed status of meal deliverers. Instead, they eschew the language of training and instead ‘share’ what they call ‘best practices’, ‘tips-and-tricks’, or ‘information’ on how to satisfy restaurant and consumer needs:

“We provide meal deliverers with tips-and-tricks on what restaurants value. We have to be cautious however not to offer instructions and use imperative language. That is not allowed, because we work with freelancers who are free to decide how they want to execute their work.” (Manager Deliveroo)

Second, Uber Eats and Deliveroo devolve the instruction of workers to the restaurants through a feature in the restaurant and delivery app. This reinforces the corporation logic of control without the platform firm having to dismiss the market logic (i.e. working with independent freelancers who cannot be instructed). For instance, while collecting ethnographic accounts as a meal deliverer, instructions were received through the delivery app from the restaurant to wait outside the restaurant and to pack the meal in a specified manner. Meal deliverers experienced the same:

*Interviewer: “Does anyone instruct you on how to do your work? If yes, who?”
Interviewee: “Yes, this is clearly explained in the app. You receive an instruction coming from the restaurant or consumer on what you have to do, where to wait, how to transport the food, whether you should ring the bell or not, etc. Both the*

restaurants and the consumers communicate a lot of demands via the app.” (Meal deliverer Deliveroo)

Third, Deliveroo and Uber Eats train and give instructions during the on-boarding process of new meal deliverers, but crucially *before* entering into a contract with them. In this way, platform firms can instruct gig workers and thus control their behavior (i.e. adopt the corporation logic) before the platform is compelled to align with the market logic:

“The only possible way [for Deliveroo to instruct meal deliverers] is during the registration process, when we show safety and instruction videos. That is still allowed. But after that, we really cannot give instructions anymore” (Manager Deliveroo)

Finally, in line with the corporation logic of growth, Deliveroo organizes personal development workshops to commit meal deliverers to its platform. However, to uphold the independence and freelance status of these gig workers (i.e. market logic), these training workshops are outsourced to third parties:

“All activities related to learning and development are taken care of by an external party. We cannot organize these training activities ourselves.” (Manager Deliveroo)

Compensation

Compensating gig workers is also associated with institutional complexity. While freelancers should be able to set their own pay rates, and ideally compete on the basis of these pay rates (i.e. market logic), the level of compensation offered is fully determined and controlled by Uber Eats and Deliveroo (i.e. corporation logic). To address this situation, Uber Eats institutes an escrow payment service where, officially, the restaurant is paying for the service provided by a meal deliverer, with Uber Eats being responsible for transferring the money from the restaurant to the meal deliverer. In this way, the pay rate for gig workers is controlled and determined by the platform firm (corporation logic), but the actual payment comes from the restaurants (market logic):

Interviewer: “What type of compensation and rewards does Uber Eats offer to meal deliverers?” Interviewee: “Just to be clear, the deliverer is paid by the restaurant. Our partners [i.e. meal deliverers] receive their revenue – after a deduction of the 25% service fee that Uber charges them for making use of our platform – through our app.” (Manager Uber Eats)

Performance appraisal

In line with the corporation logic of growth, it is important that meal deliverers meet the expectations and needs of platform consumers and

restaurants. Rather than controlling meal deliverers directly themselves, which would go against the market logic of free and unregulated competition, Uber Eats and Deliveroo devolve responsibility for performance appraisal to restaurants and consumers by means of rating schemes in the online app.

Discussion

In this paper, we draw on institutional theory (Greenwood et al., 2011; Lewis et al., 2019) to argue that HRM for freelancers inherently involves institutional complexity and explore the response strategies adopted by online labor platforms to address this complexity. By drawing on empirical evidence from two food-delivery platforms in the Netherlands, we show that gig workers are subjected to HRM practices, and that this creates tensions between the competing ‘corporation’ and ‘market’ logics. Moreover, we show that labor platforms rely on a range of response strategies to overcome the institutional complexity represented by these competing logics. Our results have important implications for both institutional theory and research on HRM in the gig economy as discussed below.

Implications for theory and practice

Our results on competing institutional logics in the context of online labor platforms build on previous knowledge of institutional complexity and provide new theoretical insights. First, while existing studies have shown that institutional logics impact on the use of HRM activities (Lewis et al., 2019), our study shows that the adoption of HRM activities also creates tensions between institutional logics. While HRM activities such as offering autonomy and selection reinforce a market logic, HRM activities such as recruitment, training, workforce management, compensation, and appraisal align with the opposing corporation logic. Our results support the assertion by Lewis et al. (2019) that institutional logics and HRM activities are reciprocally interrelated (see [Figure 1](#) that summarizes our empirical results). While one institutional logic (e.g. corporation logic) motivates organizational decision-makers to adopt certain HRM activities, another and competing logic (the market logic) may delegitimize the use of these HRM activities, motivating organizational decision-makers to adopt HRM activities that create an alternative institutional logic. This has implications for our understanding of the HRM activities used by online labor platforms which traditionally are not viewed as having HRM responsibilities (Kuhn &

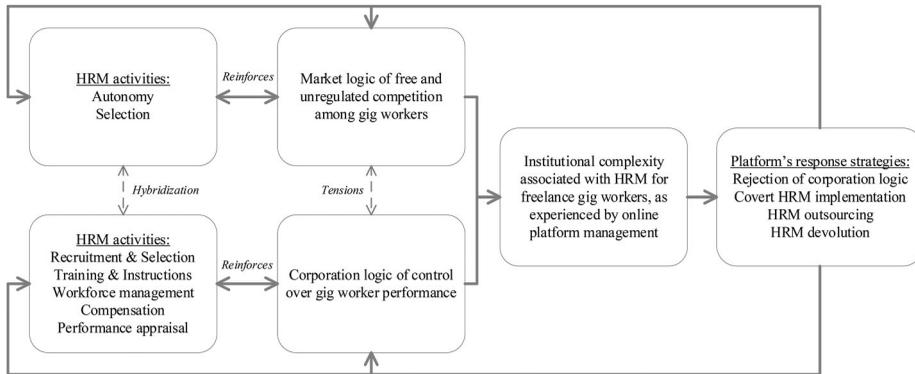


Figure 1. Interrelations among HRM activities for freelancers, competing logics, and response strategies to institutional complexity.

Maleki, 2017; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Given that the majority of online labor platforms deny an employment relationship, one may argue that HRM activities are absent, and therefore HR theory irrelevant, in a gig context. Our results challenge this viewpoint. While some HRM activities used by platforms imply the existence of an employment relationship (i.e. those that reinforce the corporation logic), others do not (i.e. those that reinforce the market logic). These findings do not align well with well-established HR concepts such as internal alignment, strategic fit, and HRM system strength, all of which stress that the success of HRM activities depends on how well they converge towards realizing and signaling one consistent goal (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). On the contrary, our results imply that the success of HRM activities used by online labor platforms depends on what we call the 'hybridity' of HRM, i.e. how well HRM activities strike a balance between competing institutional logics. Striking this balance requires ongoing experimentation and multiple iterations, which may explain why HRM activities for freelancers frequently change depending on the institutional logic currently favored by an online labor platform (e.g. Deliveroo's changing approach to training practices before and after shifting to a freelance model). Our findings suggest that HRM activities used by online labor platforms are simultaneously the source of and (through the adoption of response strategies and alterations of HRM processes) solution to the institutional complexity associated with HRM for freelancers (see Figure 1). Our results suggest and hopefully motivate future research to adopt a longitudinal perspective for further exploring the dynamism (Van Mierlo et al., 2018) and recursive interrelations among HRM activities, competing institutional logics, and response strategies to institutional complexity in the gig economy (Lewis et al., 2019).

Second, although previous studies have conceptually explored the institutional complexity created by online labor platforms (Frenken et al., 2018), we empirically show which gig economy actors experience tensions between the market and corporation logics. Notwithstanding some exceptions, gig workers in our study appear to experience little institutional complexity and to favor the market logic. It is plausible that workers who favor the corporation logic view online labor platforms as illegitimate and do not to join them. In comparison, the management of online labor platforms experience institutional complexity associated with HRM for freelancers. This occurs because the platform's business model requires them to simultaneously institute the corporation logic (e.g. working with freelancers to cut labor costs) and corporation logic (e.g. controlling freelancers to ensure platform growth) (Aloisi, 2016; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Wood et al., 2019) even though these are in tension. While institutional HRM researchers have shown that the management of workers involves institutional complexity (Lewis et al., 2019), our results show that the management of requesters is equally associated with institutional complexity. In line with the market logic, independent businesses such as restaurants ought to have the autonomy to compete on the basis of service offerings. This is contradicted by HRM practices such as appraisal (e.g. sanctions by the platform for restaurants that perform poorly) and workforce management (e.g. algorithmic restriction of the number of consumers that restaurants can serve) that align with the corporation logic of control. These results not only imply that future research needs to differentiate between the use of HRM for gig workers and for requesters (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019), but also specify whether they study institutional complexity related to the management of gig workers or of requesters.

Third, building on existing research, we have shown how Deliveroo and Uber Eats seek to resolve institutional complexity through response strategies that others (D'Aunno et al., 1991; Greve & Man Zhang, 2017; Raaijmakers et al., 2015) have previously described, such as ignoring an institutional logic (e.g. not providing training and instructions to gig workers), adhering to the logic that achieves the greatest reward (e.g. framing gig workers as freelancers, or delegitimizing a competing logic (e.g. "meal deliverers value their freedom as a freelancer which could not be offered if hiring them as employees"). While existing studies "assume or imply that organizations enact single (...) responses" to institutional complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011: 351), our results show that online labor platforms implement these strategies in tandem. Online labor platforms implement a variety of HRM activities that each add to institutional complexity due to the incompatibilities between the market and

corporation logics, and which require a portfolio of response strategies. This suggests that the number of strategies required may be linked to the number of incompatible institutional logics present as well as the degree to which they contradict each other. This is evidenced by our results showing that Deliveroo experienced greater levels of institutional complexity than Uber Eats, resulting in the adoption of a variety of response strategies by Deliveroo (see [Table 2](#)).

Fourth, our results show that the gig economy context requires new response strategies to address the institutional complexity resulting from online labor platforms being compelled to balance competing logics in order to control freelance gig workers (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Wood et al., 2019). To achieve this, they implement novel HRM activities that are enabled by the technologies and online marketplaces they establish. These novel practices include the devolution of HRM activities to requesters (e.g. consumers engaging in performance appraisal and restaurants giving instructions *via* the app) and outsourcing of HRM to third parties (e.g. providers of e-learning modules). This is striking as previous research has shown that HRM activities are primarily outsourced or devolved to reduce costs and/or improve HRM service quality (Lepak et al., 2005; Maatman & Meijerink, 2017), and also that such services usually command financial recompense for those to whom such tasks are outsourced. Although such findings may also hold for online labor platforms, our results imply that, in the gig economy, HRM outsourcing also serves as a response strategy to address institutional complexity. Alongside outsourcing HRM, online platforms engage in another novel strategy to address institutional complexity. We call this strategy ‘covert HRM activity implementation’, that is, work practices which control freelancers but do not imply or create an employment relationship. These include offering tips-and-tricks for ‘training purposes’ or ‘selling’ gear at a 100% discount to simultaneously implement the market and corporation logics. Others have shown that institutional complexity is not necessarily undesirable as competing logics provide leeway for organizations to choose a desired logic (Lewis et al., 2019). Their business model makes it challenging for online labor platforms to adopt such ‘either/or’ response strategies to institutional complexity. This does not imply however, that institutional complexity is always undesirable and needs to be eliminated. Instead, our result suggest that tensions between competing logics also motivate the use of novel business practices that blended and balance competing logics, favoring one logic over others, such that institutional complexity can be a driver of and opportunity for organizational change and innovation.

Finally, online labor platforms may divert public attention away from one platform to another to shape its structural position in an institutional field (Greenwood et al., 2011). This occurs with Uber, where Uber Eats' operations are camouflaged by Uber Rides, which has gained significant attention from institutional players in the Netherlands. Deliveroo cannot adopt such a 'distraction' strategy as it operates a single platform, yet was in a 'central' field position as it gained attention as a consequence of switching from hiring employees (corporation logic) to freelancers (market/professional logic). This implies that a platform's field position not only shapes its strategic responses as found in previous studies (Greenwood et al., 2011; Pache & Santos, 2010), but also that strategic responses shape the manifestation of institutional complexity through shaping a platform's field position.

Limitations and directions for future research

As with any study, this one has its limitations. First, we examined a three-sided platform (consisting of gig workers, restaurants, and consumers). This inherently makes the coordination of these actors challenging, which increases the need for HRM activities that lead to additional institutional complexity. In other situations, where only gig workers and consumers interact (e.g. Uber Rides), there may well be less need for coordination, meaning that fewer or other HRM activities may be adopted. Future research on this issue is recommended to determine whether our results are generalizable to two-sided platforms.

Second, the results of this study may not be generalizable to other types of gig work. For instance, gig work can also take place virtually (e.g. Amazon Mechanical Turk), can be more creative/less structured (e.g. idea generation platforms), or require gig workers to collaborate (Duggan et al., 2020; Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Each of these types of gig work present different coordination challenges that need to be addressed with HRM activities and differ in terms of the core and extra role behaviors required for platforms to succeed and provide competitive differentiation. As such, we strongly encourage future studies to explore the role of HRM in online labor platforms that source other types of gig work than that studied here.

Third, the institutional lens adopted in this study may not help to explain all of the tensions that online labor platforms create. For example, researchers have argued that platform use of algorithms for HR purposes may restrain as well as improve workers' autonomy (Veen et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019). Although anticipating the link between autonomy and the market logic, institutional theory says little about how

so-called algorithmic management enables or limits gig worker's autonomy. Moreover, different legal jurisdictions may place more or less emphasis on autonomy as a legal condition for determining the existence of an employment relationships (i.e. corporation logic). Given differences in how (competing) institutional logics may be 'formalized' in (labor) laws, online labor platforms' experiences of tensions between institutional logics are likely to differ across countries. Therefore, to more fully understand the complexity associated with the use of HRM practices for freelance gig workers by online labor platforms, interdisciplinary research is needed that combines insights from e.g. institutional theory, HRM, labor law and information systems research.

Finally, it is quite possible that we did not obtain full details of the utilized HRM activities. For instance, competitive pressures meant that Deliveroo and Uber Eats withheld some information on the precise functioning of their algorithms and mobile applications. As a result, we were unable to uncover all details with regard to HRM activities such as workforce management and compensation. Future research on the details of algorithmic HR management for freelance gig workers is likely to be of immense practical and theoretical value in better understanding this nascent phenomenon.

Conclusions

Notwithstanding its limitations, we believe that our study has provided important insights into the use of HRM for freelancers in the gig economy and how online labor platforms address the institutional complexity that this creates through novel responses strategies. We showed that gig workers are subject to HRM activities that are needed to control their actions, which is seen as necessary to grow the platform. This aligns with the corporation logic that online platforms institute, but contradicts the market logic that online labor platforms simultaneously propagate through their reliance on freelancers that ought to be autonomous in their work and free to join (and leave) online market places that online labor platforms create. The institutional complexity that this creates can to an extent be alleviated by means of technology and the marketplaces that online labor platforms establish, and by having HRM practices implemented through third parties, including their own clients, and through covert HRM activities.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Prof Anthony McDonnell, Prof John Burgess, Dr Ronan Carbery, Dr Ultan Sherman and the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback.

Furthermore, the authors acknowledge with gratitude the help of Alina Gervald, Irene Hagens, Stefan Becking, Kimberley Morris, Vincent Schapers, and all of the people that took part in this study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Jeroen Meijerink  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0210-073X>

Tanya Bondarouk  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8455-1859>

References

- Aloisi, A. (2016). Commoditized workers: Case study research on labor law issues arising from a set of on-demand/gig economy platforms. *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal*, 37(3), 653–690.
- Battilana, J., & Dorado, S. (2010). Building sustainable hybrid organizations: The case of commercial microfinance organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(6), 1419–1440. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.57318391>
- Bos-Nehles, A. C., & Meijerink, J. G. (2018). HRM implementation by multiple HRM actors: A social exchange perspective. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22, 3068–3092.
- Bowen, D. E., & Ostroff, C. (2004). Understanding HRM–firm performance linkages: The role of the “strength” of the HRM system. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(2), 203–221.
- Chen, L., Mislove, A., & Wilson, C. (2015). Peeking beneath the hood of uber. *Paper Presented at the Proceedings of the 2015 Internet Measurement Conference*.
- Daskalova, V. (2018). Regulating the new self-employed in the uber economy: What role for EU competition law. *German Law Journal*, 19(3), 461–508. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S207183220002277X>
- D’Aunno, T., Sutton, R. I., & Price, R. H. (1991). Isomorphism and external support in conflicting institutional environments: A study of drug abuse treatment units. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34(3), 636–661.
- Denzin, N. K. (1987). *Sociological methods: A source book*. Routledge.
- Duggan, J., Sherman, U., Carbery, R., & McDonnell, A. (2020). Algorithmic management & app-work in the gig economy: A research agenda for employment relations & HRM. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 30(1), 114–132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12258>
- Frenken, K., Vaskelainen, T., Fünfschilling, L., & Piscicelli, L. (2018). An institutional logics perspective on the gig economy.
- Goodrick, E., & Reay, T. (2011). Constellations of institutional logics: Changes in the professional work of pharmacists. *Work and Occupations*, 38(3), 372–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888411406824>

- Greenwood, R., Raynard, M., Kodeih, F., Micelotta, E. R., & Lounsbury, M. (2011). Institutional complexity and organizational responses. *Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 317–371. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2011.590299>
- Greve, H. R., & Man Zhang, C. (2017). Institutional logics and power sources: Merger and acquisition decisions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(2), 671–694. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0698>
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Kässi, O., & Lehdonvirta, V. (2018). Online labour index: Measuring the online gig economy for policy and research. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 137, 241–248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2018.07.056>
- Katz, L. F., & Krueger, A. B. (2019). The rise and nature of alternative work arrangements in the United States, 1995–2015. *ILR Review*, 72(2), 382–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793918820008>
- Kessler, S. (2015). The gig economy won't last because it's being sued to death. *Fast Company*, 17, 2015.
- Kuhn, K. M., & Maleki, A. (2017). Micro-entrepreneurs, dependent contractors, and instasferfs: Understanding online labor platform workforces. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 31(3), 183–200. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2015.0111>
- Lee, M. K., Kusbit, D., Metsky, E., & Dabbish, L. (2015). *Working with machines: The impact of algorithmic and data-driven management on human workers* [Paper presentation]. Paper Presented at the Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, New York.
- Lepak, D. P., Bartol, K. M., & Erhardt, N. L. (2005). A contingency framework for the delivery of HR practices. *Human Resource Management Review*, 15(2), 139–159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2005.06.001>
- Lewis, A. C., Cardy, R. L., & Huang, L. S. (2019). Institutional theory and HRM: A new look. *Human Resource Management Review*, 29(3), 316–335. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2018.07.006>
- Liemann, R. (2018). *Uber Voor Alles*. Business Contact.
- Lin, K.-Y., & Lu, H.-P. (2011). Why people use social networking sites: An empirical study integrating network externalities and motivation theory. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(3), 1152–1161. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.12.009>
- Maatman, M., & Meijerink, J. (2017). Why sharing is synergy: The role of decentralized control mechanisms and centralized HR capabilities in creating HR shared service value. *Personnel Review*, 46(7), 1297–1317. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-09-2016-0245>
- Meijerink, J. G., & Keegan, A. (2019). Conceptualizing human resource management in the gig economy: Toward a platform ecosystem perspective. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 34(4), 214–232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-07-2018-0277>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebooks*. SAGE Publications.
- Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 13–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100202>
- Nishii, L. H., & Wright, P. M. (2008). Variability within organizations: Implications for strategic human resource management. In D. B. Smith (Ed.), *The people make the place: Dynamic linkages between individuals and organizations* (pp. 225–248). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Pache, A.-C., & Santos, F. (2010). When worlds collide: The internal dynamics of organizational responses to conflicting institutional demands. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(3), 455–476.
- Raaijmakers, A. G., Vermeulen, P. A., Meeus, M. T., & Zietsma, C. (2015). I need time! Exploring pathways to compliance under institutional complexity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(1), 85–110. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0276>
- Rosenblat, A., Levy, K. E., Barocas, S., & Hwang, T. (2017). Discriminating tastes: Uber’s customer ratings as vehicles for workplace discrimination. *Policy & Internet*, 9(3), 256–279. <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.153>
- Rosenblat, A., & Stark, L. (2016). Algorithmic labor and information asymmetries: A case study of Uber’s drivers. *International Journal of Communication*, 10(27), 3758–3784.
- Sandberg, J. (2005). How do we justify knowledge produced within interpretive approaches? *Organizational Research Methods*, 8(1), 41–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428104272000>
- Shapiro, A. (2018). Between autonomy and control: Strategies of arbitrage in the “on-demand” economy. *New Media & Society*, 20(8), 2954–2971. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817738236>
- Smets, M., Jarzabkowski, P., Burke, G. T., & Spee, P. (2015). Reinsurance trading in Lloyd’s of London: Balancing conflicting-yet-complementary logics in practice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(3), 932–970. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2012.0638>
- Stanford, J. (2017). The resurgence of gig work: Historical and theoretical perspectives. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 28(3), 382–401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304617724303>
- Tanriverdi, H., & Lee, C.-H. (2008). Within-industry diversification and firm performance in the presence of network externalities: Evidence from the software industry. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51(2), 381–397. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2008.31767300>
- Thornton, P. H. (2004). *Markets from culture: Institutional logics and organizational decisions in higher education publishing*. Stanford University Press.
- Thornton, P. H., & Ocasio, W. (1999). Institutional logics and the historical contingency of power in organizations: Executive succession in the higher education publishing industry, 1958–1990. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(3), 801–843. <https://doi.org/10.1086/210361>
- Van Mierlo, J., Bondarouk, T., & Sanders, K. (2018). The dynamic nature of HRM implementation: A structuration perspective. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29(22), 3026–3045. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1443957>
- Veen, A., Barratt, T., & Goods, C. (2020). Platform-capital’s ‘app-etite’ for control: A labour process analysis of food-delivery work in Australia. *Work, Employment and Society*, 134(3), 388–406.
- Wood, A. J., Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., & Hjorth, I. (2019). Good gig, bad gig: Autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy. *Work, Employment & Society: A Journal of the British Sociological Association*, 33(1), 56–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017018785616>