

Gig Watch

STUDIECIRKEL

Introduktion till gigeconomien

26 augusti 2019

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THE WORLDWIDE UBER STRIKE IS A KEY TEST FOR THE GIG ECONOMY

Uber drivers can't unionize. They're striking Wednesday anyway.

By [Alexia Fernández Campbell](#) May 8, 2019, 8:40am EDT



Driver and organizer Nicole Moore speaks during a one-day strike against Uber and Lyft in front of an Uber office near Los Angeles on Monday, March 25, 2019.

Scott Varley/MediaNews Group/Torrance Daily Breeze via Getty Images

Uber and Lyft drivers have been fighting for years for the right to unionize and negotiate better pay. So far, they've failed — but they've found another way to flex their power.

A loose network of ride-share drivers are on strike today, from San Diego all the way to São Paulo and Sydney. They've urged drivers to boycott ride-sharing applications for 24 hours Wednesday and to instead spend the day picketing to demand more money. They also want cities to regulate ride-hailing platforms the way New York City does.

The work stoppage comes two days before Uber's long-awaited public debut Friday on the stock market, and that's no coincidence. Drivers want company executives to know they are really, really unhappy.

Uber has been cutting driver pay rates in major cities to boost its bottom line as it prepares for its initial public offerings (IPO). That has infuriated drivers, who say they were already struggling to make ends meet. They are particularly incensed by the fact that Uber investors are expected to reap millions (even billions) of dollars from the IPO because of their labor.

“This is not fair; something has to change,” Karim Bayumi, a Los Angeles Uber driver, said in a video posted on Twitter. “What’s the point of flexibility if you have to work so much more, without getting paid more or overtime?”

Bayumi, who drives full time to support a family of three, is one of the drivers organizing the strike in LA with Rideshare Drivers United, an unofficial group of Uber and Lyft drivers advocating for policy changes. Other groups, like the Boston Independent Drivers Guild and Chicago Rideshare Advocates, are coordinating similar strikes.

What started with a call on social media has since spread to about a dozen US cities, including Atlanta, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Washington, DC, and Dayton, Ohio. News of the strike has even inspired Uber drivers across the world. Groups of drivers in Kenya, Nigeria, Chile, Costa Rica, and the United Kingdom are striking too.

Each group has its own set of demands, but most want a firm cap on Uber’s commission from each ride, which varies widely but averages about 33 percent. Drivers in the US also want the company to reverse recent pay cuts, and to guarantee drivers \$15 to \$20 an hour in take-home pay. Right now, they earn an average of \$10 to \$12 an hour in the US, after expenses, according to several researchers.

An Uber spokesperson didn’t comment on the strike but pointed out to Vox that the company is giving drivers bonuses ahead of the IPO.

“Drivers are at the heart of our service — we can’t succeed without them — and thousands of people come into work at Uber every day focused on how to make their experience better, on and off the road,” he wrote in a statement to Vox. “Whether it’s more consistent earnings, stronger insurance protections or fully funded four-year degrees for drivers or their families, we’ll continue working to improve the experience for and with drivers.”

It’s unclear how many drivers plan to take part in Wednesday’s stoppage, and whether they will change anything. Yet the event’s swift spread to major cities across the world marks a pivotal moment for the so-called gig economy, which relies heavily on workers with no labor protections or collective bargaining rights. Gig economy workers are starting to recognize they can organize and exert pressure even without a formal labor union.

The strikes challenge Uber's business model

Uber's profit model, like all others in the gig economy, involves much more than providing a popular service to customers. It depends on all the money saved from skirting US labor laws.

By classifying drivers as independent contractors instead of employees, Uber doesn't need to pay certain taxes, benefits, overtime, or minimum wages to tens of thousands of drivers. As self-employed contractors, drivers don't have a legal right to form labor unions and negotiate contracts either.

Uber drivers have spent more than six years fighting the company in court, saying they've been intentionally misclassified. They argue that drivers should be considered employees because the company has so much control over their workday, including strict rules on their vehicle conditions, what rides they can take, and which routes to take.

Uber **has fought back**, maintaining that drivers are not employees because they set their own schedules and provide their own cars.

So far, the issue has not been resolved.

Last month, Uber settled the main court case with 13,600 Uber drivers, agreeing to pay them \$20 million, but without changing their status as independent contractors. The other 350,000 drivers who were part of the initial class-action lawsuit had signed mandatory arbitration agreements, so a federal judge is requiring them to pursue their cases in a private forum, where they are less likely to win their case.

Any challenge to the drivers' status as contractors threatens Uber's bottom line, which is another reason the strikes are so significant.

Uber has been upfront with investors about the risk of a labor revolt. In a new Securities and Exchange Commission filing, Uber acknowledges that giving drivers the same legal rights as employees would "fundamentally change" the company's financial model:

If, as a result of legislation or judicial decisions, we are required to classify Drivers as employees ... we would incur significant additional expenses for compensating Drivers, potentially including expenses associated with the application of wage and hour laws (including minimum wage, overtime, and meal and rest period requirements), employee benefits, social security contributions, taxes, and penalties.

It's worth reemphasizing this: Uber doesn't want to pay drivers to take 15-minute rest breaks every few hours because it would cost too much, even though all US employers are required to give hourly workers paid breaks under federal law.

In the filing, the company says that dissatisfied drivers could become a business liability, as recent protests in India, the United Kingdom, and the United States have interrupted business on the platform. Instead of outlining ways to make drivers happy, Uber suggests it will just get worse.

“As we aim to reduce driver incentives to improve our financial performance, we expect Driver dissatisfaction will generally increase,” the company stated.

That dissatisfaction is leading Uber and Lyft drivers to organize.

Los Angeles drivers launched the first major US strike

In March, hundreds of Uber and Lyft drivers refused to pick up customers for an entire day — part of a one-day strike to protest the company’s recent decision to slash pay rates for drivers in the area.

Uber had cut its per-mile pay by 25 percent in Los Angeles County and parts of Orange County. That means drivers are now earning 60 cents per mile instead of 80 cents. That decision pushed drivers, who were already scraping by, over the edge.

Hundreds of them swarmed the streets, chanting and picketing outside Uber’s office in suburban LA. They asked customers to use public transportation instead of using the apps.

“Help us end this neo-indentured servitude,” Sinakhone Keodara, one of the drivers organizing the strike, tweeted that day.

A spokesperson for Uber told me at the time that the company had revamped its pay formula so that drivers will earn about the same amount that they did before Uber last increased pay rates in September.

The latest strike comes at a key moment for the ride-hailing industry. Lyft recently launched its IPO, which converted the platform into a publicly traded company. Uber is next, and its initial public offering is expected to create a financial windfall for dozens of early investors who will turn into overnight millionaires. Meanwhile, drivers say they can barely make ends meet on poverty wages.

Bayumi and other drivers helped organize Wednesday’s strike with Rideshare Drivers United. The group has been active in Los Angeles for a few years and has organized strikes before, but their impact was limited by the small group of members. That has changed recently.

Within the past two years, the group has gone from 300 drivers to about 3,000. As part of their strike, drivers demanded that Uber reverse the 25 percent rate cut and guarantee drivers a \$28-per-hour minimum rate.

That didn't happen, but that doesn't mean the pressure is dying down. Drivers in New York City have proven that forming labor unions isn't the only way for workers to secure better pay.

New York City drivers forced Uber and Lyft to pay them a living wage

The explosion of ride-hailing apps has been great for the startups' investors — but not so great for actual drivers. Researchers say drivers in the US earn about \$12 an hour, after deducting car expenses and gasoline.

In New York City, the unrestricted growth of these companies put serious financial strain on the city's taxi drivers and has made it hard for alldrivers to compete and earn a decent living.

Economists at the New School and the University of California Berkeley published a report in July with some limited pay data, and discovered something alarming: Driving for ride-hailing apps in New York City is not really a part-time gig for people who want to earn extra cash.

More than half of their drivers are ferrying around passengers on a full-time basis, and about half of all drivers are supporting families with children on that income. But their earnings are so low that 40 percent of drivers qualified for Medicaid, and about 18 percent qualified for food stamps.

The New School report showed that the average hourly wage for app-based drivers in New York was about \$12. "The app companies could easily absorb an increase in driver pay with a minimal fare adjustment and little inconvenience to passengers," they wrote.

The report helped drivers persuade city officials in December to pass the nation's first minimum pay rate for drivers working with the four largest app-based firms: Uber, Lyft, Juno, and Via.

Starting in January, ride-hailing companies were required to start paying drivers around \$17.22 per hour (after expenses) — about \$5 more per hour than the previous average of \$11.90 per hour, according to the Independent Drivers Guild, which represents about 70,000 Uber, Lyft, Juno, and Via drivers in the city. The new pay rate is calculated per ride, but the guild expects it to give full-time drivers an extra \$9,600 a year. (Lyft and Juno are now suing the city, arguing that the calculated rate favors Uber, but said they are using a different formula to meet the minimum hourly pay rate.)

Because Uber and Lyft drivers are considered independent contractors and not employees, they are not subject to the city's minimum hourly wage, which is now \$15 per hour. But the new rules essentially get around that loophole and ensure that drivers are earning at least the minimum wage, with a few dollars extra to cover payroll taxes and some paid time off.

Uber and Lyft have pushed back against the pay increase, saying it would hurt competition and discourage drivers from taking riders out of Manhattan. The current lawsuits suggest that Lyft and Juno are not done fighting it (Uber is not part of the lawsuits).

But if there's any moment for drivers to demand more, it's now. Companies are having a harder and harder time finding workers to fill jobs, which means the competition for labor is getting fierce.

Workers are now realizing how much leverage they have

The US economy is currently experiencing a major labor shortage. There just aren't enough workers to fill all the available jobs.

For nearly a year now, the number of open jobs each month has been higher than the number of people looking for work — the first time that's happened since the Department of Labor began tracking job turnover two decades ago.

At the end of January, the US economy had 7.6 million unfilled jobs, but only 6.5 million people were looking for work, according to data released earlier this month by the US Department of Labor. This was the 11th straight month that the number of job openings was higher than the number of job seekers. And each month, the gap has grown.

Employers have been complaining about a shortage of skilled workers in recent years, particularly workers with advanced degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields. Nearly every industry now has a labor shortage, but here's the twist: Employers are having a harder time filling blue-collar positions than professional positions that require a college education.

The hardest-to-find workers are no longer computer engineers; instead, they are home health care aides, restaurant workers, and hotel staff. The shift is happening because more and more Americans are going to college and taking professional jobs, while working-class baby boomers are retiring en masse.

So, for once, low-skilled workers have the most leverage in the current labor market. Uber and Lyft drivers won't have a hard time finding other jobs in today's economy — which means there's no better time for working-class Americans to demand better wages, benefits, schedules, and work conditions.

The Uber strikes will also test how much leverage gig workers have in making these demands, and how effective it is to organize without a labor union.



Max V Karlsson
@KarlssonMax

8 nov. 2017

1) Dags för HISTORIA! Äntligen! Denna gång om ungt motstånd underifrån. Häng på och ha tålamod så blir det här riktigt roligt. [#newsboysstrike](#)



2) Det går att säga att spansk-amerikanska kriget år 1898 var ett av de första mediala krigen, med s.k. "gul" journalistik/sensationalism som skulle påverka opinion.

3) Du skulle så klart sälja så många tidningar som möjligt, och tidningarna som låg i framkant (samt i luven på varandra) var "The World" & "New York Journal".

READ "THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE," BEGINNING TO-DAY

863,956
 WORLDS CIRCULATED YESTERDAY
 THE
 World.
 863,956
 WORLDS CIRCULATED YESTERDAY

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 6, 1915. PRICE ONE CENT.

PEACE TREATY IS RATIFIED, AWFUL SLAUGHTER

SPORT Our Troops at Manila Killed the Filipinos by the Thousands--40 Americans Killed.

NEW ORLEANS RACING

NEW ATTACK ON MANILA TO-DAY.
 Admiral Dewey Cables the News That the City Itself Has Been Attacked.

TREATY VOTE IS 57 TO 23.
 Three Votes to Spare When the Final Test Was Reached.

FILIPINO LOSS IS 4,000 MEN.
 About 40 Americans Dead. 'Beaten Insurgents Torn to Pieces by Dewey's Guns.'

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6.—A cablegram was received at the Navy Department from Admiral Dewey at 10:30 o'clock this morning, of which the following is a translation:

MANILA, FEB. 6.—'INSURGENTS HAVE ATTACKED MANILA. BOSTON LEAVES TO-DAY FOR ILOILO TO RELIEVE BALTI-MORE, WHICH WILL RETURN TO MANILA. TWO MEN WOUNDED ON BOARD MONARCH. ONE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED.'

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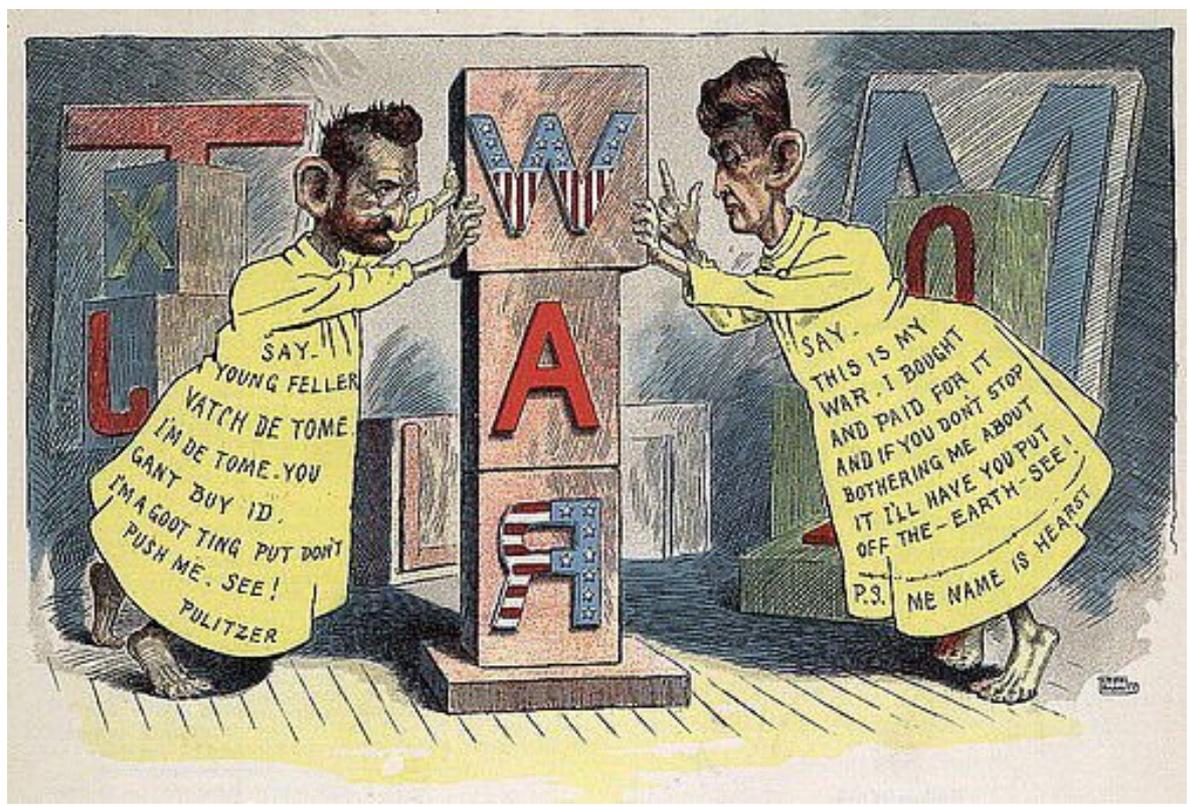
MAINE EXPLOSION CAUSED BY BOMB OR TORPEDO

Capt. Sigbee and Consul-General Lee Are in Doubt--The World Has Sent Special Tug, With Submarine Divers, to Havana to Find Out--Lee Asks for an Immediate Court of Inquiry--Capt. Sigbee's Suspicions.

CAPT. SIGBEE, IN A SUPPRESSED DESPATCH TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT, SAYS THE ACCIDENT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY AN ENEMY DR. F. C. PENDLETON, JUST ARRIVED FROM HAVANA, SAYS HE OVERHEARD TALK THERE OF A PLOT TO BLOW UP THE SHIP--CAP. ZALINSKI, THE DYNAMITE EXPERT, AND OTHER EXPERTS REPORT TO THE WORLD THAT THE WRECK WAS NOT ACCIDENTAL--WASHINGTON OFFICIALS READY FOR VIGOROUS ACTION IF SPANISH RESPONSIBILITY CAN BE SHOWN--DIVERS TO BE SENT DOWN TO MAKE CAREFUL EXAMINATIONS.



4) Här syns respektive tidnings mäktiga ägare Joseph Pulitzer & William Randolph Hearst i en dåtida satirteckning om just sensationalism & tonläge.



5) För att tidningarna skulle vinna marknadsdelar i staden krävdes aggressiv marknadsföring, det skulle inte gå att missa just deras rubriker.

6) "Lösningen" för tidningarnas räkenskaper stavades bl.a. barnarbete. Japp. Det skulle finnas en tidningspojke elr barn vid varje gathörn redo att sälja.



7) Vid den här tidpunkten fanns det tiotusentals & åter tiotusentals hemlösa och fattiga barn i New York, barnarbetet var utbrett & tvärssektoriellt.

8) Förhållanden på New Yorks gator vid den här tiden var inhumana, med tydlig segregation & stora klasskillnader. Hemlösa levde & dog på gatan medan vissa stadsdelar badade i lyx.



9) Det gick till så att gatubarnen fick köpa en bunt med tidningar för pris X och sälja samma bunt för pris Y. Så skulle de få behålla viss mellanskillnad om de sålde allihop.

10) Problemet var att konkurrensen om marknadsandelarna var hård, och under kriget höjde både Pulitzer & Hearst inköpspriset för buntar för respektive tidning.

11a) Marginalerna var nästintill obefintliga, och barnarbetarna slet utan att få något för det. Många var arga och kände att något behövde göras.

11b) Parantes: Du köpte hela buntan oavsett om du lyckades sälja alla. Du kunde alltså gå back om du inte lyckades sälja alla dagens.

(Här är en bild på en ung pojke som sover i ett trapphus, lutad mot bunten han inte fått såld)



12) 18 juli rinner bägaren över, och barnarbetarna på Long Island blockerar vägar, stoppar trafiken i protest. Tumult uppstår, det fick vara nog nu!

13) Dagen efter samlas flera hundra barnarbetare i parken utanför Manhattan City Hall för att organisera sig. En ledning bildas & STREJKEN är ett faktum!



14) Med start 20 juli är tidningspojckarna officiellt i strejk, och dagarna som följer är fyllda av aktioner. De är högljudda, målinriktade & effektiva.

15a) Strategin: Sälj inte World elr Journal, alliera er med tidningsstånden och de vuxna arbetarna, skrik högt.

15b) Kraven: sänk inköpspriset igen, respektera nybildade fackets auktoritet, köp tillbaka alla tidningar som inte lyckas bli sålda.

16) Ynglingarna är välorganiserade & håller tätt, de lyckas bli hindra vagnar med World elr Journal att ta sig fram/lämna tryckerier.

17) Pulitzer försökte anställa strejkbrytare, vuxna, att göra barnens jobb, men få ville blanda sig i eller gå emot barnen.

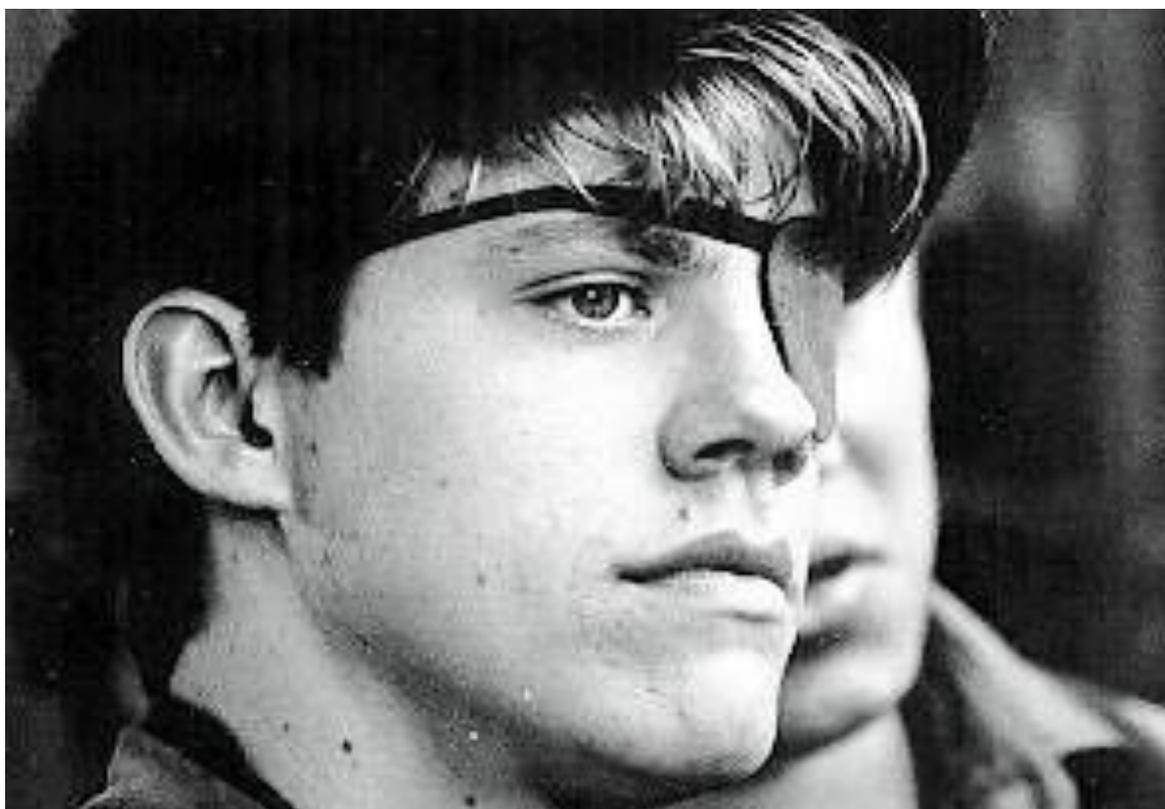
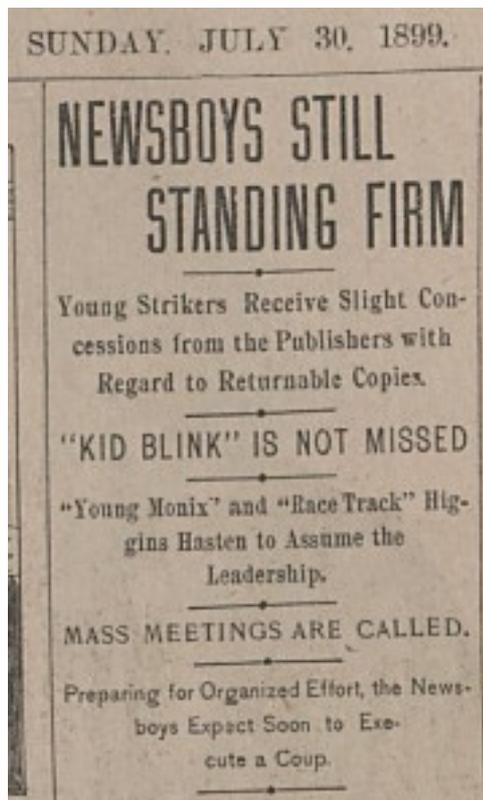
18) Vid flera tillfällen anställdes kriminella för att skrämma eller slå barnen men våldet fick motsatt effekt, allmänheten svarade upp.

19) Det hölls flera stormöten med så många som 6000 (!) barnarbetare, marscher blockerade Brooklyn Bridge, talen ökade & spreds.

20) De andra tidningarna skrev flitigt om strejken, och såg det som en chans att smutskasta konkurrenterna. Inte pojkarna emot, så klart.

21) New York Tribune skrev flitigt om en av pojkarnas ledare, "Kid Blink". Han var lite äldre, blind på ena ögat, och en stark frontfigur.

22) Så här kan han ha sett ut (bild från Disneys musikalfilm/dramatisering av strejken):



23) Med sin tunga brooklynaccent stod han för citat som "Me men is nobul." och det nästan legendariska uttalandet nedan. [#solidaritet](#)

"Friens and feller workers. This is a time which tries de hearts of men.
Dis is de time when we'se got to stick together like glue....
We know wot we wants and we'll git it even if we is blind."

24) Tidningarnas försäljning led, våldet kring strejken gav Pulitzer & Hearst oönskad & dålig PR. Förhandlingarna startade!



25) Efter två veckor upphörde strejken. Ägarna backade, och gick med på kraven om att köpa tillbaka allt som inte såldes samt förhandla m facket.

26) Barnen tog det här som en enorm vinst, och accepterade motbudet. Deras motstånd skulle komma att inspirera liknande strejker landet över!

27) Strejkens kulturella arv blev massivt. DC Comics skapade senare en serietidning kring ett gäng nyhetspojkar och Disney gjorde bla musikalfilmen "Newsies" (om än en aning nervattnad): https://youtu.be/59pP_Xcw0g

28) Ja, det är en ung Christian Bale ni ser i klippet ovan.

29) Kontentan med denna blast from the past är att inte underskatta kraften i ung radikal organisering, & att vi står på giganter axlar.

30) Arvet från de modiga barnen vid Newsboys Strike of 1899 är massivt, deras kamp för bättre villkor spelade en stor roll mot barnarbete i sig.



31) Genom strejker som denna och andra kampanjer fick både allmänheten och myndigheter upp ögonen för den kalla samtiden...

32) ... och delar av de system & aktörer som utnyttjade fattiga och barn med slit & släng för stor profit.

33) Personligen blir jag eld & lågor av historier & revolter som den här, hoppas att det var intressant läsning. Tack! /tråd

The fall of the cathedrals

NICOLAS COLIN

Developed economies have gone through several paradigm shifts since the Industrial Revolution. Each was triggered by the rise of a new general purpose-technology, such as the steam engine, the Bessemer steel process, and the automobile. In turn, those technologies contributed to radically transforming production, consumption, and ultimately our entire way of life.¹

Today's shift is between two very different worlds – the Fordist Age of the twentieth century and the Entrepreneurial Age of the twenty-first – and workers have once again found themselves at the sharp end of the revolution.

For most of the twentieth century, workers were protected by large Fordist corporations. These titans were exceptionally resilient because they enjoyed the stability derived from the welfare state, a well-regulated banking system, and suitable industrial regulations. In turn, they could provide individuals with steady jobs that eventually became the catalyst for much more than a form of work: a predictable income, generous social benefits, amplified representation through strong trade unions, and access to affordable housing and consumer credit.

But then those large organizations started to weaken as an institution, and steady jobs along with them. First it was because the Fordist Age entered a phase of exhaustion from the 1970s onward, with globalization and then financialization taking their toll. And now it's because of the rise of a new general-purpose technology: the bundle of computing and networks.

For a long time, building a large, integrated organization – a “cathedral”, as coined by Eric Raymond² – was rational. It was the best way to secure assets

and employ a large number of workers whose labor could be streamlined along a given value chain. On top of that came economies of scale, which made it possible to lower the unit cost of production as that production scaled up. This is why the Fordist Age came to be seen as the age of mass production.

But today, the rationale for building cathedrals doesn't exist anymore. Put simply, it was destroyed by the accelerating rise of computing and networks. Indeed, there's more and more computing power in the world, and it has become ubiquitous, found not only in personal computers and smartphones but also pooled by large cloud computing platforms and embedded in basically every device. In turn that has driven the birth and growth of networks that never cease connecting individuals to one another.

An economy driven by ubiquitous computing and networks is a whole different game for businesses. Its main rule is that there's now more power outside than inside organizations. To quote Nilofer Merchant, "across industries and worldwide markets, buyers are not parked at the end of a value chain, but often in the middle of its flow".³ That's because computing and networks make it so easy to orchestrate interactions between customers and to collect the data they generate at a large scale.

An immediate consequence is that the most competitive businesses are now those which excel at harnessing that power vested in billions of individuals using networked applications – like Google collecting user-generated data to train its algorithms, or Amazon relying on its own customers to contribute with product reviews. Those businesses are not cathedrals like in the past. Rather they are outward-looking, software-driven organisations entirely dedicated to sealing an alliance with an engaged community of networked individuals.⁴ And in an economy dominated by such organisations, it's consumers that now wield the most power – not workers (who were strong in the 1950s and 1960s) or shareholders (who took over as the dominant party from the 1970s onward). Indeed many people believe that tech giants are at the top of the economic pyramid. But those who really set the pace are the individuals as consumers, because tech companies are so reliant on the power they wield as a network.

Second, an economy driven by ubiquitous computing and networks is driven by increasing returns to scale:⁵ the value that a company creates increases faster than the size of the network of individuals using its applications. An adverse consequence of that is widespread instability. Because of increasing returns, growth curves are now exponential rather than linear. The winning company usually takes most of the market,⁶ leaving little room for lesser competitors.

But its dominant position depends on the strength of the alliance sealed with the multitude of Internet users. If customers become disenchanted with the product (because of a design that ceases to match ever-growing expectations) or the company (because it doesn't inspire trust anymore), they can easily migrate to a better product. Large tech companies are fiercely competing against each other, constantly seeking to diversify by invading the other's ecosystem. And there are always well-financed upstart companies striving to enter the market.

What does it all tell us about the future of work? From a worker's perspective, there are two options – the new economy and the old economy – and neither of them is very attractive.

On the one hand, a growing proportion of individuals work in the new economy. But whether they are workers with an employment contract or self-employed workers chasing gigs on platforms, their working life is difficult. Today's customers are so empowered by computing and networks that they've effectively turned into impatient, whimsical bullies storming into the workplace and telling the workers to serve them better and to make it quick.

Because workers are not organized to resist this pressure, they're bound to consent to degrading working conditions – whether it's the harried workers in Amazon's ever-more-efficient warehouses or the software and marketing teams being constantly evaluated on their capacity to enhance user satisfaction. And this doesn't mention the fact that because of the harsh competition, all tech companies, however large, feel like they're giants with clay feet. Like MySpace, Fab and Yahoo, they can be wiped out of the market, and fire their employees, if they fail to keep pace with what empowered users demand. It's because they realize their own fragility that some of them have embraced continuous innovation as a strategy, while building those "moats" that are designed to protect their position. Think of Apple's valuable brand, Amazon's world-class logistics, and Google's massive salesforce guarding the gate to the advertising market.

On the other hand, the majority of the workforce is still working for those cathedral organizations born in the old paradigm. The problem is that those organizations don't have the ability to compete in the new economy. As cathedrals, they have been designed to concentrate power on the inside, not to harness power from the outside. Workers may have the impression that they still have steady jobs, but in fact, those jobs have a great deal of uncertainty. Employers that belong to the old economy are so fragile they can go bankrupt and shed most employees overnight, as we've seen with Kodak, Blockbuster, Toys"R"Us, and Sears. And those which manage to survive do so not because they innovate, but because

managers are doubling down on the search for efficiency, tightening the bolts and demanding more sacrifices from workers. Employees may still have a job, but they are expected to work harder in exchange for a lower wage while renouncing most of what used to make their job steady, secure, and attractive.

What could make the future of work brighter in both parts of our transitioning economy?

First, we must invent the new institutions that will make work in the new economy more rewarding and attractive. This won't happen by forcing businesses following the new paradigm to fit into the categories of the past. Rather we need to reinvent everything that used to make work good: trade unions, social insurance, the housing market, occupational licensing, consumer finance, and the employment contract itself. This is what many new organisations are working on at the moment: among many examples are Point and Divvy, two US startups tackling the tough challenge of reinventing housing finance to account for the terrible state of the real estate market; Lambda School, which teaches code to non-tech workers, paid for by a capped share of future income; and Trupo, a business born out of the famous Freelancers Union in New York, that provides freelance workers with short-term disability insurance.

Second, workers themselves are taking the matter into their own hands. Particularly interesting is the world of freelancers and gig workers, who have the flexibility to organize both their work and their connections with other workers as they please. Thus it's easier for them to organize as a network, making the most of technology, than it is for traditional employees. These workers are inventing a form of economic security that matches a world wired by computing and networks. They're using tools such as Facebook and WhatsApp to join forces and organise. They're also developing their own mechanisms to cope with what the new labour market is about, such as Alia, a spin out of the National Domestic Care Workers Alliance, that provides house cleaners in the US with an online platform for portable benefits.

The goal now shouldn't be to repress those discoveries and force those workers to fit the employment contracts of the past. Rather we should see them as the vanguard that explores what the future of work is about and discovers its new institutions on our behalf. Consumers hungry for more convenience and lower prices are the ones that must be invited to contribute to that effort. What they'll gain in the process is a digital economy able to serve markets in a more sustainable and inclusive way. It's now up to us to hasten the pace toward this new Golden Age.

“Stop accepting the shit”

26 JULI 2019



unique: Since you moved to Sweden more than 5 years ago, many countries in Europe changed their view on migration. Did you feel a shift in the way migrants are treated in Sweden – and the way you are treated, as someone from a foreign country?

Daria: Me, not directly. But for sure I can tell that the tone of debate about migration has hardened. Many racist opinions are more tolerated and normalized. However, like you said, Sweden is not alone among the countries where migration is a hot political topic. The sad thing is that racism and hardened legislation following the heated migration debate affects the migrants – while the whole phenomenon is always a result of politics and politicians, whether it is free movement and economical inequalities between European countries, or wars and climate crisis. It is hard for many to see the complexity of migration being a natural result of global capitalism and its strive to always lower the cost of production and work, forcing people into those conditions. Many people today buy the right wing's description: The narrative of foreigners as "invaders" or "the others with their culture that threatens OUR culture" is spreading. Regular working people are blamed for moving to other countries for a better life or to escape from wars, instead of criticizing the real problems: capitalism and inequality.

At one point in your comic, you say you always thought unions were antiquated – but you changed your mind while working under precarious conditions. What is your take on this topic now?

Wow, this is my favourite topic in the world... I'll have to try to keep myself short. I think, for my generation, the whole established political system is quite antiquated. The differences between most parties are marginal today and are focused on values or opinion on cultural topics, rather than on actual economic politics. Every party is fixed on believing that 'the market' will solve everything. My generation doesn't need to vote to express their opinion – we have social media for that (*laughs*). And the economic policies are the same. We don't feel like we can make any change.

How do you explain the “take it or leave it” approach that you describe for many of your peers struggling with bad payment and shitty jobs?

The thing is that many young people grew up in this system, late capitalism, so we don't remember that it could be different. The bosses have total power now and are used to that. So when things at work are not the way we would like it, we more often choose an individual approach than try to fix problems collectively, or we change the job. My case here is: If we keep on quitting shitty jobs without trying to collectively fix the problems we who work there have, just hoping the next job will be better, there will be no better jobs soon. All will be shit. Maybe we are already there even now, as our rights as workers have been drastically diminished during the last decade and unions were getting weaker and weaker. I think it is time to start thinking about those issues, stop accepting the shit and start to organise. To do that, we need structures – unions are one of them. They might be out of touch with reality and seem square, but that doesn't mean that we cannot change them and use them as a tool for making our lives and futures better.

You also address very personal issues, like your sex life and an abortion you had. Is *Von Unten* more a way to cope with your own personal thoughts and doubts, or is it more of a political appeal?

I don't actually think I address those things so much in my book, except that they are being mentioned. I included sex scenes and mentioned that I had an abortion, because those are just normal things that happen and they happened in my life – and many other women's for sure – and I don't see a reason why I should have left them out. But the fact that I seem to make the impression of deliberately wanting to speak about sex and abortion just by them being present in the book makes me think now about how we still speak so little about those things. We should never be ashamed of speaking out about our sexuality and sexual or reproductive health. These are everyday issues that affect all of us, and especially us women. And we should definitely be talking about those issues now, when right wing politics are on the rise all over the world. It has always been them who try to limit our rights to our own bodies. That said, and to answer your question: personal is always political.

The comic ends with a personal success for you against your exploitative boss. Do you know if the situation for migrant workers in Malmö's restaurants has changed since then?

This is a sad part: I hate it when the book is being described as a story of a "person who fought and won"! I tried to make a story that would give hope, but not to leave out that this was a bittersweet victory. I won, but things didn't change: Neither at the restaurant, nor in Malmö or Sweden. It just gets worse with the new labour legislations coming, making it even harder for us to organise, or taking our rights away from us. But I don't give up. I don't believe that you can change your situation at work by writing a book about it, or talking about it in the media, and that's why I'm a union organiser today. I work mostly with migrants. This is something that changes things for real. Of course, the world will not become better at once, even if you decide to act. Union organising is hard, and sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. It takes time and energy and lots of emotions, but it's worth it. Without taking these sometimes exhausting steps, a move forward towards a positive change will not be possible.

Thank you very much, Daria!