

ITI Coffee House: The platform economy in translation and interpreting

12pm – 1.30pm BST 29 May 2025

Dr Deborah Giustini & Dr Gökhan Firat

What is the platform economy?

- Digital platforms **matching** workers & clients
- Accessed via **apps** or websites
- **Always on**: 24/7, real-time, global
- **Work model**: independent, on demand contractors
 - 163 million platform workers globally (Online Labour Observatory, Oxford University, 2021)
 - 28 million in the EU (European Commission, 2024)
 - 2.8 million in the UK (UK Government Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2018)



Regulation

- Lack of coherent legislation
- No sick leave, minimum wage, or social protections
- 55% of EU platform workers earn below net minimum wage
 - e.g., in the UK 52% earn < minimum wage (£8.97/h vs £12.21)



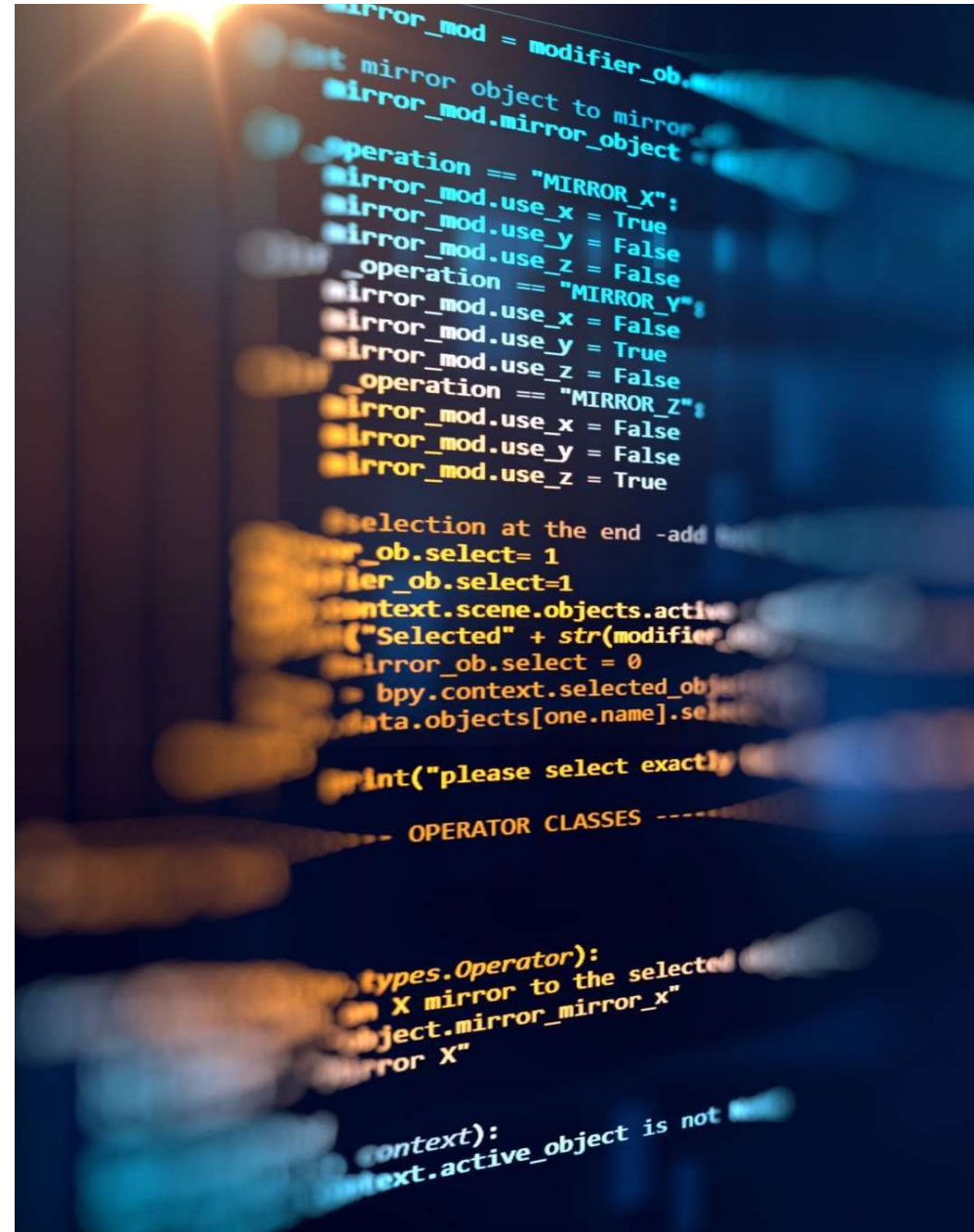
Your boss is an algorithm

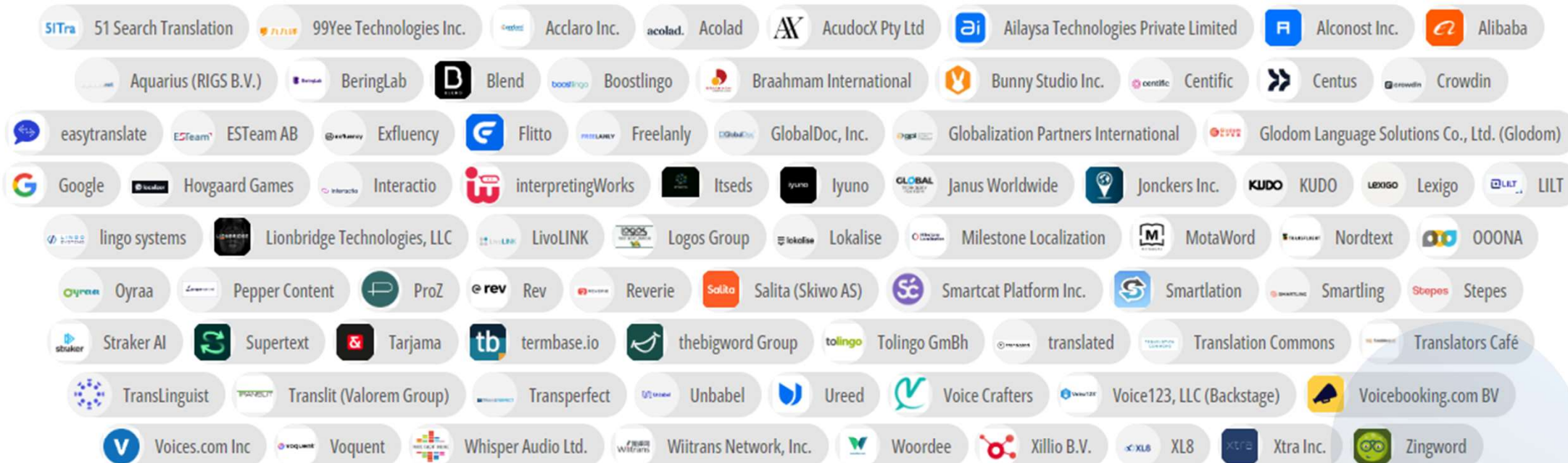
- Delegation of managerial functions to automated systems
- Tasks assigned, pay set by algorithms
- Workers rated & tracked; little transparency or ability to appeal
- Deactivation & pay fluctuations common



Work fragmentation

- Tasks split into micro-jobs
- Low pay, high control
- Platforms profit from:
 - Commissions
 - Subscriptions
 - User data





Source: Nimdzi 2024 - Language Technology Radar Report

The uberisation of interpreting

- **On-demand culture:**

- Platforms facilitate both remote and on-site work, but promote a "click-and-go" mindset.
- Interpreting framed as fast, cheap, and disposable — like ordering a ride or takeaway.
- Jobs are fragmented and short-term, platforms take a cut per task.
- No feedback loops, no relationship-building, no trust – wellbeing?

"We're hanging on, they're just taking advantage at our expenses [...] we have no say, there's no coming back." [Interview, interpreter]

The uberisation of translation

- Working conditions of translators on digital labour platforms and in translation cooperatives.
- Alternative work arrangements such as digital labour platforms and cooperatives .
- Advancements in machine translation (MT) and artificial intelligence (AI).
- The labour conditions of translators in platform and cooperative models against international standards of decent and fair work, as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Fairwork.

ILO Decent Work Indicators and Fairwork Principles



Adequate earnings and
productive work



Decent working time
and work-life balance



Social security,
stability and security of
work



Health conditions,
stress and safe work
environments



Fair management,
representation and
workplace democracy

Key findings and arguments (1)

Platform impact on translation and interpreting workers: 'Uberisation'

Precarious and unproductive work, low pay under poverty and starvation lines, excessive work hours, health issues, lack of social security and job stability and undemocratic management.

Capitalist, patriarchal and colonial exploitation

Fail to provide fair and decent working conditions.

Systematic inequality

Women and Global South translators/interpreters.

Key findings and arguments (2)

Cooperative models: transcooperation

Fair and decent labour practices with collective ownership and governance.

Sustainability

Long-term stability and workplace democracy.

Cooperative challenges

Gender disparities, funding, scaling in capitalist market and competing against larger monopolies, educational gaps.

Translation cooperatives

mondragonLingua
translation&communication

SOGL^SN!K
jezikovna zadruga

Signalise

Revolutionary Sign Language
Interpreting Services



Just Words Co-op
Translators & Interpreters Working for Language Justice



Interpreters' Cooperative of London
LANGUAGE SERVICES



LANGUAGE JUSTICE
COOPERATIVE



Cooperativa de
Serveis Lingüístics de Barcelona



Coop l'Argot
Translation and Linguistic Services



**Interpreters
& Translators**
Platform Co-op Inc.

**Guerrilla
Translation**



Community
Language
Cooperative

Guerrilla Media Collective

A Wiki for Distributed Cooperative Practices

The Guerrilla Translation/Guerrilla Media Collective Wiki is the main knowledge base for the Guerrilla Media Collective and its offshoots (Guerrilla Translation, Guerrilla Graphic Collective, etc).

<https://wiki.guerrillamediaincollective.org/>



Welcome!

First time here? Read our [Handbook](#) or our go through our introductory sections.

[Go »](#)



Community

Community is at the heart of Guerrilla Media Collective. This section deals with everything related to our internal functioning as a collective and as a cooperative.

[Go »](#)



Sustainability

Our Sustainability section deals with everything related to our finances, fundraising, legal structure and clients.

[Go »](#)



Tools

The Tools section of the wiki explains what tools we use, why we use them and how they fit together.

[Go »](#)

Guerrilla Media Collective Wiki

Media Peers

The Media Peers section of the wiki deals with everything related to the "outside": Social media, alliances, events, etc

[Go »](#)

Governance

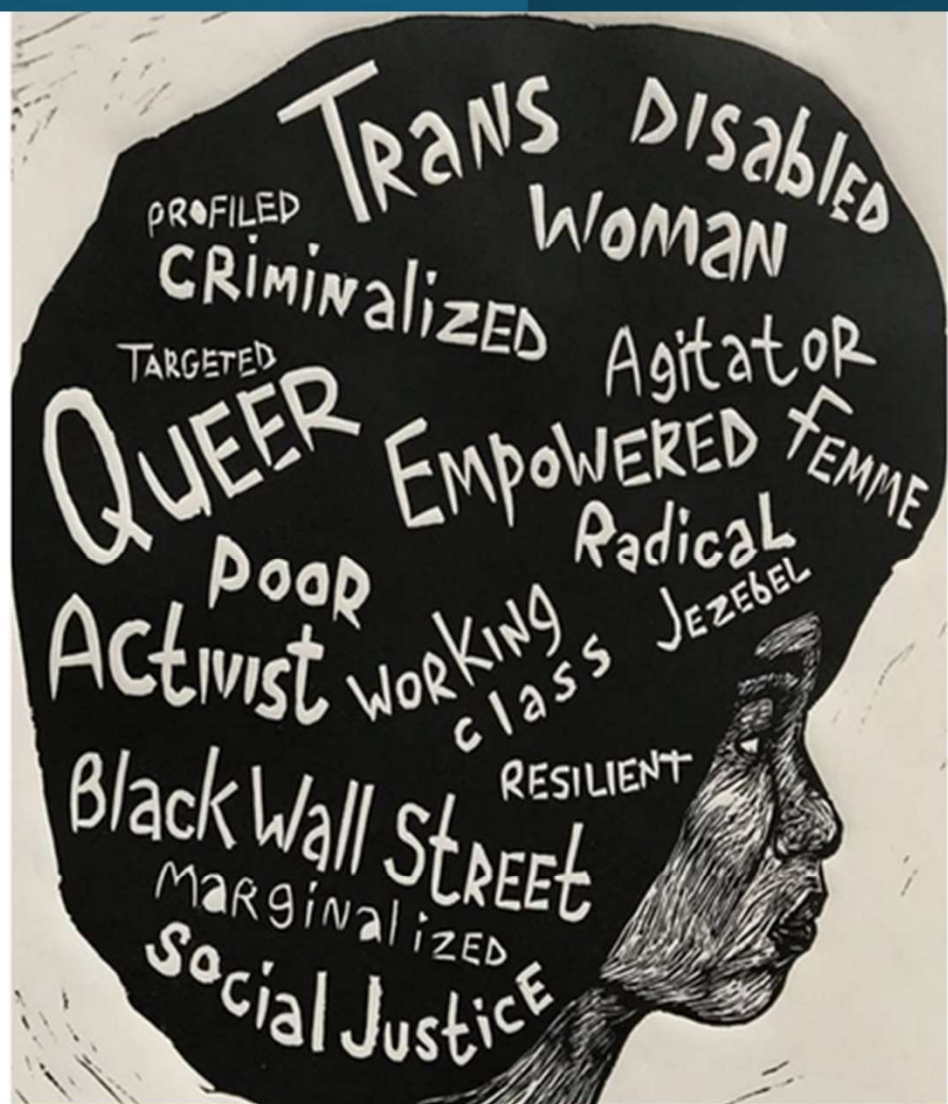
While Governance is intrinsically tied to community we have reserved this category for our specific governance model and its version history.

[Go »](#)

More Categories

Our front page only features a selection of some of our main categories, but there are many more and you can read about them here.

[See all categories »](#)



Thank you!

Join us for discussion in the breakout rooms