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Peer Review

Review of: "Algorithmic Management as Private Labour Regulation: A Framework for Standards, Monitoring, Sanctions, and Worker Due Process"

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This is an interesting, well-written, and logically presented paper. It deals with one of the major aspects of the production process, labour management. It seeks to establish a coherent analysis of private labour regulation in the moment of digital control systems. It sets out the problem and provides a four-fold dimensional account of the issues encountered – standard setting, detection, sanctions, and contestation. It calls upon a variety of theoretical models, including labour process, to illustrate the wider relevance of the debate on the table.

Overall, the paper is sufficiently cogent to be considered for publication, but I suggest some areas need further coverage. The notion of 'private labour regulation', for example, is inadequately explored – this is deemed to be at the level of the firm, although in most countries such regulation is informed by and restricted through national labour laws. These are usually codified and applied with varying degrees of rigour by state agencies. In other words, there can be no 'private' regulation that is not designed and implemented without reference to state oversight. The paper also needs to be more exact on the nature of worker behaviour — employees are not passive recipients of employment rules, and in many countries push back through trade unions and threats of legal action. Indeed, rules and rule-based systems go to the heart of traditional industrial relations (see Hugh Clegg on job regulation), and therefore, require more scrutiny by the authors. The use of grievances and disciplinary measures is part and parcel of any actual and perceived application of procedural justice, and, even in the digital age, plays a part in the struggle over the 'frontier of control' (see Goodrich) that evokes the nature of any wage labour system.

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My recommendation is that the authors be allowed to resubmit after making improvements that deepen the paper's contribution to the real world of workplace employment struggles, and recognise the powerful influence of the state, external labour markets, and custom and practice on their thesis.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.