

The unsustainable precarity of the pursuit for freedom: a critical overview of the Spanish “*sí soy autónomo*” movement

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Throughout 2020, the Spanish Government initiated the process of regulating all activities related to platform work with the purpose of ‘chasing the fraud of bogus self-employment’. Somewhat surprisingly, this initiative was met by a substantial wave of protest from the workers who the government proclaimed to be attempting to protect. In this light, the present research explores the arguments of the Spanish *sí soy autónomo* [yes I am self-employed] movement in its struggle against the Spanish Government. Drawing from a critical discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews to couriers of Uber Eats, Deliveroo and Glovo, as well as to a representative of an association in favour of the preservation of the self-employed status (N=20), the main finding is that the pursuit for the self-employment status is primarily informed by workers’ attempt to escape the precarious working conditions offered to wage-earners in the Spanish labour market as a whole, rather than by an empirically grounded claim. This suggests that new labour legislation addressing the challenges posed by platform work must not overlook the broader context in which it is intended to unfold - otherwise, it may not only fail to improve workers’ situation, as also drive them to demand what are, actually, further deregulated legal arrangements.

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