

Ola! Moral Economies of the Digital?

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Abstract

In this study we seek to understand how digital platforms are changing the nature of on-ground experiences of autorickshaw based transportation in Indian cities using the lens of moral-economies. We focus on auto drivers to understand the non-economic motivations that inform their economic activities (i.e. moral economy). We argue that with the use of mobile apps such as Ola Auto, moral economies play a critical role; while being reified, transformed and challenged. On the one hand, we show how the uptake of Ola Auto has led to reproducing and reifying moralities, where the app has reproduced the process of hailing an auto as it is on the ground. On the other hand, it has also led to challenging some of the existing practices and moralities, through the use of ratings and the feature of Ola Premium.

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