JUAN MANUEL DEL NIDO. *TAXIS VS. UBERS: COURTS, MARKETS, AND TECHNOLOGY IN BUENOS AIRES. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2021. 256 P. ISBN: 9781503611528*

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Until late March 2016, most Argentines believed that Uber would not arrive in the country due to historical and political reasons. However, by mid-April of the same year, Uber's presence in Buenos Aires caused the taxi industry to be easily cast aside and rendered it incapable of mounting a response. *Taxis vs. Uber* captures this particular political moment: a time when the Argentine middle class is anxious about the national economic downturn and the loss of its past glory, distrustful of Peronism and partisan politics, and yearning for modernity, cosmopolitanism, and globalism.

Drawing on extensive archival research and detailed ethnographic accounts, Juan Manuel del Nido examines how and why the traditional taxi industry, with longstanding legal protections and political connections, was challenged, and even written off, by the arrival of Uber. The author argues that 'post-political reasoning', which involves the mobilisation of 'the logics, rhetoric, and affects' to organise knowledge and structure the common experience of public life (8), helped Buenos Aires' middle class legalise the Uber service while foreclosing the very possibility of disagreement.

This book consists of eight chapters. The first three chapters delve into the examination of the taxi industry before Uber's arrival. Chapter 1 introduces the political economy of the taxi industry, detailing how it was organised as a public service by the city government through the taxi license. The following chapter documents the bodies allowed to enter the taxi trade, requiring successful completion of professionalisation courses, medical and health check-ups, as well as psychological tests. In chapter 3, the author explores how the standardisation in the circulation of vehicles, bodies, and transactions shaped middle-class residents' common experience of riding a taxi. These chapters demonstrate the substantial governmental support received by the taxi industry and its connections with Peronism and institutional authorities.

Chapter 4 focuses on the intense conflict in the public sphere triggered by Uber's arrival. In response to the imminent Uber, the taxi industry initiated collective legal actions. Buenos Aires' middle-class residents, however, held different attitudes towards the conflict, believing that the taxi industry, built on a monopoly of the taxi license, was a moral aberration, while Uber should stay because 'the people' wanted it. In this case, the political economy of the conflict and disagreement resulting from Uber's disruption was reframed as a moral economy of individual citizen-consumer's choice.

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In addition to a moral category, the next chapter elaborates on how the idea of competition was mobilised as an economic solution to a political problem. For most residents, the taxi industry was deeply entwined with Argentina's political and economic landscape, riddled with exclusions and monopolies. The image of the 'taxi mafia' fuelled residents' longing for Uber's arrival as an outsider and a competitor to the taxi industry. Within the logical machine of competition, Uber's alterity enabled it to become an ally against the abuses of the powerful taxi industry and the political order it represented.

In Chapter 6, the author explores why Uber's arrival was unstoppable and how it became a 'stranger king' through technical terms. Uber's algorithmic labour arrangements and the app's rating system not only (re)produced an 'ordered, orderly order' (134), but also turned taxi transactions from a public issue to a private one, thus fabricating unverifiable and undebatable Uber relations. In other words, platform technologies enabled Uber to participate in the redistribution of the sensible and the empowerment of consumers. As a result, consumers' preferences, desires, expectations, and experiences became the ultimate site of irrevocable truth in late capitalist societies.

The remaining two chapters centre on governmental failures of legal attempts to block Uber. Despite legal bans, Uber dismissed the courts and reassured users through social media campaigns and promotions. The enduring 'trials of strength' (173) affirmed Uber's transcendence over Argentina's juridico-political order and reinforced its entangled relationships with all parts of the Greater Buenos Aires area. Chapter 8 investigates how the narrative of the Argentine technocratic government laid the groundwork for accepting Uber's arrival, and why protests from the taxi industry failed to gain widespread resonance. The taxi industry was perceived as the epitome of Peronism and the recalcitrance of a neoliberal project of a nation emancipated from its political past.

Taxis vs. Uber may be the only ethnographic research carried out while Uber was crashing into a territory. This book stands out for its embedded analysis, which takes historical, institutional, and material contexts seriously, illustrating how various parts of society contribute to a social problem at the ethnographic level. In addition, the focus of this research is neither on labour precarisation and exploitation, nor on the Uber-taxi conflict itself, but rather on the post-political and non-expert reasoning, making it distinct among platform and gig economy studies. The importance of studying rationalities goes far beyond this case; it also offers critical insights into how people understand disagreement and the disavowal of disagreement. As del Nido (2022) stated in an interview, 'it is increasingly difficult to disagree and remain a political equal' in late capitalist societies. This book provides readers with an alternative way to understand economic and political processes through the distribution of parts, voices, and roles in a society, as well as through individuals' common sense and concrete experiences.

Bibliography

del Nido, Juan Manuel 2022. Juan del Nido on his book, *Taxis vs. Uber*, interviewed by Diego Valdivieso, *CaMP Anthropology* https://campanthropology.org/2022/02/21/juan-manuel-del-nido/ (accessed 28 Jul 2023).