



Hectic and unpredictable times: the work shifts and everyday Life of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers in London

Nicola Montagna, Francesco Della Puppa & Valeria Tonioli

To cite this article: Nicola Montagna, Francesco Della Puppa & Valeria Tonioli (02 Oct 2025): Hectic and unpredictable times: the work shifts and everyday Life of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers in London, Globalizations, DOI: [10.1080/14747731.2025.2555744](https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2025.2555744)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2025.2555744>



Published online: 02 Oct 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Hectic and unpredictable times: the work shifts and everyday life of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers in London

Nicola Montagna ^a, Francesco Della Puppa ^b and Valeria Tonioli ^b

^aUniversity of Salerno, Salerno, Italy; ^bDepartment of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Master Program on “Immigration: Migratory Phenomena and Social Transformations”, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Venice, Italy

ABSTRACT

This study aims to contribute to the literature on migrant labour in the platform economy and the work-life balance by examining the case of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers in London. Drawing on in-depth interviews with drivers and stakeholders, the research explores how Uber’s model of algorithmic management and flexible employment impacts drivers’ economic stability, social lives, and well-being. While Uber marketizes its work as autonomous and flexible, findings reveal that drivers work long and often unpredictable hours, job insecurity, and financial strain. Health issues, including back pain and sleep deprivation, are widespread, exacerbated by irregular work schedules and lack of proper breaks. Furthermore, drivers report strained family relationships due to conflicting schedules, with many missing key social and family moments. The article concludes that Uber’s rhetoric of driver autonomy masks a system that blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, leaving drivers in a state of economic and social instability.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 13 February 2025
Accepted 29 August 2025

KEYWORDS

Platform labour; algorithmic management; Uber; migrant workers; work-life balance

Introduction: Uber in London

Founded in the early 2010s, the Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) company Uber, a prime example of voracious platform capitalism, has since revolutionized urban transport, becoming one of the fastest-expanding sectors worldwide. The company capitalized on smartphone technology to connect passengers with drivers, making ‘ride-hailing’ more convenient and affordable than hailing traditional black cabs. Key to its success is its affordability for customers and flexible – or, as its critics might say, precarious – job opportunities for drivers (Woodcock & Graham, 2020). Customers benefit from lower fares than traditional taxis, making Uber a cost-effective transport option. For workers, Uber provides job flexibility and has relatively low entry barriers, making it an attractive choice for those seeking a supplemental income or employment in the gig economy. However, another key factor that fuelled Uber’s rapid early expansion across numerous markets was its asset-light business model. While local operations required on-the-ground resources, such as sales teams and language localization efforts, the company’s main offering was its software platform and not its physical assets. Drivers supplied their own vehicles and riders used their own smartphones, providing the essential hardware needed to operate the service without requiring Uber to make any significant capital investments. This approach allowed Uber to scale up quickly with minimal financial risk, freeing up resources to invest in market growth, brand presence, and competitive positioning.

By 2015, five years after it was founded, their market capitalization – the total market value of a publicly traded company's outstanding shares, which is commonly used to measure a company's value, was \$60 billion, which is an almost unprecedented growth rate (MacMillan & Demos, 2015). Although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted its ride-hailing business, it soon recovered, with Uber Eats driving revenue growth by over 200% year-on-year (Business of Apps., 2025). As of August 2025, Uber Technologies is the 77th or 79th most valuable company in the world by market capitalization, with a market cap of approximately \$193.10 billion, a 54% increase compared to the previous year, according to Companies Market Cap (2025).

Its presence in London is partly responsible for this success. Since its launch there in 2012, Uber has become a key player in the city's transport. In London three types of taxis operate under specific licenses, London black cabs, private hire cars, and platforms like Uber and Estonian Bolt. Uber is the leading ride-hailing platform, operating formally as private hire cars, but in a wider geographical area and under a different set of specific regulatory requirements (Gebrial, 2024; Koivusalo et al., 2023). London's high demand for quick, efficient transport and its large population made it a prime location for Uber's expansion. Within just a few years, Uber had amassed tens of thousands of drivers and millions of passengers, making it one of the most popular ride-hailing services in the city. By 2023, with over 45,000 licensed drivers in the city (BBC, 2019a), Uber had cemented its dominance in London's highly competitive market for ride-hailing services against competitors like Bolt, Ola, and traditional black cabs.

Uber's labour market is generally highly racialized, reflecting broader social and economic inequalities, and in London this is particularly visible (Gebrial, 2024). In December 2023, the vast majority of London's 106,164, 94%, PHV driving licenses were from ethnic minorities and migrant backgrounds. They were also overwhelmingly male and primarily drawn from the bottom half of the income distribution (BBC, 2019a). This is in stark contrast to London's black cab drivers who are 88% white British and who also take-home higher earnings (BBC, 2019a). Due to its low barriers to entry, Uber provides an accessible path into the workforce for migrants and foreign workers who might face significant challenges or discrimination in more traditional employment sectors. This inclusivity allows individuals who may struggle with language barriers, credential recognition, or immigration-related restrictions to earn an income.

However, this workforce composition also underscores broader issues of economic inequality and job insecurity. Many Uber's drivers report earning less than the minimum wage after accounting for expenses such as vehicle maintenance and insurance. The lack of financial stability, combined with long working hours, has led to widespread dissatisfaction among drivers, with many organizing protests and strikes to demand better pay and working conditions (The Guardian, 2021).

However, Uber's growth in London has not gone unchallenged, and in fact has ignited a range of controversies, including with Transport for London (TfL). Responsible for regulating the city's transport services, TfL has had numerous run-ins with the company over safety, compliance, and regulation. In 2017, it refused to renew Uber's license, citing concerns over passenger safety and the company's approach to reporting criminal offenses committed by drivers, as reported by Financial Times. Uber appealed the decision and was able to continue operating during the legal process. Ultimately, Uber was granted a temporary license in 2018 and again in 2019, but its future in London remained uncertain until 2020 when the Westminster Magistrates' Court ruled in favour of Uber, granting it an 18-month license extension (BBC, 2019). One of the key issues raised by TfL was the lack of adequate background checks and the company's handling of complaints, including sexual assault allegations against drivers (The Guardian, 2017). In addition, unlike black cab

drivers, who must pass the rigorous Knowledge of London test, Uber drivers only need a PHV license, which is significantly easier and quicker to obtain (The Guardian, 2019). Critics argued that Uber's focus on rapid growth came at the expense of passenger safety, forcing the company to implement stronger safeguards and improve its reporting mechanisms.

Uber's business model, based on the idea of drivers being independent contractors, was another source of controversy. It meant that drivers did not receive benefits such as paid holidays, pensions, or minimum wage protections, which led to widespread criticism from labour advocates. In 2021, the UK Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling that classified Uber drivers as 'workers', granting them rights to a minimum wage, holiday pay, and pensions (The Guardian, 2021). This ruling marked a significant shift in the gig economy, as it set a legal precedent for other platform-based companies. In their interviews with 20 Uber drivers in London, Koivusalo et al. (2023; see also Gebrial, 2024), reported that drivers made reference to the tangible benefits, such as holiday pay, that had arisen from their 'worker' status as a result of the court cases.

London is also the centre of political organization by Uber drivers (Aslam & Woodcock, 2020; Woodcock & Graham, 2020). As we have already seen, many drivers in the city are migrants or belong to minority communities, often turning to Uber for flexible work opportunities in the face of limited options in a more regulated labour market. Unsurprisingly, research shows that drivers' dependence on the platform left them particularly vulnerable to exploitation. London's high cost of living further compounded these challenges, making it difficult for drivers to achieve financial stability despite long working hours. Aslam and Woodcock (2020) describe how London became a hub for drivers' early organizing efforts in 2014, by building connections across the city, using online forums, messaging apps, and in-person meetings to unite around shared grievances. While Uber's structure often isolated workers, London's dense urban environment provided opportunities for them to meet at key locations such as airports and ride-sharing hotspots, facilitating the spread of organizing efforts. In one of the earliest and most significant actions, drivers in London staged strikes and protests to demand better pay and working conditions. These demonstrations were often organized through grassroots efforts, with social media playing a critical role in mobilizing drivers quickly and effectively. Aslam and Woodcock show how the campaign took on different organizational forms at different times, each with its own challenges and lessons. Despite setbacks, including a negative experience with the GMB union – whose members work in nearly all industrial sectors – the fight against Uber included various successful organizational forms, and was recognized as a critical part of a broader struggle against exploitative practices in the gig economy, with implications for workers across all industries.

Drawing on 15 qualitative in-depth interviews with drivers and five with stakeholders, this article seeks to explore the work-life balance of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers navigating the streets of London. Our objective is to contribute to three expanding areas of academic inquiry: first, the broader literature on platform labour; second, the examination of work-life balance within the platform economy; and third, the specific dynamics of the everyday lives and work shifts of Uber drivers. Although there is already a fair amount of literature on the gig economy and Uber drivers (Leonardi & Pirina, 2020; Peterlongo, 2023), as well as on the digital work of migrants in the tertiary sector (Gebrial, 2024; Maury, 2024; Pirina et al., 2024), there are very few in-depth studies analysing the daily lives of these workers.

The first two sections focus on the rhetoric of autonomy surrounding the platform economy in general and Uber in particular. The third section focuses on Bangladeshi's onward migration to the UK and specifically to London. After the methodological section, the three empirical sections will

analyse the working conditions of Uber drivers, the impact of their work on their health, and on their everyday, social and family lives.

Uber's 'be your own boss' rhetoric and its critique

The narrative of autonomy and being your own boss is central to the platform economy (Aslam & Woodcock, 2020). Much of its success hinges on the premise that, through the use of apps, workers can organize their shifts independently and operate without direct oversight. This messaging is particularly evident in Uber's promotional rhetoric, where the emphasis on flexibility and individual control over work schedules is unmistakable.¹

A 2018 report by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, and Accenture, largely funded by the IFC with financial contributions from Uber, which surveyed over 11,000 female Uber drivers across six countries, found that the ability to work whenever they choose was the primary reason women chose to work for Uber. This flexibility is understood to be seen as a positive by women drivers because it allows them to balance their work with other responsibilities. This emphasis on autonomy is reiterated in a joint report based on interviews with PHD by Uber and Public First (2024), which argues that '[u]sing Uber means drivers can start or stop working at the push of a button, while retaining the ability to access work through other platforms'.

Some academic studies also echo this emphasis on flexibility. For instance, the 2016 survey carried out by Hall and Krueger (2016), both employees and shareholders of Uber at the time, suggests, among other things, that drivers choose Uber because it offers a better work-life balance and due to its complementarity with other economic activities such as school attendance, caregiving, or employment. Along similar lines, Chen et al. (2019) understand Uber as part of a more general growth in independent contractor work as a primary or secondary activity. They argue that this is due to digital platforms like Uber that instantaneously match buyers and sellers. A significant and unusual characteristic of ride-sharing is that drivers can supply labour (or not) to the platform whenever they choose. The kind of freedom and taste for flexibility provided by Uber, and more generally by platform economies, is seen to compensate for the often lower and uncertain wages. They may earn less, but

Uber is a platform on which drivers, once approved, can use their own or rented cars to offer rides whenever they choose. There are no minimum hours requirements and only modest constraints on maximum hours. Drivers can choose their own hours, and they can do so in real time. (Chen et al., 2019, p. 2)

In other words, this adaptability allows drivers to provide labour at their discretion.

The optimistic narrative of gig work flexibility has been subject to intense scrutiny from academics, labour activists, and policymakers, who have raised concerns about the implications for labour rights, employment practices, income volatility, and gender and intersectional economic inequality, and have provided insights into the precarious nature of gig work and its broader implications for labour relations (Antunes, 2019; Baril, 2024; Leonardi & Pirina, 2020; Peterlongo, 2023; Thelen, 2018). A number of critics have argued that the emphasis on autonomy is a smokescreen to hide precarity and the impact of Uber's model on labour conditions. By classifying drivers as independent contractors rather than employees, platforms circumvent various labour protections, thus leading to precarious working conditions. In this respect, Uber exemplifies the precarious labour dynamics of the digital era. Behind the positive narrative of the freedom to choose their own

working times and achieve a better work-life balance, there is a general erosion of traditional employment protections, such as stable contracts, predictable wages, and clear employment statuses, all of which foster insecurity (Kallberg, 2017).

Studies by Schor et al. (2020) and Schor (2020) challenge the narrative of autonomy and flexibility and highlight that classifying drivers as independent contractors rather than employees results in insecure labour, with drivers lacking benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and job security. They argue that while platform work offers some workers supplemental income and more flexibility in organizing their schedule, it also creates significant vulnerabilities. These include: *economic insecurity*, in the form of income volatility, a lack of benefits, and job insecurity, all hallmarks of precarious labour; *dependence on platforms*, as workers often rely on a single platform for income, limiting their bargaining power and making them susceptible to algorithmic control and unilateral changes in pay structures; *inequities across worker groups* based on gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; and *limited autonomy*, because, despite their promise of freedom, platforms exercise significant control over workers through opaque algorithms, rating systems, and penalties for rejecting specific tasks.

Uber's reliance on algorithmic management has sparked a multitude of empirical and theoretical studies that demonstrate how such systems function as digital surveillance, further dismantling the narrative of worker autonomy (Aslam & Woodcock, 2020; Möhlmann et al., 2021; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Woodcock & Graham, 2020; Zwick, 2018). The rise of platform companies such as Uber, Amazon, and Deliveroo has been accompanied by a significant shift in the dynamics of work and oversight. Algorithmic management, which replaces traditional managerial control with data-driven systems, is often presented as a tool for increasing efficiency and optimization. However, this perspective overlooks its role as a mechanism of digital surveillance – systematically monitoring, assessing, and influencing worker behaviour (Eubanks, 2018; Noble, 2018; Scholz, 2016; Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019; Zwick, 2018). This system, in which digital technologies, rather than the assembly line, enforce labour discipline and reduce worker autonomy, has been described as 'digital Taylorism' (Anwar & Graham, 2022; Eubanks, 2018; Noponen et al., 2024).

Rosenblat and Stark (2016) show how this dynamic operates in Uber, highlighting how the app dictates when and where drivers work, penalizing those who decline ride requests or fail to meet performance metrics. This algorithmic oversight creates information asymmetry, as drivers have limited understanding of how fares are calculated or why specific rides are prioritized. The lack of transparency disempowers workers, reducing them to passive participants in a system designed to maximize company profits. In the end, Uber's algorithmically mediated system of flexible employment integrates new forms of surveillance and control, perpetuating imbalances in information and power. Within this system, algorithms, customer service representatives, passengers, performance evaluations, and the rating system collectively replace direct managerial oversight.

Möhlmann & Henfridsson (2019), in their multi-method study of Uber drivers in New York and London, highlight a similar outcome, showing that these technological systems – far from being neutral tools – shape working conditions in opaque and often unfair ways. Their research, based on interviews, direct observations, and analysis of online forums, reveals that the lack of transparency in algorithmic decision-making contributes to widespread driver dissatisfaction and a persistent sense of exploitation. The app's opacity limits workers' ability to challenge unjust practices or make informed decisions about their labour, reinforcing the very vulnerabilities the gig economy relies on.

Woodcock and Graham (2020) and Aslam and Woodcock (2020) also argue that flexibility is a façade for precariousness, as workers are deprived of stable incomes, benefits, and long-term job

security. The myth of flexibility and autonomy is challenged by arguing that it often masks insecure working conditions. On the one hand, as we have seen, platforms use algorithms to manage and control workers, undermining the autonomy they claim to provide: they do not just assign tasks, but monitor, evaluate, and discipline workers in ways that are often opaque and unaccountable. On the other hand, Uber drivers are under pressure from customers and the rating system. Unlike other delivery platforms, Uber's model encourages customers to rate them after the ride, creating a power dynamic in which drivers are vulnerable to being penalized due to customer dissatisfaction, on top of being constantly at risk of verbal and physical assaults and harassment by passengers.

Thus, this body of literature explores the implications of algorithmic management in platform-based companies like Uber, highlighting its role as a mechanism of digital surveillance and control that undermines worker autonomy, contradicting Uber's 'autonomy narrative'. It shows that the flexibility advertised by platform companies often masks insecurity and precariousness, challenging the narrative of autonomy and independence in gig work. Workers face precarious conditions, lacking stable incomes, benefits, and long-term security, despite the illusion of flexibility.

Building on this, research identifies several mechanisms through which algorithmic control is exercised. First, the algorithmic systems used to replace traditional managerial oversight function as tools to increase digital surveillance, monitoring, and assessment, and to influence worker behaviour. This practice of 'digital Taylorism' thus uses technology to enforce labour discipline and reduce worker autonomy. Second, Uber's app is a good example of the use of algorithmic control to dictate work schedules, penalize certain behaviours, and create information asymmetry, thus leaving drivers disempowered and unable to contest decisions. The lack of transparency in fare calculations and task assignments further exacerbates worker dissatisfaction and their sense of exploitation. Third, companies in the 'gig economy' often misclassify workers, outsource risks, and employ the economically vulnerable, perpetuating neoliberal practices that prioritize shareholder and consumer benefits over worker stability. Finally, Uber drivers are subject to dual pressures: they not only experience algorithmic oversight but are also at the mercy of customer ratings. These ratings introduce additional vulnerabilities, as drivers must manage customer satisfaction while facing risks of harassment and assault.

However, labour exploitation within Uber's framework is far from uniform, with research revealing that it affects different workers to different degrees, with significant variations according to gender and migrant status. Webster and Zhang (2020) have examined how intersections of gender, race, and class shape the experiences of platform workers. While Uber portrays gig work as universally accessible, structural inequalities often hinder marginalized groups' success, leaving them more vulnerable to exploitation. Research indicates that female drivers consistently earn less than their male counterparts due to differences in driving behaviour, platform experience, and working hour choices, as well as customer biases. For example, studies such as Cook et al. (2021) identified a 7% gender earnings gap in Uber drivers in the US, due to men selecting higher-paying times and areas, and generally driving faster.

Safety concerns disproportionately affect female drivers, leading many to avoid night shifts or unsafe neighbourhoods. Additionally, customer ratings – integral to a driver's job security – often reflect gender and racial biases, with women and people of colour receiving lower ratings (Webster and Zhang, 2020). Thelen (2018) points out that while platform work is marketed – particularly to women – as a solution to finding a work-life balance, its precarious nature and lack of social protections mean it falls short of delivering the promised benefits.

Migrant workers make up a substantial portion of Uber's driver base, particularly in major urban centres like London. A study focusing on London revealed that most Uber drivers are male

immigrants, primarily from the lower half of the city's income distribution. While nearly half of these drivers reported higher earnings after joining Uber, many transitioned from stable full-time or part-time employment into the less secure gig economy (Berger et al., 2019).

The flexibility that Uber offers is particularly appealing to migrants seeking adaptable work schedules, but this comes with significant trade-offs. Migrant drivers often experience income volatility, a lack of health benefits, and limited opportunities for career advancement. These challenges exacerbate the precariousness of their work environment, compounded by the absence of traditional labour protections (Van Doorn et al., 2023). The intersectionality of being both a migrant and a female driver presents compounded challenges. These individuals often face heightened vulnerabilities, including discrimination, cultural barriers, and increased safety concerns. The lack of targeted support mechanisms exacerbates these issues, leading to further marginalization within the gig economy (Ibidem).

Methodology

Drawing on 15 qualitative in-depth narrative interviews with drivers and five with stakeholders carried out between April 2023 and October 2024 in London, this article seeks to explore the work-life balance of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers in London. The interviews were conducted in English and Italian, according to the interviewees' inclination. Given the good knowledge of English of younger, urban-educated Bangladeshis, and their many years of residence in Italy to learn Italian (often to a high level of fluency), these two languages functioned effectively for the interviews. The participants included 15 Bangladeshi migrant men, aged 40–50, who, after obtaining Italian citizenship through their residence in Italy, migrated to London to work as Uber drivers and five Italian-Bangladeshi females, aged 30–40, who also live in London and are wives of Uber drivers. Additionally, five key informants were interviewed, including researchers, linguistic and cultural mediators, spare parts and car dealers catering to Uber drivers, and the wives of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers.

All the Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers were living in East London neighbourhoods at the time of the interviews and mainly commuted to central London to work. Before migrating to the UK, these individuals predominantly lived in Italian regions such as the Province of Venice, Rome, Brescia, and Vicenza, where they worked in various occupations, such as shipyard workers, tannery labourers, dishwashers or assistant cooks, and market stall owners.

The recruitment of Italian-Bangladeshi participants took place through snowball sampling, initiated through connections with key informants. Despite being well-integrated into the Bangladeshi communities in both Italy and London – thanks to years of prior ethnographic research – it was challenging to find interviewees willing to discuss this specific topic. One reason for this reluctance was the sensitivity surrounding the strategy of combining limited working hours with access to welfare benefits. This often means drivers have to do unreported work or additional hours to achieve financial stability, as even 50–60 h working for Uber does not always provide sufficient income to support a family. This dual reliance on welfare assistance and undeclared labour creates a relatively stable economic situation, which some interviewees describe as preferable to what they experienced in Italy. However, such strategies contributed to the hesitancy of many potential participants to share their work experiences as Uber drivers (Della Puppa & King, 2020; see also Koivusalo et al., 2023).

In addition to male participants, we also engaged with five women, aged 35–55, the wives of Uber drivers in London. These contacts were made possible through the collaboration of

London-based researchers, who were personal acquaintances of members of the research team. One of the authors had previously worked with Bangladeshi families in Mestre and Marghera – two neighbourhoods in Venice – and was a long-term resident of Marghera.

This author had been involved in teaching Italian as a second language (L2) to support migrant families in language acquisition, assisted children in homework support programmes, and had collaborated in previous years with local social services and practitioners in the context of earlier research projects (Tonioli, 2020, 2022). Furthermore, the author had developed strong ties and friendships with numerous Bangladeshi women and mothers and was thus regarded as a trusted and positive presence within the community. These established relationships played a key role in fostering trust and encouraging the women to participate in the interviews.

To complete our sample and gather as much information as possible, we also contacted Italian-Bangladeshi individuals currently residing in London who had previously lived in Venice, as well as relatives of the researchers' contacts still living in the Veneto region. Specifically, we engaged with the president of an association based in Mestre whose family lives in London, a cultural mediator working in Rome whose cousins are Uber drivers in London, three families who relocated from Venice to London in the past two years, and two restaurateurs from Marghera with family members currently residing in East London. These participants played a crucial role in facilitating access to the interviewees involved in the study.

The interviews explored several themes, including: self-presentation and identity; motivations for migrating from Italy to London; employment experiences in both Italy and London; daily life and working conditions as Uber drivers in London; the operational structure of Uber in London; intersections of work, family, and social habits; transformations in social, familial, and professional lives after migration; health and safety concerns among Uber drivers; and future aspirations and plans.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis involved a thorough reading of each transcript, coding thematic segments, and performing horizontal comparisons across the interviews to identify patterns and insights. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants.

Italian-Bangladeshi onward migration to the UK: the everyday realities of Uber drivers in London

Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers interviewed in London are part of a broader phenomenon of intra-EU onward migration, which refers to the reactivation of mobility among third-country nationals (TCNs) who, after acquiring citizenship in an EU country, utilize their enhanced mobility (Della Puppa et al., 2021; Della Puppa & King, 2019; Kaufmann et al., 2004; Moret, 2018; Paul, 2015) to relocate to another EU country. The experiences of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers interviewed in London exemplify this trend (Toma & Castagnone, 2015; Della Puppa & King, 2020). These movements combine internal and international migration, continuing the settlement of migrants from the Global South in Europe (King & Skeldon, 2010). Unsurprisingly, onward migration is often directed toward former colonial powers due to cultural, linguistic, and social connections (van Liempt, 2011; Ahrens et al., 2016). For some migrants, EU citizenship signifies the end of their migration journey and the beginning of stabilization (Ambrosini, 2016), but, for others, it facilitates renewed mobility and further migration (Danaj & Çaro, 2016; De Hoon et al., 2019). Onward migration thus challenges the traditional 'origin-destination' model of migration, emphasizing the complexity of migrant trajectories (Stewart, 2012; Ciobanu, 2015).

After initially settling in countries such as Italy, Greece, and Spain, many Bangladeshis choose to move to the United Kingdom. Before Brexit, this onward migration was facilitated by the European Union's freedom of movement policies, allowing migrants to settle in the UK without additional immigration restrictions (Montagna, 2020). But even after Brexit, Italian-Bangladeshi onward migration to the UK continues, and has received significant scholarly attention in recent years (Della Puppa & King, 2019). The reasons for this specific onward migration arise from a combination of individual factors, collective histories, and more or less idealized representations of the British context (Della Puppa & King, 2020).

First, there is a common reason for new migration: the Bangladeshi aspiration for upward social mobility for their children and an investment in the future of new generations. According to the interviewees' perceptions and representations, a life in Italy would run the risk that their children retraced the same professional and existential trajectory that they had previously experienced: that of generic workers locked into subordinate sectors of the labour market. Parents also believe that not learning good English would be a problem for their children in building future prospects outside of Italy.

Therefore, London is represented – not without a certain level of idealization – as the global and multicultural city *par excellence*, its meritocracy offering opportunities for young people of all national origins to enhance their skills and potential. This representation is linked to presumed British multiculturalism which – by virtue of its colonial past and the ancient tradition of immigration from former colonies – is believed to contribute to the construction of a society in which 'ethno-racial' belonging, national origin, religious faith, and linguistic and cultural elements are not stigmatized.

The long migratory tradition that has linked the Indian subcontinent to the colonial 'homeland' since the seventeenth century, and which allowed for the creation of the oldest and largest Bangladeshi 'community' outside of Bangladesh, means that London is perceived as 'a small Bangladesh in Europe'. That is, a context in which it is possible to 'feel at home' and to live in accordance with what the participants define as 'the Bengali culture and lifestyle'.

In this regard, for example, Royshan, a wife of a driver interviewed, told us that she first learned about the existence of what she described as a 'big community' in the Whitechapel area of East London after watching a video on YouTube. From that moment, she decided to relocate to London, bringing her husband and two children with her. The presence of a large number of fellow nationals gave her hope that she could receive support and become part of a broader network – one that would allow her children to interact with others, speak Bangla, and play, while also offering the family social and emotional support.

With respect to the migratory trajectories of the interviewees, as well as their dreams, ambitions, and aspirations for the future, the interviews revealed that all of them, with the exception of a few, moved to London after the 2009 economic crisis in search of a better future, with high expectations for improvements in both their living conditions and employment opportunities. The women hoped to find work, and many of them succeeded – today they are employed as teachers in Bangla schools, lunchtime supervisors, or Qur'an instructors. The men, on the other hand, hoped to receive greater support from the social welfare system and to change their line of work. Most participants had previously been employed in Italy in sectors such as food service or market stall management. Following the 2009 crisis, the majority had lost their jobs or experienced a significant decline in clientele.

None of the families interviewed had prior work experience abroad. Their migration trajectory followed a path from Bangladesh to Italy, and subsequently from Italy to London. However, they

are all part of transnational families, with members living across the three aforementioned countries. As some interviewees recounted, particularly the men, they dream of eventually returning to Bangladesh to build a multi-storey house or a large home for their old age. The women, by contrast, expressed a desire to travel – some wish to return to Italy, others to Bangladesh, while some prefer to remain in London.

Amina, mother of two children and wife of a driver, told us: ‘If I could go back 20 years, I would change my life. I would travel the world and change my job’. By contrast, Jannat, mother of three boys and married with a driver, told us:

At first, I used to think: they will study [referring to her sons], then they’ll find good jobs in Italy, and I thought I would go back with them. But now they enjoy living here, and they say they want to stay here, and that I can choose – I can either stay here [in London] or return to Italy. But I don’t know ... I came here for them, to give them a better future. Here, they have found freedom – no one in society pushes them to study to become doctors or engineers like in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, it’s usually the parents who decide. Here, you are free. I don’t know where I’ll go. (Jannat, driver’s wife, London)

Jannat’s internal struggle over whether to return to Italy or remain in London is likely shaped by the complex family dynamics that many migrants face after relocating to the UK. Her husband works as an Uber driver and is often away from home, especially during peak tourist seasons, high-demand hours, and night shifts, in order to increase his earnings. We will explore this further in later sections.

Family life has therefore become significantly more demanding since their arrival in London, requiring a highly structured daily routine for all household members. For example, her husband returns from night shifts just in time to take some of the children to school. Jannat wakes up early to prepare breakfast. Distances are much greater than in the past, and the children have long, intense days, which Jannat describes as ‘a busy time for children’.

Originally from a quiet, rural village near Dhaka, which she described as ‘very nice, very calm, very green’, Jannat first migrated to Brescia, Italy. Life there was more fast-paced than in Bangladesh but still far less hectic than in London. In Italy, there was always time for coffee with friends. Her husband worked at the market, and she helped him. In London, however, Jannat can only chat with her friends at night, once the children are asleep, because they live far away too.

Finally, the UK is seen as a more attractive destination than Italy by virtue of its more generous and efficient welfare system, considered to be more ‘inclusive’ than Italy’s ‘Mediterranean’ welfare regime, characterized by dual reliance on family and charitable organizations (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The benefits regime in the UK offers insurance against redundancy and periods of unemployment, and a better chance to meet the wider welfare needs of families.

Navigating the complexities of Uber driver work

Contradictions, challenges, and instabilities

In relation to the working conditions of Uber drivers, it is important to first acknowledge the challenges encountered during the analysis of the interview data, particularly in deciphering the operational dynamics of Uber. The interviewees provided contradictory accounts on several matters, including car management by drivers, the process of acquiring and passing licensing tests, and the practicalities of work management.

For instance, some interviewees claimed that sharing a car between multiple drivers is not permitted, while others implied that it was possible to obtain a license for a car and then share it. While

this practice reduces the costs associated with work management and vehicle maintenance, it also fosters conditions of subordinate and informal work. For instance, some drivers sublet their cars to compatriots in exchange for a percentage of their earnings, creating precarious labour relationships.

Additionally, several drivers initially identified themselves as self-employed and independent. However, during the interviews, they revealed that they shared vehicles with other drivers and operated under Uber's framework, which retains a percentage of their earnings. As an example, Khan's wife, Ramina describes her husband as an independent worker who can choose to drive for Uber or other private car companies, provided he has a valid driving license. The license costs approximately £120 and must be renewed annually. She explains:

Uber takes a percentage of my husband's work, 25%, and it is Uber that then pays my husband. The company keeps a part because they have to earn from Uber too. If you work for Uber, what does Uber earn? (Ramina, driver's wife, London)

Ramina emphasizes the flexibility her husband has in choosing his work, asserting that he is better off driving for multiple companies rather than solely relying on what she refers to as 'black cars', meaning London taxis. She elaborates:

London taxis are more for people from here, not so much for foreigners. Foreigners drive more Uber or private cars. It's also harder to get a licence for taxis, you know, you have to take an exam with lots of questions, it's harder the test. Even for private cars they have a lot of questions, a lot of things but it's easier the test than for taxis. (Ramina, driver's wife, London)

Echoing with existing research on Uber and other platform companies, which notes that they offer flexibility in working hours while shifting risks and costs onto workers, providing convenience for employers at the workers' expense (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Woodcock & Graham, 2020), Ramina recounts the evolution of her husband's work. She notes that in the initial stages of his career as an Uber driver, he earned just £65 per week. This was in stark contrast to his previous job in Brescia, Italy, where he ran a market stall and earned significantly more. In addition to low earnings, her husband encountered numerous challenges, such as obtaining a PCO licence, which cost approximately £700, and dealing with car maintenance, including a breakdown that meant he had to replace his vehicle. She explains:

He bought his car in 2016 and had many problems. His car broke down on the road and he had an accident. Then he had to buy another car and now he has a Tesla, with driver's insurance. That is why even though I have a driving licence, I cannot drive. (Ramina, driver's wife, London)

Sharmin, the wife of another Uber driver, sheds light on the demanding schedule her husband faces. He begins work as early as 5 am, coinciding with the morning prayer, and drives to what participants call the 'red zone', a central area of London with high demand, despite heavy traffic. This phase can last between four and seven hours, depending on road conditions. Sharmin notes:

If there is too much traffic my husband does not work, he prefers not to go to work because he would lose more time in traffic. (Sharmin, driver's wife, London)

Another participant, Anar, states that he often works over 12 h per day. He schedules his shifts to coincide with peak demand, typically working from 6 am to noon and resuming in the late afternoon until evening. His working conditions are shaped by traffic levels and the city's transport needs, creating instability and making it difficult to establish a routine. These factors also impact drivers' daily, social, and family lives. When asked about the red zone, Rashidul explained:

[T]here is a website where you can see the traffic in the city, whether there is a lot of traffic, whether drivers are needed or not. If the red zone is indicated, it means that the streets are closed to cars and only private cars such as Uber, taxis can enter. Usually this happens when there is a lot of work, in summer, with tourists or events. Then you go to work because there will be so much need. (Rashidul, driver, London)

The variability of shifts leads to unpredictable workloads, ranging from quiet periods to extremely busy days, described by some interviewees as ‘crazy’. As Belal observes:

Some of the groups on Facebook call Uber drivers’ slaves because they work so many hours. (Belal, key-informant, London)

In addition to these challenges, drivers face job insecurity due to Uber’s rating system. The rating system is based on user feedback – specifically, scores and reviews left by passengers at the end of each ride. Passengers rate the driver and briefly evaluate their experience. Drivers accumulate these ratings, and if their average falls below a certain threshold, Uber issues a warning. If the rating does not improve, the platform may suspend the driver’s account for at least six months, effectively rendering them (partially) unemployed. This creates a precarious and dependent situation for drivers, especially since passenger satisfaction is often influenced by factors beyond the driver’s control, as we will demonstrate below (Chan, 2019; Wiener, 2023). The rating system, therefore, significantly influences drivers’ opportunities. This process is well explained by Siam, one of Uber driver we interviewed:

With Uber, every rider, every trip, has the option to give you a rating. Everybody starts, you have 5 stars. You start off with 5 stars. If you take 10 people and they are all giving you 4 stars, your rating has dropped to 4. To be safe you need above 4.5. Uber say 4.4, I actually say 4.6. You want to be above 4.5. Now, if too many people give you a low rating, your rating starts dropping. Uber will sometimes call you in to do a test, or they will give you a warning. They will send you an email: ‘Your ratings are too low; these are your problems’. Basically, sort yourself out or we’ll kick you out. The second or third time what they will do, which is what happened to someone recently, they will switch them off for six months. (Siam, key-informant, London)

Uber drivers’ uncertainty stems from the fact that the variables that can lead to low ratings from passengers are arbitrary. Sometimes they have to do with knowledge of the city’s streets and the ability to drive in heavy traffic in central London: some drivers avoid the busiest areas to avoid complicated situations and, therefore, low ratings. However, very often, they are beyond the drivers’ control and do not depend on them. Again, in Siam’s words:

Once upon a time, I suggested to a newly arrived driver whose rating was plummeted: “You can’t work in the City”. So, he stopped working in the City, and carried on working in Barking. Now his rating is slowly starting to go back up. Now, he’s happy. Another guy, newly arrived, needed a lot of help. For example, he would go to Paddington, the job takes him to the City. In the City, he would switch it off the app. He would go back to Luton, Watford, and he would put the app back on, because he didn’t want to work inside the City. Because of the rating. As his rating’s gone up, his confidence’s gone up. He can now work anywhere. But at the beginning, it was very difficult and demanding working in the City. There is a lot of pressure. If you are a local and you make a mistake, you can maybe rectify it in a few minutes. For example, missing a turn. But in the city, if you miss your turn ... I tell people “In London, people are always buys, always rushing, always late, but if they’re late, it’s the driver’s fault”. If you make any small mistake, the whole responsibility falls on you. And it makes it a lot worse. They don’t care if it’s your fault or not. Even traffic is the driver’s fault. (Siam, key-informant, London)

These accounts illustrate the demanding and precarious nature of work as an Uber driver, highlighting issues of health, safety, scheduling, and job security. The transfer of risks and costs onto

workers extends beyond providing their own vehicles or covering repair expenses, as illustrated by one of our participants. As the literature shows, platform companies reduce costs by avoiding direct employment relationships, thereby sidestepping obligations such as minimum wage guarantees, healthcare benefits, and protection against unfair dismissal (Srnicsek, 2017).

However, it should be emphasized that, despite difficulties and challenges, working as driver through the Uber platform is considered, by Italian-Bangladesans relocated to London, as a ‘safety net’ of employment and, at the same time, a ‘first-line’ job sector and, possibly, a ‘transit job sector’ to other occupations. This aspect may differentiate the working and life experience of Italian-Bangladeshi Uber drivers in London and that of native/British drivers. In the words of some interviewees:

Uber can be a safety net: yes, here you can do every job, but if you are unemployed, at least you can work as an Uber driver. [...] Of course, there is an examination, you need to have a British driving licence, if you don’t have it you can’t apply for the licence for a mini cab. But it is easy. No problem. (Shumon, driver, London)

In Italy, I was a welder, but I developed some elbow problems because of my job, and the doctor told me it would be best if I would have changed job. Then, when I got citizenship, I decided to come here. Here, I knew that if I couldn’t find work, at least I could work as an Uber mini-cab driver. Many of my fellow countrymen did that. A friend helped me at first, so I bought a car and started working ... I already knew people here, but not many. One helped me with the job, I got my taxi license because that’s a different license, bought a car, and then, almost immediately, I started working with Uber. Now I do this job, maybe I’ll change in the future. (Mintu, driver, London)

When I was in Italy and I was planning to come here, I heard like everyone was doing this job, and I heard like I could do it too, because at the beginning I had no other job to do. So, when I first arrived here, to start, it was fine. (Jahid, driver, London)

The interviews highlight that the perception of Uber work as a safety net was taken into account even in the planning of onward migration when Italian-Bangladeshis were still in Italy (Della Puppa & King, 2019). Therefore, in this case, opportunities of the gig economy initially shaped the migration strategies of onward migrants and their families.

‘When a passenger is good, I feel good but when he is not good, my whole day is not a good day’: the health, safety, and emotional toll of Uber work

When discussing issues of health and safety, some drivers said that their health was worse now than when they had worked in Italy because the long hours driving for Uber caused back and joint problems. These pains are particularly prevalent in the summer when, as we have seen, Uber drivers tend to work more. In order to cope with the tiring and long shifts, at certain times of the day, such as at night when the fare is higher and so earnings double, or during the many hours sitting in traffic during holidays and rush hours, many drink coffee to stay awake.

Mirda told us:

I don’t take anything, I don’t take substances, just coffee. To feel better I try to run and walk a lot because of the pain in my legs and feet. (Mirda, driver, London)

Night shifts, which are common for some drivers, can also lead to vitamin D deficiency and adverse health effects:

I tell people, nights are sleepy. I’m a big fan of Vitamin D. Have you seen in the news that they want to put it in bread, in this in that? In 2009, I imported Vitamin D from America. I posted it to Italy, Bangladesh, India. Nighttime you don’t get any Vitamin D. (Amin, key-informant, London)

In addition, working at night can be more dangerous because, as some participants said, you can meet drunk people, people who want to make a mess, and people who are generally more difficult to deal with. Some drivers have had their phones stolen, or even their cars. To protect themselves, some said they are considering paying to install webcams in their cars.

Mealtimes are also unpredictable, as the longer the driver stays in the car, the more they earn, so sometimes they don't have time to eat. As Siam told us, although 'you earn a lot of money' you often do not have time for breaks:

... when it's busy you don't even have time to eat, you don't even have time to talk to anybody because you are in the car, you are on the road. (Siam, key-informant, London)

Furthermore, the difficulties and dangers of being a private Uber driver are compounded by the emotional challenges of the job. As Abdul explains, drivers never know what kind of customers they will encounter during their workday.

When a passenger is good, I feel good, but when he is not good, my whole day is not a good day. Sometimes the job makes me happy, sometimes not, it also depends on the passenger. Some passengers are nice, some others, not. (Abdul, driver, London)

The job is made more complex by pressure for punctuality and adherence to the rules of the road:

If they're late, it's the driver's fault. If you make any small mistake, the whole responsibility falls on you. And it makes it a lot worse. (Siam, key-informant, London)

Driving for Uber can also be a dangerous job if you don't know the country's highway code, don't know the directions and don't speak English well. Siam, who helps prospective Uber drivers get licences and find spare cars, says:

[i]f you are a European driver, for 95% of them it is different because obviously right side-left side. Plus, they don't know the roads. So, you don't have the local knowledge, you don't have the driving knowledge, and you don't speak good English. It is a very bad combination. (Siam, key-informant, London)

Hectic and unpredictable: how irregular work schedules strain Uber drivers' family relations and social lives

Participants' work regimes were particularly fragmented, irregular, and often required working unsocial hours, meaning that many participants commented on their loss of control over time (Maury, 2024). This is a central issue because platform logics compress earning opportunities into evenings, nights, and weekends, making working time non-negotiable. Returning to the 'autonomy' narrative introduced in the first section, this time squeeze demystifies that promise: surge pricing, algorithmic dispatch, and ratings effectively dictate drivers' schedules, leaving little predictable time for rest, parenting, or social life. As we have seen, the highly flexible service sector in London sees them working without fixed hours, mainly at weekends or in non-social hours and, of course, requires constant mobility within the city. This is a change from the industrial work many of them did in Italy, which was organized into weekly shifts planned monthly that often coincided with those of their compatriots. The interviewees reported that their work routines in London had no structured schedules and no fixed days off:

If you start a night shift, you are likely to be locked into hours that are very different from those of your family and also very different from those you had before in Italy. (Ashek, driver, London)

They start doing the night shift and then they can't go back. Everyday life is a bit different from their previous lives in Italy when they maybe worked in restaurants, factories ... (Amin, key-informant, London)

The heterogeneity and uncertainty of schedules, locations, and work commitments make it much more difficult to meet compatriots and create friendship networks in London. Moreover, there is a 'gap' between their working hours and the times they want or need to be with their families or engage in other social and leisure activities (Ibidem). As Rashid's comment below shows, this unpredictability sometimes creates positive unplanned moments with the family, but in general, the fact that the work has peaks of demand in the evenings and at weekends does not harmonize well with family life:

Here there are no hours. In the morning, I wake up at eight o'clock, while my wife gets the children ready. At half past eight I leave the house, take the children to school and then start work. I drive a mini-cab. I work until two or three, sometimes until four, because you never know where you have to go. If you work with a local agency, you know where you are going before you take the job, you know where you have to go. If, on the other hand, you work with Uber, you don't know in advance: you accept the call and your destination comes last. Maybe you find out that you have to go to Cambridge University. However ... Then I go home, take my lunch. I see the children and in the evening, I go out and work a few more hours. (Rashid, driver, London)

Siam also tells us that many future workers arrive in London thinking they have found a secure job when in fact they often get into a car but do not know where the journey will end, it could even be at an airport or in an area outside the city:

The thing with Uber is that they get customers everywhere. You might start your job here, but you don't know where you're going to be going today, you could go all over London, it all depends on where you riders take you. (Siam, key-informant, London)

In general, participants said they spent little time with their families. Rintu pointed out that the time spent at work or resting between shifts seems to be greater than the time spent with their children. Drivers do not have the opportunity to support their children during homework and school activities, nor to play with them in their free time. Rintu's wife, Samia, told us that she never knows when her husband will be available to help the children with their homework. His availability depends on his work schedule, and even when he is home, he either needs to rest or has difficulty helping due to differences between the Bangladeshi and English school systems.

Consequently, Samia, a driver's wife, often finds herself solely responsible for supporting the children's education. Regarding mathematics, for example, she explained: 'I don't understand. It's done differently here'.

Sherif further adds that the intensity and duration of the 'shifts' are also linked to the high cost of living in London:

This kind of work also creates a distance between us and our children. For the children, the school weekend is Saturday and Sunday, but here we work a lot on Saturdays and Sundays. Therefore, parents cannot spend time with their children and cannot meet them because of the different schedules. (Rintu, driver, London)

Rokeya also points out how the family is affected by her husband's work for Uber. As he is often working on the weekends due to the better economic possibilities it offers, he does not spend time with her and their children on Saturdays and Sundays, when the children are at home. Rokeya tells us that very occasionally:

My husband can have holidays, so once we went to Belgium for three days with the whole family, but he doesn't have much time to spend with us. Most of his free time is during the week and he spends it more with his friends and colleagues and not with us. They play ludo, do gossip, or at home he does gossip chat, listens to the news, watches television. A few times he plays football with his children. (Rokeya, driver's wife, London)

We find the same narratives in the stories of Anar, who spends a lot of time with friends playing cards and badminton during the breaks between Uber rides, and devotes little time to his wife and family.

For this reason, Anar told us:

I spend a lot of time with friends, playing cards and organizing events like the Bengali New Year. I don't know if you're aware, but this year in London on June 9, 2024, we organized a celebration with over 100 people. (Anar, driver, London)

However, this is one of the few occasions when he can actually spend time with his family. Although he describes himself as a driver who is 'free to choose', like other interviewees presented previously, his work also depends on the dynamics of Uber, traffic, organization and shared shifts with the car he works with. Yet, his desire to work long hours is due to his dream of buying a three-storey house in Bangladesh where he wants to return once he can afford to stop working:

I don't spend much time with my family because it is a very hard life. Every step you take you have to pay 90 hundred pounds, many taxes, electricity, gas, many things. You have no choice, if you do not work the government helps you but I am a strong person and I want to work. That's why I work more hours, I have a plan to buy a house on the 3rd floor in Bangladesh. (Anar, driver, London)

Conclusions

The interviews highlight significant tensions between Uber drivers' professional obligations and personal lives, exposing the fragile foundation of Uber's rhetoric around driver autonomy. While Uber promotes the idea that drivers have flexibility and independence, in fact they live in economic precarity and are subject to health risks, social disconnection, and disrupted family lives. These issues are deeply intertwined with the company's operational model, which prioritizes drivers' availability and responsiveness over their well-being.

Uber drivers' economic precarity is reinforced by their need to make substantial initial investments in licenses, vehicle maintenance, and insurance. This compels many drivers to work long, irregular 'shifts', often exceeding 12 h a day in order to cover their costs and reach their financial goals. The rating system further exacerbates this instability, placing drivers under constant scrutiny and threatening their livelihoods if ratings fall below a certain threshold.

The long hours and physical demands of driving lead to significant health issues, including back pain, joint problems, and vitamin D deficiency due to night shifts. The lack of breaks and unpredictable meal times further strain drivers' physical and mental well-being. Safety risks, particularly at night, include confrontations with unruly passengers, theft, and the dangers of fatigue-induced accidents. Despite this, drivers often choose to work at night, as, contrary to Uber's claims of driver autonomy, their ability to choose when and how they work is in fact constrained by the demands of the platform and the economic pressures they face.

The irregular and fragmented nature of Uber work severely disrupts drivers' ability to engage with their families and maintain social connections. Many drivers report spending limited time with their children, missing important family activities, and being unable to participate in shared

leisure time. The peaks in demand during weekends and evenings – times traditionally reserved for family and social engagement – create further conflict between work and personal life. Thus, while some drivers are pursuing long-term goals, such as returning to their home countries or achieving financial stability, these aspirations come at a significant personal cost.

In conclusion, it is clear that Uber's emphasis on driver autonomy is fundamentally flawed and misleading. The company's operational structure, rating system, and economic model create an environment in which drivers have little control over their schedules, incomes, or working conditions. What Uber calls 'autonomy' is reduced to the ability to accept or reject rides, while the broader framework of work remains rigid, exploitative, and driven by corporate priorities. The requirement to be constantly available, combined with the financial and emotional toll of the job, limits drivers' ability to find an effective work-life balance. In short, the demanding, unstable, and unpredictable nature of Uber driving blurs the boundaries between work and everyday life, leaving drivers grappling with the challenges of maintaining a balanced and fulfilling existence while striving to meet economic and personal goals.

Note

1. See, for example, Uber's website: https://www.uber.com/gb/en/e/drive/london-eng-gb/?utm_source=chatgpt.com, accessed on 10 January 2025.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Nicola Montagna is an Associate Professor in Criminology and Sociology at the University of Salerno and an associate member of the Social Policy Research Centre at the Middlesex University London. His main research interests include migration, borders, migration policies, collective movements, and the far right. He has published widely in prominent academic journals including *Sociology*, *International Migration Review*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, secured prestigious grants, participated in international research projects, and held key leadership academic and research roles.

Francesco Della Puppa is associate Professor in Sociology at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and member of the Master Programme on 'Immigration: Migratory Phenomena and Social Transformations' at the same university. He carries out research and teaching activities in the field of international migration and asylum, migrant family and family reunification, transformations of work, digital work and daily life, Bangladeshi diaspora, ethno-graphic novels.

Valeria Tonioli is currently a research fellow at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She holds a joint PhD from the same university in Linguistics and from the Autonomous University of Barcelona in Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Studies. Her research interests include intercultural communication, language and cultural mediation, Bangladeshi diaspora and migration, language education of migrant students. Linguistic and cultural practices in migrant families.

ORCID

Nicola Montagna  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8170-2770>

Francesco Della Puppa  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1437-4719>

Valeria Tonioli  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0604-6432>

References

- Ahrens, J., Kelly, M., & van Liempt, I. (2016). Free movement? The onward migration of EU citizens born in Somalia, Iran, and Nigeria. *Population, Space and Place*, 22(1), 84–98. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1869>
- Ambrosini, M., Ed. (2016). *Europe: No migrant's land?* Ispi-Epoké.
- Antunes, R. (2019). *O privilégio da servidão: o novo proletariado de serviços na era digital*. Boitempo.
- Anwar, M. A., & Graham, M. (2022). Digital Taylorism: Freedom, flexibility, precarity, and vulnerability. In *The digital continent: Placing Africa in planetary networks of work* (pp. 107–153). Oxford Academic.
- Aslam, Y., & Woodcock, J. (2020). A history of Uber organizing in the UK. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 119(2), 412–421. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-8177983>
- Baril, É. (2024). Citizen-rentier-ship: Delivering the undocumented to labour platforms in Paris. *Antipode*, 56(4), 1132–1151. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.13009>
- BBC. (2019). Uber drivers claim discrimination over London congestion plan. (BBC 1 March 2019) Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47360402>
- Berger, T., Frey, C. B., Levin, G., & Santosh, R. D. (2019). Uber happy? Work and well-being in the ‘Gig Economy’. *Economic Policy*, 34(99), 429–477. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eiz007>
- Business of Apps. (n.d.). *Uber revenue and usage statistics*. *Business of Apps*. Retrieved August 19, 2025, from <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/uber-statistics/>
- Chan, N. K. (2019). The rating game: The discipline of Uber's user-generated ratings. *Surveillance & Society*, 17(1/2), 183–190. <https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v17i1/2.12911>
- Chen, M. K., Rossi, P. E., Chevalier, J. A., & Oehlsen, E. (2019). The value of flexible work: Evidence from Uber drivers. *Journal of Political Economy*, 127, 2735–2794. <https://doi.org/10.1086/702171>
- Ciobanu, R. O. (2015). Multiple migration flows of Romanians. *Mobilities*, 10(3), 466–485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2013.863498>
- Companies Market Cap. (2025, August). *Uber Technologies (UBER) market capitalization*. <https://companiesmarketcap.com/uber/marketcap/>
- Cook, C., Diamond, R., Hall, J. V., List, J. A., & Oyer, P. (2021). The gender earnings gap in the gig economy: Evidence from over a million rideshare drivers. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 88(88), 2210–2238. <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdaa081>
- Danaj, S., & Çaro, E. (2016). Becoming an EU Citizen through Italy: The experience of Albanian immigrants. *Mondi Migranti*, 3(2016), 95–108.
- Della Puppa, F., & King, R. (2019). The new ‘twice migrants’: Motivations, experiences and disillusionments of Italian-Bangladeshis relocating to London. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(11), 1936–1952. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1438251>
- De Hoon, M., De Vink, M., & Schmeets, H. (2019). A ticket to mobility? Naturalisation and subsequent migration of refugees after obtaining asylum in the Netherlands. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(7), 1185–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1629894>
- Della Puppa, F., & King, R. (2020). The dark side of onward migration: Experiences of Italian-Bangladeshis in the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(6), 1163–1179.
- Della Puppa, F., Montagna, N., & e Kofman, E. (2021). Onward migration and intra-European mobilities: A critical and theoretical overview. *International Migration*, 59(6), 16–28. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12815>
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton University Press.
- Eubanks, V. (2018). *Automating Inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor*. St. Martin's Press.
- Gebrail, D. (2024). Racial platform capitalism: Empire, migration and the making of Uber in London. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 56(4), 1170–1194. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X221115439>

- Hall, J. V., & Krueger, A. B. (2016). An analysis of the labor market for Uber driver-partners in the United States. *Working Paper, Working Paper No. 22843 November 2016*. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w22843/w22843.pdf
- Kallberg, A. L. (2017). Probing precarious work: Theory, research, and politics. In A. L. Kalleberg, S. P. Vallas, A. L. Kalleberg, & S. P. Vallas (Eds.), *Precarious work* (pp. 1–30). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M. M., & Joye, D. (2004). Motility: Mobility as capital. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(4), 745–756. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2004.00549.x>
- King, R., & Skeldon, R. (2010). ‘Mind the Gap!’ Integrating approaches to internal and international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(10), 1619–1646. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489380>
- Koivusalo, M., Svnarenko, A., Mbare, B., & Perkiö, M. (2023). Globalization, platform work, and wellbeing—a comparative study of Uber drivers in three cities: London, Helsinki, and St Petersburg. *Global Social Policy*, 23(1), 88–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14680181221115524>
- Leonardi, E., & Pirina, G. (2020). Uber in the Portuguese Gig Economy: A laboratory for platform capitalism. *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation*, 14(2), 46–63. <https://doi.org/10.13169/workorglaboglob.14.2.0046>
- Maury, O. (2024). Scenes of life’s work: Migrant platform workers’ struggles over social reproduction in the context of welfare state bordering in Finland. *Platforms & Society*, 1, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/29768624241307017>
- MacMillan, D., & Demos, T. (2015, July 31). Uber valued at more than \$50 billion. *The Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/uber-valued-at-more-than-50-billion-1438367457>
- Möhlmann, M., & Henfridsson, O. (2019). *What people hate about being managed by algorithms, according to a study of Uber drivers*. Harvard Business Review.
- Möhlmann, M., Zalmanson, L., Henfridsson, O., & Gregory, R. W. (2021). Algorithmic management of work on online labor platforms: When matching meets control. *MIS Quarterly*, 45(4), 1999–2022. <https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2021/15333>
- Montagna, N. (2020). *Da Blair a Brexit: Vent’anni di immigrazione e politiche migratorie nel Regno Unito*. Franco Angeli.
- Moret, J. (2018). *European Somalis’ post-migration movement mobility capital and the transnationalisation of resources*. Springer.
- Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. NYU Press.
- Noponen, N., Feshchenko, P., & Auvinen, T. (2024). Taylorism on steroids or enabling autonomy? A systematic review of algorithmic management. *Management Review Quarterly*, 74, 1695–1721. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-023-00345-5>
- Paul, A. M. (2015). Capital and mobility in the stepwise international migrations of Filipino migrant domestic workers. *Migration Studies*, 3(3), mnv014–mnv459. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnv014>
- Peterlongo, G. (2023). *Nella trama dell’algoritmo Lavoro e circuiti informali nella gig-economy*. Rosenberg and Sellier.
- Pirina, G., Della Puppa, F., & Perocco, F. (2024). Lavoratori immigrati e lavoro digitale di piattaforma: Percorsi teorici, lavorativi e urbani. *Economia e Società Regionale*, 1(1), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3280/ES2024-001003>
- Public First. (2024). The impact of Uber in Canada [Report]. *Public First*, April 22. <https://ubercanada.publicfirst.co/>
- Rosenblat, A., & Stark, L. (2016). Algorithmic labor and information asymmetries: A case study of Uber’s drivers. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 3758–3784. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2686227>
- Scholz, T. (2016). *Uberworked and underpaid: How workers are disrupting the digital economy*. Polity Press.
- Schor, J. (2020). *After the Gig: How the sharing economy got hijacked and how to win it back*. University of California Press.
- Schor, J. B., Attwood-Charles, W., Cansoy, M., Ladegaard, I., & Wengronowitz, R. (2020). Dependence and precarity in the platform economy. *Theory and Society*, 49(5-6), 833–861. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-020-09408-y>
- Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Stewart, E. (2012). UK dispersal policy and onward migration: Mapping the current state of knowledge. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 25(1), 25–49. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fer048>
- The Guardian. (2017, September 23). Uber stripped of London licence due to lack of corporate responsibility. *The Guardian*.

- The Guardian. (2019, November 25). Uber loses London licence after TfL finds drivers faked identity. *The Guardian*.
- The Guardian. (2021, February 19). Uber drivers entitled to workers' rights, UK Supreme Court rules. *The Guardian*.
- Thelen, K. (2018). Regulating Uber: The politics of the platform economy in Europe and the United States. *Perspectives on Politics*, 16(4), 938–953. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592718001081>
- Toma, S., & Castagnone, E. (2015). What drives onward mobility within Europe? The case of Senegalese migration between France, Italy and Spain. *Population-E*, 70(1), 65–96.
- Tonioli, V. (2020). Educazione linguistica e rappresentazioni della disabilità in famiglie migranti di origine bangladeshe. Risultati di un'indagine condotta nel territorio di Venezia (in Italian), [trans. Linguistic Education and representations of disability in migrant Bangladeshi families. The results of an investigation conducted in Venice]. *JHCEinP, Journal of Health Care Education in Practice*, 2(1), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.14658/PUPJ-jhcep-2020-1-9>
- Tonioli, V. (2022). Tell Me: Language education representations and family language policies in Transnational Bangladeshi low socioeconomic status families living in Italy. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 19(2), 269–287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2022.2040512>
- Van Doorn, N., Ferrari, F., & Graham, M. (2023). Migration and migrant labour in the gig economy: An intervention. *Work, Employment and Society*, 37(4), 1099–1111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170221096581>
- van Liempt, I. (2011). “And then one day they all moved to Leicester”: The relocation of Somalis from the Netherlands to the UK explained. *Population, Space and Place*, 17(3), 254–266. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.606>
- Webster, N. A., & Zhang, Q. (2020). Careers delivered from the kitchen? Immigrant women small-scale entrepreneurs working in the growing Nordic platform economy. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 28(2), 113–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2020.1714725>
- Wiener, M. (2023). Algorithmic control and gig workers: A legitimacy perspective. *Information Systems Journal*, 32(1), 573–594. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12363>
- Woodcock, J., & Graham, M. (2020). *The gig economy: A critical introduction*. Polity Press.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. PublicAffairs.
- Zwick, A. (2018). Welcome to the gig economy: Neoliberal industrial relations and the case of Uber. *GeoJournal*, 83(4), 679–691. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-017-9793-8>