

Unraveling the Nature of Digital Labor Platforms: An Institutional Logics Perspective on Features, Affordances and Work Practices

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The purpose of this research project is to shed light on the nature of a certain type of platforms prevalent in the sharing economy, namely digital labor platforms (DLPs). Rather than enabling the exchange of existing tangible or intangible goods, DLPs mediate work that individuals provide in the form of skills and knowledge in exchange for compensation (Rai et al. 2019). While being depicted as markets, DLPs are also referred to as corporations in academic and public discourse (e.g., Frenken et al. 2020; Leimeister et al. 2016) which leads to a controversial debate reflected in various court decisions (DeClercq 2019; O'Connor 2020). Thereby, policy makers and regulators struggle in the classification and regulation of DLPs, platform owners face uncertainties in their choice of platform features and platform workers are left unguided in their decision making about the status and benefits they want to profit from when choosing a DLP: autonomy (market) versus security (corporation). To systematically address the controversial nature of DLPs, we investigate how affordances enabled by platform features contribute to market- and corporation-associated institutional logics on DLPs (Faik et al. 2020;

Karahanna et al. 2018). As platforms and work on platforms are enabled by digital technology, the technological aspects are central to the analysis of the nature of DLPs. However, prior literature lacks an understanding of affordances of DLPs and their enabling platform features. Additionally, the configuration of the technological affordances can lead to an association with one institutional logic and related consequences, such as regulations, over others (see Figure 1).