

# ICGC COLLOQUIUM SERIES

## Rescuing Rajni: Fighting Poverty with Free-Markets, One Smart Techie at a Time.

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Friday, April 19, 12 -1 pm CT

537 Heller Hall (ICGC)

Live Stream Available @ [www.icgc.umn.edu](http://www.icgc.umn.edu)

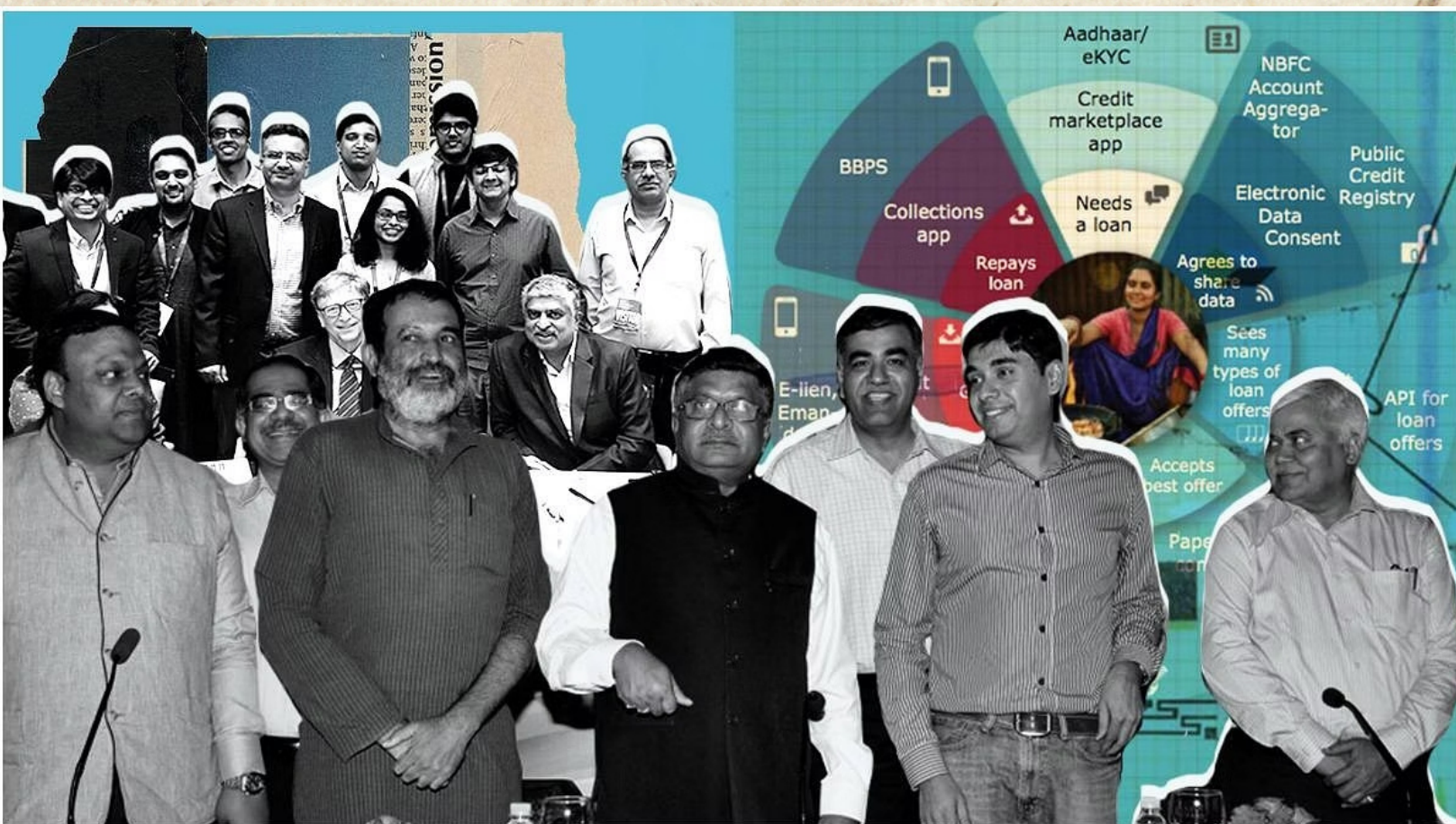


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Platform finance — a new industry that uses digital platform technology to collect individuals' data and sell them customized financial products — is one of the fastest growing industries globally. Outside the West, India is home to the world's most highly valued platform finance industry. This shift from in-person to platform finance has made banking convenient for existing customers who can now bank from anywhere, at any time. Platform finance firms in the global south, however, also seek to "democratize finance" by using data to make finance accessible to those outside the formal financial system i.e., the poor. How did democratizing finance, formally known as "financial inclusion," become both the cause and consequence of platform finance? Scholars credit techno-solutionist ideology and neoliberal economic-political practices. Through an ethnography of the digital infrastructure powering India's platform finance industry and its founding think-tank, I argue that techno-solutionism and neoliberalism can't be taken for granted, assumed to be fixed in meaning and universal. I show how the material interests of domestic software capital; the organization's culture of smartness, hard work, and neutrality; and members' biographies of privilege and social imaginaries of poverty shape the contents, characteristics, and trajectories of "techno-solutionism" and "neoliberalism" in the platform age.

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