



When cities meet platforms: Towards a trans-urban approach

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ABSTRACT

This paper focusses on the impact that the development and spreading of digital platforms have at urban level. In particular, lean platforms are transforming cities more and more in sites of production and circulation, so to change also actors and roles engaged with urban planning and public policies. Despite we will propose an investigation on a particular service, neither the analysis of a general process shared by all platforms, in the article we will investigate the socio-historical background for platform economy development more in general, in order to propose a methodological approach we call a trans-urban approach.

In the first part of the article, we rest on the historical background of our digital era. Analysing the relation between technological innovation and productive organization, we will highlight how platform economy emerges as particular articulation of a more general long-time transition deeply entangled with the so-called "Logistics Revolution". In the second part, we will consider more in depth the specificities of platform business model in relation with its urban dimension focusing on the platforms territorialization and on platforms conflicts. In the third and final part, we propose a trans-urban approach as an innovative perspective to study the globalized and variegated features of contemporary capitalism, in particular the urban impact of platform economy.

The aim is to sketch few features of a new methodological approach towards the urban space as field of tension between several and different perspectives generated by the development of platform economy.

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Labour in Urban Spaces) coordinated by University of Bologna.

1. Introduction

During last years the literature regarding the platformization of labour in urban context has been highly expanding (Barns, 2020; Graham, 2020; Huws, 2020). On one side it concentrated on so-called lean platforms that provide local services and their impact on labour organization and regulation at urban level: we are talking about transporting (Rosenblat, 2018; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016), food delivering (Richardson, 2020 among many others) and hosting (Ferreri & Sanyal, 2018, Shaw, 2018, Gainsforth, 2019, Söderström & Mermet, 2020 just to recall a few). On the other side, many scholars analysed dynamics and

processes crisscrossing single platforms: the extraction of data (Attoh, Wells, & Cullen, 2019; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2019), resistances (Ravenelle, 2019; Rossi, 2019; Workers Inquiry Network, 2020), living labour behind algorithm management (Anwar & Graham, 2020, Casilli, Chicchi, & Marrone, 2022), a de-westernized gaze on platforms (Chen & Qiu, 2019; Davis & Xiao, 2021; Odendaal, 2020).

In this article¹ we will investigate the socio-historical background for platform economy development in order to propose a methodological approach linking urbanization and platformization in the framework of a more general transformation of capitalist processes. Indeed, from an historical perspective we will try to show how platforms and

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platformization are entangled both with the end of Fordism and the stunning urbanization of the Planet. Occurred in just fifty years, the passage from Fordism factories to “platform capitalism” (Srnicek, 2016) has not been smooth and flat. Rather, it involved a coherent new “business model” that both transformed cities into «factories without walls» (Ashton, 2006) and generated new waves of labour conflicts on new terrain (Moody, 2017). The “hyperindustrial”, to recall Italian workerist Romano Alquati (see Armano, 2020; Armano & Cominu, 2021; Bedani & Ioannilli, 2020), needs new methodological ways to be investigated: this is what we aim to sketch in this paper. Widely said, we will try to offer a kind of conceptual constellation that even though it will not fully cover the whole perspective of what we would call a “trans-urban approach”, it will offer some coordinates that link together urban studies and platform studies through a) the role of technology and the cyborg perspective; b) the reconceptualization of geographical scale; c) the concept of the “world-economy” reinterpreting Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein; and d) the focus of the transitional phase we are living towards a planetary dimension (Chakrabarty, 2022; Frapporti & Ventresca, 2020).

More specifically, in the first part of the article, we rest on the historical background of our digital era. Analysing the relation between technological innovation and production organization, we will highlight how platform economy emerges as particular articulation of a more general long-term transition. In the second part, we analyse more in depth the specificities of platform business model in relation with its urban dimension. In the third and final part, we propose a trans-urban approach as an innovative perspective to study the globalized and variegated features of contemporary capitalism, in particular the urban impact of platform economy.

2. From Fordism to platform capitalism through logistics

Today we live a new wave of technological innovations applied into several sectors, from political participation to labour organization: more generally, in all people life. Digital technologies furnish new possibilities to economic expansion and valorisation, giving life to what we may call *Capitalism 4.0* (Into the Black Box, 2021) that is characterized by technical newness such as a high form of automation, an enormous spread of ICTs on work and a clear «platformization» of businesses thanks to digital technologies (Gurumurthy, Bharthur, & Chami, 2019; Helmond, 2015; Srnicek, 2016). This digitalized capitalism is supposed to be the result of a Forth Revolution. As it has been pointed out by Klaus Schwab, the term Fourth Industrial Revolution was «coined at the Hannover Fair in 2011 to describe how this will revolutionize the organization of global value chains and of the factory. By enabling “smart factories”, the fourth industrial revolution creates a world in which virtual and physical systems of manufacturing globally cooperate with each other in a flexible way. This enables the absolute customization of products and the creation of new operating models» (Schwab, 2016, p. 12). However, the centrality of smart-factories and the impact of digital technologies in terms of automation should be considered in parallel with another trajectory of Forth Industrial Revolution, namely the platformization of society. The so-called digital platforms (widely intended) are drastically changing our lifestyles as well as internet firms are constantly gaining power and economic weight,² something which is particularly true after Covid-19 pandemic as its outbreak is strongly reinforcing the digitalization of labour and services.

Thus, beyond German factories, Silicon Valley can be considered the second geographical source of the digital innovation, if we intend it as the productive fulfilment of the so-called Californian ideology in which an optimistic, technology-driven future was depicted as a combination

between «the free-wheeling spirit of the hippies and the entrepreneurial zeal of the yuppies» (Barbrook & Cameron, 1995). It is from the Silicon Valley that platforms have spread as «a smooth and flat space in which are developed flows, a continuous mobility, the meeting between customers and suppliers, but also sharing practices, forms of socialization and an ethics of participation» (Pirone, 2018, p. 47). Still Schwab remarks as, «to give a sense of what this means at the aggregate level, compare Detroit in 1990 (then a major centre of traditional industries) with Silicon Valley in 2014. In 1990, the three biggest companies in Detroit had a combined market capitalization of \$36 billion, revenues of \$250 billion, and 1.2 million employees. In 2014, the three biggest companies in Silicon Valley had a considerably higher market capitalization (\$1.09 trillion), generated roughly the same revenues (\$247 billion), but with about 10 times fewer employees (137,000)» (Schwab, 2016, p. 14). Covid-19 pandemic just increased and accelerated this trend: digital platforms figure among the companies whose wealth increased more dramatically during the pandemic crisis as it is the case of “Silicon Valley’s firms” or the case of Amazon.

The supposed newness of this revolution hides a more general process of re-organization occurred in the spatialities of production. While we could tackle platform genealogies from different perspectives like firm theory (Baronian, 2020) or media and counterculture (Lingel, 2017, 2021), here we would like to foster particular significance on two trajectories: the logistical rationality and labour precarization’ process. Such double focus seems to us the most intriguing to interrogate the evolution and features of global capitalism today.

Starting our path, we may go back until the so-called “logistics revolution” of the 1960s, when logistics became a benchmark of capitalist production and reproduction (Allen, 1997; Bonacich & Wilson, 2008; Cowen, 2014; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2019). Logistics revolution was essentially «a revolution in the calculation and organization of economic space» (Cowen, 2014, p. 23). Spread mostly in the military field since the rise of modernity (Cuppini & Frapporti, 2018; Van Creveld, 1977), after the World War II logistics «was transformed into a business science». Such transformation orbited around three axes: materially, “logistics revolution” implied the spread of containers, pallets, quantitative technics, computers, software and other technologies for worldwide standardization and intermodality; from a business science perspective, the 60s saw the end of the circulation time of commodities as a wasted cost and time process: «cost minimization had been replaced with a model that emphasized value added» (Cowen, 2014, p. 34); eventually, rise of global supply chain meant the search for cheap and precarious labour forces.

Since then on, the commodities circulation and the global range of the production process became the characteristic feature of the capitalism system, which gradually saw the dethrone of the “Fordist Factory” in favour of a global scale production where work was increasingly “parcelled” and “atomized”. The acceleration in the circulation procedures (with new infrastructures, new systems of transports, intermodal trans-shipment method, new modes of storage and so on and so forth) gained more and more importance, and all the urban areas were keen to facilitate the needs of became hub towards which the flux of commodities were passing through. In the aftermath of the logistics revolution, that «Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger» (Levinson, 2006), another process burst into the scene named by authors like Neilson Lichtenstein as «The Retail Revolution» that «has transformed the nature of U.S. employment, sent U.S. manufacturing abroad, and redefined the very meaning of globalization» (Lichtenstein, 2010, p. 4). The manufacture system was recalibrated. Consumers somehow dictated the global agenda of production, so that neoliberal cycle of the last 70s and 80s introduced new fragmentations: in a long process of dismantling, working-class composition saw further bashes like the rise of teleworking (Huws & et al., 1996), finally turning in what has been described as a «Multitude» (Hardt and Negri, 2005). Already in the 80s some authors started to talk about a new “commodity chain” (Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1986) or of a “value chain” (Porter, 1985)

² See the “Platform Strategy Report” of MIT. The last one released on November 7th, 2019, is available here: <http://ide.mit.edu/news-blog/news/newly-released-2019-platform-strategy-report>.

which was spreading worldwide, «where commodity production is broken down into discrete parts, with different parts of the process carried out by different workers in different locations» (Huws, 2017, p. 32). This process brought to the birth of what Anna Tsing called few years ago “Supply Chain Capitalism” through which she refers «to commodity chains based on subcontracting, outsourcing, and allied arrangements in which the autonomy of component enterprises is legally established even as the enterprises are disciplined within the chain as a whole» (Tsing, 2009, p. 148).

«Supply chain capitalism» ran in parallel with the rise of so-called *dot-com revolution* (Becker, 2006): «If containerization can be understood as a crucial element in the rise of logistics, the rise of digital technology is without a doubt another element», Moritz Altenried states in his last book (2022, p. 27). Indeed, the global network society of 90s (Castells, 1996) witnessed a deep change in the market and saw the advent of actors such as Amazon at the central stage. If Walmart stays at the core of “retail revolution”, Amazon is paradigmatic of the digital one. Started with a book sent by Jeff Bezos from his Seattle garage in 1994, today offers multiple services where e-commerce just affects less than the 50% of Amazon's total revenue.³ Nonetheless, e-commerce and home delivery represented the very beginning of Amazon, and it is a kind of truism to stress how much logistics are entangled with Amazon's rationality which is precisely structured on a “*just in time and to the point*” character.

Together with e-commerce, eWork and digital labour exploded. In the book *The Making of a Cybertariat? Virtual Work in a Real World* (2003) Ursula Huws faced the rise of *cybertariat* due to introduction of new technologies. *Cybertariat* – according to Huws – was just the last categories of workers rose from the change of working conditions occurred at least since the end of “The Glorious Thirty” in the 1970s. More precisely, it was the fourth step of a wave of changes where «employment landscape was suddenly very different [...] and ICTs had [...] become part of the taken-for-granted environment of all work» (Huws, 2003, p. 13).

Last step in this genealogy occurred after 2008 economic crisis when *platform capitalism* (Srnicek, 2016) burst into the scene: a tremendous set of platforms «have penetrated the heart of societies» (Van Dijck, Poell, & De Waal, 2019, 2) quickly defining new ways of consumption as well as new figures of workers. Indeed, ICTs changed dramatically how labour confronts capital in the new millennium, and a kind of paradigmatic example is given precisely by “platform workers”, namely those who work in the “gig” or “sharing” economy which – after a first fascinating period (Bauwens, 2006; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Wang & Zhang, 2012) – soon revealed its risks and challenges. Most platforms are prominently urban-based actors with a “logistics rationality” leading their conduct: all the food-delivery platforms as well as many others like those of ride hailing or domestic care operate *just in time to the point*. The “digital Taylorism” defined by Altenried seems to overstep the wall of warehouses spreading urban-wide where riders, drivers etc. have their time beaten by the algorithms that run their smartphones apps.

On a general manner we can conclude that digitalization cannot be separated by a wider transformation of geographies under capitalist production. Algorithms, Big Data and software are fundamental to manage all the flows of commodities and info generated by the circulatory dimension of contemporary “logistics capitalism” that bears on a kind of *just in time to the point* rationality. Quoting again Altenried: «many of the logics involved in containerization can also be found in the manifold of digitalization; accordingly, as not only in their homogenizing drive but also in how they create heterogeneity and

fragmentation» (2022, p. 23). Cities represent main spaces for their accumulation and platforms constitute the best way to manage them. We will see better how.

2.1. The urbanization of platform capitalism

In the previous paragraph we analysed the logistics rationality behind platform economy. Together with this genealogy we insisted on the disarticulation of working conditions towards a multiplication of labour that have been framed in terms of Multitude or Cybertariat. In this paragraph we will continue extending this perspective trying to place this logistics rationality and the emergence of such workers' subjectivity at a peculiar scale, the city.

We already introduced the concept of platform capitalism, but we have still to clarify what a platform is. Generally, this term refers to a business model based on the matching between demand and supply through a digital infrastructure like an application, a social network or a website. According to Geoffrey Parker, Van Alstyne, and Choudhary (2016) platforms existed for years but the application of digital technologies reduced fix costs and permitted to expand their range of inclusiveness and efficiency. On the other side, Anne Helmond (2015) argues that platform model generated into social network and rapidly became hegemonic as “the dominant infrastructural and economic model of the social web”. In both cases, there is a “platformization” of businesses thanks to digital technologies. Platforms manage data flows that produce matching between demand and offer in different sectors such as hosting, delivering, transport, multi-tasking. According to Parker, Van Alstyne and Choudhary the platform strategy involves three main shifts from traditional industry:

1. From resource control to resource orchestration. Assets do not need to be privatised because producers and consumers networks create a community that shares its resources and contributes.
2. From internal optimization to external interaction. Platforms do not create a locked circuit of production but are based on interactions between producers and consumers. Labour control is less important than governance.
3. From a focus on customer value to a focus on ecosystem value. The community of users is more important than the single customer. The creation of an ecosystem needs circular, iterative, feedback-driven process facilitated by ICT and digital technologies.

So platforms capture many activities – some of them not even considered properly as work – and bring them into a supposed collaborative exchange. In other words, platforms embed scattered social interactions and productive activities generating an ecosystem managed through a logistics rationality. Here we want to further detail two elements of such analysis: the spatial scale and the subjective composition. In other words, to describe platforms in terms of ecosystems or interactions' management is still not enough to distinguish them from other organisations.

Even if platforms operate at global level, these ecosystems – especially in the case of lean platforms furnishing local services – do not operate only on a vague global scale, but find an effective ground of organization at urban level (Hardaker, 2021). Considering the contemporary capitalism in terms of operations (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2019) or variations (Peck & Theodore, 2007) – that means that general tendencies of valorisation and global enterprises adapt themselves to different contexts in non-uniform ways – we could understand how the process of platforms' territorialisation entails both a wide quite homogeneous tendency of business platformization and an irregular adaptation to urban social, economic and political background. The platform economy, in fact, is affecting first and foremost urban areas. According to Artioli (2018) urban spaces are very fruitful for platforms economy because:

³ Amazon today offer services such as: Amazon Web Services, producer of movies and series and shows Football Champions League with Amazon Prime, selling its own clothing, technologies like Kindle or Alexa and so on and so forth (cfr. Altenried, 2022, pp. 30–32).

- 1) Digital mediated exchanges benefit from the population density, spatial proximity and socio-economic specialisation of urban agglomerations. City markets are bigger and deeper, which makes it easier to attract, embed and 'match' producers and consumers within platforms' exchanges.
- 2) Platform mediated exchanges rely on, and contribute to, the digital skin of the city, including its infrastructures or the diffusion of radical technologies as smartphones.
- 3) Virtually mediated exchanges affect existing urban groups and spaces, reshaping city environment, and having distributional effects, often unequal, that bring into play, in various ways, incumbent economic actors, local organisations, activists, platform workers or platform providers.
- 4) Local administrations are on the frontline for regulation. They set experimental regulatory frameworks through changes in regulations, bans, taxation and agreements with platform firms.

One Earth (2015) highlights how "the dense concentration of people in an increasingly urban society enables sharing with less friction while a desire or necessity for more independent lifestyles with part-time work attract people to the Sharing Economy". On one side, online platforms facilitate new businesses like sharing and gig economy, where "physical exchange is concerned, the population density of cities has created especially fertile ground" (World Economic Forum, 2017). Moreover, "the popularity of smartphones, lower data costs and high population density in cities facilitate the use of sharing platforms, which can scale quickly with the right business model. The multitude of resources concentrated in urban areas also create ideal conditions for monetizing idle or excess capacity, skills contracting and optimizing the match of supply and demand" (ivi). Cities foster practices of sharing together with digital lifestyles, necessity of supplement jobs and consumer new orientations.

Secondly, the containment measures adopted to face the ongoing pandemic particularly at urban level reinforced the general trend towards the digitalization of services (McKinsey, 2020; OECD, 2020). From so-called smart working to food delivery, platforms acquired new shares of users and businesses. The urban economies are rapidly moving on platforms to avoid the shutdown or to expand their services (Chicchi, Frapporti, Marrone, & Pirone, 2020).

This expansion of platform capitalism through urban areas follows different strategies. On one side, platforms become leading actors of urban agglomerates driving economic and social transformations – think about Airbnb' impact on housing market (Lee, 2016) or Uber' on taxi industry (Cramer & Krueger, 2016). They also lead to urban changes (Barns, 2020). On the other side, the same cities adopt a platform logic trying to become smart or digital (Cocchia, 2014). Moreover, urban areas host more and more infrastructures or facilities useful to favour platforms' expansion (Shapiro, 2022).

Once clarified the centrality of urbanization for platform capitalism, there is another point to be mentioned. Cities do not offer only a generic basin of producers and consumers. They host several segments of workforce – from low-skilled to STEM workers – who are fundamental for platforms' operations. As the *Inception Report for the Global Commission on the Future of Work* states, "a common misperception is that algorithms and new technologies do the work supplied through these information and communication technology (ICT) channels. In fact, 'invisible workers' – human labour behind the technology – perform much of this work. These workers are 'invisible' in the sense that their work has no dedicated location, and their employment relationship is often not recognized". A lack of legal protections in platform economy has been largely documented (De Stefano, 2016; Degryse, 2016). On the one side, 15% of independent workers earn their income on digital platforms but the percentage is rapidly growing (McKinsey, 2020). This kind of activity, nevertheless, assumes more and more the role of proper

jobs for the people involved. On the other side, it is not possible to fit them into the categories and protections typical of standard jobs. Consequently, these innovations have entailed deep changes in the content of work and new skills required by the labour market. The features of flexibility, casualness, autonomy and self-entrepreneurship required by these new jobs question welfare models based on standard employment, dependency, long temporality.

"Independent work is nothing new: in emerging economies, self-employment is still the predominant form of work. Nevertheless, the modern 9-to-5 job that dates back to the Industrial Revolution is being challenged by technology-enabled independent work" (McKinsey, 2020).

Social and labour conflicts emerged together with the growth of platform economy at urban level. From citizens' committees complaining about gentrification favoured by tourism platforms to informal unions of riders fighting against unfair working conditions in food delivery sector, in recent year urban spaces became a battlefield between platforms' expansion and other social actors claiming for a different urban planning or against algorithmic power (Into the Black Box, 2021).

Considering both these elements – the urbanization of platforms and the conflicting dimension of its workforce – local governments are both under increasing pressure for managing platform economy impact' consequences and are more and more appointed as key-actors that could facilitate their growth and take advantage from it. There is a spectrum of roles local governments play in the platform economy: no action, facilitative actions, preparatory actions, implementation actions" (One Earth, 2015). These actions could contribute to a fair economic growth, to define taxes and fees for collective benefits, to protect data (World Economic Forum 2017). Municipalities, therefore, are asked not simply to regulate such growing phenomena but to co-operate with other different stakeholders (trade associations, unions, workers, citizens' committees) to plan sustainability in economic, social, environmental terms of such transformations.

3. Towards a trans-urban approach

The hypothesis we are supporting is that it is not possible to separate an analysis of industrialization processes, technical innovations and labour transformations from the environment in which they develop, the spatial configuration they create and interact with, that is to say (in this case) from the urban. Therefore, we could state that industrialization and urbanization processes are somehow two faces of the same coin. Over the last decade, the emergence of platform urbanism prompts a reimagining of existing infrastructural geographies of the city and the labour that underpins the operation of urban life. Platforms interact with existing infrastructures and environments transforming the way the urban is governed and experienced through technology. These interfaces have become ubiquitous nowadays, but we think that it is necessary endowing the analysis of such phenomena with a methodological and genealogical investigation, to grasp in a more complex and accurate way the current transformations.

It is necessary to adopt a lens on the urban able to go beyond what has been defined as an ideological cityicism (Wachsmuth, 2014). Urban studies used to point out cities as specific units of analysis, as if cities are bounded entities that could be understood in their own. However, a recent wave of critical urban scholars (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2015; Merrifield, 2013a) have pointed out the necessity to destabilize this assumption opening up a new theoretical and empirical terrain of urban analysis. We try to contribute to this stream of studies by elaborating what we labelled as a 'trans-urban approach'.

In fact, we considered that the ways in which digital platforms are territorializing (both producing new spatial arrangements and social relations) requires an inquiry's approach able to comprehend how they interact, the frictions that they produce, the adaptation they require in the urban texture in a planetary vision. In other words, as stated in the

introduction, rather than considering specific case studies as meaningful in themselves, we push towards a research attitude able to focus on the continuities, resonances and commonalities that platform capitalism is producing on a large scale. This does not mean that specificities, differences, contextual and situated factors do not matter. On the contrary, we think that a trans-urban approach should be able to emphasise the contextual dynamics by enlightening the common ground in which they are produced and the particular frictions creating in the processes of territorialization.

To better frame a trans-urban perspective on platforms' expansion through cities we propose four points.

First, the concept of planetary urbanization (Brenner & Schmid, 2014; Merrifield, 2013b) together with Donna Haraway conceptualization on 'cyborg' (1985) as an entity combining cybernetic, organic as well non-organic qualities is a quite intriguing approach that can be tested on the analysis on platform capitalism from both the labour and urban perspective. Cities' boundaries blurs while digital technologies open up new hybrid spaces connecting life and valorisation.

Second, this means going beyond the hierarchical vision prompted by modern geography. The world is not any more organized through a defined scalar disposition (Farinelli, 2009). The local, the regional, the State, the continent and the global used to function as analytical and political steps for encapsulate social phenomena. However, one of the main changes that globalization processes have prompted has been a complex re-scaling (Brenner, 2010). In this sense, trans-urbanism places the urban level directly in relation to the global and state level, which is something deeply entangled with the world of platform.

Third, trans-urbanism reformulates an urban interpretation of the so called 'world-ecology' field (Moore, 2015; Patel & Moore, 2017). The hyphenated term world-ecology derives from a reinterpretation of the historians Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein. The history of capitalism marks the geographical expansion of a world-economy that becomes global in the twentieth century. In Moore's early formulation, the capitalist world-economy could not be separated from its environmental history: capitalism is a "world-ecology" whose geopolitics and economic life was rooted in a particularly dynamic – and violent – relationship towards webs of life. Capitalism as a system of endless capital accumulation required a constant search for new, lost-cost natures – including enslaved humans and the destruction and depletion effected by capitalist monocultures and extractive systems exhausted cheap natures discovered in a previous era, setting in motion new frontiers of violent accumulation. Now this frontier is represented by urban spaces where social reproduction is transformed into platform services and social cooperation into data extraction.

Forth, the above-mentioned reference to the so-called world-system theory, points to cycles of accumulation leading to the world-system. There is a specific urban perspective within it. Each cycle of accumulation had a city as its centre of gravity. From Venice to Amsterdam, from London to New York, cities used to represent the logistical and financial heart of the world-systems. These cities were laboratories of forms of coexistence and conflicts, miniaturized worlds. However, at the end of the XIX century there was a huge increase of exchange and trade on the global scale, led by the deepening of the interconnection between metropolitan fabrics, stretching from Paris to Berlin, from London to New York, from Chicago to Calcutta. This was a break with the precedent set by world-cities, who were (or at least pretended to be) the unique centre of a world-system with a clear core-periphery geography. Moreover, the becoming-metropolitan of what were formerly world-cities triggered a new cycle, the so-called "first Globalization". The figure of the Globe (globalization) was definitely affirmed during the Nineties of the XX century, with discussions of the end of the state within a borderless world (Ohmae, 1999), a new era structured around a global space of flows (Castells, 1996) with social relationship organized around the new net technologies in a global village (McLuhan & Power, 1989). The "triumph" of the concept of global city marked that historical passage. However, in the last decade we are living in a transitional phase

towards a planetary dimension. This involves a trend towards technological, communicative, and productive "unification", going hand in hand with a continuous multi-polarization. We are faced with the progressive extension of an urban infrastructure on the whole planetary surface, that requires a trans-urban perspective to be grasped.

We previously discussed how logistics and platforms can be assumed as turning points in the history of capital development. Logistics and platforms are also crucial vectors for the continuous and ongoing mutation of the urban. They endlessly extend and re-shape urban boundaries and frontiers. Towards the elaboration of a trans-urban approach, we need to mobilize these analytical coordinates, to grasp how local and situated peculiarities and frictions generate variations in the global operations of capital. At the same time, the mobilizations occurring in platform economy are happening almost simultaneously in a myriad of contexts all around the continents. They are a truly trans-national phenomena (Sassen, 2001), acting at the same time in multiple locations. These local mobilizations are producing global resonances and they influence each other. As a research project to be develop further, the conception of trans-urbanism is nurtured by all these stimulations and will need to be better fine-tuned elaborating on the intersection between genealogical investigation, theoretical panoramas, empirical cases, as we tried to start elaborating in this article.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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