

25 JUNE 2021

FROM 5PM TO 10PM

PLATFORM URBANISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

BOLOGNA, DUMBO, VIA CASARINI 19

FREE ENTRY



5:00 PM // ONE DAY EXHIBITION

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY LUCIA BABINA, COLLETTIVO WUXU, DAVIDE BLOTTA, ILARIA DEPARI, GIULIO DI MEO, INTO THE BLACK BOX COLLECTIVE, MICHELE LAPINI, DARIO SANNA

5:30 PM // ROUNDTABLE

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

LUCIA BABINA (CULTURAL ACTIVIST)

CARMEN LAEL HINES (CENTRE OF GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE)

YVONNE HÜTTER (MARIE-CURIE FELLOW)

SANDRO MEZZADRA (UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA)

HELGE MOOSHAMMER (CURATOR OF AUSTRIAN PAVILLION AT BIENNALE)

PETER MÖRTENBÖCK (CURATOR OF AUSTRIAN PAVILLION AT BIENNALE)

AN EVENT ORGANIZED BY INTO THE BLACK BOX COLLECTIVE AND THE ACADEMY FOR GLOBAL HUMANITIES AND CRITICAL THEORY

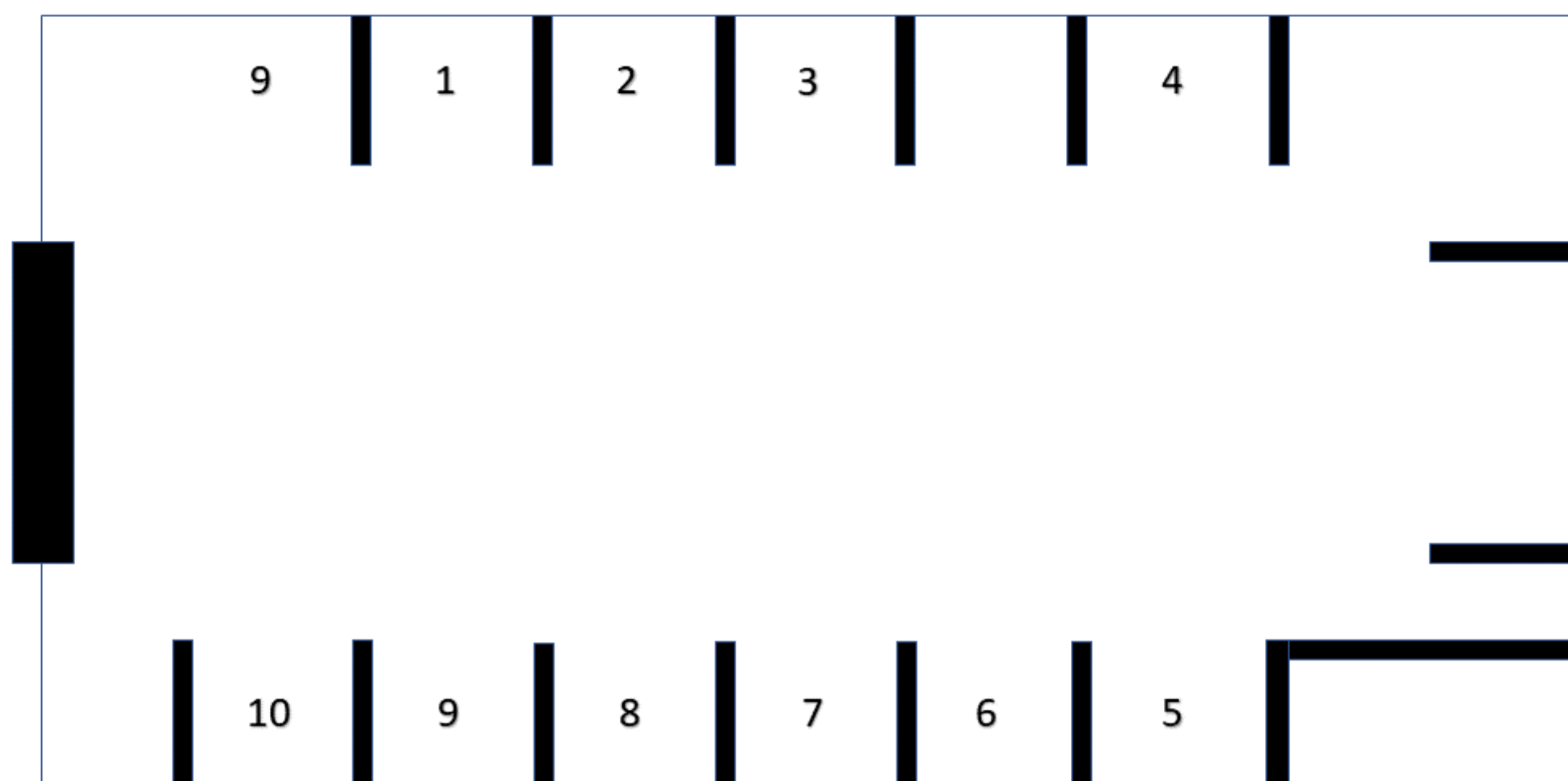
Talk “Platform Urbanism and Its Discontent”

By reorganizing access to a wide spectrum of fundamental domains, such as education, housing, health care, or even political information, platforms are destined to become the most powerful players regulating the way we live in cities. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Uber, Airbnb and Amazon embody not only new types of enterprises but also a completely new culture of life—from the products we handle and the services we use every day to entire urban neighborhoods that will be built by major platform enterprises in the next few years. These multi-scalar changes raise significant questions about the social potentials and risks of the architecture of these all-encompassing ecosystems.

Exhibition “Into the Black Boxes of Platform Urbanism”

Platforms are becoming crucial vectors of urban transformations. They colonize cities embedding the social fabric into valorization circuits, both symbolic and material. Dwellers become entrepreneurs in competition on marketplaces. Streets, neighborhoods, areas are codified, ranked and hierarchized into categories of use. Services grow hybridizing material and digital spaces. Nevertheless, platform’ supposed horizontality hides the inscrutability of its algorithms, management and mechanisms. Despite the narrative of the progress and sharing, forms of discontent develop along with platform expansion. They contest working conditions, gentrification, data transparency, profit distribution.

The exhibition proposes ten different perspectives on platform urbanism. Each box of a Dumbo pavilion hosts a particular artwork of a photojournalist or artist. The contributors reflect on several features of the platform urbanism, from workers’ protests to the effects on environment. All together they propose a multifaceted gaze on this phenomenon. Put it differently, the exhibition invites the spectator to enter into the secret core of platforms and discover the hidden mechanisms of power they keep.



1 / 2 / 3 / Michele Lapini

Echographies of contamination. The new landscapes of the Capitalocene

2021

photographies printed on blueback paper

In this work I explore how aerial photography can document climate change, and render it in a form unusual to the human eye. The absence of humans in the photographs counterbalances their strong impact on climate change, in the era of the Anthropocene, or rather Capitalocene, where human action has a decisive influence on environmental dynamics.

The photos depict the floods that increasingly affect the territories of the Po Valley, the erosion of the environment caused by the activities of the quarries for the commercialisation of stone, the effects of storm Vaia, which in 2008 razed millions of trees to the ground with winds of over 200 km/h in north-eastern Italy, the covering of the Presena glacier in Trentino to mitigate the melting of ice due to global warming, and the construction of a new aqueduct in the province of Vicenza, after the water table was irreparably polluted by Pfas, caused by the spillage of toxic substances for decades by local industries.

These images show the power of nature and the responsibilities of human beings, but also the attempts to remedy the serious problem of climate change.

4 / Lucia Babina

3 out of 7

2020

audio recordings

In recent times, big corporations, online platforms, virtual events and phenomena have expanded their domain of influence not only on our spaces and the way we live, but also on our intimate sphere(s). This development has been reinforced by major events such as the pandemic we are currently experiencing.

The current crisis has piled on an extra load of restrictive duties, which impacts many aspects of our personal and intimate lives, such as the way we gather and socialise with friends and family, share knowledge, care for our bodies, breathe, make physical contact, experience pleasure, affection, sacred moments, etc.

We are all moving toward a change of epic proportions without knowing what the end result will be. There is not just one enemy to combat, not just one right to fight for. We are all affected on an intimate level, we constantly live in state of emergency, we are unable to plan, we fear the worst coming around any corner.

I regard this special time as rich in its capacity to teach us. It is crucial to look at how the human species reacts to the new planetary configuration made of the very schematic structures and predefined patterns which concern the living. It is also of vital importance to discern the emergence of reformulated safe spaces in which there is the possibility of re-appropriating the intimate, which in my view is a fundamental step toward the reconstruction of a possible future.

I selected three statements – out of the seven, all published in the Platform Austria blog – in the form of audio contributions about how the persistence of different practices concerning our more intimate life and bodies is manifested in the digital world.

With this audio material, I don't intend to map out a path, draw any conclusion, or create a new theory. I just would merely like to share various perspectives on these interesting times.

Statement 1: Kaya Jiwan (Sex and life mentor) – Embodying The Change

Statement 4: Seth Eisen (Artist, performer and researcher) – Coming Back To Some Sense Of Intimacy

Statement 6: Charlie Morley (Lucid Dreaming teacher, coach and writer) – Free Of All Des-Ease

5 / Ilaria Depari

Na manzoor

2021

photography on a lightbox

Even if they are depicted by platforms as self-entrepreneurs of a supposed gig-economy, food delivery riders represent probably the most combative segment of platform workers. While the power of the algorithm lies in its capacity to manage and control flows of people, data and commodities, couriers detoured its logistics through strikes and blockades that sabotage circulation.

Many of these workers are migrant who joined platforms because of the lack of other job opportunities. Nevertheless, this does not mean a resigned approval for every kind of working condition: *na manzoor* – unacceptable in urdu – has been their slogan in many Bologna strikes, a strong refusal to accept unfair working conditions.

6 / Dario Sanna

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2021

cement, plastics

Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies: Computer Models Of The Fundamental Mechanisms Of Thought – written by Douglas R. Hofstadter and other members of the Fluid Analogies Research Group – is Jeff Bezos's first book and expedition as part of the Amazon project, which took place on July 7, 1995 from his garage in Bellevue, Washington. Starting from the origins of Amazon, Arkè wants to stimulate a critical reflection on the e-commerce giant, its development, its impact on the present and future and the systemic model to which it contributes.

7 / Davide Blotta and Carmen Lael Hines

Platform architecture and the collapse of scales

2021

photographies and video

Platform Urbanism is a rising planetary phenomenon based on complex entanglements between technology, urbanism and capital. These entanglements are enacted on varied and collapsed scales, positioning new spatial relations which function as ripe territory for extraction, accumulation, or contestation. These photographic interventions situate three 'enactments' of Platform Urbanism – in London, Paris, and Bologna, which serve as exploratory studies of this urgent, contemporary phenomenon.

Level -1 (26 metres underground) // Paris: The Paris Metro

The metro, as platform, mediates access, and exists for and through the fluidity of user-dweller-movers within the city-space. Or rather, the city-space is produced through the metro-users, and the infrastructure mediating that use. These networks of production exist underground, in an opaque layer of a coherent, multi-scalar 'Stack.'

Level 0 (Ground Level) // Bologna: The Platform Strikes

As platforms function through an architecture of user-participation and logistical labour exploitation, the former must be activated in order to collectively dismantle the latter.

Level 1 (30- 181 metres) // London: The Sharp and The Vauxhall Tower

The St George Wharf Tower, also known as the Vauxhall Tower, is the tallest residential building in the United Kingdom, and is almost completely empty. An investigation by The Guardian in 2016 revealed that almost two-thirds of homes in the Tower are in foreign ownership, with a quarter held through secretive offshore companies based in tax havens [...] The towers, as structures for speculative investment and seasonal oligarchic nomadism, are active representations of the platform as vertical, and vertical-ising infrastructure.

8 / Into the Black Box

Open the Amazon Box

2021

aluminium glazed archive with qr codes

Flying Drones crossing the sky to delivery packages. AI devices managing your home while waiting for next Amazon Prime Video series. Thousands of robots working in a smart warehouse with all kind of commodities. Welcome to the Amazon World. This is the surface of a black box containing all the information on how this Giant achieved to gain his leading position in the global economy.

Transforming an old archive – a first attempt to accumulate data – into a contemporary Amazon Locker, the information contained into the installation will lead you inside the box, behind and beyond the curtain of its rhetoric. Starting from the history of the company, the spectator will move through its expansion and vision of the future to gradually arrive to the “secret laboratory of production” where thousands of workers are exploited along a supply chain that connects all the globe in one click.

9 / WUXU

Il viaggio di Cristina / Tangpingnism

2020 / 2021

video and stickers / paint on wall

On this occasion WUXU presents two moments to draw a contemporary transnational identity.

One of the two scenarios is very specific and microscopic, from the textile industrial city of Prato in Tuscany, a community of Chinese workers and entrepreneurs. The arrival of the Chinese in just thirty years has created a strange spectacle here, including a typical Italian historical centre with a vast 'foreign' industrial area. At the same time, it is not only full of conflicts caused by capital, but the daily life of immigrants also brings a creativity to the city that is not officially recognised. We visited one of the most typical Chinese neighbourhoods with local teenagers and reconnected the participants to this urban space reversing the perspective of immigrants and natives.

Another parallel scene is in China, where Tangpingnism (lying down-ism), like other voices of protest in contemporary China, is a movement that develops from a virtual space. The people involved come from all over the country and rapidly change position in a controlled discourse space. At the same time, the tradition of refusing to work connected to distant traditions in Europe, such as Bologna in the days of Radio Alice.

10 / Giulio Di Meo

No more deliveries without rights

2020

photographies

The recent pandemic and lockdown measures have once again brought to the fore the figure of the rider – who has become a symbol of new forms of work and the need to build new rights. Essential but unprotected workers, food delivery apps have struggled in recent years to claim decent work.

Giulio Di Meo documents the work of Bologna's riders who, even during the lockdown, have never stopped, both in their deliveries and in their protests. The images retrace those days: the working time, the pickets, first demonstrations just after the reopening in May 2020. The photos in the exhibition are part of the work Anticorpi bolognesi, a reportage on the varied and at times contrasting humanity that arose in Bologna during the coronavirus emergency, in the hardest months of the lockdown, from March to June 2020.