

Call for Participation – Symposium
Platform Urbanism
Towards a technocapitalist transformation of European cities?
University of Graz, March 4-6 2021

Recently, the increasing **platformisation of everyday life** has become a subject of research across the social sciences. This symposium aims at strengthening **critical research on platform urbanism**. Critical urban scholars have advanced this concept to examine the significance of changing everyday practices and power shifts brought about by the expansion of platform operators into all areas of urban life (Barns 2019), such as household services, food delivery and mobility. Thus, platform urbanism can be understood as a mode of producing urban spaces. The inherent mechanisms take on an increasingly central role in refashioning relational dynamics between code, commerce and corporealities (Sadowski 2020; Lee et al. 2020).

The task of a critical platform research lies in engaging with the socio-spatial and normative implications of platform-mediated urban life. Platformisation reconfigures existing **digital-social-spatial orders** and threatens to increase inequalities of circulation and care in cities (Elwood 2020; Bauriedl/Strüver 2020). Moreover, platforms are not only challenging existing regulatory frameworks (Graham 2020), they also increasingly shape ways of imagining urban futures and experiencing urban space in what may be called **platform-mediated practices of place-making**. Hence, the inclusion into or exclusion from the newly created webs of code, commerce and bodies create new forms of precarity, (in)visibility and (in)security. However, beyond a mere 'techno-dystopian' stance, critical platform research needs to emphasise the call to understand platforms as well as contested sites of social creativity and everyday appropriations (Leszczynski 2020; Elwood 2020; Richardson 2020). Rather than a critique of 'uberisation' or 'airbnbisation' in megacities, this symposium invites for a critical debate of the actual consequences of digitalisation for socio-technical relationships between citizens, cities and urban infrastructures with reference to platform urbanism.

We seek to bring platform researchers and activists from the fields of feminist geography, critical urban studies and labour geographies into dialogue, by focusing on but not limiting the discussion to questions such as the following:

- How does the **rise of platforms** affect urban socio-spatial practices and services?
- Which **implications** do datafication, platformisation and algorithms have for everyday urban life?
- How are **embodiments**, subjectivities and gender relations stabilised, normalised or transformed by service platforms?
- How do platform economies and platform practices increasingly **impact** the demand for urban services, (de)privilege urban spaces and (de)normalise the gendered division of labour?
- Which new **spatial patterns** of centrality and peripherality are (re)produced in platform urbanism?
- What can we learn from **alternative platforms** and social movements for **technological sovereignty** with regard to alternate platform futures?

Format of contributions

- Paper presentation (analogue or digital)
- Discussion statement on one of the proposed topics
- Suggestion for a workshop theme

Abstracts deadline: November 30, 2020

Please send your abstract (300 words and including the planned format) to: Marcella Rowek, email: marcella.rowek@uni-graz.at - with subject: "cfp Platform Urbanism".

Organisers: Prof. Dr. Anke Strüver, Marcella Rowek, Yannick Ecker (all Institute of Geography and Regional Science, University of Graz), Prof. Dr. Sybille Bauriedl, Henk Wiechers (all Department of Geography, European University of Flensburg).

Conference venues:

- Institute of Geography and Regional Science, University of Graz, Heinrichstraße 36, 8010 Graz, Austria
- Forum Stadtpark, Stadtpark 1, 8010 Graz, Austria, Elevate Festival: <https://elevate.at>
- Internet streaming

The event is scheduled to take place as a physical, but hybrid conference in Graz. In case the Covid-19 situation will require it, we inform participants and facilitate a fully digital conference format.

Sponsored by Elisabeth-List-Fellowship-Programme for Gender Research, University of Graz. Travel expenses can be covered for a number of contributors without any other funding.

For information on our fellowship project, please visit: <https://fellowship-geschlechterforschung.uni-graz.at/en/projects/smart-city/>

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- Lynch, Casey R. (2020): Unruly Digital Subjects: Social Entanglements, Identity, and the Politics of Technological Expertise. In: Digital Geography and Society, 1: 100001.
- Richardson, Lizzie (2020): Coordinating office space: Digital technologies and the platformization of work. In: Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, September 2020: 1–19.
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