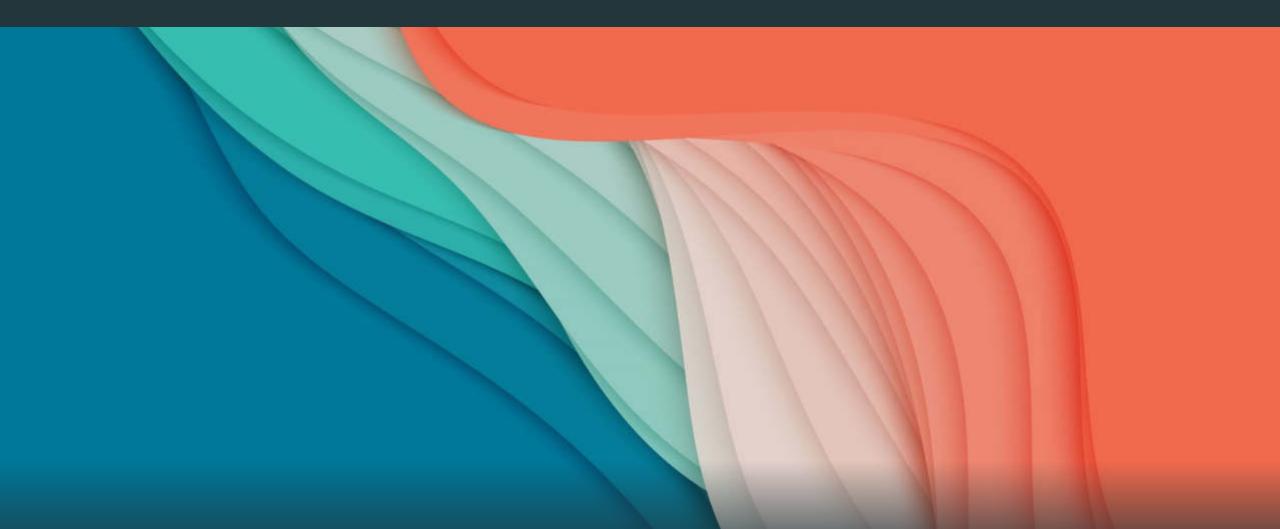
The sharing economy's past and our platformed future though a digital ecology lens

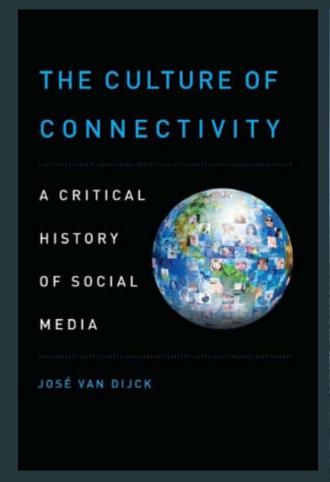
## Dr Karolina Mikołajewska-Zając

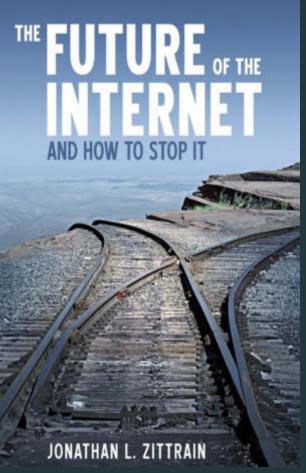
The University of Queensland Business School k.mikolajewska@uq.edu.au



## How did we end up with a platformized Web? Narrative 1: 'Loss of innocence'

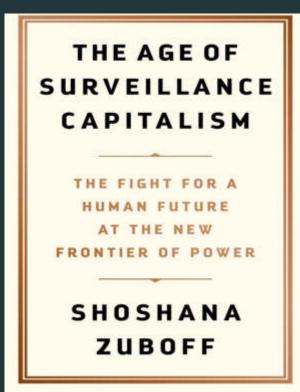
... or a 'fall from grace', see: Burgess and Baym, 2020.





## How did we end up with a platformized Web? Narrative 2

• Zuboff (2022: 2): "...surveillance capitalism as a unified field of institutional development. Its four already visible stages of development are examined through a two-decade lens on expanding economic operations and their societal effects, including extraction and the wholesale destruction of privacy, the consequences of blindness-by-design in human-tohuman communications, the rise of AI dominance and epistemic inequality... Structurally, each stage creates the conditions and constructs the scaffolding for the next, and each builds on what went before' (emphasis added).



## THE YALE LAW JOURNAL

LINA M. KHAN

## Amazon's Antitrust Paradox

ABSTRACT. Assume is the titue of recept-dest occurs; connecent in addition to being a tracular, it is now a resultating platform, a different and logistics naturent, a proposar survive, a confitlender, an auction house, a stage book publisher, a producer of effections and films, a fashion designer, a lead-tour manufacture, and a healing hour of alread surver space. Although Assume has ofested suggesting general, a generator senging perfox, obscuing on print halow-cost and capand widely instrud. Though this strange, the company has post-leaned surfar at the context of constructive and new serves on contextial influenties for a least of other businesses that depend upon it. Elements of the form's structure and conduct pose annicompetitive concerns—per it has reaged autition as servicin.

This Nove again that the current finantwish is unitrast—spacifically in pegging competition to "consumer welfare," defination as about series price efficies—in interpretable to capture the architecture of nather power in the enabors reconspicitives. We answer cognitive the protected fearure to competition posed by Amazonic dominance if we measure competitive primarily through price and output, Sportfally, current dominant learns to interpretable primarily through price and output, Sportfally, current dominant learns from the proposition for all or pricing and how interpretable across distinct business from many prove auticompetitive. These concents an height main in the content of outling inflatures for more pressure. Each the community of partner material rises in the content of outling inflatures for row company to pursua growth over prints, a strategy that insections have visualed. Under those conditions, postborre pricing becomes highly actional—over an existing docrine trease it as transmit and therefore implicately. Second, because online platforms serve a critical interreduction, temporary and content for production the content to control the executal infrastructure at which their rends depend. This that only also makes a platform to explain information soldered on consequence and in a new horse and consequent content on execution.

This Not may not facts of Armen's deminance. Design senables as to make must of me business strangy, illustrates anticorreptions aspects of Armanics structure and conduct, and conductances deficienties to current duction. The Note closes by considering two potential neglence for addressing Annancies power, recording traditional auditoriat and competition policy principles or applying common currier obligations and duties.

AUTHOR. I are deeply grantful to David lingth Greend for enumaging on to pursue this pricat and to Barry C. Lyrue for introducing me to these times to the form place. For thoughtful feedback at various stuges of this project, I are also grantful to Christophor K, Leelle, Dassid Mathevire, Starty Michell, French Tonquake, George Frenct, Massicon Strake, and Sandops Vibronan. Larthy, starsy chanks to Juliana Brits, Orja Mirad, and the Tale Line Journal entitle for in-sightful consenses and careful dollars, All arms as one years.

## How did we end up with a platformized Web?

## Narrative 3

- APIs as a tool for creating platform ecosystems as stellar systems made up of 'connectors' and 'complementors' (see: van Dijck, Poell, De Waal, 2018).
- Shifting emphasis to ongoing genesis, relationality (Mackienzie, 2018).

SM

## The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready

South Media + Sections July Connection (IEEE 1-11 In This Authority) (IEEE 1-11 DOI: 18.1179/joba.10111540788 Inc. 18.1179/joba.1011154078 Inc. 18.1179/joba.101154078 Inc. 1

Anne Helmond

## distract

In this article, I imparts and Facabook's development as a platform by ensating it within the transformation of accol network sites accol media platforms, it applies to support that sufficient as platform properties on, what I refer to as platformation, or the rise of the platform as the determine infrastructural and economic model of the becal-wish as to economic. Platformation assails the settement of social make platforms and the rest of the web and their drive to make external web size "platform ready." The specific technological artifactories and introduced dispersions of platforms with the examined by taking their programmables (see account, I position platformation as a form of platform restly." Suffer that impulses also the dynamics of the decurrinalisation of platform for or social media platform for the web.

## Keywords

social media, platforms, Facabook, social network situs, Application Programming Interfaces

On 15 August 2000. Facebook introduced the Facebook Development Platform, giving third-party developms access to Facebook users' profiles, titizads, photos, and events to extend the "Facebook experience" uso extend applications (Patternan, 2006)— thereby naring Eacebook Platform, offioper involvement. A year later, at the first B Developer Conference, Facebook Jounched Facebook Platform, officially marking Facebook's advancement as a platform. Facebook Platform provides developers with a set of tools for sending and retrieving data from and to Facebook and a deep integration with Facebook's "social graph," a inappray, of the connections between people and objects, for building applications (Germander, 2007; Hicks, 2017).

In the article, I sequence into Fuedbook's development as a platform by situating it within the transformation of social activety active time social needia playlowse. I strate this "platformation," or the rise of the platform as the dominant attractivation of the constant model of the social well and recrimequature, in the Introduct contest. Platformization outside the extension of social mode platforms into the real of the with and their drive to make externed with the "platform ready." The specific technological architecture and strategical distinctiveness of platforms will be examined by valuing one aspect of their medium-specificity (Rogers, 2012), their programmability, into account, In doing in I follow Langlois, Musicityes, et al. 's (2009) call for a "platformbased perspective," which, account, In doing in I follow Langlois, Musicityes, et al. 's (2009) call for a "platformbased perspective," which, accounts to Formesia McKelvey. (2011), should critically impure into the programmability of platforms. Examining the decretarization of platform fratures into the web and the reconstruction of platform ready data is a way to examine the consequences of the programmability of secied methal platforms for the selb.

The new architectural model of the platfilm explicitly opens up websites by enabling their programmability with a software interface, on Application Programmability facilities (API), for third parties. For comprehend this programmabilities of the programmabilities. These data channels to enable data flows with their parties. These data channels or past content with data flows between social models platforms and their parties for also financies and data channels no mode contents with data platform results.

## Material-Technical Perspective on Social Media Platforms

The term "platform" has become the dominant concept for social mulio companies for positioning flumsches in the

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## Corresponding Author:

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Article

## Infrastructure studies meet platform studies in the age of Google and Facebook

row media & society
2018. Vol. 20(1) 293-310
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## Jean-Christophe Plantin

The London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

## Carl Lagoze, Paul N Edwards and Christian Sandvig University of Michigan, USA

## ....

Two theoretical approaches have recently emerged to characterize new digital objects of study in the media landscape: infrastructure studies and plotform studies. Despite their separate origins and different features, we demonstrate in this article how the cross-articulation of these two perspectives improves our understanding of current digital media. We use case studies of the Open Web, Facebook, and Google to demonstrate that infrastructure studies provides a valuable approach to the evolution of shared, widely accessible systems and services of the type often provided or regulated by governments in the public interest. On the other hand, platform studies captures how communication and expression are both enabled and constrained by new digital systems and new media. In these environments, platform-based services acquire characteristics of infrastructure, while both new and existing infrastructures are built or reorganized on the logic of platforms. We conclude by underlining the potential of this combined framework for future case studies.

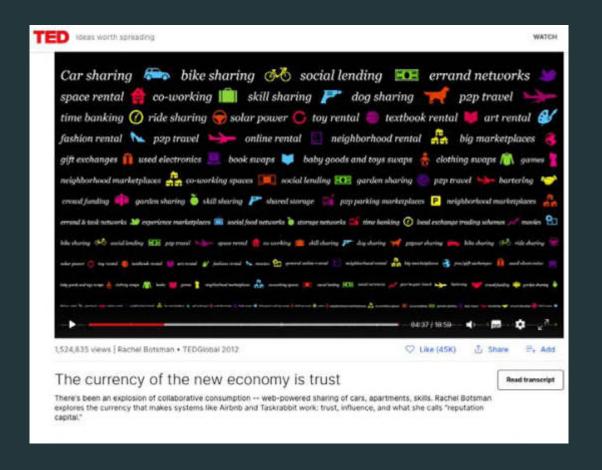
## Keywords

API, applications, Facebook, Google, infrastructures, networks, Open Web, platforms, programmability, STS

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## Where are they (almost) all gone?



# An alternative explanation: ecological epistemology and looking beyond 'winners'

- Moving away from the metaphor of 'power' or 'control' or 'force' (see: Harries-Jones, 1996) and towards an ecological, cybernetic epistemology (Bateson, 1972, 1979).
- *Digital ecology* (Márton, 2021): digital ecosystems as informed/cognitive, and not mechanical systems. Allows to trace the *dynamics* that the growth of platforms give rise to.



## Rooting this paper...

- ... in longitudinal in-depth fieldwork tracing the history of Couchsurfing, a collaborative hospitality platform (conducted 2013-2018 in the EU and the US).
- ... in previous collaborative papers with Attila Márton (CBS) and Mike Zundel (U of Liverpool).





Special Issue on Technology and Organization

## Couchsurfing with Bateson: An ecology of digital platforms

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Karolina Mikolajewska-Zając Kazmiroki University, Poland

Attila Márton Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Mike Zundel University of Liverpool Management School, UK.

Digital platforms radically after socio-economic and organizational patterns. In an ecological sense, they enable the rapid extension of colorance limits by digitally scaling variables such as the availability of accommodation or labour. However, such maximization of specific variables in a complex ecology bears the danger of pathological runsway patterns. In our paper we draw on the work of Gregory Batason to outline an analytical approach for the study of digital platforms as ecological phenomena, focusing on the effects of digitalization on the context in which platforms operate. To study such muta-patterns, we elaborate three interrelated concepts: stress, adaptation and budgets of flexibility. We exemplify these ideas through a longitudinal study of the early digital platform CouctourFing and develop implications for our understanding of technology and organization.

Bistoson, Couchsurfing, digital platform, ecology, ecosystem, technology, sustainability

NTERNET HISTORIES 2022, VOL. 6, NOS. 1-2, 68-89 https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2022.2057751



## The four deaths of Couchsurfing and the changing ecology of the web

Karolina Mikołajewska-Zając 🍱 🔞 and Attila Márton 🔞



"Department of Management in Networked and Digital Societies (MINDS), Kozminski University, Warsaw, Poland, "The University of Queensland Business School, Brisbane, Australia; 'Department of Digitalization, Copenhagen Business School, Frederiksberg, Denmark

This paper describes the history of Couchsurfing, a platform matching free, peer-to-peer hospitality launched in 2004, as a series of four deaths and resurrections. The platform was first brought back to life by its members, in the spirit of open collaboration, then by its leaders, in an effort to legitimize the platform as a US-based charity, then by Silicon Valley investors, seeking to mold it into a profitable startup, and finally by private investors, only to find itself yet again in Jeopardy as a result of Covid-19. The aim of the paper is to consider what the history of this niche platform tells us about the changing ecology of the Web as a whole. Through that lens, Couchsurfing's struggles to respond to drastic changes in its environment are indicative of the growing specialization of the Web into a closed and monetized information ecosystem.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 February Revised 15 March 2022 Accepted 22 March 2022

Couchsurfing: platform history: platform death; Web ecology ecology of ideas Photo: https://www.inputmag.com/features/rise-and-I

## Couchsurfing's successful take-off

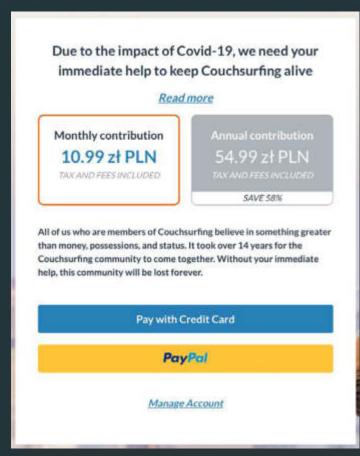
- Reviving the ideals of open collaboration
- Riding the wave of social media / Web 2.0.
- Emerging as an early harbinger of what became known as the 'sharing economy'.



https://ww1.prweb.com/prfiles/2006/07/11/0000410431/CSscreenshot.jpg

## ... and a series of turbulences or near-deaths

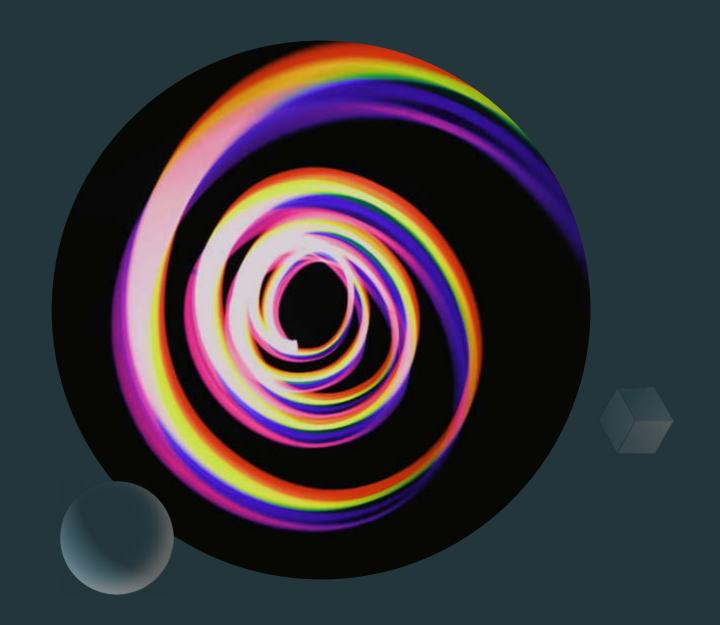
- 2006: technological crash and burn-out of the leader. Rebirth thanks to volunteer mobilization.
- 2007: a crash of its 'do-ocratic' governance model. Rebith as a top-down, formalized non-profit.
- 2011: charitable status denied and near-bankruptcy. Rebirth as a Silicon Valley, VC-funded startup.
- 2015: startup failed. Saved by a private investor.
- 2020: another near—death due to border closures and lockdowns.



https://www.couchsurfing.com/contribution?after\_sign\_in=true

## Key insights from the case

- The turbulences as a series of escalating 'problems' and 'solutions', an effect of conscious purpose (see Bateson 1972, 440-447) each solution gives rise to novel, ever-bigger problem which in turn requires ever-more expansive solution (Mikołajewska-Zając et al. 2022).
- Purposively deployed 'solutions' are rather quick fixes and are likely to become 'self-perpetuating and ecologically destructive games without end' (Ray, 2007, p. 864).



## Key insights from the case

- With each adaptation, the platform was losing a portion of its flexibility to adjust – it was becoming more and more specialized and committed – dependent on the chosen solution and less able to cope with the crises in the environment (e.g., COVID).
- Digitalization not only allows for tech fixes to be developed much faster but for systemic stress to shift faster and further (Mikołajewska-Zając et al. 2022).



## Broader insights

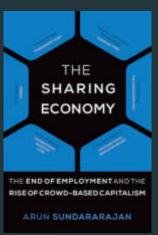
- Platformization becomes unveiled as a runaway pattern:
  - platforms are prone to become locked in a patter whereby they need to resort to ever more expansive ad-hoc measures to survive in short-term,
  - at the same time, they make entire societies dependent on their systems (Mikołajewska-Zając et al. 2022),
  - what is more, platform dominance can only be achieved by trumping the previous leaders (Barwise and Watkins 2018), so they escape
    forward.
- **Dependence** (e.g., overspecialization) **is lethal to an ecosystem** because the unit of survival is not a single organism (a platform) but a **flexible organism and its environment** (Bateson 1972, 451).
- The story of Couchsurfing is indicative of wider, ecological developments, by which a loss of
  flexibility has become the price for escalating growth across the whole digital platform
  ecosystem, only to be maintained by massive financial investments. It unveils the erosion of diversity
  of ideas and organizational forms (Mikołajewska-Zając and Márton, 2022).

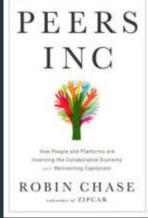
# The role of 'sharing economy'in intensifying platformization

• A particular dynamic of intensification: Investors betting on future 'platform winners' after the financial crisis, especially 'strong business models'.









## Considering the Web's future

- Considering the **health of the Web** as an ecosystem and the continued diversity of ideas it can maintain seriously to stop erosion and rebuild diversity of organizational forms (Mikołajewska-Zając and Márton, 2022). In particular (Márton, 2021):
  - Considering erosion of the environment as likely ultimately lethal to digital platforms.
  - Forgetting linear progress. Instead: circularities, death and rebirth as a continuation of life.
  - Embracing ecosystems as patters of *heterogeneous relationship* which do not materialise in homogenous (e.g. market) terms.
- Platform cooperatives problems and hopes.

## Thank you

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