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THE STACK

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- Benjamin Bratton develops a way of thinking about the territories of information and software beyond the military division of land, air, and sea. By thinking about computation on a planetary scale, Bratton develops the idea of the stack which is composed of layers which begin from a global scale and start to zoom into to a more local scale. Linkages across these scales can happen in different ways such that a path that connects one person to the cloud could take a completely different route than his/her neighbor and even be denied access along the way. This way of looking at the world, state vs. market now has an added dimension, which is the platform – neither state nor market, the platform takes and informs both with its logic. States have citizens, the market has consumers, and the platform has users.

Platforms centralize and decentralize at once, drawing many actors in a common infrastructure. (Bratton, 46)

- Another important point that Bratton makes, is that the cloud is innately physical due to the extraneous amounts of energy and mineral extraction it requires to take form earth to continue expanding, though we do not perceive its physical presence.

- Additionally, platforms expand by accumulating surplus in two ways – the first is through user surplus – the information that a user has access to is more valuable once involved with the platform, and the second is through platform surplus – where the accumulated data from users is more valuable than the cost of producing and running the platform. Platform economics tend to monopolize power and wealth into centripetal consolidations as the platform surplus greatly exceeds the user surplus.

- Platforms are not neutral and this is what makes them useful as geopolitical design tools.

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Benjamin H. Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015).