Platform Power and the Geopolitical Order: Greece 2.0 as a Tech Colony

Charis Papaevangelou (University of Toulouse)

Eugenia Siapera (University College Dublin)

Platform Governance Research Network Conference 2023

4 April 2023

1. Introduction

RQ: What can we learn from Big Tech investments in Greece about platform power?

4/4/2023

2. Theoretical Framework

Platform Power

- **Infiltrates** state & political power
- **Creates** dependencies
- **Imposes** platform logics
- **Becomes embedded** in governance & the social fabric

(Poell et al., 2022; van Dijck et al., 2019)

Data Colonialism

- **Frames** platform power as a form of colonialism
- **Highlights** the data extractivist practices
- **Combines** colonialism, capitalism & neoliberalism

(Couldry & Mejias, 2019, 2021)

Geopolitical & Economic Order

- **Emphasises** the political economy of platforms' infrastructural investments
- **Enquires** into broader power structures & relationships between countries
- **Sheds light on** the underlying dependencies of periphery on core/Western countries

(Gray, 2021; Velkova & Plantin, 2023)

3. Case Study: Greece 2.0 & Big Tech

Research Context

- Greece's long & complex history of colonisation and dependency on core Western countries

- Greece's financial collapse & severe austerity measures between 2009-2018

- Neoliberal governmental policies & digitisation of the state

- Covid-19, NextGenerationEU & Greece 2.0

Case Study

- Greece's National Recovery and Resilience Plan: Greece 2.0

- Microsoft's GR for Growth Project (2020)

- Amazon Web Services (AWS) Pilot Project: Turning Naxos into a Smart Island

Methods

- Discourse analysis of government & tech companies' communication material

- Document analysis of legal & policy texts

4/4/2023

4

3. Case Study: Greece 2.0 & Big Tech

Greece 2.0

- €30.5 billion in grants & loans from the NextGenerationEU recovery package
  - €1.3 billion for the digital transformation of the public sector
  - €300 million for the digitalisation of SMEs
  - €500 million for the digital transformation of the education and health system
  - €750 million for digital upskilling

Microsoft GR For Growth

- 3 data centres in Attiki, Greece by 2025
  - Qualified for the privileged 'Strategic Investment' legal framework
  - €976 million investment, 300 new jobs in 10 years
- Cloud services, legal advices & Microsoft products for businesses & the public sector
- Digital literacy programs for 100,000 employees
- AI for Cultural Heritage: Ancient Olympia

AWS: Naxos Smart Island

- Designed by a consortium of 20 Greek & int'l companies, and supported by the Greek govt, local authorities & the US embassy
  - Cloud-powered services for health, tourism, transportation, resource management
  - Digital literacy
- Follows a series of agreements:
  - MoU with Min. of Digital Governance in 2020 for the "Digital Transformation of Greece"
  - MoU with Min. of Development for a "Regional Space Hub" in 2021
  - Awarded 2 contracts to support Greece's Covid-19 cloud services in 2020, 2021
  - AWS Local Zone in Greece (€200 million)
  - Opened offices in Athens in 2021 / Launched other cloud services

4. Preliminary Findings

Dependencies

- Economic
- Infrastructural
- Governmental
- Geopolitical
- Lock-in effects

Transformation

- Greece is framed as a technological laggard & in deficit compared to core EU/Western countries
- Foreign investments – primarily US capital – are presented as the solution (creation of jobs, upskilling, connection to the "information highways" of powerful economies)
- Regulatory facilitations (e.g., fast-track processes)

Colonialism

- Extractivist practices from core socioeconomic & health-related exchanges of individuals
- Occupation of territories and space
- Deterioration of environment & local landscapes
- Appropriation of public resources & funds
- Strengthening of neoliberal governance (governance *through* platforms)

Works Cited (Indicative!)

- Gray, J. E. (2021). The geopolitics of 'platforms': The TikTok challenge. *Internet Policy Review*, *10*(2). https://doi.org/10.14763/2021.2.1557

- Poell, T., Nieborg, D. B., & Duffy, B. E. (2022). *Platforms and cultural production*. Polity Press.

- van Dijck, J., Nieborg, D. B., & Poell, T. (2019). Reframing platform power. *Internet Policy Review*, *8*(2). https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.2.1414

- Velkova, J., & Plantin, J.-C. (2023). Data centers and the infrastructural temporalities of digital media: An introduction. *New Media & Society*, *25*(2), 273–286. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221149945

4/4/2023

THANK YOU!

Charis Papaevangelou (University of Toulouse) - @charispapaev / charilaos.Papaevangelou@univ-tlse3.fr

Eugenia Siapera (University College Dublin) - @eugeniasiapera / eugenia.siapera@ucd.ie

Platform Governance Research Network
Conference 2023

4 April 2023