

Geopolitics of Digital Platforms in Agriculture: Present Situation and Future Challenges

INRIA-INRAE PhD Proposal

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In the last three decades, intermediation platforms have progressively revolutionized the organization of multisided markets. They initially ensure the connection between consumers and producers on two-sided markets, taking care of intangible exchanges, information and payment, with in general no involvement in the production. The novelty is that they can operate from a remote position, therefore over an unbounded territory. The largest platforms are historically unique enterprises, with billions of users, reaching the top of market capitalizations at meteoric speed, while profoundly disrupting societies at global scale. They already dominate a large number of sectors such as retail, news or ride sharing for instance, and are on the verge of disrupting other sectors such as health, education, or agriculture.

The rapid integration of intermediation platforms in agriculture is already transforming global food supply chains and systems. The geopolitical implications of these platforms remain underexplored, representing a critical gap in current academic research. Understanding the geopolitical dimensions is crucial for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and international organizations. This research aims to bridge the gap and provide insights into the present situation and future challenges of intermediation platforms in agriculture.

Objectives:

- Investigate the current geopolitical landscape of intermediation platforms in agriculture.
- Identify and analyze the major challenges and opportunities associated with these platforms.
- Explore the role of key nations and international organizations in shaping the geopolitics of agricultural platforms.
- Study the potential impact and role of the platformization on sustainability, social conditions, agro-ecology, food crisis, etc.
- Develop recommendations for sustainable governance and international collaboration in the sector.

The literature review will cover various fields:

- Digital Agriculture and Globalization. Review the literature on the digital transformation of agriculture and its global implications. Identify key trends and theories related to the integration of intermediation platforms.
- Geopolitics in the Digital Era. Analyze existing literature on the geopolitics of digital technologies. Evaluate how digital platforms in agriculture intersect with broader geopolitical considerations.
- Agricultural Platforms and Sustainable Development. Examine the relationship between intermediation platforms and sustainable agricultural practices. Investigate how these platforms contribute to or hinder global efforts toward sustainability.

Methodology. Mixed-methods approach based on qualitative and quantitative analyses. Case studies to explore specific instances of geopolitical influence and challenges. Data from both primary sources through potentially interviews with key stakeholders, policymakers, and platform representatives, as well as published sources from academic papers, industry reports, and official publications.

The proposed research addresses a critical gap in the literature and offers valuable insights into the geopolitics of intermediation platforms in agriculture. The findings are expected to contribute to academic scholarship, inform policymakers, and guide industry stakeholders toward sustainable and equitable practices.

Location: Complex Systems Institute, IXXI, ENS Lyon, France

The candidate should ideally align with the multidisciplinary nature of the research topic, and possess a combination of educational background, research experience, and skills relevant to the complexities of digital agriculture, geopolitics, and sustainable development. The candidate should hold a master's degree in a relevant field such as Agricultural Economics, International Relations, Geography, Digital Agriculture, or a related discipline, and demonstrate a strong academic record, with coursework in areas such as global governance, technology and society, and agricultural systems. Familiarity with qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, including data collection and analysis techniques. Exhibit an interdisciplinary mindset, as the research involves navigating the intersections of agriculture, technology, geopolitics, and sustainable development. Strong written and oral communication skills, ability to communicate complex research findings to both academic and non-academic audiences. International exposure or experience working in different cultural contexts would be a plus given the global nature of the research topic.

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