FROM DIGITAL TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD.
WORKING CONDITIONS AT THE AMAZON SITE IN PASSO CORESE.

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Platforms as the main actors of the digital economy

What are they?

Platforms are digital infrastructures that enable interaction between two or more groups of actors, facilitating the meeting between those who offer and those who seek goods and services. Platforms rely on 'network effects,' where the platform gains more value as more people use it. In their role as intermediaries, platforms can govern the rules of exchanges and have direct access to the data generated by online interactions. (Pais, 2019: 144).

What are the main types?

Sharing Platform

Space rental Platform

Good distribution Platform

Buy and sell Platform
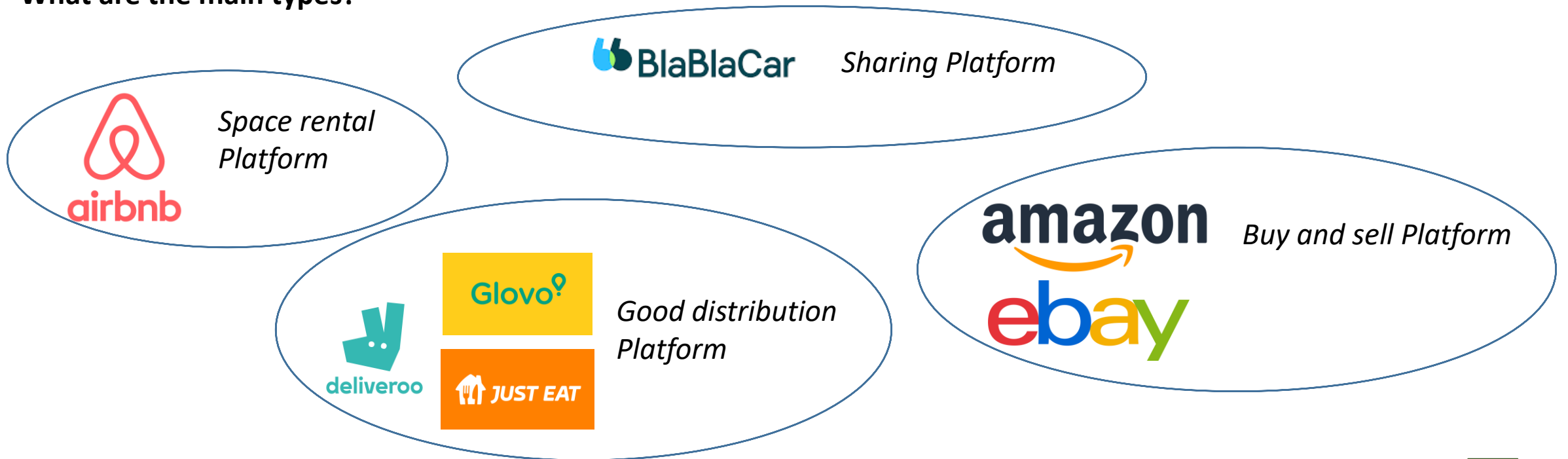
From digital to the physical world. Working conditions at the Amazon site in Passo Corese

**1. BACKGROUND AND
RESEARCH CONTEXT**

Fit Cisl Lazio decides to promote a research project to understand labour transformations in the logistics sector, with a particular focus on the **Amazon case**. This work is part of an effort to provide greater protections for workers in the digital economy, which has led to the acceptance by the Rieti Court of the appeal against Amazon for anti-union conduct (Ex. Article 28) and the opening of the «Stazione Lavoro» a refuge for riders, job seekers, and socially vulnerable individuals.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The research promoted by Fit-Cisl Lazio was conducted with the aim of understanding the internal working conditions at the Amazon site in Passo Corese in relation to the recent establishment of the Industrial Relations Protocol

3. RESERCH DESIGN

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	ANALYSIS METHOD
Communicative content and narrative material present on the web	Semantic analysis
In-depth interviews	Analysis through an inductive method, creation of thematic labels
Observation of the work environment through virtual tours	Analysis of notes and observations made during virtual tours

The presentation of Amazon's organizational culture: the 14 principles of leadership

SATISFY THE CUSTOMER	SEEK INNOVATION	INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICENCY
Customer Obsession "Leaders work vigorously to earn and keep customer trust"	**Invent and Simplify** "Leaders expect and require innovation and invention from their teams and always find ways to simplify".	**Insist on the Highest Standards** "Leaders have relentlessly high standards — many people may think these standards are unreasonably high".
Ownership "They think long term and don't sacrifice long-term value for short-term results".	**Are Right, A Lot** "Leaders are right a lot. They have strong judgment and good instincts".	**Hire and Develop the Best** "Leaders raise the performance bar with every hire and promotion"
Earn Trust "Leaders listen attentively, speak candidly, and treat others respectfully".	**Learn and Be Curious** "Leaders are never done learning and always seek to improve themselves".	**Dive Deep** "Leaders operate at all levels, stay connected to the details, audit frequently, and are skeptical".
	Have Backbone; Disagree and Commit "Leaders are obligated to respectfully challenge decisions when they disagree".	**Deliver Results** "Leaders focus on the key inputs for their business and deliver them with the right quality".
	Frugality "Accomplish more with less".	**Strive to be Earth's Best Employer** "Leaders work every day to create a safer, more productive, higher performing, more diverse, and more just work environment".
Success and Scale Bring Broad Responsibility "We started in a garage, but we're not there anymore. We are big, we impact the world, and we are far from perfect".		

Algorithm and technology. The omniscient narrator of Amazon's production processes

«You can't have ideas because they even predicted if it was raining, people would stay at home and order more, just as an example» *[Gialli].*

«I know for sure that there are numbers, and they have files where all the items that a person scans in 8 hours are recorded. In these files, they report the operator and how many pieces they produce per hour. How many pieces they produce in total within the 8 hours, what the average trend is, how much time they stop, for example, to go to the bathroom» *[Rossi].*

«The area managers have programs, I believe the Leads as well, where they record daily errors, track the hourly progress, including hourly and daily productivity. So, yes, there is monitoring throughout the day. They can see everything at any time, and this impacts the decision to have a permanent contract, it impacts growth» [*Bianchi*].

The algorithm effects

Workers side:

➢ Performance control;

➢ Maximization of workforce productivity;

➢ Actions control;

➢ Disciplining.

Company side:

➢ Monitoring of the large amount of items in the warehouse;

➢ «Quality» control;

➢ Support for managerial decision-making;

➢ Standardization of processes.

Productivity as the main asset for the company's development

The organization of processes represents Amazon as an organicistic company characterized by strong task fragmentation and standardization, which in turn suggest an affinity with Tayloristic visions of work. (Massimo, 2019; Delfanti, 2019).

a) Centralization of authority lines;

b) Constant pursuit of increased productivity by the workforce and technological facilities;

c) Use of science as a guide to action for improving performance.

«I heard a manager telling a colleague, 'If you don't achieve the numbers', and he mentioned the process number, I won't let you apply for the Team Lead position» [Rossi].

«This thing with the light turning on has been designed because when our famous robots are almost full and nearly at capacity, it's difficult to visually determine whether an item fits or not. So, if the operator stops, checks if there's space, they lose those 20 seconds. Instead, with this technology they have provided, when the robot arrives, the light turns on, and you're obligated to put it in there; it's simply squeezing the warehouse operator even more» [Bianchi].

Occupational duality: green badge vs blue badge

«I worked as a picker continuously for 6 months, and I even became a top performer at Amazon on a European level; so, I was really good, let's say I earned the contract. [...]. There's a metric called 'tag time,' which is the time between one 'pick' and another. [...] Clearly, that data influences whether or not you can get a permanent contract» [Bianchi].

«We deserve a raise! A raise that includes meal vouchers, an incentive, something to provide motivation to the workers, including myself, who have been there for 3 and a half or 4 years. Since it's not a satisfying job, it's not like you say, 'Oh, today I painted this wall, look at the beautiful reflections, well done!' There's no satisfaction, so the only motivation is seeing changes in the economic aspect» [Bruno].

«Then I would also like to emphasize the severance pay. They propose that we leave every December. Every December, they ask us if we want to leave and offer us some money? For example, last year they offered me 4,000 euros. I think this is also a fundamental issue. For example, for people like me who have undergone this intervention or for other reasons have had some absences, it weighs on them, and they come and tell you, 'Here, take a few bucks and leave» [Rossi].
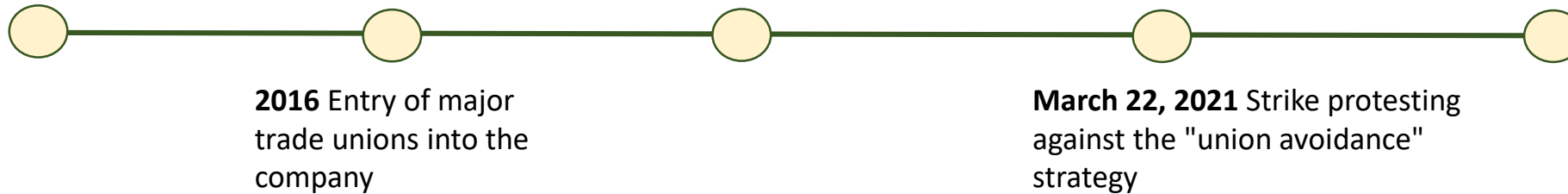
Hope to change roles → Rate and productivity → Salary as only gratification → Estimate workers Commitment → **Toward a truly stable employment with sustainable working conditions for an extended period?**

The path towards the signing of the industrial relations protocol

2011 Opening of the first Amazon distribution center

2017 First strike at the Castel San Giovanni site during Black Friday

September 15, 2021 Signing of a shared Industrial Relations protocol

2016 Entry of major trade unions into the company

March 22, 2021 Strike protesting against the "union avoidance" strategy

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PROTOCOL

1. Industrial relations represent an inherent value.
2. Protocol applicable at the national, regional, and company levels.
3. Opportunities for dialogue on the evolution of the e-commerce sector, both within the company and in institutional settings.
4. Encouragement for participation in company-level dialogue moments.
5. Continuity of employment (contractual and training).

Conclusions

The gathered informational material suggests an interpretation that portrays a reality characterized by an **extreme fragmentation of the production process**, subject to both **hierarchical control carried out by managerial figures and control developed by technology through algorithms** that monitor processes, tasks, and employee performance (Massimo, 2019; Massimo, 2020).

Three fundamental aspects for the full implementation of the Industrial relations protocol and effective bargaining at Amazon:

1. Containing conflict and pursuing the highest standards of productivity;

2. Safeguarding the company's reputation as a fundamental asset of a strategy based on the absolute centrality of the customer;

3. The high standardization of work processes, together with the large number of workers employed in Amazon warehouses, seems to have awakened a sense of class capable of incentivizing representation and the power of workers' demands, supporting the arguments that advocate for the reconstitution of a proletarian class in the face of the development of new productive areas in the digital economy (Dyer-Witheford, 2015; Huws, 2014).

L'importanza della ricerca per il sindacato

Managers

Technologies

Companies
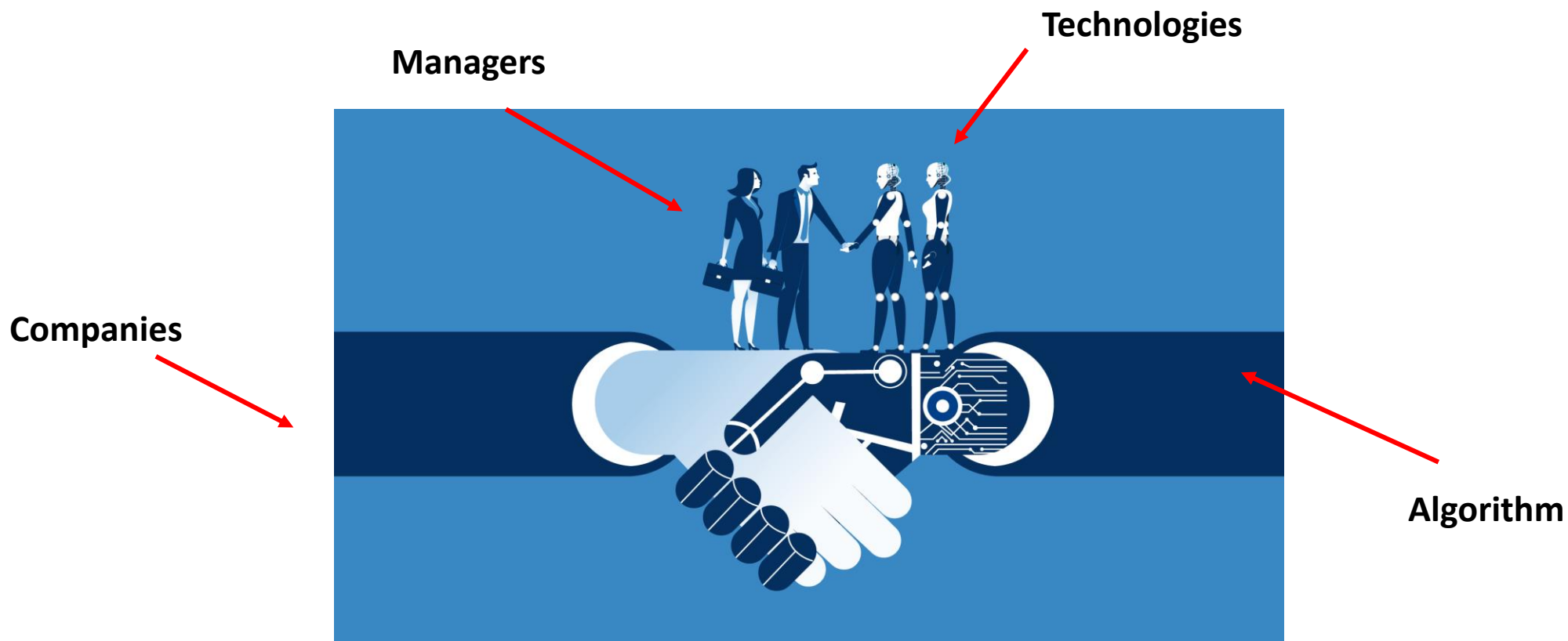
Algorithm

Technologies are tools, and **algorithms are "recipes".** Human decide how to use them. The only path for a Union capable of creating fairer working conditions lies in studying and understanding the contents of these "recipes" and how the tools are used. Through this approach, it will be possible to create effective bargaining strategies.