

How digital technologies reshaped capitalism

This lecture will discuss the main consequences of the digitalization of capitalism, focusing on surveillance-based commodification processes (Zuboff, 2019), fragmentation of labour (Vallas and Schor, 2020), intellectual monopolies (Rikap, 2021) and the restructuring of global production networks (Durand and Milberg, 2020). It will be shown how these processes resulted in a growing polarization of techno-economic power, both between capital and labour as well as between (old and new) 'core' areas and ever more left-behind 'peripheries'. This lecture will highlight the key mechanisms leading to growing inequalities, weakening of democracies and risks of new, larger and potentially disruptive conflicts.

References

- Durand, C., & Milberg, W. (2020). Intellectual monopoly in global value chains. *Review of International Political Economy*, 27(2), 404-429.
- Rikap, C. (2021). *Capitalism, power and innovation: Intellectual monopoly capitalism uncovered*. Routledge.
- Vallas, S., & Schor, J. B. (2020). What do platforms do? Understanding the gig economy. *Annual review of sociology*, 46(1), 273-294.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power: Barack Obama's books of 2019*. Profile books.

Blurring boundaries: Disentangling the Big Tech-military nexus

This lecture aims at discussing the mutual dependence linking digital platforms, i.e., 'Big Tech', and the US military apparatus. Three main elements are brought at center stage: an 'originary linkage' binding the development of digital platforms with governments' military R&D efforts; the critical nature of infrastructures and technologies controlled by platforms; and their role as their government's 'eyes and ears' (both at home and abroad). Focusing on the US, this lecture will document the growing relevance of Big Tech as US Department of Defense contractors, as well as key actors in war scenarios. In so doing, the main facets of a new military-digital complex will be highlighted, showing how the intertwining of Big Tech's surveillance-based strategies aimed at monopolizing markets and those directed at the political-military hegemony of nation states (i.e., the US, China and their vassals) constitute a threat to humanity whose integrated character is essential to grasp.

References

- Coveri, A., Cozza, C., & Guarascio, D. (2022). Il capitale monopolistico ai tempi delle grandi piattaforme digitali. *Economia & lavoro*, 57(1), 49-63.
- Coveri, A., Cozza, C., & Guarascio, D. (2022). Monopoly Capital in the time of digital platforms: a radical approach to the Amazon case. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 46(6), 1341-1367.
- Coveri, A., Cozza, C., & Guarascio, D. (2024). Blurring boundaries: an analysis of the digital platforms-military nexus. *Review of Political Economy*, 1-32.