



Digital Transformation

Technical progress and its impact on workers

Summer School 18th/19th of May 2023 at the WZB in Berlin

Organised and partly funded by the WZB Berlin Social Science Center and the Digital Futures at Work Research Centre (Digit)

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The simultaneity of rapid technological change and multiple crises pose an enormous challenge to the working classes worldwide. It has significant effects on the world of work, employment relations, and the global economy. Research on industrial relations is of utmost importance in evaluating this change. For this purpose, the WZB and the Leeds University Business School (LUBS) invite PhD students and early career researchers to participate in the Digital Transformation Summer School – an exciting joint initiative that offers the opportunity to exchange ideas about the dynamics of employment relations in different contexts.

For a fruitful discussion, participants will be able to present ongoing research and their empirical findings. In addition, we aim to discuss current research approaches and paradigms to cover the following learning goals:

1. To deepen the understanding of the interplay between an affordable life, digitalisation and democracy at work.
2. To address the similarities and differences between workers' agency and capital's strategies in various contexts.
3. To create a network of researchers committed to advancing knowledge about working relations and the digital economy.

The summer school is organized around three themes. Participants submitting an abstract should indicate which session their paper does fit into:

1. In search of new methods? Digital sociology and labour

- What (digital) methodological approaches are practical in studying digitalisation processes in labour relations?
- In what way and with which tools do we need to address digital technology in researching developments in employment and labour?
- How does the researcher's position change, and what ethical issues might arise from researching work in a digital age?

2. The boundaries of the concept of the employment relationship in (dispersed) digitalised workplaces

- How is the digital transformation of society affecting work and employment relations? For example, looking at platforms with a focus on labour-capital relationships instead of conceptualising them as intermediaries.
- Looking on differences between legal definitions and actual power relationships between capital and labour: What role does digital technology play in softening the standard employment relationship? What is distinctive about the platform economy?

3. Worker agency and organisational (mis-)behaviour: How to conceptualise workers' agency in digitalised workplaces?

- How should workers' agency be conceptualised from a researcher's perspective? From individual misbehaviour to collective action: Where does workers' "obedience" end, and agency begin?
- How to guard against a tendency towards technological determinism in understanding workplace dynamics?
- Outlook: From platform companies to platform cooperatives – discussing alternative models of work organisation?

We will have three keynote speakers making the introduction to each of the sessions. Confirmed speakers for this year's edition include Dr Jamie Woodcock (University of Essex), Dr Xanthe Whittaker (Leeds University Business School) and Dr Simon Joyce (Leeds University Business School).

The number of participants is limited. Participants are required to be PhD students and early career researchers from Digit and the Digit Doctoral Network, LUBS, WZB or the Weizenbaum Institute. Travel costs to Berlin are partly funded. Please submit an abstract outlining the project you want to discuss. This can be a literature review, book chapter, paper draft, etc. The word limit is 300 words. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is March 1st. Feedback will be given on March 7th. Please send the abstracts to digital.school@wzb.eu. In the run-up to the Summer School, full texts have to be submitted

which will be reviewed and discussed by a senior academic. Participants are advised to read all the papers of their session.