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EDITORIAL

The Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society

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Editors of the Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society

This second issue of the Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society brings together four contributions that examine the role of actors and regulation in processes of digitalization from the perspective of different disciplines.

The study by Sidney Rothstein combines approaches from political science and sociology to analyze the agency of tech workers in the restructuring processes of tech companies. Rothstein compares restructuring cases in Germany and the U.S. and elaborates on the different institutional conditions of labor agency. However, he does not stop at this institutionalist perspective but focuses his analysis on the discursive strategies that different actors use in restructuring processes. He is interested in the entrepreneurial discourse of Silicon Valley and the question of how this discourse shapes the actions of actors in Germany and the United States.

In their contribution, Philipp Staab, Sandra Sieron, and Dominik Piétron examine European regulation of the platform economy. The European Union is considered a pioneer in the regulation of platforms and tech companies. However, the authors elaborate that the regulatory practices of the European Union are definitely in continuity with its previous regulatory approaches. They follow the pattern of negative integration and focus on market-building policies.

Jasmin Brieske and Alexander Peukert also focus on European regulation and analyze the German implementation of copyrights in the European Digital Single Market in the form of the Act on the Copyright Liability of Online Content Sharing Service Providers (OCSSP Act) from a jurisprudential perspective. The authors examine companies' reactions to the German legislation and show that regulation has had rather limited consequences so far, mainly due to enforcement problems. This experience of German legislation, which has been viewed rather positively by the public, raises questions about how future regulations can be designed.

In the last contribution, Martin Krzywdzinski develops a socioeconomic theory of automation. The paper criticizes the theory of routine-biased technological change, which is dominant in research and public discourse but is characterized by technological determinism. Krzywdzinski argues that a socioeconomic theory of automation must address three issues: (1) issues of the feasibility of automation, (2) issues of the social choice of automation of technologies, and (3) issues of the social outcomes of automation technologies. To develop such a theory, he combines approaches from sociology, business studies, and engineering.

All four contributions focus on the social conditions and social shaping of technological change. Although they are anchored in different disciplinary perspectives, they all engage in exchanges with other disciplines. They show how the analysis of technological change can be combined with a focus on actors, regulation, and institutions. We wish you a good read.