Technology and labour: rhythms of automation and resistance to technological change

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With the development of 'platform capitalism', research on automation has made a strong comeback in the social sciences. The spectrum of positions on this matter is variegated, although it follows a classic pattern, ranging from optimism (Brynjolfsson and MacAfee, 2014) to forms of radical dismissal (Laïnae et Alep, 2020). Rejecting both positions, authors such as Aaron Benanav (2020) or Jason E. Smith (2022) relativise the impact of automation and technological innovations on employment and emphasise the importance of deindustrialisation processes due to the absence of productive investment in the age of neoliberalism. Antonio Casilli (2019) or again Roberto Ciccarelli (2018) draw attention to the 'mythological' character of digitisation, which hides human labour under a hyper-technological veneer.

Issue 65 of Zapruder (September-December 2024) would like to shed a new light on the properly historical nodes of the question of technical change as a driver of the conflicts between capital and labour. In particular, this call for papers wants to attract specific case studies and reflections that are inscribed in the long time of the industrialisation/deindustrialisation cycle. The issue will also be an opportunity to bring together Italian and French historiography.

The contributions, which can be proposed in Italian, English and French, should be articulated around the following thematic axes:

1. Rhythms of automation. The implementation of technical innovations can take on widely varying paces, depending on geographical contexts, work cultures or the investment potential of the players involved. Interesting examples in this direction could be the study of the persistence of certain technical configurations depending on labour supply; the analysis of the consequences of the coexistence of different production techniques; or above all, the investigation of how the various forms of conflict - whether or not related to the technical question - slow down or accelerate the implementation of the innovations themselves.

2. Failures and resistance to technical innovation. What are the consequences of the implementation of experimental technologies for the workers who have to use them? Are there any forms of conflict (strikes, rejection of certain production processes, slowdowns/sabotage of production, etc.) linked to technologies which are news or difficult to implement in practice? If so, with what outcomes? Who are the actors involved in these struggles and, in particular, how are middle managers involved in the implementation of these technical innovations?

3. Measurement and redistribution of technological gains. How are productivity gains linked to a technical innovation measured by those who can aspire to their redistribution? How do workers measure and perceive work intensification? What conflicts arise from these measurements, how

are they characterised and how are they resolved?

4. Qualifications, training, skills. It is taken for granted to say that every technical innovation brings with it processes of de-skilling, still it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that innovations also brings the emergence of new forms of know-how which are sometimes extremely valuable and valued by the workers themselves, either as an element of distinction between generations, or as a positive evolution of the nature or symbolic value associated with a given task. What conflicts arises around these transformations of work?

This issue of Zapruder also wants to give an important place to the agricultural sector, since, despite having undergone accelerated technical modernisation, it is in many ways marginal in studies on these issues. Likewise, special attention will be paid to contributions that articulate technical change and reproductive work.

Article proposals (max. 3,000 characters including spaces) must be sent in Italian, French or English by **31 July 2023** to automaticzap@tarcab.net. Zapruder is characterised by its openness to a variety of article types, with a strong focus on visual elements (now also comics) and on unconventional methods of transmitting historical knowledge: we therefore invite you to consult the [vademecum about journal's different sections](#) (*in Italian*) and to contact us for any requests for clarification. The results of the selection will be announced in September 2023 and the complete texts must be submitted no later than **7 January 2024**. Authors are kindly requested to indicate in the proposal in which rubric they wish to write their contribution, taking into account editorial policy (i.e. 35.000 characters for «Zoom» rubric, 20.000 for «Schegge» and so on).