Autonomy_Digital

Advances in digital technology have transformed the global economy at unprecedented speed. Entire industries have been changed in under a decade, with global businesses disappearing and new ones rising in their place. Digital platforms promise us instant access to an amazing array of new experiences. This emerging world is offered to us as an enticing package of entrepreneurial spirit and liberated desire. But it also threatens to create new forms of regulation and control, with more surveillance and the extraction via vast war chests of data. As digital technology redefines our everyday lives, Autonomy_Digital seeks to understand the contours of this digital world and push them towards their emancipatory horizons.

We now stand at the crossroads of how the development of new technologies will shape our future. The 2010s were dominated by a narrative of the innovation and benevolence of Big Tech. Stories abounded of how the "sharing economy" and ethical entrepreneurs would transform our lives for the better. Many of these illusions are now shattered. But we must act to control how the story of the next decade will be told. Avaricious technology firms have so far succeeded in setting the terms of the debate. In the next decade, Autonomy_Digital will act as a knowledge hub to frame the narrative and provide expertise in digital technology. We will facilitate the exchange of knowledge, dispel myths and reveal uncomfortable truths about the digital economy.

We cannot simply reproduce the organisational forms and demands of the past. Technological change has brought with it new forms of production and the prospect of an economy based less and less on human labour. Our aim is to develop a policy agenda for this new era that moves beyond nostalgia and an outdated playbook of economic and social categories. As an organisation, we will strive for agility in order to respond quickly to new developments and develop new tactics and strategy. The ongoing crisis of the job-society presents an opportunity to radically change our thinking of the necessary structure and outcomes of the digital economy.

Autonomy_Digital will address new inequalities between platform owners and platform users, data analysts and data producers, tech entrepreneurs and digital labourers. Technology firms have generated enormous wealth, but have concentrated it in ever fewer hands. Advances in digital technology are driven by and help shape political ideologies. We seek to understand not simply the technological changes, but the political forces which underpin them. Corporations have succeeded in selling us a vision of private power over public goods and of consumption over real control. To better understand the rise of new inequalities, we will place questions of power and democracy at the heart of our ongoing analysis.

Autonomy_Digital aims to contribute to a world in which the wealth of the digital economy is shared by all. To achieve this end we need a flourishing ecosystem of people working alongside one another to achieve a green, internationalist and egalitarian vision. There is an emergent consensus on shared ownership and control over our digital infrastructure, data and our labour. Towards this end, we will be developing a targeted policy agenda in this field, starting new conversations about the digital economy with a range of actors and conducting new research with the most advanced data-based methods available.