



Industrial Relations Unit (IRRU)

Seminar Speaker Series – Summer 2022 (Term 3)

Speaker:

Cecilia Manzo, Assistant professor in Economic Sociology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Title:

Frontline workers and the digital revolution in fast fashion stores

Date:

Wednesday 12 July 2023

Venue:

Hybrid (In-person: WBS room 1.001 and online: Zoom platform)

Time:

14:00 – 15:30 (GMT)

Abstract:

The impact of technological innovation on employment has been extensively studied in recent decades, highlighting both the risk of technology replacing workers and thus destroying jobs, and the possibility of new jobs being created. Some authors have pointed out that, in many advanced countries, there is a trend towards job polarization, as technology would more easily replace standardized, routine, medium-skilled activities than high-skilled and manual ones. It is true, however, that among the medium-skilled activities there are many activities that require face to face contact and therefore cannot easily be replaced by robots or automatic machines. The impact of digital technologies on frontline workers' occupations in retail has not been studied so much, as the sector does not represent a frontier for technology innovation. Nevertheless, the growth of online commerce, which accelerated sharply during the pandemic, could lead us to think that the sales assistants' work is destined to disappear and shops to close permanently. However, recent trends seem going to the opposite direction with sales in brick-and-mortar stores resumed. The analysis of the interviews, together with a map of the digital technology innovation within the fast fashion stores in the city center of Milan, wants to identify the processes of change that have been set in motion by the pandemic and that could trigger further changes in frontline jobs within the stores.

Registration:

Book now via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/irru-202223-speaker-series-with-cecilia-manzo-tickets-666750738407>