

Vienna Lecture on the European Union

How Silicon Valley built a Digital Single Market and how Europeans can govern it

(Abstract overleaf)

31 May 2022, 5:00 pm

Centre for European Integration Research (EIF)

online

Lecture: **Vili Lehdonvirta**, Professor of Economic Sociology and Digital Social Research, University of Oxford

Comments: **Timo Seidl**, Post-doctoral Researcher at the Centre for European Integration Research (EIF), Department of Political Science, University of Vienna

Moderation: **Gerda Falkner**, Head, Centre for European Integration Research (EIF), Department of Political Science, University of Vienna

This lecture will be held in English, questions can also be asked in German.

Please register via eif@univie.ac.at
and we will send you the link to the virtual event shortly beforehand.

Abstract

The early Internet was a lawless place, populated by scam artists who made buying or selling anything online risky business. Then Amazon, eBay, Upwork, and Apple established secure digital platforms for selling physical goods, crowdsourcing labor, and downloading apps. These and other tech giants have gone on to rule the Internet like autocrats. How did this happen? How did users and workers become the hapless subjects of online economic empires? The Internet was supposed to liberate us from powerful institutions, but instead it gave rise to even more powerful ones. In his new book *Cloud Empires: How Digital Platforms Are Overtaking the State and How We Can Regain Control*, economic sociologist Vili Lehdonvirta draws on six years of research by his research group at the Oxford Internet Institute to explore the rise of the platform economy into statelike dominance over our lives. In this lecture, Lehdonvirta will discuss today's platform economy against the context of the European Union's struggles to create a Digital Single Market for the continent, followed by its attempts to regulate the market created by Silicon Valley. Instead of trying to deal with tech giants in the way our grandparents dealt with industrial monopolists, should we be dealing with them in the way our ancestors dealt with aristocrats?