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Aula Poeti, Palazzo Hercolani

Strada Maggiore 45, Bologna

American Retail Capitalism and the Origins of the Amazon Economy

Professor Kathleen Thelen

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In this presentation, Professor Thelen traces the origins of, what is known as, the "Amazon Economy" to the late 19th century, when large-scale retailers capitalized on the uniquely permissive regulatory landscape of the American political economy to outgrow the capacity of the government to regulate them. Thelen's account focuses on features of the legal context, in particular a uniquely congenial competition regime, and on the impact of a fragmented regulatory landscape that invited regulatory arbitrage and outright rule-breaking. As they grew, America's large retailers were able to assemble an ever-growing political support coalition that could be weaponized to head off the regulatory efforts they faced.



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