



The New Technological Revolution Calls for a New Social Contract

by Eva Paus

The fourth industrial revolution is under way. The conjuncture of advances in artificial intelligence, digital connectivity, processing speed, big data, and robotics will have a profound impact on jobs, working conditions, and people's lives around the world.

Although its full impact may not be felt for a generation or more, the new technological revolution is unfolding in a context marked already by the unsettling consequences of three decades of hyper-globalization: growing inequality within and between many countries, significant increases in economic insecurity, and a pervasive lack of decent jobs in most low and middle income countries.

Will the new technological revolution accelerate the corrosion of societal cohesion that hyper-globalization has engendered and give rise to economic or political upheaval? Or will it improve the lives of people around the world, as less human labor is needed for the production of goods and services?

The recently published book [Confronting Dystopia. The New Technological Revolution and the Future of Work](#) (Cornell University Press, 2018) addresses these important questions. The book, which I edited, has one key message: to avoid a dystopian future, strategic policy efforts have to reign in unfettered globalization and distribute the benefits of the new technological revolution broadly.

The contributors offer multi-faceted analyses of the impact of the new technological revolution in low, middle and high-income countries; they demonstrate that country-specific contexts shape outcomes and inform specific policy directions that address each country's most pressing challenges. Policy proposals focus on revising the rules governing globalization, improving working conditions and redistributing existing work, creating new jobs by moving to a green economy and addressing the huge deficits in the care economy, and providing people with a basic income and social protection regardless of whether they have a job.

The book makes clear that far-reaching institutional changes and new social contracts are the only way to translate the promise of the new technological revolution into increased human welfare for all.

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