

The Open Society Foundations' U.S. Programs has initiated a collaborative inquiry about emerging technologies and the future of work. We are engaging a diverse, cross-disciplinary group of researchers, academics, advocates, and designers to address some of the biggest questions about the transformation of work and what work could look like in 30 years.

Through commissioned research, inspiring design formats, provocative conversations and hands-on learning experiences, we aim to raise questions about emerging technologies and the changing context of work, jobs, and income for all workers, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable people and communities. Through the inquiry, we hope to identify actions that could be taken to create positive alternatives for those who are likely to face the greatest challenges in the future.

In 2014, the Future of Work Project commissioned a series of research and design projects to explore questions that OSF's U.S. board and staff members and outside experts prioritized. The Future of Work Project also commissioned a series of position papers from leading advocates, where they shared their visions and projections for the constituencies with which they work, including communities of color, elected officials, formerly incarcerated people, immigrants, industries impacted by the sharing economy (including taxi and retail), low-income people, small business owners, women, and young people. Links to full text of the research outputs are available below.

2014 OSF Future of Work Commissioned Research and Design Projects

DATA-CENTRIC TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKFORCE

Researchers: Alex Rosenblat, Tamara Kneese, and danah boyd, Data & Society Research Institute

The Data & Society Research Institute produced five issue primers that examine the impact of several emerging technologies on work. Authors Alex Rosenblat, Tamara Kneese, and danah boyd explore 1) workplace surveillance, 2) networked employment discrimination, 3) intelligent systems and robotics, 4) technologically mediated artisanal production, and 5) fair labor practices in a networked age. **Full text of the 5 primers available here:** <http://www.datasociety.net/blog/2014/10/08/working-papers-from-the-future-of-labor-project/>

NETWORKED COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND COLLECTIVE WORKER ACTION

Researchers: Lilly Irani, University of California, San Diego's Department of Communication; Niloufar Salehi, Ali Al Khatib, Eva Ogbé, and Michael Bernstein from Stanford University's Department of Computer Science

Researcher Lilly Irani, University of California San Diego, is co-founder and co-designer of Dynamo, a platform for crowdsource workers to rate and review Amazon's Mechanical Turk employers. Lilly and Niloufar produced a paper exploring how networked communication technologies can be designed to support collective action by online workers as they face decentralization and shifting employer accountability. **Full text available:** [here](#).

THE SHARING ECONOMY

Researcher: Denise Cheng, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT Center for Civic Media

Denise Cheng, freelancer and Affiliated Researcher at the MIT Center for Civic Media, produced a primer on the sharing economy that unpacks various definitions, regulatory implications, shortcomings in federal worker classification, and structural inequalities that prevent many communities from participating and benefiting from the sharing economy. **Full text available:** [here.](#)

TECHNOLOGY ACTIVISM AND LABOR ADVOCACY

Researcher: Josh Breitbart, Open Technology Institute, New America Foundation

This paper expands upon New America's Open Technology Institute's work on developing mediation between those focused on labor and work and those focused on telecommunications policy, the future of the internet, and related matters in technology and society. The paper explores technology policy for the labor advocacy community, with sections on networked workers, networked workplaces, and the workers who build the networks. **Full text available here:** <http://www.newamerica.org/oti/telecommunications-policy-and-the-future-of-work/>

TECHNOLOGY, LABOR, AND WORK PRACTICES

Researchers: Laura Forlano, Institute for Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, and Megan Halpern, Arizona State University

Laura Forlano, Institute for Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and Megan Halpern, Arizona State University, developed an interactive "game-shop" and resulting paper that explores historic and current relationships between technology and labor. Using design principles and game development, the project explores how these methods can be used to reframe narratives around automation and robotics and generate critical questions to shape debates on the future of work. **Full text available:** [here.](#)

SMALL BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Researchers: Eduardo Staszowski, Ben Winter, Elliott Montgomery, Amy Findeiss, & Yaprak Büyükteoman, Parsons The New School, Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESIS) Lab

Parsons The New School for Design's Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESIS) Lab, in partnership with the NYC Department of Small Business Services, explored the future of workforce development. Through interactive service design workshops, the project built scenarios for what workforce development services will look like in 2040. **Full text available here:** <http://nyc.pubcollab.org/futuring-workforce-development/>

ASSISTIVE REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Researcher: Rachel Abrams, Turnstone Consulting, LLC

Designer and illustrator Rachel Abrams produced a visual exploration of assistive reproductive technologies and long-term implications on the future of work. **The research and resulting animated video are available here:** <http://www.turnstoneconsulting.com/work/futureofwork/>

HUMAN ENHANCEMENT TECHNOLOGIES AND PEOPLE “BECOMING” TECHNOLOGY

Researchers: Jess Charlesworth and Tim Parsons, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Designers and illustrators Jess Charlesworth and Tim Parsons, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, produced a visual exploration of human enhancement technology. Through a speculative design process, they created a “Catalogue for a Post Human” designed to raise questions on how emerging technology could impact workers of the future. **Full text available here:** <http://parsonscharlesworth.com/Catalog-For-The-Post-Human-Futures-Research>

2014 Commissioned Advocate Position Papers

WOMEN, NEW MEDIA, AND OLD MISOGYNY

ADVOCATE: Susan Faludi

In “New Media/Old Misogyny” journalist Susan Faludi explores how the rise in digital media and a freelance economy has negatively impacted women writers who often face low pay and widespread online harassment. The paper finds that the exploitation female writers face online, echo conditions women face in the digitally dominated workplace more generally. **Full text available:** [here.](#)

“JUST IN TIME” WORKFORCE TECHNOLOGIES AND LOW-WAGE WORKERS

ADVOCATE: The Center for Popular Democracy – Fair Work Week Initiative

In “Uncertainty by the Hour” Carrie Gleason, Center for Popular Democracy, and Susan Lambert, University of Chicago, explore “just-in-time” workforce management technologies and the ways in which technology is reshaping many low-wage service sector industries. The paper highlights both the challenges and opportunities for workers represented by these emerging forms of technology. **Full text available:** [here.](#)

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE SHARING ECONOMY

ADVOCATE: ColorOfChange

In “Virtual Redlining and the Myth of Opportunity in the Sharing Economy” Rashad Robinson, ColorofChange, explores race and the “sharing economy.” This paper details African American participation in (and impact from) the leading sharing economy products and services in the marketplace today. **Full text available:** [here.](#)

A NEW MORAL EMPLOYMENT CODE FOR THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED

ADVOCATE: Take Action Minnesota & National People’s Action

In “Mining the Gap: Employment Background Checks for Profit and the Racial Jobs Gap” Dan McGrath, TakeAction Minnesota, and Bree Carlson, National People’s Action, explore data mining technologies and how they disproportionately impact formerly incarcerated workers seeking employment. **Full text available:** [here.](#)

THE INFORMAL ECONOMY AND THE EVOLVING “HUSTLE”

ADVOCATE: Design Studio for Social Intervention

In “Redlining the Adjacent Possible: Youth and Communities of Color Face the (Not) New Future of (Not) Work” Lori Lobenstine and Kenneth Bailey from the Design Studio for Social Intervention, explore the informal economy and the evolving “hustle.” This paper reframes the conversation on the sharing economy by contrasting innovations by peer-to-peer platforms that are celebrated, with historical innovations within low-income communities and communities of color that are criminalized. **Full text available:** [here](#).

NEXT GENERATION LABOR POLICY AND CONTINGENT WORKERS

ADVOCATE: Future of Work Initiative – National Guestworker Alliance, Jobs with Justice, and National People’s Action

In “Bargaining for the Future of Work” Saket Soni from the National Guestworker Alliance outlines the rise in contingent, precarious and low-paid work. This paper provides recommendations from the Future of Work Initiative—a partnership between the National Guestworker Alliance, Jobs with Justice, and National People’s Action—on how advocates can address and proactively shape the future of work. **Full text available:** [here](#).

THE “MAIN STREET” SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMY AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

ADVOCATE: Small Business Majority

In the “Rise of the Freelance Economy” John Arensmeyer from the Small Business Majority writes about trends facing the growing freelance workforce, barriers to sustainable self-employment, and the need for evolving policies in the US to address the freelance economy. **Full text available:** [here](#).

TAXI DRIVERS, UBER, AND MODERNIZING THE TAXI INDUSTRY

ADVOCATE: Virginia New Majority and Tenants and Workers United

In “Uber and the Degradation of Working Class Jobs” Jon Liss from the Virginia New Majority and Tenants and Workers United explores how new economy platforms like Uber and Lyft are radically disrupting the taxi industry. The paper explores how technology is modernizing the taxi industry, opening up space for new and unlikely alliances to form between workers and company owners, and how these changes are creating opportunities for worker gains. **Full text available** [here](#).

ELECTED LEADERS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND REGULATION

ADVOCATE: Young Elected Officials Network

In “Left Behind by the Digital Revolution: Policies to Protect Those at the Margins” Andrew Gillum and Dawn Huckelbridge from the Young Elected Officials Network draw on the direct experience of elected officials and local policy makers. The paper challenges local officials to take advantage of opportunities presented by technology and entrepreneurship while also developing the regulations to mediate these changes and ensure benefits are evenly distributed within their communities. **Full text available** [here](#).

MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHANGING ECONOMY

ADVOCATE: Young Invincibles

In “The Future of Millennial Jobs” Tom Allison and Konrad Mugglestone from Young Invincibles explore the changing Millennial workplace as impacted by technology, with a focus on low-income young adults and young adults of color. **Full text available [here](#).**

RETURNING PRISONERS AND REENTRY TO THE JOB MARKET

ADVOCATE: Malcolm Young

In “The Returning Prisoner and the Future of Work” former Soros Justice Fellow and co-founder of the Sentencing Project, Malcolm Young, explores the future of work for formerly incarcerated individuals. The paper explores barriers to re-entry and proposes seven new strategies for prisoner re-entry designed to bring individuals into the workforce of the future. **Full text available [here](#).**

REIMAGINING THE WORK WEEK: A DIFFERENT WAY TO APPROACH PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH

ADVOCATE: Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN)

The Economic Analysis and Research Network, a state-based network of the Economic Policy Institute, produced a series of research reports and scenarios in a cross-section of states in the US. This includes sector-specific analysis on the retail and health care sectors in 2045 as well as discussion on the potential for shorter work-time policies. **Full text available here: <http://earncentral.org/futureofworkinthestates.htm>**

DIGITIZATION AND WORK: POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES IN LOW-WAGE LABOR MARKETS

ADVOCATE: Saskia Sassen, Columbia University

This position paper examines the question of the future of work and technology through two issues: 1) How digitization can enhance the work life of low-income workers by addressing the specific needs of these workers at their workspace and in their neighborhoods, and 2) Complications and ambiguities that arise for workers from the use of semi-automated systems. **Full text available [here](#).**