



FINAL OVERARCHING:

Draft position on the challenges of the Future of Work

1. ITF believes that the discussion about technology and the future is **heavily shaped by a narrative** which stresses the revolutionary nature of technological changes, and their potential impact of technology upon jobs.
2. This narrative is largely created by corporations, consultancies, tech companies and governments as a response to their need to respond to economic, ideological and social crisis. **Workers and their organisations should not take these views as 'truth'**, but should instead have a critical approach that seeks to distinguish fact from fiction, and new from old.
3. There is **little concrete evidence of a massive and rapid technological change** in the global economy. For example: productivity growth is stagnant, necessary communications technology is still in development, jobs losses are within existing margins and tech adoption remains concentrated among the wealthiest TNCs.
4. Technology - along with political and economic developments - has always shaped and transformed global transport and logistics. Today these factors continue to change our sector. There is little evidence that these changes are any more 'revolutionary' than those of the past. **Labour remains a crucial part of technology, production, and services.** The jobs impact of these changes is within the scale of past technological developments.
5. The impact of technology is determined by much larger social and political processes. Its impact depends on context. For example, an app like Uber relies on loose and fragmented regulatory structures. But technology can also be used to target organised workers. In a capitalist society technology's impacts on workers are often negative because tech tends to be used in the interests of owners, and therefore exacerbates existing inequalities.
6. By worsening existing inequalities technology often has a **negative impact on the working conditions of the most vulnerable** categories of worker, especially women and young people. However, older workers are negatively affected when jobs are lost to automation.
7. This dependency on context means that it is almost **impossible to accurately predict a timeline** for deployment of a technology, or set of technologies.
8. Technology is often **unable to fulfil its promise because of the way it is created** and deployed. Technology is often seen as the best way of resolving a problem, rather than finding a 'social' answer. For example, workers and users of tech are not usually part of the process of discussing how tech might improve processes. It is imposed from outside.
9. Technology is often used in pursuit of **productivity or efficiency**, which **has a negative impact** on working conditions and the health and safety of workers.
10. In every sector and geography different variations and combinations of technology are used, and they subsequently have differing impacts on workers. In some workplaces, technology might replace jobs, in others it might intensify oversight. So in some workplaces the problem is job losses, in others health and safety issues caused by tech.
11. The more **highly automated** the system, **the more important the remaining workers** are to the effective function of that system. Automation cannot completely eliminate errors, so humans must have oversight of technology.

12. The digitalisation of the economy is having an impact across our sectors. **Digitalisation creates data, which can be used to reorganise labour processes, but also to control them.** This 'digital taylorism' is an important challenge for workers in the 21st century because it exposes them to heavy-handed surveillance, arbitrary benchmarking and management by algorithm.
13. **Algorithms** are developed by people, and therefore they are imperfect. Without oversight and control they **can embody social or political prejudices** and biases that threaten workers with 'algorithmic discrimination', particularly women and ethnic minorities.
14. Data can be an expression of power. **The creation, use and ownership of ever-increasing quantities of data by private companies, is creating a tremendous social challenge.** Whoever owns data can control it and decide what is done with it. It can change the dynamic between companies, but also between management and workers. It threatens to vastly empower those who are already powerful. We believe that the scale of this challenge requires a **democratisation of both the workplace and society** more generally.
15. Digitalisation is **blurring the lines between sectors** and between work and leisure. It is also increasing the amount of information workers have to deal with.
16. The digitalisation of the economy is also **creating new types of company**: platforms like Uber or Deliveroo, and tech titans like Facebook and Google. Tech companies threaten to dominate the harvesting and use of data through advanced algorithms, and can expand across sectors - which along with the recognised dynamic towards monopoly in the tech sector, has implications for companies, workers and society as a whole.
17. Data, as a key factor in the 21st century economy, threatens to create data inequality within and between countries. Those **countries that can independently collect, store and use data will be able to exercise a form of 'data colonialism'** over those which cannot. This potentially threatens workers across much of the global south, and even in Europe.
18. In principle, technology can help improve working conditions for workers. Young people may be better equipped to use digital equipment and learn the skills necessary. Women may benefit from the reduced importance of physical strength that could come with increased automation or use of remote control. However, the **impact on these groups will depend on workers' capacity to negotiate the introduction of technology**, or participate in its integration into their work processes.

