Social Innovation Research Institute

SOCIETY 4.0

FORUM
4 DAY WORK WEEK & OTHER BOLD INITIATIVES TO SOLVE WORK IN THE FUTURE

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#society4
Collectively shaping the future of work

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The world of work today
Our work is service based

- Shift since 1980s away from manufacturing to services
- Over 80% of workforce in “service work” - retail, financial, hospitality, health
- Digitisation and deregulation e.g. gig economy, subcontracting
Our work is increasingly insecure

- Self-employment grown rapidly since 2000
- 15% of workforce in UK, 16.7% in Australia
- Increasing numbers of women are self-employed, yet gender pay gap persists
- Uberisation and “side hustles” part of the story, but also “bogus” self-employment in traditional sectors - construction
Our work is making us ill

- 1/4 UK sick days caused by workload stress
- 15 million days lost in 2018, 3 million more than year before
- Digital age > never switching off
- Wellness industry - an individualisation of a bigger societal problem?
What happened to Keynes’ prediction of a 15 hour work week?
BEFORE 1980 FULL-TIME HOURS WERE ON COURSE TO REACH 4-DAY WEEK BY 2040

4-DAY WEEK BY 2040: 30HR AVERAGE FULL-TIME WEEK

SOURCE: NEF ANALYSIS BASED ON BANK OF ENGLAND 2018 AND ONS 2019
There has been ample economic capacity to reduce hours
Why are we still working long hours?

Gains of new tech go to shareholders

People need more hours & multiple jobs

Work casualisation & low pay

Trade union decline
Looking ahead...
Facing two major challenges

1) Climate imperative
   - Most sectors will be impacted by transition to low-carbon economy, especially energy, transport, construction, manufacturing & agriculture
   - In UK these create over 85% of emissions and provide 6 million jobs

2) Acceleration of automation
   - 1.5 million UK jobs at high risk of automation - 7.5% of workforce
   - 70% are jobs carried out by women
   - Retail and service roles impacted more than industrial sectors
How can we shape the future world of work?

Three strategies:

#1 Collective voice and ownership
#2 An ample social safety net
#3 A shorter working week
#1 Collective voice and ownership:

- Expansion of unions and creation of new models - i.e. freelancers’ unions
- Catalysing worker co-ops and “inclusive ownership”
#2 Ample social safety net:

- Allow fluidity between jobs
- “Weekly National Allowance”
- Universal basic services - childcare, social infrastructure i.e. free workspace, wifi
#3 Shorter working week:

- 1 in 3 UK businesses see 4 day week as integral to future success
- Major parties make manifesto commitments
- Major trade union campaigns
- Growing international interest
but they fought for change, and they won.
Can we prove Keynes right?
Is it desirable?

1. What could we gain by working less?
2. What would you do with an extra day off?

Is it possible?

1. What changes would you need to make at work to make it possible?

(5 mins)
Gender equality & care economy

- Women’s “double shift”
- Penalised in pay for part time hours
- Ageing population
- Men want more time off to share caring work
An environmental case

- Less car travel, more time to use public transport
- A slower pace of life
- Environmental policies still needed to shape extra consumption
An economic case

- “Early mover” firms find productivity is maintained or improved
- Economy-wide productivity gains catalysed by more leisure time
- Managed acceleration of automation
Iceland’s world of work: adaptability and strength through equality

• Weathered 2008 financial crisis
• Highest global levels of income inequality intact
• Growth of new sectors – tourism, pharmaceuticals, renewables
Ingredients for success:

#1 Commitment to social provision: *investment in social security, universal childcare*

#2 Social dialogue: *recognition of role of unions*

#3 Innovative ideas for world of work: *outlawing gender pay gap, shorter working week*
Reykjavík council adopts shorter working week

• Experiment with 70 child protection workers in 2015
• Cut week by 4 hours, pay maintained
• No money set aside: workplaces tasked to change the way they worked
• Shift patterns posed problems e.g. in elderly care homes. Solved when managers, workers and union reps crowdsourced ideas
• Improvements in wellbeing: better sleep, less sickness
• Extended to 2,000 workers - new trials in 4 national state departments (immigration, police, hospital)
Find out more about the growing campaign...

- New Economics Foundation
- 4 Day Week Campaign (UK and US)
- Autonomy UK

Thank you
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THANK YOU

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