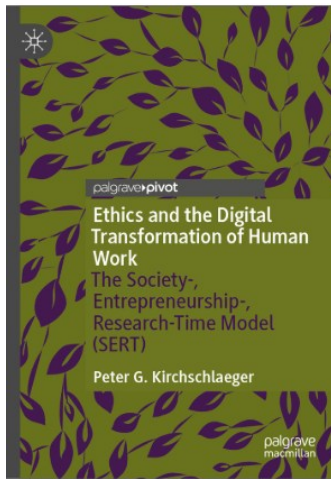




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SUMMARY

Ethics and the Digital Transformation of Human Work

The Society, Entrepreneurship, Research-Time Model SERT

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The aim of this book is to provide an ethical analysis of the digital transformation of human work and of the impact of so-called “Artificial Intelligence (AI)” on human labor. Digital transformation and the use of so-called “AI” – more adequately defined as “Data-Based Systems (DS)” – change already today human lives. They open new horizons for innovating business models and economic systems as well as new forms of work. This dynamic will create new jobs. DS have the capacities to ease our existence as well as to support the growth of productivity and innovation as well as the amplification of human cognitive functions.

At the same time, the disruptive impact of digital transformation and DS on human labor as well as on education and professional training deserves close consideration. Digital transformation and DS lead to challenges for workers, employers, and policymakers one can already see today, e.g., inhumane working-conditions, substantial decrease of wages.

Beyond that, the question arises if digital transformation and the use of DS will lead to a massive reduction of paid professional tasks for humans or not. This question is often answered with a historical response, namely that this fear always came up amid a technological boost but so far, more technology caused always more human jobs. Comparing digital transformation and DS with earlier technology-based eras of change, unique characteristics of digital transformation and DS indicate that this time will be different, among others:

- Unlike earlier technology-based eras of change, digital transformation and DS are, first of all, not about making work easier for humans, but replacing humans in the value chain for reasons of cost-efficiency.
- Digital transformation and DS aspire that less to no human input will be needed.

- Digital transformation and DS concern all professional jobs (e.g., robot surgeons, robot lawyers, etc.) – not just paid professional tasks requiring low or no qualification that were affected by earlier technology-based transformations.

These and other unique characteristics of digital transformation and DS form *30 differentiators from earlier technology-based eras of change* following the main argument against the potential of massive reduction of paid professional tasks for humans, namely that never in human history innovation-based shifts have led to a decrease in jobs. Combined with other considerations, this analysis results in the assessment that likely many more paid professional tasks for humans will disappear than will be created due to digital transformation and DS, which significantly distinguishes this transformational era from other boosts of innovation.

In a next step of this ethical reflection, the massive reduction of paid professional tasks for humans is ethically assessed. From an ethical point of view, fewer working hours and more free time are not necessarily a bad thing. It becomes ethically problematic if the disappearing sources of income, of financial means for social welfare, but also of other aspects forming together *40 functions of paid professional tasks* like structuring daily life, providing purpose of life or identity for humans, ... are not addressed and if the core consequence of digital transformation and the use of DS is not considered: *fewer and fewer humans will directly participate and partake in a more efficient and effective value chain*.

This ethical study does not end with the ethical evaluation of ethical upsides and downsides of technology-based changes of human work. It addresses also the systemic nature of digital transformation of human labor and the impact of DS on human work, namely the end of the strive of the economy for full employment. This ethical analysis takes this systemic changeover seriously by avoiding placing the burden of it on the shoulders of individuals – calling irresponsibly for in-service training and upskilling for a job-market that won't exist anymore – but by developing a *systemic* response to a *systemic* transformation. This ethical analysis results in a concrete model fostering the ethical opportunities and mastering or avoiding the ethical risks of digital transformation of human labor and the impact of DS on human work: the *Society-, Entrepreneurship-, Research-Time-Model (SERT)*. SERT represents a decoupling of income and work *without unconditionality* aiming at contributing to the survival and to a life as humans – i.e. with dignity – for all humans. SERT encompasses *five pillars*:

1. the *payment of a higher basic income*: this covers not only the needs for a physical survival of humans, but also allow for a life as a human – a life with human dignity.
2. a *conditional decoupling of income and work*: it consists of a commitment of the same time-duration by each person to society ("society-time"), which is demanded of each person in return for the basic income. Analogously to the already since almost three decades existing and positively proven model of the Swiss Civil Service, every person could choose freely and autonomously from a broad array of options in which area to contribute to the good of society as a whole. Digital transformation of human labor and the impact of DS on human work will not make these professional tasks serving the good of society disappear for humans but even less marketable, e.g., taking care of elderly humans which need support is usually not a profitable business but the right thing to do from an ethical perspective. SERT embraces these professional tasks serving the good of society for humans with the "society-time". The administration of SERT is digitalized, using, e.g., DS and blockchain technology.
3. the opportunity for all humans to enjoy during the "society-time" *some or all of the 40 functions of paid professional tasks*.

4. *the incentives for entrepreneurship and for innovation:* SERT offers a reduction in the time-duration of “society-time” or even an exemption from “society-time” when committing oneself to education, research and science, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
5. *Distribution of growing economic profits:* A more efficient and effective value-added chain results in more resources so a higher basic income not only guaranteeing physical survival for all humans but also a life with human dignity does not fail because of lacking financial means. Their ethically necessary fair distribution consists in harmonizing taxation globally, taxing capital rather than work as well as taxing DS and data.

SERT could serve as an ethical impulse for continued interdisciplinary discourse on the digital transformation of human work and of the impact of DS on human labor.

At the end of the book, SERT is embedded in a context which would be beneficial for the realization of SERT, consisting in *human rights-based DS* (a regulatory framework encompassing the respect and implementation of human rights in the entire life-circle of DS) and the establishment of an *International Data-Based Systems Agency (IDA) at the UN* promoting, enforcing, and realizing human rights-based DS by an access to market approval-process, by monitoring that human rights are not violated with or by DS, and by fostering international technical collaboration. Both concrete proposals for action – human rights-based DS and the establishment of IDA at the UN – enjoy the support by, among others, UN Secretary General António Guterres, Pope Francis, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, Sam Altman (Founder of Open AI), Mustafa Suleyman (CEO of Microsoft AI, Co-Founder and former Head of applied AI at DeepMind), and “The Elders”.