

# Staring into the void: The role of labour regulation

## Abstract

Many argue that with driving forces such as new technology, new business models and increased diversity in working practices are creating changes that rival those of the First Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2015). Our paper draws on qualitative and quantitative sources investigating digital platforms to examine aspects of contemporary work relationships in Europe, the UK and Australia (Avent, 2016; Barley et al, 2017; Earl et al., 2017; Graham et al., 2017).

The results identify a world where work is accessed through intermediaries and opaque, lengthening supply chains. Adopting a legal and psycho-social perspective, we argue that the changes occurring require us to re-assess much of what we have known as traditional employment relations – we also suggest that very little of what is happening is truly new. Rather, it is the pace and scale of change that has created the imperative to act.

The discussion sets the results into a wider (and worrying framework) that has created what we call ‘the Void’. It is a void that is growing around a complex vortex of issues, from the role of multi-national, apparently unaccountable corporations to the recognition of growing inequalities, and perhaps, more critically, questions about how will skills and re-skilling be provided (Fudge, 2017; IDC, 2017).

We conclude with some thoughts as to a recurring and fundamental question, what is the role of regulation? Our aim is to help navigation of ‘the Void’ and how we can go about ensuring a fairer, robust and workable framework for the new economy.

## References

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