

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ON LABOR IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DECENT WORK

### PERCEPÇÕES DO FÓRUM ECONÔMICO MUNDIAL SOBRE O LABOR NA QUARTA REVOLUÇÃO INDUSTRIAL E REFLEXÕES NA PERSPECTIVA DO TRABALHO DECENTE

### PERCEPCIONES DEL FORO ECONÓMICO MUNDIAL SOBRE EL TRABAJO EN LA CUARTA REVOLUCIÓN INDUSTRIAL Y REFLEXIONES DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DEL TRABAJO DECENTE

SILVIO BERTRAMELLI NETO

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3940-5983> / <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4777371367391173> / [silviobeltramelli@gmail.com](mailto:silviobeltramelli@gmail.com)  
Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, Campinas, São Paulo.

LEANDRO FARIA COSTA

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1058-5191> / <http://lattes.cnpq.br/2331635508857828> / [leandrofariacosta@hotmail.com](mailto:leandrofariacosta@hotmail.com)  
Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, Campinas, São Paulo.

#### ABSTRACT

This article aims to reconstruct the elements that structure the content of the expression “Fourth Industrial Revolution”, as it is adopted by the World Economic Forum (WEF), and to analyze this content with the purposes of promoting Decent Work, under the terms disseminated by the International Labor Organization. It is an exploratory and analytical investigation, for which the deductive approach methodology and the bibliographic procedure methodology were used, with emphasis on the examination of official documents (studies and reports) of WEF, edited between 2014 and 2019 and whose content addresses more directly the impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on the world of work, especially in the strategic dimensions of promoting Decent Work prescribed by the ILO. In the end, it is concluded from what is shown in the documents examined that, in spite of the apparently reasonable approximations between the strategic objectives of promoting Decent Work and the treatment of the impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the world of work, this is established as a rhetorical artifice, deprived of aptitude to attack the core of the intensification of the exploitation of the workforce and of social inequality, aggravated by the technological advance on the forms of labor.

**Keywords:** Decent Work - ILO; Fourth Industrial Revolution; International Cooperation; World Economic Forum.

#### RESUMO

Este artigo pretende reconstituir os elementos que estruturam o conteúdo da expressão “Quarta Revolução Industrial”, tal como adotada pelo Fórum Econômico Mundial (FEM), e cotejar tal conteúdo com os propósitos da promoção do Trabalho Decente, nos termos difundidos pela Organização Internacional do Trabalho. Trata-se de investigação de cunho exploratório e analítico, para qual empregaram-se a metodologia dedutiva de abordagem e a metodologia bibliográfica de procedimento, com ênfase no exame de documentos oficiais (estudos e relatórios) do FEM, editados entre 2014 e 2019 e cujo teor aborde mais diretamente os impactos da Quarta Revolução Industrial no mundo do trabalho, sobretudo nas dimensões estratégicas de promoção do Trabalho Decente preceituadas pela OIT. Ao final, conclui-se do quanto consta dos documentos examinados que, a despeito das aproximações aparentemente cogitáveis entre os objetivos estratégicos da promoção do Trabalho Decente e o tratamento dos impactos da Quarta Revolução Industrial no mundo do trabalho, tal se estabelece como artifício retórico, destituído de aptidão para atacar o âmago da intensificação da exploração da força de trabalho e da desigualdade social, agudizadas pelo avanço tecnológico sobre as formas de labor.

**Palavras-chave:** Cooperação Internacional; Fórum Econômico Mundial; Quarta Revolução Industrial; Trabalho Decente; OIT.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo pretende reconstituir los elementos que estructuran el contenido de la expresión "Cuarta Revolución Industrial", tal como fue adoptada por el Foro Económico Mundial (FEM), y cotejar dicho contenido con los propósitos de la promoción del Trabajo Decente, en los términos difundidos por la Organización Internacional del Trabajo. Se trata de una investigación exploratoria y analítica, para la que se utilizó la metodología del enfoque deductivo y la metodología del procedimiento bibliográfico, con énfasis en el examen de los documentos oficiales (estudios e informes) del FEM, editados entre 2014 y 2019 y cuyo contenido aborda más directamente los impactos de la Cuarta Revolución Industrial en el mundo del trabajo, especialmente en las dimensiones estratégicas de la promoción de los preceptos del Trabajo Decente por parte de la OIT. En definitiva, de los documentos examinados se desprende claramente que, a pesar de los enfoques aparentemente convincentes entre los objetivos estratégicos de la promoción del trabajo decente y el tratamiento de los efectos de la Cuarta Revolución Industrial en el mundo del trabajo, éste se establece como un artificio retórico, desprovisto de la aptitud para atacar el núcleo de la intensificación de la explotación de la fuerza de trabajo y la desigualdad social, agravada por el progreso tecnológico en las formas de trabajo.

**Palabras clave:** Cooperación Internacional; Cuarta Revolución Industrial; Foro Económico Mundial; Trabajo Decente; OIT.

## SUMÁRIO

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## INTRODUCTION

The 1970s mark the historic moment of structural rupture in the political economy of democratic capitalist nations. The neoliberal impulse would transform the meaning of the role of the State in the lives of citizens and, above all, in the economy. The production global ecosystem that previously saw national bureaucracies as a shield against their drives for deregulation and profit optimization, found, with this teleological change, a fertile substrate for the development of financial and monetary practices that removed the major responsibility of the impact on the management of social welfare from the State.

In this context, changes in the industry have meant, ultimately, the organization of the relationship between the available jobs and the measurable productively advantages with the modernization of processes and equipment (machinery). The social repercussion of this, therefore, directly implies the way in which these changes will be incorporated into the daily life of the population and absorbed as a new reality. As much of the institutional industry created by the three decades after World War II was supplanted by a new economic order based on the free market, the working class has its fundamental rights and guarantees concealed by the imperative force of capital.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, sometimes taken by a new stage of world capitalism, boosted by a series of technological innovations, represents the dichotomy between modernization and the generation of structural unemployment. If, on the one hand, it aggregates information systems and deepens the fusion of technologies, on the other, it leads to a process of continuous dispensability of human labor and the destruction of job creation and forms of work, consequently.

This study intends, in the first place, to reconstruct the historical archeology of the expression “Fourth Industrial Revolution”, as it is adopted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) to designate the contemporary structural changes in production systems; and, finally, to compare this idea with the purposes of promoting Decent Work covered by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The aim of this investigation is to understand how the WEF assesses and predicts movements in the world of work and to examine what this can mean in terms of promoting Decent Work, along the lines prescribed by the international community.

For the development of this research, which has an exploratory and analytical nature, the deductive approach methodology and the bibliographic procedure methodology were used, with emphasis on the examination of official documents (mainly studies and reports) of the WEF, issued in the interregnum between 2014 and 2019<sup>1</sup> and whose content addresses more directly the impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on the world of work, especially in the strategic dimensions of promotion of Decent Work prescribed by the ILO.

In fulfilling the exploratory purpose of the research, the descriptions made observe, as a theoretical framework, the assumptions adopted by the World Economic Forum and by its founder and prominent architect of the notion of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Klaus Schwab. The analysis of the data and information found has, on one hand, as a legal-dogmatic reference, the notion of Decent Work, according to the ILO, and, on the other hand, as a critical theoretical paradigm, the idea of neoliberal rationality developed by Dardot & Laval, based on the work of Michel Foucault on neoliberal biopolitics.

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<sup>1</sup> Since the WEF is lavish in the publication of studies and reports, we opted for the time frame of the six most recent years for the selection and analysis of documents, at which time there was a series of these documents referring to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which provide for the understanding of the most current view of that international organization on the faced thematic.

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## 1 THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM: INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND CRITICISM

In 1971, under the name “European Management Forum”, a nonprofit foundation based in Geneva, headed by the German economist Klaus Schwab, in Davos, Switzerland, held a symposium to allow managers of multinational companies to interact with a broader base of stakeholders and also provide European representatives with opportunities to learn new techniques and concepts from American business leaders and from leading business school teachers.<sup>2</sup> To this end, several important personalities from commerce, politics and civil society were invited to this event, forming a dialogical space for the exchange of knowledge. Even then, events such as the collapse of the fixed rate, which put an end to Bretton Woods in the international monetary system, and the Vietnam and Arab-Israeli Wars, denoted a scenario of turbulence in world geopolitics.<sup>3</sup>

The organization's name changed in 1987, and was then renamed “World Economic Forum” (WEF). Since the beginning, according to an official document that describes its creation, the entity claims independence, impartiality and disconnection from any special interest.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the WEF has established itself over the years as an environment of public-private cooperation for the creation of a set of global and regional governance agendas, built from the combination of political, industrial and economic interests of the different leaders of society.<sup>5</sup>

In order to broaden its vision and spectrum of action, the Forum, from the 1990s, sought to weave relationships that went beyond the intricacies of the European community and, then, it radiated its attention to the new economic actors that emerged with the new developments of the globalization. In other words, the nations and companies whose potential for growth and economic

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<sup>2</sup> DELIVORIAS, Angelos. *The World Economic Forum: Influential and controversial*. European Parliament Think Thank, Bruxelas, p. 1-8, jan. 2016. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)573928](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2016)573928). Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>3</sup> DE OLIVEIRA, Giuliano Contento; MAIA, Geraldo; MARIANO, Jefferson. O sistema de Bretton Woods e a dinâmica do sistema monetário internacional contemporâneo. *Pesquisa & Debate. Revista do Programa de Estudos Pós-Graduados em Economia Política*, v. 19, n. 2(34), nov. 2011. p. 208-209. Available at: <https://revistas.pucsp.br/rpe/article/view/7570>. Accessed on: 14 may 2020.

<sup>4</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *A partner in shaping history: 1971-2020*. Genebra: World Economic Forum, 15 jan. 2020, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *A partner in shaping history: 1971-2020*. Genebra: World Economic Forum, 15 jan. 2020, p. 28.

development showed signs of flourishing were incorporated into the discussion and planning circuits, thus creating a polymorphic platform for intermediating the frontiers of capitalism.<sup>6</sup>

In general, the entity is governed by a Foundation Council formed by twenty-five representatives who determine and supervise its activities, and also all the other bodies activities, including what concerns the approval of annual accounts, strategic directions and statute management. These members are chosen by leading business, political, multilateral organizations and universities leaders to serve three-year terms. It is, therefore, a kind of managing body responsible for organizing and guiding the institution's progress.<sup>7</sup>

The internal organization is composed of communities that reflect the levels of participation and engagement degrees. The so-called “strategic partners” are the 100 most present companies, paying the highest membership fees and participating in debates and initiatives at the global and regional level. There is even a respective thematic assignment to these groups, whose role is to write studies and reports that support their objectives and aspirations. These documents are published as official manifestations of the Forum and aim to explain and analyze phenomena of the world economy, based on a kaleidoscopic approach to reality. During the period from 2014 to 2019, these documents focused on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, assessing characteristics and possible implications of this structural change in industry and the economy.<sup>8</sup>

The criticisms of the WEF are directed, on the one hand, to its influence in shaping global economic policy in general, facilitating the profusion of neoliberal ideas that benefit an elite, to the detriment of the rest of the population, and for considering its actions, disguised under the mantle of neutrality, ambiguous, biased and privatized; and, on the other, to administrative inability and methods of operation, claiming that its effectiveness is mitigated within the internal bureaucracy, reducing its ability to mobilize.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> GRAZ, Jean-Christophe. How Powerful are Transnational Elite Clubs? The Social Myth of the World Economic Forum. *New Political Economy*, Abingdon, v. 8, n. 3, p. 321-340, 2003. p. 326. Available at: [https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB\\_25874.P001/REF](https://serval.unil.ch/resource/serval:BIB_25874.P001/REF). Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>7</sup> DELIVORIAS, Angelos. The World Economic Forum: Influential and controversial. *European Parliament Think Thank*, Bruxelas, p. 1-8, jan. 2016. p. 3. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)573928](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2016)573928). Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>8</sup> SCHWAB, Klaus. *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: what it means, how to respond*. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Disponível em: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-and-how-to-respond/>. Acesso em: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>9</sup> DELIVORIAS, Angelos. The World Economic Forum: Influential and controversial. *European Parliament Think Thank*, Bruxelas, p. 1-8, jan. 2016. p. 6. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)573928](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2016)573928). Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

## 2 SHAPING ASPECTS OF SO-CALLED FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND ITS PERCEPTION BY THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

In “A Caverna”, the Portuguese author José Saramago narrates the story of Cipriano Algor, a potter who has his life transformed after the arrival of a large shopping center in the city. The dolls and crockery that he produced are gradually attracting less and less interest in consumers and, consequently, losing value. Thus, new ways of negotiating commercial trades, productive optimization practices and the needs induced by new goods have profoundly altered the social ecosystem of that worker and forced him to change his life completely. In other words, this local transformation of consumer - and power - relations externalized another subjectivity, shaped from this social and historical place and its relations established with the technological sophistication of the world in which it was inscribed.<sup>10</sup>

The speed of transformations in the industries directly impacts the way in which individuals interpret their realities and occupy the social spaces and contexts constituted by their own experiences. Thus, when there is a profound change in the productive spheres, the entire social system tends to adapt to the new situations and opportunities created by this window of innovation.

However, these phenomena do not happen in a homogeneous and organized way.<sup>11</sup> The national efforts of developed countries to oxygenate their economies and revitalize their companies stem from their historically built economic capacity and technological development. The working class, by its turn, has its jobs reduced and wages flattened, while the other part of the population enjoys the consumer goods and amenities provided by it. Even though this is a common concern in world geopolitics, the countries' technological progress is only incorporated into processes and products that were defined a priori as fundamental, stimulated by public policies that add up to the effective demand and to the support tools for scientific and technological development.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> SARAMAGO, José. *A caverna*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2017, p. 9-36.

<sup>11</sup> DAUDT, Gabriel Marino; WILLCOX, Luiz Daniel. Reflexões críticas a partir das experiências dos Estados Unidos e da Alemanha em manufatura avançada. *BNDES Setorial*, Rio de Janeiro, n. 44, p. 5-45, set. 2016. p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> GIMENEZ, Denis Maracci; SANTO, Anselmo Luís dos. Indústria 4.0, manufatura avançada e seus impactos sobre o trabalho. *Textos Para Discussão*, Campinas, v. 371, p. 13, 1 nov. 2019.



In this sense, in 2011, at a fair in Hannover, Germany, the first mention of the term “Fourth Industrial Revolution” emerged, then announced by the German government at the time as the set of main strategies to leverage and generate competitiveness in German companies in the international scenario.<sup>13</sup> In 2013, it was officially treated as a German strategic initiative to take the lead in consolidating pioneering industries that were revolutionizing the manufacturing sector. In this way, the expression “Fourth Industrial Revolution” - to which, often, the term “Industry 4.0”, alluding to a productive profile structured by technology, is associated -, seen closely in its genesis, transcends an impression of elaboration exclusive by large transnational companies and rises as a bundle of government actions coordinated with the productive capital of an expansive international character.

In general, the notion of the Fourth Industrial Revolution refers to a multifaceted set of industrial changes that bring new syntheses between men, machines and intelligent software.<sup>14</sup> The new industrial processes are based on the deepening of a certain productive interdependence in the global value chain, with a greater flow of services and goods.<sup>15</sup> Globalization thus stimulates a change in the competition patterns of national economies and requires a rethinking of institutional strategies to obtain results. In this sense, universities are important catalysts for discoveries and knowledge, in such a way as to feed back into the innovation cycle and catalyze scientific research.

One of the main characteristics of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is to establish, in an unprecedented way, the aggregation of production, processing and online information flows. The Internet of Things (IoT)<sup>16</sup> and Big Data<sup>17</sup>, for example, have the ability to communicate with

<sup>13</sup> HERMANN, M., PENTEK, T., OTTO, B. Design Principles for Industrie 4.0. **Scenarios, Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences**. Vol. 2016, p. 3931. 2016.

<sup>14</sup> CARUSO, L. Digital innovation and the fourth industrial revolution: epochal social changes? **AI & Soc**, n.º. 33, p. 384, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> GEREFFI, Gary; LEE, Joonkoo. Why the World Suddenly Cares About Global Supply Chains. **Journal of Supply Chain Management**, v.48, n.3, p.29, jul. 2012.

<sup>16</sup> “O que hoje é chamado de internet das coisas (*internet of things*) é um conjunto de tecnologias e protocolos associados que permitem que objetos se conectem a uma rede de comunicações e são identificados e controlados através desta conexão de rede.” (CAVALLI, Olga. **Internet das coisas e inovação na América Latina**. [S.l.: s.n.], 2016. Mimeogr.).

<sup>17</sup> “O conceito do Big Data não é consensual. Pode ser compreendido como as múltiplas fontes de informação estruturadas e não estruturadas que não foram capturadas pelas ferramentas típicas dos bancos de dados, bem como conjunto de software para tratamento dos dados. Por sua vez, os dados abertos interligados objetivam criar conexões entre vários dados, em especial, aqueles disponíveis em bibliotecas, museus e arquivos, criando uma grande rede estruturada semanticamente legível.” (GASQUE, Kelley Cristine Gonçalves Dias. **Competência em Informação: conceitos, características e desafios. AtoZ: novas práticas em informação e conhecimento**, v. 2, n. 1, p. 5-9, aug. 2013. Available at: <https://revistas.ufpr.br/atoz/article/view/41315>. Accessed on: 20 apr. 2020.)

devices independently, creating global information networks and storage systems that incorporate machines into cyber-physical systems.

Thus, information technology and communication are the sectors, at first, considered the most emblematic for personifying this increase in importance of high added value services and a great wave of technological advancement, because they are the pioneers in the use of these differentiated forms of organization, thus building self-application practices of their own inventions. At the same time, they take root in other sectors and spheres of society, changing these contexts and adapting to them.<sup>18</sup>

The WEF is the main disseminator of the Fourth Industrial Revolution idea, which have taken over several public initiatives that highlighted the still incipient transformations in the production of goods and services arising from the application of a new wave of technical innovations during the period between 2014 and 2019. The annual meeting held by the WEF, in which the main heads of state, businessmen and representatives of international institutions meet in Davos, in a more or less directly way, advocates the thesis that the Fourth Industrial Revolution has the power to raise global income levels and improve the quality of life of populations worldwide.<sup>19</sup> In a more systematic way, the institution voiced its expectations through the production of documents made by related specialists, which describe the impacts of changes in various areas, such as global value chains, technological development, job quality, intelligence and the production and distribution of goods, for example.<sup>20</sup>

The re-training of the workforce, one of the topics covered in these documents, works, as it is alleged, as a continuous agreement between social actors and a proposal for organized action to invest in the skills and potential of the workforce at all ages. In this way, given a certain balance, the dynamic training environment would have the potential to provide profoundly rewarding careers, while simultaneously reinforcing social cohesion and equity.<sup>21</sup>

WEF's president, Klaus Schwab, also wrote two referential books for the organization's approaches about the referred phenomenon. They are: "The Fourth Industrial Revolution" and

<sup>18</sup> COSTA, Cesar da. *Indústria 4.0: o futuro da indústria nacional*. POSGERE - Pós-Graduação em Revista / IFSP - Campus São Paulo, v. 1, n. 4, set. 2017, p. 5-14. Available at: <http://seer.spo.ifsp.edu.br/index.php/posgere/article/view/82>. Accessed on: 15 apr. 2020.

<sup>19</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Our mission*. Geneve: World Economic Forum, s.d. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/about/world-economic-forum>. Accessed on: 15 apr. 2020.

<sup>20</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Agile Cities: Preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/agile-cities-preparing-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 15 apr. 2020.

<sup>21</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Accelerating Workforce Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/accelerating-workforce-reskilling-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 15 apr. 2020.



“Applying the Fourth Industrial Revolution”. The approach of these books starts from the premise that there are unique characteristics, in this historical moment, that demand its differentiation from the Third Industrial Revolution. Schwab argues that the exponential and non-linear speed of new discoveries, the breadth and depth of innovations whose technological revolution is the basis and the systemic impact that involves the transformation of entire systems between countries and within industries and companies are elements that form a set of unprecedented factors that support the existence of Industry 4.0 when aggregates.<sup>22</sup>

The interaction between society and technology, in its turn, is widely emphasized, considering that, concerning technology, there is a false dichotomy between "accepting and living with it" and "rejecting and living without it", since it considers that this it is not an external and autonomous force, under which there is no form of social control. It also believes that shared knowledge is the key to shaping a collective future that mirrors the common good.<sup>23</sup> Despite that, it recognizes that there is an internal contradiction that locates it as something prosperous and, at the same time, reckless, in addition to making few considerations about the process of accumulation and concentration of wealth<sup>24</sup>, concealing the debate on inequality.

### 3 THE DECENT WORK AND THE ILO POSITION ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The end of the First World War (1914-1918) started a series of diplomatic actions by the countries, especially those directly involved in the conflict, in an attempt to lay the first stones on the building of pacification, stability and international cooperation. In this sense, multilateral organizations were created in order to supervise and guide the actions of countries in different areas, trying to reconstruct the global dialogical bases.

The ILO, created in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles, symbolizes the reorganization of productive activity itself and a political effort to create a joint international agenda in matters relating to labor, with the aim of mediating the tension between capital and labor, these intimates antagonists who, by that time, had already reached robust levels of confrontation. Thus, even

<sup>22</sup> SCHWAB, Klaus. *A quarta revolução industrial*. Trad. Daniel Moreira Miranda. São Paulo: Edipro, 2016, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> SCHWAB, Klaus. *A quarta revolução industrial*. Trad. Daniel Moreira Miranda. São Paulo: Edipro, 2016, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> SCHWAB, Klaus. *Aplicando a Quarta Revolução Industrial*. Trad. Daniel Moreira Miranda. São Paulo: Edipro, 2018a, p. 58.

with the impacts and consequences arising from the Second World War (1939-1945), the institution continued to operate under the image of improvements in working conditions, promotion of social justice and human rights. The 1944 General Conference in Philadelphia reinforced this commitment already stated in its initial constitution and outlined its immediate and future aspirations to standardize the regulation of labor relations in its member states.<sup>25</sup> The tripartite composition, which is the presence of representatives of governments, employers and employees in the annual discussions and deliberations in Geneva, headquarters of the ILO, is an exclusive organizational aspect of this organization, fundamental for its strengthening and, at the international level, the proposal for social dialogue and the guarantee of greater legitimacy to the decisions taken.<sup>26</sup>

In their turn, the 1970s and 1980s were permeated by the heated debate about the structural failure of the Social Welfare State and its interventional impacts on business health.<sup>27</sup> So, neoliberalism<sup>28</sup> began its rise to the category of hegemonic economic doctrine and its dictates put into practice by political authorities in most countries.

The ILO had a great challenge in the need to remodel its positioning, in response to that new hegemonic political and economic western world view that, on the one hand, enshrines economic agents whose interest was turned towards loosening labor demands and the liberalization of the market and, on the other hand, union representatives repudiating and warning about the risks of these changes for the quality of employment and the effectiveness of social guarantees.

Faced with this scenario, in 1999, the then Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, in his Memory addressed to the 87th International Labor Conference (meeting of ILO Member States at a regular assembly), proposed a new guiding concept of institutional behavior called “Decent Work”, focused on a programmatic and unified performance, aiming to improve working conditions

<sup>25</sup> INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION. **Declaration of Philadelphia**. Genebra: Oit, 1944. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62\\_LIST\\_ENTRIE\\_ID:2453907:NO#declaration](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62_LIST_ENTRIE_ID:2453907:NO#declaration). Accessed on: 17 apr. 2020.

<sup>26</sup> BELTRAMELLI NETO, Silvio; VOLTANI, Julia de Carvalho. Investigação histórica do conteúdo da concepção de Trabalho Decente no âmbito da OIT e uma análise de sua justiciabilidade. **Revista de Direito Internacional**, Brasília, v. 16, n. 1, p. 166-186, 2019. Available at: <https://www.publicacoesacademicas.uniceub.br/rdi/article/view/5900>. Accessed on: 17 apr. 2020.

<sup>27</sup> STREECK, Wolfgang. **A crise adida: tempo comprado do capitalismo democrático**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2018. p 74-76.

<sup>28</sup> Neoliberalism has asserted itself and must be understood, in the Foulcatian way, as the very rationality of contemporary capitalism, conjugating a set of discourses, practices, and devices that determine a social mode based on the universal principle of competition, dominant in the public and private spheres. (DARDOT, Pierre; LAVAL, Christian. **A nova razão do mundo: ensaio sobre a sociedade neoliberal**. Tradução Mariana Echarlar. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2017, p. 17)

in the world.<sup>29</sup> In this way, the increasing devaluation of the Organization in the face of the new architecture of capitalism, with the reduction of its influence on decision-making at global level and the loss of protagonism of its actions in the regulation of work was faced by a process of institutional modernization and reforms structural policies based on international cooperation with States to promote Decent Work.<sup>30</sup>

Based on this proposal, the ILO has systematized four strategic objectives that shape the promotion of Decent Work, namely, the protection of fundamental principles and rights in industrial relations, the generation of quality jobs, the expansion of social protection and the adoption of social dialogue.<sup>31</sup> According to the ILO, together, these objectives represent the idea of social justice and reserve to international cooperation the role of the main parameter for national governmental initiatives, concerning labor relations.

The protection of fundamental principles and rights in industrial relations, related to the first strategic objective of Decent Work, aims to operationalize the content of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998<sup>32</sup>, especially concerning union freedom and the right to collective negotiation, the eradication of slavery and child labor and the prohibition of any type of discrimination in the labor market. The second objective is linked to the creation and access to new qualified jobs, which are understood as those with dignified remuneration and that do not expose people to risks to health and physical integrity.<sup>33</sup>

The expansion of social protection, the third strategic objective of Decent Work, is directly related to the State's burden of providing access to revenue (and, therefore, survival) to those who cannot or should not be in the labor market, due transient or permanent personal

<sup>29</sup> INTERNACIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION. **International Labour Conference**. 87th Session. Report of the Director-General: Decent Work. International Labour Office, Geneve, jun. 1999, p. 05. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>. Accessed on: 17 de abril de 2020.

<sup>30</sup> BELTRAMELLI NETO, Silvio; VOLTANI, Julia de Carvalho; BONAMIM, Isadora Rezende. Trabalho Decente segundo a OIT: uma concepção democrática? Análise crítica à luz da teoria do contrato social. **Revista Eletrônica do Curso de Direito**, Santa Maria, v. 14, n. 1, p. 1-36, 29. Available at: <https://periodicos.ufsm.br/revistadireito/article/view/33853>. Accessed on: 17 abr. 2020.

<sup>31</sup> INTERNACIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION. **International Labour Conference**. 87th Session. Report of the Director-General: Decent Work. International Labour Office, Geneve, jun. 1999, p. 05. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>. Accessed on: 17 apr. 2020.

<sup>32</sup> INTERNACIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION. **Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**. Geneve, 1998. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms\\_716594.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_716594.pdf). Accessed on: 17 apr. 2020.

<sup>33</sup> INTERNACIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION. **International Labour Conference**. 87th Session. Report of the Director-General: Decent Work. International Labour Office, Geneve, jun. 1999, p. 05. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>. Accessed on: 17 apr. 2020.

situations linked, for example, to health or age.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the fourth strategic objective, the adoption of social dialogue, adds, ultimately, the resignification of the triparty proposal, through the construction of lasting consensual solutions for socially conflicting situations, guided by an exchange of ideas and suggestions from all social actors and representations.

## 4 THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION UNDER THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM PRISM

In January 2014, six years after the 2008 economic crisis, in the document “Jobs and Skills: Tackling the Global Unemployment Crisis - Preparing for Growth”, the WEF presented a list of proposals and recommendations whose fundamental element was the centrality of employment for governments, companies and unions in countries that still felt the strong side effects of the global economic recession.<sup>35</sup> It also predicted that the three main problems, over the following years, would be the increasing tensions in the Middle East and North Africa, income disparities and persistent structural unemployment. To this end, they based the thought that employment and growth share a symbiotic relationship.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, for the WEF, governments and social partners should work together to ensure an adequate supply of workers with the skills needed to sustain the long-term productive potential of the global economy. Thus, they would also ensure that economies were well positioned to respond well to recovery when it finally concretizes.<sup>37</sup>

Governments would therefore need to act on the demand and supply side. Integrated macroeconomic, financial and labor market policies, which promote growth and employment, combined with measures to support good domestic investment and a business environment, especially for small and medium-sized companies and startups, in addition to reforms to promote

<sup>34</sup> MERINO, Lucyla Tellez. *A eficácia do conceito de trabalho decente nas relações trabalhistas*. Tese de Doutorado. Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2011. p. 138-139.

<sup>35</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Jobs and Skills: Tackling the Global Unemployment Crisis - Preparing for Growth*. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2014. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/jobs-and-skills-tackling-global-unemployment-crisis-preparing-growth/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>36</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Jobs and Skills: Tackling the Global Unemployment Crisis - Preparing for Growth*. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2014. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/jobs-and-skills-tackling-global-unemployment-crisis-preparing-growth/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>37</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Jobs and Skills: Tackling the Global Unemployment Crisis - Preparing for Growth*. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2014. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/jobs-and-skills-tackling-global-unemployment-crisis-preparing-growth/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

growth and job creation, are some of the initiatives that could structure, according to the WEF, the establishment of a positive economic cycle for countries.<sup>38</sup>

It would also be necessary to promote the segmentation of the labor market, with the reduction of informality and the promotion of inclusive labor markets, which fully respect workers' rights and social protection, combined with public policies responsible for increasing the participation of the workforce including young people, women, elderly workers and people with disabilities. In addition, the reduction of structural and long-term unemployment, underemployment and informality should be pursued through labor market and social investment policies, which support aggregate demand and reduce inequality, establishing adequately minimum wages in national wage setting systems.<sup>39</sup>

National collective bargaining agreements and other policies to reinforce the links between productivity and human development, focused on training and improving skills, especially for vulnerable groups, are also the main initiatives that make up the recipe for recovery in national economies. Finally, the study warns policy makers about attention to job quality, since, in the institution's interpretation, low-quality work is rarely sustainable work.<sup>40</sup>

In January 2016, "The Future of Jobs", an extensive report by the WEF that deals with the changes in work, considers that a set of a broader socioeconomic, geopolitical and demographic factors of change, each interacting in multiple directions and intensifying themselves, can cause the majority of occupations to undergo a fundamental transformation: some jobs are threatened by redundancy, others are growing rapidly and still others are undergoing a change in the portfolio of skills necessary for their execution.<sup>41</sup> Taken together, demographic and socioeconomic changes are expected to have almost as strong an impact on business models and organizational structures as technological changes.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Jobs and Skills: Tackling the Global Unemployment Crisis - Preparing for Growth**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2014. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/jobs-and-skills-tackling-global-unemployment-crisis-preparing-growth/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>39</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Jobs and Skills: Tackling the Global Unemployment Crisis - Preparing for Growth**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2014. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/jobs-and-skills-tackling-global-unemployment-crisis-preparing-growth/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>40</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Jobs and Skills: Tackling the Global Unemployment Crisis - Preparing for Growth**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2014. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/jobs-and-skills-tackling-global-unemployment-crisis-preparing-growth/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>41</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The Future of Jobs**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>42</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The Future of Jobs**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

The document supports that the application of technology has already changed when and where work is carried out in practically all sectors, as industrial age workplaces give way to digital age work practices, including remote work, flexible work and work under demand. The strong growth of jobs in the fields of information technology and mathematics is driven by trends beyond technology, such as the rapid urbanization of developing countries and the interruptions that negatively affect job prospects, such as geopolitical volatility and issues privacy.<sup>43</sup>

However, the increasing participation of the female workforce is seen as a key factor in change in various sectors of the industry, such as consumer affairs, and which is highly correlated with expected employment growth - an unequivocally positive trend, in a turbulent scenario of technological, demographic and socioeconomic changes. The continued rise of women in the workplace would also contribute to more diverse and dynamic cultures in the workplace. The report also provides a comparative analysis of all sectoral and regional profiles related to gender disparity indicators in the world of work, the purpose of which is to map information to decision makers and experts from academia, companies, government and civil society, providing interested companies with the opportunity to refer to the range of expectations prevalent in their country and / or sector.<sup>44</sup>

In November 2016, “Values, Ethics and Innovation: Rethinking Technological Development in the Fourth Industrial Revolution” was published, document that deals with ethics and innovation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In it, it is asserted that the opportunities and threats created by emerging technologies require leaders from all business, government and civil society to understand the importance of values and ethics in technological development, that is, for a conscious perspective of technological development that prioritizes society's values and acting in accordance with elected values, a priori, as fundamental and guiding economic activities and relations, such as justice, the commonweal and good administration.<sup>45</sup>

A more constructive view of technology, its complexity and its impact on daily life can be seen by the saturation of urban and rural environments with technical infrastructure, personal and professional needs for connectivity, the advancement of computational capacities and the

<sup>43</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The Future of Jobs**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>44</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The Future of Jobs**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>45</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Values and the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Connecting the Dots Between Value, Values, Profit and Purpose**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/values-and-the-fourth-industrial-revolution-connecting-the-dots-between-value-values-profit-and-purpose/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.



biotechnological advances in manipulation genetics. In other words, technological developments and social changes affect the way people live, work and relate.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, according to the WEF, it is necessary to invest in an approach that does not lack the real meanings of technological progress, namely, social progress and the well-being of humanity, in terms of opportunities and self-realization, which, in practice, requires the taking a human-centered approach, that is, recognizing how technologies and societies are co-produced and prioritizing a future that involves all stakeholders, promoting the goal of greater social cohesion, trust and well-being, a pillar in transition to transformative innovation and responsible leadership in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.<sup>47</sup>

In May 2017, the study “Advancing Human-Centred Economic Progress in the Fourth Industrial Revolution” suggested a political agenda that ensures that technological progress increases substantially in the 21st century, without replacing human and employment potential. It also proposes a tripartite program to reorient the growth models of the G-20 economies, guided by the concept of social inclusion in their innovation ecosystems and economic policies, in order to disseminate, as widely as possible, the general gains in opportunities and prosperity made possible by technology and international economic integration. For that, in the construction’s scope of future labor market policies for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, according to the study, it will be required a thought that surpasses the simple calculations of the number of jobs created or destroyed. In this way, it must be considered that work represents a place that is socially constructed and brings with it a variety of expectations, rights and responsibilities in addition to strict legal stipulations.<sup>48</sup>

As well, the report adds that the person who works has a specific identity and inalienable rights, for whom efficiency is less important than undertaking meaningful, safe and sustainable activities, which provide value to a community and thus convey social status and economic security. Finally, it understands that placing people and their living standards at the center of

<sup>46</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Values and the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Connecting the Dots Between Value, Values, Profit and Purpose.** Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/values-and-the-fourth-industrial-revolution-connecting-the-dots-between-value-values-profit-and-purpose/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>47</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Values and the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Connecting the Dots Between Value, Values, Profit and Purpose.** Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2016. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/values-and-the-fourth-industrial-revolution-connecting-the-dots-between-value-values-profit-and-purpose/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>48</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Advancing Human-Centred Economic Progress in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.** Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/advancing-human-centred-economic-progress-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

economic policy represents an agenda that involves and shapes the future, laying the foundations for a new and more robust model of global growth, more inclusive, sustainable and resilient than the generated dependence on macroeconomic stimuli and trade surpluses in recent years.<sup>49</sup>

From July 2017, the document “Accelerating Workforce Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution” highlights the fact that the way one works, the skills needed to thrive in jobs and careers are evolving rapidly. These changes - driven by technological innovation, demographics, changing business models and the nature of work - are significantly capable of changing the skills required by the job market.

The incompatibilities of skills and skill changes have increased the need for permanent qualification of adults, throughout their careers, forcing those who work to make appropriate investments to optimize the potential of the adult workforce, in all stages of productive life. Thus, companies and societies can reap the benefits of productive, innovative and experienced employees who continue to adapt.<sup>50</sup>

This study continues to support that, despite the increasing need for requalification of adults, currently there are no opportunities for comprehensive and inclusive requalification, with adequate levels of access, quality and scale of supply in most countries. Progress has been made in accessing greater amounts of low-cost digital training in many countries, but there is still a lack of a cohesive system that addresses the diverse needs of students, dedicates sufficient resources and brings together the right stakeholders in providing applied learning opportunities. Public and private sources of adult training and learning are often disjointed and individuals and businesses are attended in a reduced way.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, it proposes the creation of a continuous cycle of interaction between the needs of the labor market and the stakeholders of the educational system at all levels, requiring an effective anticipation of skills that informs and engages relevant stakeholders, in addition to models co-financed between government and employers or employer co-financing coalitions. To do so, the study says, policymakers and companies must adopt a variety of dialogical tools to share

<sup>49</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Advancing Human-Centred Economic Progress in the Fourth Industrial Revolution**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/advancing-human-centred-economic-progress-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>50</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Accelerating Workforce Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/accelerating-workforce-reskilling-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 15 apr. 2020.

<sup>51</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Accelerating Workforce Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/accelerating-workforce-reskilling-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 15 apr. 2020.

financial investments among individuals, governments and employers, including, for example, payroll taxes dedicated to subsidizing training opportunities, deductions corporate income tax, special taxes to be paid if a minimum training budget is not disbursed.<sup>52</sup>

In “Case Studies in Retirement System Reform”, of May 2017, the WEF deals with a falling issue on the international stage: the proposals for reform of the social security system in response to the increase in life expectancy and quality in countries and fiscal balance. First, the text alludes to the fact that many workers in developed and developing countries still do not have easy access to pension plans and savings products. In many cases, options are available, but the acceptance is low. The lack of opportunity to start saving, as well as the inadequate incentive to make the economy a habit, would have been severely limiting the ability of many people to accumulate financial and equity reserves. In this context, self-employed and informal workers are less likely to have access to a social security plan. Likewise, those who work in smaller companies, where employers may be overburdened by regulation to provide a private pension plan, are also at a disadvantage. It is necessary to save 10 to 15% of an average annual salary to support a reasonable level of retirement income.<sup>53</sup>

However, individual savings rates in most countries are much lower, according to the study. This already presents challenges in which defined benefit structures, which use a formula that includes years spent and salary history to calculate fixed payments, traditionally would have provided a guaranteed retirement benefit. As workers analyze their defined contribution retirement balances - which consist of contributions whose final value depends on what employers reserve (therefore, benefits are not guaranteed) - they realize that their savings will provide a much lower retirement income than the expected.<sup>54</sup>

Pension systems and reforms stemming from several countries were used as an example, such as Canada, Japan, Netherlands, Singapore and the United Kingdom. Finally, it was concluded that the implementation of these initiatives requires a strong governance structure and a long-term investment. Risk premiums are cyclical and expressed over the years, in such a way that it

<sup>52</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Accelerating Workforce Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/accelerating-workforce-reskilling-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 15 apr. 2020.

<sup>53</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Case Studies in Retirement System Reform**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/case-studies-in-retirement-system-reform/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>54</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Case Studies in Retirement System Reform**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/case-studies-in-retirement-system-reform/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

considers it crucial to find the right balance of confidence in local skills and the ability to assess risks and efficiencies at a global level.<sup>55</sup>

The report “Eight Futures of Work Scenarios and their Implications”, from January 2018, seeks to identify and prospect, until 2030, the current period of intense changes in the world of work. As automation - mainly in the form of robotics, artificial intelligence and other new technologies - is developing at an unprecedented rate and as it has a significant impact in various sectors, there are, more and more, wide changes in the positions, tasks and skills needed within each sector.<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, several other factors, such as labor mobility and migration, demographic change, changes in the delivery and quality of education and skills and the growing needs for talent in sectors such as infrastructure, health and education are also changing the nature and quality of work. Thus, even with large-scale automation of manual and routine tasks, most middle and high-skilled functions remain relatively untouched by disruptions, particularly those that require non-cognitive skills and the completion of complex tasks.<sup>57</sup>

Many low-skilled and displaced workers were competing for fewer roles suited to their skill sets. These, as far as they are concerned, end up going to the emerging world in search of better ways to earn a living, more stable income and lower cost of survival, or become, essentially, dependent on state-sponsored social assistance systems. Companies face a growing lack of talent.<sup>58</sup>

According to that report, in response to the concerns of displaced workers, governments imposed restrictions on international labor mobility and sought to fulfill the talent needs of their economies internally. Attempts to control social agitation have focused on efforts to maintain jobs across locations, across tightly controlled borders between cities, states and countries. As the income reaches few, the economy of the past disintegrates and the conflict increases. Governments are increasingly challenged to resort to new and radical political interventions, often

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<sup>55</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Case Studies in Retirement System Reform**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/case-studies-in-retirement-system-reform/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>56</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Eight Futures of Work: Scenarios and their Implications**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018, p. 2. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/eight-futures-of-work-scenarios-and-their-implications/>. Accessed on: 18 de abril de 2020.

<sup>57</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Eight Futures of Work: Scenarios and their Implications**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/eight-futures-of-work-scenarios-and-their-implications/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>58</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Eight Futures of Work: Scenarios and their Implications**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/eight-futures-of-work-scenarios-and-their-implications/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

untested, such as the nationalization of technology-owned monopolies to far-reaching redistribution schemes. This emptying of the labor market has led to deep and growing inequalities, polarized values and divided points of view on technology.<sup>59</sup>

With relatively low levels of physical labor mobility within and between countries, online platforms increasingly offer an additional outlet to access local and global markets. Many entrepreneurs have also turned to opportunities in their local markets, creating a range of products and services, varying from artisanal products to new ventures in the care economy to urban agriculture. There is a dynamic market for workers to create opportunities for themselves, attracting constant flows of investment capital. Finally, the main criticisms are aimed at requalifying the current workforce and supporting job transition.<sup>60</sup>

The document “The Future of Jobs Report 2018” aimed to provide specific information about the magnitude of the trends of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and to assess the expected time horizon for its impacts to be felt in job functions, employment levels and skills. The study supports that, as the Fourth Industrial Revolution unfolds, companies are looking to take advantage of new and emerging technologies to reach higher levels of production and consumption efficiency, in addition to expanding into new markets and competing with new products for a base global consumer population increasingly composed of digital natives. Four specific technological advances - omnipresent high-speed mobile internet; artificial intelligence; widespread adoption of Big Data and cloud technology - are expected to dominate the 2018-2022 period, as factors that positively affect business growth. They are, therefore, flanked by a variety of socioeconomic trends that generate business opportunities along with the dissemination of new technologies, such as trajectories of national economic growth.<sup>61</sup>

A wider range of robotics technologies in commercialization or production - including stationary robots and fully automated aerial drones, in addition to machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence - are attracting significant commercial interest for their adoption. Besides that, companies should expand their use of outsourced workers who carry out specialized work tasks, with many respondents highlighting their intention to involve workers in a more

<sup>59</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Eight Futures of Work: Scenarios and their Implications**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/eight-futures-of-work-scenarios-and-their-implications/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>60</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Eight Futures of Work: Scenarios and their Implications**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/eight-futures-of-work-scenarios-and-their-implications/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>61</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The Future of Jobs Report 2018**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.



flexible way, using in addition to physical offices and decentralization of logistics and distribution operations.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, the conclusions of this report suggest the need for a comprehensive strategy to increase the creation of quality jobs, with an approach in which companies seek to use the automation of some work tasks to complement and improve their human resources, comparison of the workforces and, finally, to enable employees to extend their full potential. Thus, instead of focusing only on work based on automation and cost reduction, the broader horizon of value creation activities is taken into account, which can be carried out by human workers, often in addition to technology, when they are free from the need to perform routine and repetitive tasks, with room to use their distinctly meaningful talents.<sup>63</sup>

In “The New Production Workforce: Responding to Shifting Labor Demands”, also from 2018, the WEF seeks to understand how the workforce is behaving in the face of all these observed inflections and to bring a new lens for the future of productive employment, focusing on changes in the production value chains and the impact of the main trends, in the different segments of these chains. Low labor costs may become less important and there may be a profound shift in production work to advanced economies. However, the jobs created will be different from the traditional production jobs that have been outsourced.<sup>64</sup>

Skills mismatches are expected to increase. Two main characteristics are identified, in regions and countries that indicate a high potential for skills mismatch. First, there are locations with more skilled production labor forces but fewer workers, such as East Asia and Western Europe, where there is likely to be more demand for highly skilled production workers than the labor market can offer.<sup>65</sup> Second, there are locations with large consumer markets. China and the United States may have the greatest risk of skills mismatch, because the demand for high- and low-skilled labor may increase, regardless of the impact of automation. Incidentally, automation is expected to continue to displace workers across the production value chain, particularly in South Asia and

<sup>62</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The Future of Jobs Report 2018**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>63</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The Future of Jobs Report 2018**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>64</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The New Production Workforce: Responding to Shifting Labour Demands**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/the-new-production-workforce-responding-to-shifting-labour-demands/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>65</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The New Production Workforce: Responding to Shifting Labour Demands**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/the-new-production-workforce-responding-to-shifting-labour-demands/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.



other developing economies, and at the same time, the jobs that will be created in the production industries will require a different set of skills existing in the workforce of the current production industry.<sup>66</sup>

More recently, in January 2019, the study “Dialogue Series on New Economic and Social Frontiers Shaping the New Economy in the Fourth Industrial Revolution” reflected on the current and upcoming social and economic changes of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Thus, says the report, long-term global trends in important dimensions of human well-being show a picture of hope: poverty rates were decreasing worldwide, incomes were rising for the majority of the global population, and global public health would have improved significantly in recent decades. Rapid technological advances have sustained many of these global gains in income and welfare, which are unprecedented in human history.<sup>67</sup>

Nowadays, the scale of online markets has been a source of vast benefits for the consumer, due to greater variety, speed, efficiency and lower costs. At the same time, the technological developments currently underway represent a significant challenge in terms of the depth of the economic and social transformation necessary for its benefits to be fully realized and distributed equitably.<sup>68</sup>

Although many advanced economies have collected enormous benefits from technological advances, the document says, they have also experienced the emptying of the middle class, growing market concentration in many sectors, great decoupling between productivity growth and wage developments and concerns about algorithm bias, solidifying the exclusion patterns. Mostly, perceptions in these economies about opportunities and risks are divergent due to increased polarization and reduced social mobility.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **The New Production Workforce: Responding to Shifting Labour Demands.** Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2018. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/the-new-production-workforce-responding-to-shifting-labour-demands/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>67</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Dialogue Series on New Economic and Social Frontiers: Shaping the New Economy in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.** Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2019. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/dialogue-series-on-new-economic-and-social-frontiers-shaping-the-new-economy-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>68</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Dialogue Series on New Economic and Social Frontiers: Shaping the New Economy in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.** Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2019. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/dialogue-series-on-new-economic-and-social-frontiers-shaping-the-new-economy-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

<sup>69</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Dialogue Series on New Economic and Social Frontiers: Shaping the New Economy in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.** Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2019. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/dialogue-series-on-new-economic-and-social-frontiers-shaping-the-new-economy-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

For some, the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution brought the existing structures and landmarks together in such a way that the prevailing sense became one of uncertainty and insecurity, rather than being seen as unlimited opportunities. This added fuel to populist movements, which thrived on promises to reimpose old orders.

With regard to work, the WEF establishes that strategies for job growth should not focus solely on the number of jobs created; the quality of work also needs to be prioritized, requiring the development of a consensus among companies, the public sector and workers on what constitutes quality work which can help sustain economic and social stability. Policy makers can contribute to ensure quality work through better application of existing labor laws and updating employment guidelines and regulations. Companies can also introduce corporate policies that encourage the creation of decent and rewarding work. Finally, understanding, evaluating and managing the new job opportunities presented by the platform economy is an essential element of this path towards job creation.<sup>70</sup>

## 5 DECENT WORK, WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM AND THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: AN EVIDENT CONVERGENCE

The WEF reports and studies examined so far, in which is dealt with people who live off from the sale of the labor force, may, at first sight, cause the impression of a vision compatible with the promotion of Decent Work.

It is true that the WEF documents concerns the respect for labor rights considered fundamental by the first strategic objective of promoting Decent Work. There is talk of more inclusive labor markets, whose full respect for labor rights and social protection are theoretical premises. The elimination of child labor, in its turn, permeates the entire programmatic content of the formulation of public policies for expanding the supply of quality jobs. Union freedom and collective bargaining are also pointed out as mechanisms that can give more democratic features to the innovations provided by technological increases in production, in such a way that they would allow the organization of the workers themselves in defense of the realization of their rights.

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<sup>70</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Dialogue Series on New Economic and Social Frontiers: Shaping the New Economy in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2019. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/dialogue-series-on-new-economic-and-social-frontiers-shaping-the-new-economy-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>. Accessed on: 19 apr. 2020.

Finally, the presence of women, young people and the elderly integrated to new technologies in the labor market is extolled.

The generation of quality and productive employment - according to the strategic objective of Decent Work - is reached, for example, when the WEF proposes a political agenda for the countries that are members of the G-20, whose content seeks to guarantee technological progress, without there being replacement of human potential in jobs. That is, in the ecosystems of innovation and opportunities, social inclusion is envisaged through joint strategies by governments, companies and workers, capable of generating gains in opportunities and prosperity. To increase the generation of quality jobs, it is suggested that it must exist a comprehensive strategy focused on the automation of some work tasks complementary to human resources, in addition to training employees. Therefore, a broader horizon of value creation activities is considered, where workers could, supposedly, be less subject to repetitive and discouraging labor.

In view of the internationalization of the phenomena and consequences arising from the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the expansion of social protection - the third strategic objective of Decent Work, which relates to safeguarding the population against economic crises and unfavorable social circumstances - is treated by the WEF as a motto for interconnected actions of governments and social actors, in order to guarantee an adequate infrastructure so that workers are able to have the social skills necessary to sustain the long-term productive potential. In addition, investment in macroeconomic policies that have the transfer of income and the creation of better living conditions for the population through public policies that support aggregate demand and the reduction of inequality at its center is envisaged.

By presenting proposals and readings that permeate the actions of governments, companies and unions, the WEF seems to embrace the mechanism of social dialogue - the fourth strategic objective of promoting Decent Work. In this tone, it was found, for example, the radiograph of indicators of gender disparities in the world of work and the comparative analysis of various sectoral and regional profiles, so that the international community - governments, companies, civil associations, unions - can build solutions and new perspectives, based on the dialogue between the various social actors. Finally, the WEF strives for a continuous circuit of interaction between employers and governments, responsible for educational policies, in such a way that it is possible to build a link between the skills developed in schools and the current and future needs of companies in the Fourth Revolution Industrial.

However, it happens that a more sophisticated and adherent analysis to the materiality of socioeconomic relations, with regard to some of the conclusions or expectations of the WEF about

the Fourth Industrial Revolution brought to light, reveals a not consistent meaning regarding the effective promotion of Decent Work, as a minimally protective notion of those who work, thus preventing a feasible structural coupling between the perspectives of the Forum and the ILO. In fact, the impression of commitment to a world in which work is less painful and exclusive, fades in the face of the reality of work in digital times.

It is true that, despite this denomination being far from unanimous acceptance in the fields of history and sociology, the WEF appropriates the term Fourth Industrial Revolution and disseminates it to portray the impacts of substantial technological advances in the modes of production and consumption, since, certainly, human labor could not be simply ignored in view of its unavoidable centrality to the accumulating dynamics of capitalism.<sup>71</sup> In this scenario, examining the profile of work in the 21st century, although in a brief and compatible way with the extent of the present study, is a condition for a more accurate examination of the congruence between concerns and proposals of the WEF on the subject. After all, what can labor observers in history and society offer to understand the direction of work?

The course of human existence on planet Earth demonstrates that periods considered as revolutionary in terms of social models, taken in a panoramic way, denote a chain of advances in the use rationing of the labor force, from classical slavery, through feudal vassalage and reaching the typically capitalist wage labor. In this way, the Cognitive Revolution (70,000 years ago) opened up space for the Agricultural Revolution (12,000 years ago), which, in its turn, paved the way for the Scientific Revolution (16th century), which would contribute decisively for the Industrial Revolution (18th and 19th century)<sup>72</sup>, from which, establishing capitalism as a social mode, science and work would come to be re-signified by the impulses and purposes of accumulative production<sup>73</sup>, as a result of a historical process of co-optation of science by imperialism and capitalism.<sup>74</sup>

But it is, in fact, precisely in the 18th century, that the Industrial Revolution concretized an unprecedented combination of “abundant and cheap energy with abundant and cheap raw

<sup>71</sup> ANTUNES, Ricardo. **Adeus ao trabalho?** Ensaio sobre as metamorfoses e a centralidade do mundo do trabalho. São Paulo: Cortez, 1995.

<sup>72</sup> HARARI, Y. N. **Sapiens: uma breve história da humanidade**. Trad. Janaína Marcoantonio. 48. ed. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2019, p. 11-168; 257-385.

<sup>73</sup> BRAVERMAN, H. **Trabalho e capital monopolista: a degradação do trabalho no século XXI**. Trad. Nathanael C. Caixeiro. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: LTC, 2015, p. 138.

<sup>74</sup> HARARI, Y. N. **Sapiens: uma breve história da humanidade**. Trad. Janaína Marcoantonio. 48. ed. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2019, p. 281-360.

materials”, resulting in “an explosion of human productivity”<sup>75</sup> and, consequently, of its intensification to levels never seen before. Nevertheless, the technological possibilities of machinery would come to experience a feeling of exhaustion at the end of the 19th century, thus giving rise to a response from capitalist economic rationality, consisting of a new Technical-Scientific Revolution, this time anchored in the rational and supposedly organized scientific work processes, from the intervention and separation of the ways of conceiving and executing productive activities, precisely linked to the optimization of working time, having Frederick Winslow Taylor as his most outstanding craftsman.<sup>76</sup> Taylor, whose ideas cannot be said to be completely abandoned even in contemporary times, despite the new proposals for productive organization consistent with a restructured capitalism with flexible accumulation, a restructuring that is affirmed as a “simple recombination of two profit-seeking strategies”, that is, the supply of working hours and the more intensified extraction of human productive capacity, in the same space of time.<sup>77</sup>

In this way, one can never lose sight of this relation of science in the service of imperialist-capitalist expansionism - which witnessed, at the turn of the 20th century, the overcoming of the protagonism of the Nation State for international corporations - when examining activities, speeches and actions of an organization like the WEF. At the same time, it cannot be neglected the fact that, in the capitalist society of the last two hundred years, every technological leap has presented and presents a capitalist impulse or it shapes itself to it, resulting, inevitably, in the intensification of the exploitation of the work force that manages to place itself in the labor market, now no longer essentially industrial, but predominantly services.

For no other reason, work in the digital age, whether in agribusiness, industry and, mainly, in services, has, now and always will, in the disputes concerning the working day and its regulation, a sensitive element that reveals the intensification of the exploitation of the labor force, to which technological advances serve leading to expansion of the possibilities of controlling, strengthening and enhancing the extraction of human energy applied to the production process. In addition to the innovative instruments for digital productivity control, including remotely, there were also innovative systems for extending and intensifying working hours. In this regard, Basso mentions mobile working hours at the employer’s discretion (“à la carte”), the setting of usual overtime

<sup>75</sup> HARARI, Y. N. **Sapiens: uma breve história da humanidade**. Trad. Janaína Marcoantonio. 48. ed. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2019, p. 351.

<sup>76</sup> BRAVERMAN, H. **Trabalho e capital monopolista: a degradação do trabalho no século XXI**. Trad. Nathanael C. Caixeiro. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: LTC, 2015, p. 146-212.

<sup>77</sup> HARVEY, D. **Condição Pós-Moderna**. Trad. Adail U. Sobral e Maria Stela Gonçalves. 13. ed. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2004, p. 174-175.

provision and hour bank compensation systems, in a kind of concomitantly intensive and extensive exploitation of the workforce by combining long and intense hours.<sup>78</sup>

Accompanying such typical requirements of the new time management systems is an arsenal of legal innovations that support this reality, admitting a growing variety of atypical contracts, such as zero hour contracts, of the various hypotheses of employment contracts of temporary workers and anomalous legal figures of outsourcing, of the individual company and the exclusive professional, who reconfigure and distort, in the legal sphere, the essentially bilateral material relationship that shapes salaried work, dissociating, to the disadvantage of those who live from the sale of labor force, the legal norm of versed reality.

In the digital age, or the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we witness the thickening of this state of affairs, pressured by the increase in global structural unemployment, which in its turn is shaped by the productive mobility typical of the dynamics of the globalization of capital and global value chains (GVC). Encouraged by the capitalist dynamics of expansion of activities and goods that could become commodities<sup>79</sup>, a growing mass of both female and male workers, rather formal or informal, appears to provide all types of services through digital platforms, subjected to uncertain, insecure and poorly paid working conditions, whose growth allowed Huws to envision the formation of a cyber-class or<sup>80</sup>, as Antunes prefers, an “info proletariat”<sup>81</sup>. Thus, a context of hyper-intensification of the exploitation of the workforce is formed, tensioned by digital expedients, which has already opened its devastating psychological effects, causing a vast pandemic of cases of depression due to the insecure and harassing professional situation.<sup>82</sup>

Immersed in this situation, no initiative, including those of the ILO and the WEF, can truly intend to offer proposals to increase worker protection (of course, even if it does not go beyond the capitalist model), if such proposals do not touch deeply and counter-hegemonic trends in labor exploitation in the digital age or the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Assuming that this is the ILO's expectation for the four strategic objectives of Decent Work, it can be said that the perceptions

<sup>78</sup> BASSO, P. **Tempos modernos, jornadas antigas: vidas de trabalho no início do século XXI**. Trad. Patrícia Villen. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2018, p. 265-268 e 297.

<sup>79</sup> HUWS, U. **A formação do cibertariado: trabalho virtual em um mundo real**. Trad. Murilo Van der Laan. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2017, p. 242-243.

<sup>80</sup> HUWS, U. The Making of a Cybertariat? Virtual Work in a Real World. **Socialist Register**. Available at: <https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5753>. Accessed on: 18 jan. 2019.

<sup>81</sup> ANTUNES, Ricardo. **O privilégio da servidão: o novo proletariado de serviços na era digital**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2018, p. 78-80.

<sup>82</sup> BASSO, P. **Tempos modernos, jornadas antigas: vidas de trabalho no início do século XXI**. Trad. Patrícia Villen. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2018, p. 283; HAN, Byung-chul. **Sociedade do Cansaço**. Trad. Enio Paulo Giachini. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 2015.



of the WEF about the world of work in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, in reality, do not match with the Decent Work paradigm.

Regarding the protection of human rights in industrial relations, the documents analyzed by the WEF are not assertive to the fundamentality of working hours limitation and the perniciousness of new forms of control and flexibility of working time. Although opposed to slave, child labor and discrimination of all kinds, the studies examined present generic proposals that overestimate the role of the State, compared to that of corporations, in terms of overcoming the economic and cultural inequalities that sustain such repulsive phenomena.

Even if the person who works is considered to have a unique subjectivity and a set of inalienable rights, its efficiency and the way it responds to the productivity goals imposed by the current way of production are at the center of any actions that seek to adapt these people - either on their own initiative, from governments or companies - to the specific requirements that the digital age imposes. Thus, from the perspective of the WEF, a more inclusive macroeconomic policy is still ultimately subordinated to the perennial need to generate trade surpluses for companies. Regarding that, there is no suggestion that the demands for training far outweigh the criticisms of the “advanced” concepts of labor management and work process design, oriented to the immense increase in productivity and adapted to the new technological paradigm of computerization, disseminated by business models of international standard, thirsty for new opportunities, in this context of productive change.<sup>83</sup>

In this scenario, it is not possible to achieve respect for basic rights in labor relations, just as it is not credible to imagine, in the same context, improving the quality of working conditions, in a general sense.

By the way, with regard to the generation of quality jobs (adequately remunerated and executed in a physically and mentally safe environment), in the path of the referred to the working day, the analyzed WEF documents, at the time that they fluctuate between generalities and the eloquent omissions, they reaffirm the logic of employment as an instrument, per se, for improving living conditions, a paradigm so directly opposed by the idea of Human Development<sup>84</sup> that it even guides the actions of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), since the 1990s, and inspires the concept of Decent Work.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> ANTUNES, Ricardo. **O privilégio da servidão: o novo proletariado de serviços na era digital**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2018, p. 69.

<sup>84</sup> SEN, Amartya. **Desenvolvimento como liberdade**. Trad. Laura Teixeira Motta. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2010.

<sup>85</sup> SEN, Amartya. Work and rights. **International Labour Review**, v. 139, n. 2, p. 119-128, 2000.

The obsession with reducing production costs through the use of technologies that replace human labor and eliminate a wide range of jobs, generating structural unemployment and aggravating the progress of precarious rights, even more dramatic in the Global South<sup>86</sup>, remains undisguised in studies taken by the WEF. In this line, initiatives to expand automation of work tasks considered complementary to human resources are projected, as well as to expand the training of employees, with interaction between governments and corporations to direct education along this path, and to support the long-term productive potential, sustained by a broader horizon of value creation activities.

Still against the increase in the quality of jobs, temporary occupations and outsourcing are considered inexorable and, within the fallacious logic of employment as a synonym for life improvement opportunities, they are exalted, supporting the legal figures that admit them while providing deficient protection to basic rights of those who work. The analysis of the WEF, possibly suitable for a small range of highly specialized and well-paid outsourced workers, is indifferent and silent on the huge contingent of informal and temporary employees in situations of vulnerability or unemployment, more subjected to accidents at work, flat wages and fragmentation of class consciousness, with the deepening of the dispersion and social delegitimation of unions.<sup>87</sup>

The need for specialization and constant and uninterrupted improvement by the working class, in its turn, does not adhere to the reality as a solution to the labor asymmetries in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, because it neglects the particular capacity of each country, company and, above all, of those who work to resign these increments, in its productive ecosystem.<sup>88</sup> That is, when interpreting outsourcing and atypical labor contracts as trends to be stimulated, with a view to better organization of the production system in times of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the WEF stifles the promotion of a truly productive, quality job and, above all, legally protected. Furthermore, the studies analyzed do not seem to be interested in going deeply into the deleterious results of the intensification by digital means of the rhythms and demands inflicted on workers, in spite of considering its occurrence.

Regarding the expansion of social protection, the neoliberal canon of fiscal austerity resonates strongly in the WEF, which identifies, in the excess of state intervention, the main cause

<sup>86</sup> BRAGA, Ruy. **Rebeldia do Precariado: trabalho e neoliberalismo no Sul global**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2017, p. 125.

<sup>87</sup> DRUCK, Maria da Graça. Flexibilização e Precarização: formas contemporâneas de dominação do trabalho. **Cadernos do CRH**, Salvador, v. 37, p. 15, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> REY, Carl Benedikt; OSBORNE, Michael A. The future of employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerisation?. **Technological Forecasting And Social Change**, Elsevier, v. 14, p. 264, 2017.

of the problems of inefficiency in the provision of public services.<sup>89</sup> In this regard, through a study on national pension systems<sup>90</sup>, the WEF endorsed the need for a reorganization of pension systems due to the growth in life expectancy and fiscal balance.

So, it happens from this study that the responsibility of States and companies, in the social security equation, is attached to policies for encouraging the economy of wages by those who work, associated with the reduction of regulations on private pension plans. In short, from this point of view, it is precisely for those who sell the labor force the greatest effort in financial engineering to obtain a safe and sustained retirement, after the interruption of their productivity to capital. In this sense, the informal workers - a category that is expected to increase, according to the WEF itself, during the Fourth Industrial Revolution and which is, of course, more exposed to situations that may impair their work capacities - will be, if these trends confirmed, increasingly vulnerable, since more distant from state protection, in some cases, due to the massive neoliberal depletion imposed on the social security systems of the countries or by other forms of social assistance.<sup>91</sup> The expansion of social protection, in this context, is mitigated by the severe reduction, which occurred through budget cuts and macroeconomic changes, in the ability of governments to organize and react to the problems that affect the population, a trend once again adverse to what is prescribed by international development promotion programs authorities, in particular UNDP<sup>92</sup>.

Finally, the strengthening of social dialogue finds little support in the main proposals examined. There is talk of constant exchange of information between companies and public policy makers, with special attention to educational policies, so that the needs of the market can be fulfilled by schools and universities. Thus, the interesting skills and knowledge to the production method would be incorporated into the basic teaching material, dedicated to creating qualified labor exclusively according to the demand of the companies, already impacted by the technologies, denoting reinforcement of the traditionally established positions of power, legitimizing the position of exploited in the social hierarchy and reducing the capacity for self-

<sup>89</sup> HARVEY, David. **O neoliberalismo: histórias e implicações**. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2008, p. 36-37.

<sup>90</sup> WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. **Case Studies in Retirement System Reform**. Geneve: World Economic Forum, 2017. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/whitepapers/case-studies-in-retirement-system-reform/>. Accessed on: 18 apr. 2020.

<sup>91</sup> COCKELL, Fernanda Flávia; PERTICARRARI, Daniel. Retratos da informalidade: a fragilidade dos sistemas de proteção social em momentos de infortúnio. **Ciênc. saúde coletiva**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 16, n. 3, p. 1712, mar. 2011.

<sup>92</sup> UNDP. **Human Development Report 2019**. Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: inequalities in human development in the 21st century. New York, NY: UNDP, 2019; e UNDP. **Human Development Report 2018**. Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update Team. Nova Iorque: PNUD, 2018.

determination of individuals.<sup>93</sup> In this light, the social dialogue appears to be a distorted simulation in relation to that decanted by the ILO, since the solutions are not subject to consultation and referendum by all the actors involved in the process.

## CONCLUSION

After examining reports and studies published by the World Economic Forum, in the period from 2014 to 2019, concerning the motto of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its impact on the world of work, it was possible to notice that such documents are marked by an analysis that examines the reality of a set of hegemonic assumptions imbued with the neoliberal logic of the economic interest of large corporations, although a rhetorical effort supposedly concerned with the deleterious effects of technological advances on employability and social inequality is noticeable.

In fact, these problems are not ignored, hidden or left out of the diagnoses and propositions assumed by the WEF. However, the proposed prescription, in the harshness of the reality of labor relations, seems to repeat, with the veneer of a careful discourse, the canons of globalized financial and ultraliberal capitalism that marks this historical block, which, in the case of exploiting workforces, calls for deregulation, normalization of precarious conditions of employability, education and state funding for the reproduction of productive demand and distancing of organized civil society from the real spheres of economic decision.

This way, it seems right to suspect that the eventual approximations, even if apparently cogitable, interviews in the WEF documents, between the strategic objectives of promoting Decent Work and the ways and solutions for the impacts of technological innovations and other developments of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the world of work are established as rhetorical devices, devoid of the aptitude to attack the core of the intensification of the exploitation of the workforce and social inequality, aggravated by the technological advance on the forms of labor.

Meanwhile, it is not thought that the promotion of Decent Work has the power to carry out that same attack. However, in light of a potential that mitigates damages and fosters possibilities that protect the class of those who live from the sale of the labor force from the normalization of the precarious condition of labor (deepened by digital media), especially in times of successive planetary economic crises, it is imperative that the strategic objectives of promoting

<sup>93</sup> MÉSZÁROS, István. A educação para além do capital. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2005, p. 56.

Decent Work remain in real dispute for the organized social forces, in the international and national trenches, which requires the complete impediment of their full cooptation by the neoliberal offensive disguised by the veil of social pseudo-preoccupation.

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### SOBRE OS AUTORES

#### SILVIO BELTRAMELLI NETO

Professor Titular Categoria A1 da PUC-Campinas, vinculado ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Direito, linha de pesquisa "Cooperação Internacional e Direitos Humanos", grupo de pesquisa Direito num Mundo Globalizado (CNPQ/PUC-Campinas). Pós-doutorando em Desenvolvimento Econômico pelo Instituto de Economia da Universidade Estadual de Campinas - UNICAMP, integrando o Centro de Estudos Sindicais e de Economia do Trabalho - CESIT. Doutor em Direito (2013) pela Universidade de São Paulo - USP. Mestre (2007) em Direito pela Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba - UNIMEP. Especialista (2001) em Direito e Processo do Trabalho pela PUC-Campinas (2001). Graduado pela PUC-Campinas em 1999. Membro do Ministério Público do Trabalho (Procurador do Trabalho).

#### LEANDRO FARIA COSTA

Undergraduate at Pontifícia Universidade Católica of Campinas (PUC-Campinas), Applied Human and Social Sciences Centre, Law School. Member of the Scientific Initiation Program of PUC-Campinas rectory and also of the Research Group "Law in a Globalized World", where he developed the research project "Fourth Industrial Revolution, work relations and sustainable development from the perspective of the World Economic Forum", using of the scholarship given by FAPIC/PUC-Campinas rectory.