The future of work and automation: Why employment is good for you in small doses.

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Abstract
By 2050 machine-learning and robotics technologies promise to be able to replace some tasks or whole jobs that have traditionally been performed by humans. Like previous technologies introduced in the past couple of centuries, this possibility has been met with either optimism that will permit liberation from the tyranny of employment, or pessimism that it will lead to mass precarity and unemployment.

This lecture will present qualitative and quantitative evidence to explore the possible societal consequences of a radical reduction in the length of the normal working week. It will draw upon the evidence for the economic, sociological and psychological literatures on employment. It will be argued that paid work does have important benefits beyond the wage, but the minimum effective dose of employment for such benefits may be as little as one day per week. The paper also considers why the historical increases in productivity have not been matched with proportionate reductions in working time.