

PUBLICATIONS

*New UBS Center Policy Briefs,
injecting nonpartisan evidence.*



The newly established policy brief series conveys main research insights to politicians, policy makers, and the broader public. The policy briefs are non-technical summaries of research findings that address today's key challenges, and they come with policy suggestions derived from the research results.

Michael Stiefel

The first three policy briefs deal with the labor market in the wider sense: the changing gender composition in high-paying jobs, the question on how automation can cause social unrest, and the importance of culture as a determinant for unemployment duration.

In the first issue of the new series “The end of men”, Nir Jaimovich analyzes how the rising demand for highly skilled workers in the US has unequally affected both genders over the last forty years. The employment outcomes of highly skilled women in the high-paying jobs have improved, while the outcomes for highly skilled men have deteriorated. Jaimovich explains this change by a rising need for social skills in the workplace, such as empathy and communication. Changes in job definitions and job ads show that high-paying jobs increasingly require those skills. Evidence from psychology indicates an advantage for women in this domain. Jaimovich finds that women's outcomes improved precisely in those occupations where there was also a shift towards social skills. As opportunities for action, this policy brief stresses the importance of social skills and calls for education systems, which equally foster them.

In the second issue “Rage against the machines”, Bruno Caprettini and Joachim Voth analyze historical data from the Swing Riots in England, shedding new light on how the adoption of labor-saving technology can cause social unrest. In 1830, protests by rural laborers who destroyed threshing machines

spread through England. Caprettini and Voth analyze historical newspaper ads to build a data set of threshing machines at this time. Using variation in geographic characteristics, they show that in areas predestined for this technology, the adoption of threshing machines indeed caused labor unrest. This study puts emphasis on the necessity for compensating the losers from new technology, by either providing a safety net or alternative employment for them.

In the third policy brief “Culture and Work Attitudes”, Josef Zweimüller offers insights on how culture affects economic outcomes such as unemployment duration, using data from the Swiss unemployment register. In Switzerland, language borders also separate cultural groups, as both surveys and voting results show. Institutions and local labor markets, however, are similar across the borders, offering the possibility to isolate the effect of culture. Zweimüller documents that Swiss residents in French and Italian regions stay unemployed for seven weeks longer on average than residents in German language regions – an economically large difference that can be explained by different work attitudes rather than by language proficiency or religion. This policy brief highlights how culture can cause heterogeneous economic effects within the same institutional setting.

UBS CENTER POLICY BRIEFS

Publication overview

- No. 1, Nir Jaimovich: End of men
- No. 2, Bruno Caprettini and Joachim Voth: Rage against the machines
- No. 3, Josef Zweimüller: Culture and work attitudes

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