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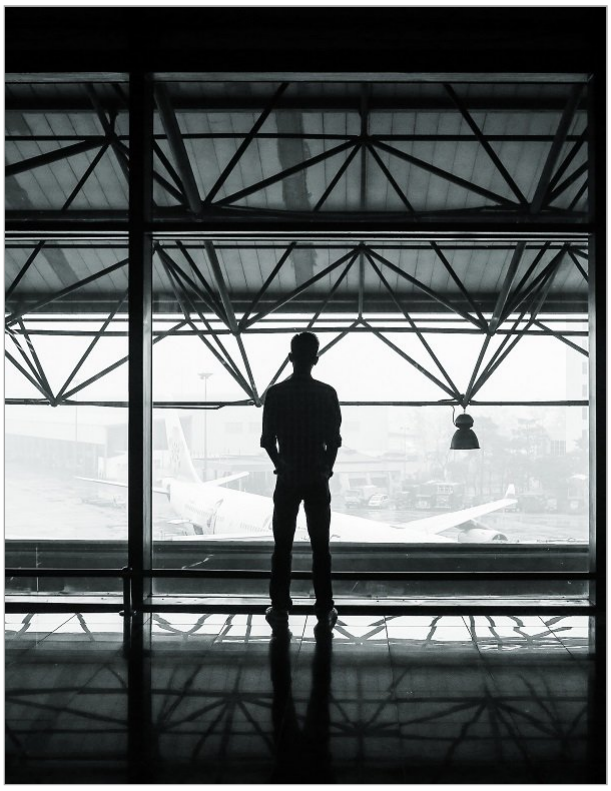

Commentary/Op-Ed - April 2017

Preparing NYC for the Next Wave of Automation

Emerging technologies have the potential to displace workers in range of New York City industries, from accountants and x-ray technicians to paralegals and taxi drivers. Although many of these changes are still years away, a recent Center for an Urban Future policy symposium discussed the steps that policymakers, business executives, and educational leaders in New York should be taking now to prepare for the oncoming wave of automation.

by Center for an Urban Future

Read the full report (PDF)

Last year's presidential election brought a new level of focus to the effects of automation on the economy. Much of the debate centered around the role that automation has played in the decline of the nation's manufacturing sector. But machines are poised to bring about massive changes to a much larger swath of the economy in the years ahead—and not just in the Rust Belt. Robots, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies have the potential to displace workers in range of New York City industries, from accountants and x-ray technicians to paralegals and taxi drivers.

Although many of these changes are still years away, a recent Center for an Urban Future policy symposium discussed the steps that policymakers, business executives, and educational leaders in New York should be taking now to prepare for the oncoming wave of automation. The forum is part of our ongoing Middle Class Jobs Project, a research initiative funded by **Fisher Brothers** and **Winston C. Fisher**.

Five important takeaways emerged from the thought-provoking discussion:

1. The effects of automation are being felt by an increasingly wide range of industries and workers, presenting both enormous challenges and new opportunities.
2. The education system needs major reforms to better prepare young people for the new world of work.
3. New York City and the country should strategically rethink skills-building and retraining programs.
4. A new social safety net—including income and work support—will be required to meet the needs of today's automated economy.

5. Companies that are automating have a responsibility to help those who are negatively affected.

Click here to these explore ideas from our expert panel, which included:

- **Nell Abernathy**, Vice President of Research and Policy, Roosevelt Institute
- **Lauren Andersen**, Executive Director, NYC Tech Talent Pipeline
- **Rebecca Greenfield**, Workplace Reporter, Bloomberg Business
- **Chris Hughes**, Co-Chair, Economic Security Project; Co-Founder, Facebook
- **Stanley S. Litow**, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs, IBM; President, IBM International Foundation
- **Serkan Piantino**, Founder and CEO, Top 1 Systems, Co-Founder, Facebook AI Research

Photo credit: Thong Vo

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Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is an independent, nonprofit think tank that generates innovative policies to create jobs, reduce inequality and help lower income New Yorkers climb into the middle class. For 20 years, CUF has published accessible, data-driven reports on ways to grow and diversify the economy and expand opportunity that are anchored in rigorous research, not preconceived notions about outcome. Our work has been a powerful catalyst for policy change in New York City and serves as an invaluable resource for government officials, community groups, nonprofit practitioners and business leaders as they advocate for and implement policies to address some of New York's biggest challenges and opportunities.

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