



Henry Alexander Wittke

Artificial Intelligence

An Approach to Assess the Impact
on the Information Economy

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Foreword

The fact that democracies are changing during the process of digitalization is undisputed today. The political handling of these changes will be decisive for the (our) future. Minor challenges arise in those (few) areas in which current trends can simply be extrapolated. However, major political and social challenges arise from "black swans", events that divide the course of time into a "before" and an "after". Artificial intelligence (AI) is both, a minor and a major political challenge: On the one hand, usage of weak AI leads to rapid but anticipatable developments. On the other hand, the development of strong AI is a "black swan", an "event horizon", beyond which serious (political) analysis is impossible.

During his time in Hamburg, Henry Wittke and I have often debated about artificial intelligence. Our discussions at the time - especially on AI's impact on the economy - marked the starting point of a long line of dialogues he had with cutting-edge experts in the US, particularly at Harvard University. The insights and findings are documented in this monograph.

Which impact will AI have on the Information Economy and on society within the next 10-15 years? Will political systems be able to support the beneficial uses of AI while softening the malicious side effects? Henry Wittke addresses these issues in a rigorous and very thoughtful manner. His insights are important for decision makers as well as citizens: During the next five years, he predicts merely a minor transformation of the character of human-machine interaction at work, but not a fundamental change in the structure of the economy. No reason to worry, then? Certainly not, since according to Wittke, things will look different in 15 years' time: widespread use of strong AI will have significantly reduced the number and importance of human-machine tandems at work. More jobs will have been destroyed than new ones created - even in the information sector. This may lead to social upheavals and unrest, unparalleled in the recent history of western democracies.

So, it's high time to talk about the political and social side-effects of AI. This book is a timely and thoughtful offer to start this endeavor.

Gary S. Schaal

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