The Law of What Comes Next

Stockholm Workshop

University of Stockholm

Friday, August 28, 2026

Call for Papers

Artificial intelligence matters only so long as it is useful to human beings. However, the problem that is rapidly emerging is that AI might turn out to be hugely advantageous to some people and disadvantageous to others. The emerging inequality problem ties in with the deep divisions that have traditionally bedevilled human societies and the conflicts that have emerged from those divides. Traditional critiques of AI have focused upon a perceived conflict between technology and human beings. This critique has deep roots in Western popular culture and has been influential on scholarly and policy debates.

Nevertheless, it does appear more likely that the true contest will be between those humans who are AI-advantaged and those humans whose labour, skills and knowledge can be replaced by AI tools. A further problem looms with the ability of AI to do basic research and analytical tasks. These tasks are ordinarily associated with entry-level white-collar jobs. Pushing past entry-level roles and into more high-paying and complex roles might ultimately require a combination of familial and state support. The presence of family support to undertake roles like unpaid internships is commonplace in industries like the media and the arts. Should this spread to other industries then the offspring of wealthier families would have a better chance of success in AI-dominated work environments because they would be able to do the unpaid or poorly paid work that leads to higher-level skills. AI is thus potentially a magnifier of existing inequality.

An uncertain rate of change, but a clear trajectory

The path that AI development will take is rather hard to predict. Moore's theory postulates that after AI reaches a certain point it will proceed to develop at an exponential rate. Whether that is currently happening or about to happen is unclear. What is clear is that AI reasoning models are getting more advanced, AI agents are beginning to appear and to have more effective uses and AI systems have apparently worked out ways to outsmart and deceive some human beings. Workplaces are beginning to adapt and to adopt AI models to do some tasks.

If rapid AI advancement occurs, then some people in established roles in the labour market will be displaced. This process of displacement may happen at a faster rate than new jobs can be created to provide work for the digitally displaced. The timescale of AI's advancement and full incorporation might well take decades and is unlikely to happen in a uniform manner, but within that process there could easily be periods of hyper-development that lead to certain tasks and roles becoming replaced by AI.

What this means is that there will be a digital precariat of uncertain membership whose roles, skills and labour are vulnerable to the development of AI. This is already being seen in the ability of some AI models to write plausible content. The controversies over AI, copyright law and contract law, wherein human authors have signalled their fears of displacement by AI systems are case in point.

While the speed at which change might occur is likely to be both unpredictable and variable, the direction in which things are heading is quite a bit clearer. Through the emergence of analytical and reasoning models, AI is not simply replicating human thought but rather moving into spaces where human labour once dominated and reigned supreme.

Can we cope with change?

The question that looms before us is whether our legal, policy and leadership systems and cultures can cope with a process of rapid change in which multiple stakeholders have different and competing claims for priority and service. The vulnerability of law, government and industry was evident during the covid-19 pandemic. There was some effective cooperation, but there was also dysfunction. At present, there are major problems emerging in copyright law and with the industries that rely upon it. There is a severe disruption to education given the impact of AI on teaching and assessment. There are novel issues of law and policy emerging around AI. What rides along with all of these challenges is the distinct possibility that the landscape will shift faster than the law can adapt.

This workshop will look at the capacity of systems in law, public policy and leadership (applying broadly in industry, NGO's and other bodies) to cope with a period AI-driven change where the rate of change is inconsistent and encompasses both the hyper-development of AI and periods of slower development. The focus of this project will be to look at the ability of legal, policy and leadership systems to handle a period of rapid and worsening inequality and to provide recommendations that would significantly enhance the adaptive capacity of these systems.

Unequal in the disequilibrium

In 2012, British academic Guy Standing wrote a book titled 'The Precariat: A New Underclass." Standing's version of the precariat focused on an underclass of workers that found themselves shut out of productive roles with progressively higher wages but locked into short-term and low-paying roles that existed at the mercy of large corporations. In part, this was a late-stage consequence of the movement of manufacturing jobs from the global North to the South, but it also reflected a trend in contracting and capitalist culture.

With the precise effects of AI on the labour market being uncertain but directed towards the replacement of substantial aspects of human labour, there will inevitably be a digital precariat whose place in the employment market becomes quite vulnerable. The corresponding effect of this vulnerability is to increase the potential for exploitation and other forms of unfair treatment. The challenge is whether the governance systems that we have in place (law, public policy and leadership in various contexts) can adapt and do justice in this environment.

Call for papers

This call for papers seeks submissions on law, public policy and labour, that address the impact of AI on human labour and the capacity of institutions, communities and individuals to adapt.

There will be a workshop at Stockholm University on Friday the 28th of August 2026. Please send abstract submissions of up to 500 words by 15 July 2026 to any of the workshop organisers below:

Associate Professor Claes Granmar (claes.granmar@juridicum.su.se)
Dr Mark Giancaspro (mark.giancaspro@adelaide.edu.au)
Professor Dilan Thampapillai (PI) (dilan@uow.edu.au).