



Carl Frey

AUTHOR · ECONOMIST

Organisations are deploying AI faster than they are rethinking what their workforces should do. The gap between automation investment and workforce strategy is not a technical problem – it is an institutional one. Every historical wave of technological disruption has produced the same error: treating short-term labour displacement as permanent decline, or resisting disruption until the window for adaptation has closed.

Whether AI creates or destroys value for an organisation depends more on the institutional decisions made in response to it than on the technology itself – that is the central argument of Carl Benedikt Frey, Oxford's Dieter Schwarz Associate Professor of AI & Work, whose labour market research and economic history give leaders the framework to act on it.

Carl Frey's 2026 Biography

Why organisations work with Carl Frey

- The 2013 paper Frey co-authored with Michael Osborne – estimating 47% of US jobs at risk from automation – is one of the most cited works in social science of the past two decades, with its methodology adopted by Obama's Council of Economic Advisors, the World Bank, and the Bank of England. No comparable speaker in this space brings this level of intellectual provenance to the conversation.
- His concept of the "technology trap" gives boards a precisely named mechanism for diagnosing their own institutional response to AI: the pattern by which efforts to resist short-term disruption deny organisations the long-term gains that technology makes possible.
- *How Progress Ends* (Princeton, 2025) addresses the question now at the top of most board agendas – why do some organisations and nations sustain the capacity to benefit from new technology while others stagnate – and gives senior leaders a durable, historically grounded answer rather than a forecast.
- His analysis is built on 1,000 years of economic history, not current trend extrapolation. That means the framework he offers survives the next wave of AI announcements rather than becoming obsolete with each new model release.
- Advisory roles with the G20, OECD, European Commission, and OECD Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence mean he brings regulatory and policy intelligence that most academic speakers lack – organisations understand not just the technology but the governance environment forming around it.

AVAILABLE FOR

- Consultancy
- Organisational Development Programme
- Panel Participation
- Speaking

CARL BENEDIKT'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Artificial Intelligence & Generative AI
- Automation and Robotics
- Economic Trends & Global Markets
- Future of Work
- Innovation & Disruption
- Scenario Planning & Strategic Foresight
- Workforce Transformation

LANGUAGES: English

Biography highlights

- Dieter Schwarz Associate Professor of AI & Work, Oxford Internet Institute; Fellow of Mansfield College; Director, Future of Work Programme, Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford
- Co-author of “The Future of Employment” (2013, with Michael Osborne) – one of the most cited social science papers of the past two decades; 20,000+ citations on Google Scholar; methodology adopted by Obama’s Council of Economic Advisors, the World Bank, and the Bank of England
- Author of *The Technology Trap* (Princeton University Press, 2019) – Financial Times Best Books of the Year; winner of the Richard A. Lester Prize for Outstanding Book in Industrial Relations and Labour Economics (Princeton University)
- Author of *How Progress Ends* (Princeton University Press, 2025) – shortlisted for the FT/Schroders Business Book of the Year Award; finalist for the Lionel Gelber Prize
- Advisor to the G20, OECD, European Commission, and United Nations; former member of the OECD Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and the World Economic Forum’s Global Future Council on the New Economic Agenda
- Ranked in the top 0.5% of economists worldwide by IDEAS/RePEc; contributor to the Financial Times, Wall Street Journal, Foreign Affairs, Scientific American, and The Economist (By Invitation)

Biography

The paper that put 47% of US jobs at risk of automation – co-authored at Oxford by Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael Osborne in 2013 – reshaped the global policy debate and became one of the most cited works in social science that decade. Obama’s Council of Economic Advisors used its methodology. So did the World Bank and the Bank of England. The Economist later described Frey as an “accidental doom-monger”: his own reading of the evidence was considerably more nuanced than the headlines.

That nuance became the subject of his first book. *The Technology Trap* (Princeton, 2019) – Financial Times Best Book of the Year and winner of Princeton’s Richard A. Lester Prize – argued that the real risk of automation is not that work disappears, but that organisations and governments mismanage the transition. Drawing on the Industrial Revolution and the Computer Revolution, Frey named the failure mode precisely: resistance to short-term disruption, he showed, tends to deny access to the long-term gains.

His 2025 book *How Progress Ends* – shortlisted for the FT/Schroders Business Book of the Year Award – extends the framework to the question now central to board strategy: why do some organisations and nations sustain the capacity to benefit from new technology while others stagnate? Frey’s answer, built from 1,000 years of economic history spanning Song China to the present, identifies the balance between decentralised innovation and the institutional capacity to scale as the deciding factor.

As Dieter Schwarz Associate Professor of AI & Work at Oxford’s Internet Institute and Director of the Future of Work Programme at the Oxford Martin School, Frey advises the G20, OECD, European Commission, and United Nations. His analysis appears in the Financial Times, Wall Street

Journal, Foreign Affairs, and Scientific American. IDEAS/RePEc ranks him in the top 0.5% of economists worldwide.

Key speaking topics

- Automation, AI, and labour market transformation
- The technology trap: historical lessons for the age of AI
- Why progress stalls – and what organisations and nations can do about it
- Workforce strategy in an era of technological disruption
- AI, inequality, and the distribution of economic gains
- Industrial policy and the geopolitics of technological leadership
- The economics of innovation: decentralisation, scaling, and competitive advantage

Ideal for

- Boards and C-suite leadership teams navigating AI investment decisions and long-term workforce strategy
- CHROs and transformation leads developing evidence-based frameworks for workforce planning under conditions of technological disruption
- Policy and public affairs functions in sectors facing direct automation exposure – financial services, professional services, manufacturing
- Strategy and scenario planning teams in organisations with significant AI or digital transformation programmes

Audience outcomes

- A historically grounded framework for distinguishing automation that displaces workers from technology that expands what workers can do – and why the difference matters for investment decisions
- A working understanding of the “technology trap” mechanism: how to identify institutional resistance before it becomes strategically costly
- Concrete criteria for evaluating workforce and AI investment decisions against historical patterns of disruption, transition, and recovery
- Insight into the macro-economic and geopolitical conditions shaping AI adoption – including what the US-China competition for technological leadership means for business strategy
- Sharper language and stronger evidence for board-level conversations about AI, workforce, and long-term competitive positioning

Carl Frey's 2026 talks & topics

Saving Labour: Automation and Its Enemies

Examines why efforts to protect jobs from automation – by organisations, governments, and workers – tend to delay rather than prevent disruption, and what this historical pattern means for how leaders should respond to AI today.

Key takeaways:

- The historical conditions under which resistance to automation created long-term economic damage – and the specific mechanisms by which this happens
 - How to distinguish short-term workforce disruption from permanent structural decline, and why conflating the two produces bad strategy
 - Practical implications for organisational policy on AI adoption and workforce transition
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The Future of Work: Is This Time Different?

Uses economic history to interrogate the most common claim made about AI and employment – that this wave of automation is categorically unlike those that preceded it – and offers a more evidence-based framing for what boards and HR leaders should actually prepare for.

Key takeaways:

- What the Industrial Revolution and the Computer Revolution tell us – and don't tell us – about the current AI transition
 - The conditions under which technological change has historically created new categories of work, and whether those conditions currently exist
 - How to build workforce planning assumptions that are grounded in historical evidence rather than technology forecasts
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Technology & Employment: Facing the Challenge

Draws on Frey's labour market research to give organisations a practical framework for understanding which roles and capabilities are most exposed to automation – and where the real strategic exposure lies.

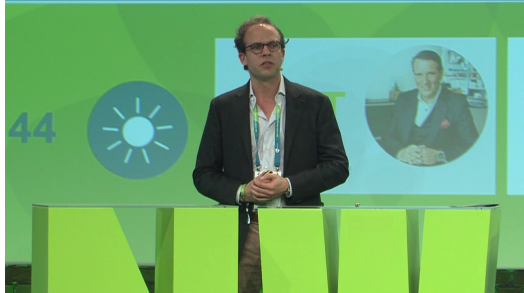
Key takeaways:

- The methodology behind the Frey-Osborne framework and how organisations can apply it to their own workforce planning
- Why exposure to automation is unevenly distributed – and why geography, sector, and organisational design all affect the outcome
- The organisational and policy levers most likely to shape whether AI-driven disruption produces a better or worse outcome for workers and employers

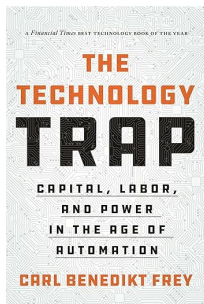
Carl Frey's Videos

#GMIS2017
KEYNOTE PANEL

THE GREAT DEBATE: SKILLS 4.0



CARL BENEDIKT'S LATEST BOOKS



The Technology Trap: Capital, Labor, and Power in the Age of Automation