HRM in a digitalized world

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Digitalization seems to drive many of the changes characterizing various sectors today, and in production focus is increasingly on automation combined with robotization, leaving very few reflections on, and perhaps limited room for, the human side of the modern enterprise. Still, humans tend to survive, and jobs renew themselves, and in this light the Track tries to investigate how the challenges for employees, line managers as well as the HR-function are perceived, handled and implemented. Also seen in the light of the resilience often characterizing the Nordic work life and institutions behind.

Today’s focus is on increased productivity and new digital platforms, creating new business models and customer driven offerings, which is supposed to have substantial consequences on the workplace organization, the employment relations and therefore also on the way human resources are managed. Old themes like employment security, new forms of work and employment models and continuous training requirements, has proven important to reintroduce. The same seems to be the case for performance standards as well as the various types of flexibility and the limitations as well as opportunities associated with theses.

As digitalization is expected to induce radical changes in the line organization, it also implies the development of an increasing focus on metrics within the human resources domain. Using data to understand HR practices is not new, but in recent years, the amount of data collected by companies in HR and other areas has increased dramatically. At the same time, a willingness to use data to learn about the business and improve processes has been on the rise. Some companies even have HR Analytics as a strategic focus area and use it as a key element in the build-up of a new business model. Despite the increased interest, many companies are still in the HR KPI reporting era - measuring return of investment (ie. simple finance theories applied to human resource investments). Soon these could be supplemented or replaced by regressions, experiments, predictions and forecasts characterizing future HR-work. This way, the HR-community has moved far beyond the point, that human value is immeasurable, and towards understanding generalized human behaviour better, ie. on that basis solving organizational challenges through a much more documented structure.

This Track addresses the challenges of digitalization in the workplace, such as the attraction and recruitment of new types of skills, training and development to take on new technologies and work tasks or restructuring and lay-offs as a result of changing labour demand, as well as the challenges arising when HR-practices are digitalized. For example the use of mobile HR apps, digitalized performance systems, the introduction of HR analytics, new skills requirements for analyzing big data, the use of digital platforms to enhance collaboration in cross-national teams,
changing employee-employer relations when the employer-employee interface turns digital. In addition, digitalization is supposed to open up for information sharing and offers collaborative tools, where formal hierarchies could be challenged and organizations turning to more organic models with an impact in the way Human Resources are organized and managed.

In such a novel field, we expect papers to use a broad range theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, like totally new points of data entry. New thoughts and ideas are welcome. Papers could be and addressing on one or several of the following challenges:

- What are the driving forces for and consequences of digitalization, including automatization, robotization and the use of artificial intelligence, of the workplace?
- What HR strategies and practices are introduced to manage digitalization in the workplace and the business in general?
- In the light of digitalization how does the role of the HR function change?
- What does digitalization mean for the development of the HR profession?
- How does digitalization change the relationship between HR and line managers?
- How does the employee-employer relationship change in the face of digitalization of the workplace and the introduction of new HR technologies?
- What is the role of social dialogue in managing digitalization in the workplace?
- How does digitalization change or affect social dialogue and the relationship between social partners?