The future of work (FoW): Opportunities and challenges for the Nordic models

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Jon Erik Dølvik, Fafo
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The “Future of Work” debate is not new

- Contested theme with shifting and divergent perceptions of drivers, contingencies, and prospects

- TODAY, simultaneous concern about envisaged….
  - Lack of jobs – due to robotization and automation
  - Shrinking labour supply – due to ageing and demographic change
  - Surplus of labour lacking needed skills – education failure & mismatch
  - Joblessness & welfare dependency – amplified by migration
  - Polarization of occupational structures – reinforced by digitalization
  - Casualization of work – new business concepts & forms of employment

→ Adieu to the wage-earner relationship of modern capitalism?

- Analyzing the FoW – and how to shape it – requires knowledge about the PAST and PRESENT dynamics of change at work
The *unknown* FoW will be shaped by a variety of *drivers and constraints* (Pillar-1)

- National consequences are filtered by markets, human agency, and economic, political and social institutions
  - Avoid determinism and “one-dimensional” scenarios
  - Uncertainty, versatility, scope for political action
The Nordic model – liability or asset in the reshaping of future work?

**CREDO:**
- Work, equality, knowledge, and productive justice
  - Technology friendly trade unions
- Strong institutions – but are they fit for the future?
The Nordic model – liability or asset in the reshaping of future work?

Future of work

The Nordic triangle model

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Impact on jobs, skills, work organization, health & safety, labour relations, inequality, labour markets, and regulatory institutions?

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Techno-economic change

Socio-demographic change

Globalization & EU integration

Ageing

Migration

Digitalization

Education

Financialization

Urbanization

Climate change - green economy

Values & life-styles

Dølvik et al
Nordmod-2030
Project overview 2017-2020:

• **Thematic pillars**
  1. *Drivers of working life transformation* (Coordinator: JE Dølvik, Fafo)
  2. *Digitalization & robotization of traditional work* (B Rolandsson, GU)
  3. *Self-employed, independent and atypical work* (A Ilsøe, UoC/FAOS)
  4. *New agents: platform mediators & managers of work* (K Jesnes, Fafo)

• **Transversal pillars**
  5. *Impact on occupational health & HES policies* (JO Christensen, STAMI)
  7. *The Nordic model: Reshaping the roles of markets, actors and the state?* (JE Dølvik, Fafo)

• **Policy-oriented, experience exchange, dialogue, and dissemination**
  • Linked to the FoW-agenda of the ILO 100th Anniversary
  • Consortium of appr. 30 scholars from Nordic universities & institutes (list behind)
  • Steering Committee set up by Nordic Council of Ministers
Pillar-2: Digitalization & robotization of traditional work – threat or opportunity for Nordic working life?

- Robotics, automation
- 3D printing, nanotech
- Machine learning algorithms,
- Artificial Intelligence
  - Big data
- Networks, sensors,
  - AR and VR
- Biotech, genetics
- Cybernetics
- Fintech
- Blockchain
- Cobot-care
- Platform work…
Opportunities

- Innovation, efficiency, productivity growth, home-sourcing, job market matching...

Threats

- Will the robots steal our jobs?
  - Frenzy phase: Massive eradication of jobs…
  - Maturing phase: Modest job effects, perhaps even positive …
  - Crux: Are added values invested in new jobs & labour?
- Polarization of skills & jobs -> the “squeezed middle”?
- Control, monitoring, alienation & degrading of work?
- How will the new co-workers – “cobots” – behave?
Comparative, multilevel approach

- Analytical perspectives on studies of digitalization
- National reviews of knowledge status, research, and policy approaches

Empirical studies – linking analyses of

- Occupational upgrading or polarization
  - Quantitative study (LFS) of changes in skill & wage structure 1995-2017
- Handling the digital shift in manufacturing work
  - Qualitative interviews with firm and social partner reps in selected branches
- Varieties of service sector trajectories
  - Expert/focus group interviews with reps from 4-5 services sectors

Overall purpose

- Provide illustrations, experience & research based knowledge aimed to frame and stimulate policy debates across Nordic boundaries
Fragmentation of work – undermining or reshaping the employment relationship and the Nordic Model?

- Conventional forms of atypical work seem pretty stable in the Nordics (Nätti et al. forthcoming) – but under the radar …?  
  - Emphasis on developing data and methods to study new forms of atypical work uncovered by standard LFS/statistics
- “When your boss is an algorithm” (Alsos et al 2017) – which rights, responsibilities, and remuneration apply?  
  - Compare evolution of platforms, crowd-workers, organizing, and regulatory responses across the Nordic countries
An innovation in the making: “Nordic Online Labour Index”

Figure 1: Growth in crowdwork - tasks posted by firms on the 5 largest English-language labour platforms 2016/5-2018/3 (Oxford Online Institute)

- Platforms representing 70% of the market by traffic (Upwork, Freelancer, Guru, Peopleperhour, Mturk)

- Tasks are classified by occupation and by ordering firm country.

- Index is normalized, i.e. 100 points on the y-axis equal the daily average number of new tasks in May 2016

**Message:**
Virtually no rise in the Nordic countries, mirroring the pattern in EU; slight decrease in Denmark and Sweden

*Source: Online Labour Index (OLI), Kässi & Lehdonvirta (Oxford Online Institute). Visualisation: Braesemann*
The “Future of work” is unknown – but is likely to challenge important features of Nordic working life

Pressure for renewal of

- Occupational health & safety regimes (pillar 5)
- Labour law & the regulation of work (pillar 6)
- The Nordic model of labour market governance (pillar 7)
  - Organizations, bargaining & tripartite concertation
  - Social security & welfare systems

→ Leap in *training & life-long learning* – funding, access, incentives
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The future of digitalized work will test the Nordic capacity for INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION!
Thank you for the attention – and don’t hesitate to contact us!

- Follow the project at #FoWNordics and at website in the making at www.fafo.no/Fownordics

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