

# JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

**Call for Papers for a Special Issue**

## **The Future of Work**

**Submission Deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

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### **Background**

The Future of Work has historically generated considerable attention with academics, practitioners, policy makers and the general public (Balliester and Elsheikhi, 2018; Aronowitz and DiFazio, 1994; Susskind, 1996; Nolan and Wood, 2003). This subject, however, has never been more pressing than today when technological developments – such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and digitalization – are contributing to a “Fourth Industrial Revolution” (Schwab, 2017). Radical advances in technology are disrupting established work practices, organizational structures and societal institutions such as labour markets, fiscal regimes and education/training systems. The effects of technological innovation are being amplified by demographic trends - such as immigration, declining fertility rates and aging populations as well as socio-political changes such as new generational preferences that question traditional understandings of work, careers and family life and new political agendas, which reflect an increasing scepticism of the benefits of globalization, de-regulation and neo-liberalism. Finally, in addition to these known mega-trends, the future of work will be affected by sudden and unexpected ‘black swan’ event like the recent Covid19 crisis, which will disrupt, deflect and accelerate many of the changes already in train.

So far academic commentary on these matters has been very divided among optimists, pessimists and sceptics. Optimists, despite acknowledging challenges, welcome the transformative potential of technology and see this as yielding more prosperity and collaborative and meaningful forms of work (Gratton, 2014; Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014; Neufeind et al., 2108) whilst also playing a crucial role in meeting current grand challenges. New jobs are likely to appear creating entirely new markets and entrepreneurial opportunities. Robots and other new production techniques may help to bring manufacturing back to developed economies (Balliester and Elsheikhi, 2018). In contrast, pessimists predict a jobless future where many jobs are automated (Frey and Osborne, 2017) and replaced by machines. Importantly, unlike previous rounds of technological development, this will include traditionally secure middle-class jobs such as those in the professions (Susskind, 1996; Susskind and Susskind, 2015). Further, as exemplified by debates on the platform economy, the precariat (Standing, 2013) and in-work poverty, new jobs are likely to become more insecure and less rewarding, careers more fragmented whilst workplaces become more exploitative, unequal and with increasingly pervasive surveillance and disciplinary systems. Furthermore, these developments may increase existing inequalities as a new digital divide could further penalize traditionally marginalized groups (WEF 2017; Haskel and Westlake 2017; Rubery et al., 2018). Sceptics question some of these scenarios and predict more limited changes, since there will be 'strong complementarities that increase productivity, raise earnings and augment demand for skilled labour' (Autor, 2014:130) so that the processes of de-skilling will be offset by gains in productivity and upskilling requirements connected with the digital economy. Thus, for Arntz et al. (2016) job losses to automatization in OECD countries will be limited to nine percent. As this debate between utopia, dystopia and business as usual suggest, and despite agreement on the significance of current technological, demographic, and socio-political trends, there is little consensus on how these forces will impact the world of work and how these changes should be understood, regulated and managed across global, national, organizational, and individual levels and how governments, education systems, and firm HR systems can facilitate this transition.

While many of the conversations around the Future of Work tend to be at the macro-economic level, the effect of these technological and societal changes is likely to be mediated and moderated by a series of institutional, organizational and individual responses. This highlights the importance of the institutional framework for the Future of Work in terms of both the formal and informal institutions that can enhance the positive effects while protecting societies and individual employees from adverse ones. In addition, organizations can play a key role in designing new types of organizational forms, structures, systems, and practices that are dynamic, interconnected, and able to support new technologies and work patterns. Furthermore, employee knowledge, skills, and abilities need to adjust, which in turn may require changes in education systems and human resource mechanisms, both in terms of content and delivery.

## **Aims and Scope**

This special issue seeks to advance our understanding of the Future of Work and its impact on actors at multiple levels of analysis. By bringing together new theoretical and empirical contributions, we hope to (1) examine how trends related to the Future of Work will affect individuals, groups, networks, organizations, and industries (2) offer relevant and actionable managerial and policy implications, and (3) set the course for a new direction of studies that look at the Future of Work through different disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses.

Specifically, we call for theoretical and empirical papers on topics that include but are not limited to the following:

- How can we organize for the Future of Work (e.g., new and flexible organization forms)? What are the relevant organizational forms, practices, systems, and strategies we require?
- To what extent and in what ways do new technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence) and technological trends (e.g. digitalization) produce individual, group, organizational, and inter-organizational outcomes and what are the mediating and moderating mechanisms at play?
- How will the Future of Work affect firm strategy, governance structures, managerial systems and labour relations?
- To what extent and how are market solutions (e.g. crowdsourcing, independent contractors) replacing traditional organization-based solutions in addressing the Future of Work?
- How can society and organizations, including governments, respond to changes in work practices and prepare individuals for the realities of the Future of Work (e.g., through education, training, re-training and lifelong learning)?
- How are organizational and individual learning, knowledge transfer and innovation being influenced by new transformational technologies?
- How can entrepreneurs recognize and take advantage of the emerging opportunities connected to the Future of Work?
- How does the Future of Work influence the internationalization process as well as coordination and control in multinational companies?
- How do developments connected to the Future of Work relate to current societal Grand Challenges?
- How will the future of work be affected by sudden crisis and emergencies such as Covid19, climate change and future financial crashes?
- How does cross-generational conflict and collaboration affect the Future of Work?
- How does the Future of Work challenge the assumptions and boundary conditions of traditional organization and management theories? Are there new theories for the future of work?
- How will managerial occupations such as HR professionals, IT analysts, administrators, technical core, middle managers, top managers, strategic planners, etc. change in the future?

In line with the broad mandate of *Journal of Management Studies* as a general management journal, the special issue aims to embrace a broad view of the future of work. Papers may take varying methodologies and approaches: conceptual, theory building, meta-analytical, and empirical. We are also open to critical papers which take sceptical stance over the future of work debate and which emphasize continuity over change.

### **Submission Process and Deadlines**

- The deadline for submission is 1st December 2020

- Submissions should be prepared using the JMS Manuscript Preparation Guidelines (<http://www.socadms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/JMSManuscript-Preparation-Guidelines.pdf>)
- Manuscripts should be submitted by e-mail to Gemma Parkinson at [business.jms@durham.ac.uk](mailto:business.jms@durham.ac.uk)
- Papers will be reviewed according to the JMS double-blind review process.
- Informal enquiries relating to the Special Issue, proposed topics and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives are welcomed. Please direct any questions to the Gemma Parkinson at [business.jms@durham.ac.uk](mailto:business.jms@durham.ac.uk)

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