

P10 - The limits of digital transformation.

2. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION of ORGANIZATIONS and INDUSTRIES

Chris Ivory¹ (chris.ivory@mdu.se)

Chris Land² (chris.land@aru.ac.uk), Maria-Laura Toraldo³ (MariaLaura.Toraldo@unimi.it), Alison Hirst² (alison.hirst@aru.ac.uk)

¹ Innovation and Product Realisation, Mälardalens University, Eskilstuna, Sweden

² Faculty of Business and Law, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK

³ Department of Economics, Management and Quantitative Methods, UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO, Milan, Italy

Track summary: The notion that digital technology, in the form of the automation of processes, robotics, planning, monitoring and decision-support will transform industry is widely accepted. Digital technology change is viewed as inevitable and one directional. The future, it is assumed, is inescapably digital.

In this track we aim to unpack and to critique this view. We are interested, not in what claimed miracles or efficiencies that digital technology might deliver, but instead in what its' limits might be. Thus, the track will focus on the instances in which digitalization fails to produce expected value, where it disappoints, fails outright and in which the analogue and the human re-assert themselves. There are other effects that are of interest. The very performativity of the promise of a 'digital future' has diverted a generation of workers away from industry; at the same time a new generation seeks to avoid the surveilled, rational and metricized embrace of corporate life – seeking instead the pleasures of craft and other 'traditional' work.

The industrial world we wish to engage with is a joyously messy one. A world in which old machines, humans, digital systems, robots and other automation entangle with one another in uneasy alliances. A place where robots themselves become unemployed, in which digital and analogue displays jostle for attention and in which humans prove a surprisingly obstinate and indispensable presence in the workplace.