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The Cinderella story – A Skilled Worker’s New Chance in the Digitalization of Services

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyse how backstage service employees may rise from invisibility to active agency when their work changes and even disappears during the digitalization of services. Our case study is of an intervention process aimed at envisioning future digital services and new work. The analysis is based on employee interviews on the future work horizons, and two workshops organized to support co-creation of the future service and work. Our main finding is that invisible backstage service workers may face a similar developmental pattern to that of “Cinderella” when finding their way in the digital era. Employees need to have a new kind of active agency in order to shift into new roles in which human expertise is crucial. Managers should be alert to involve employees designing their new job descriptions when technology replaces human work.