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Arguments for practice-based studies in e-HRM

- Case study of HR transformation at Sandvik Corp.

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UPPSALA
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- Uppsala University, Business Studies
- National research school of Management and IT
- Practice based studies research community (UU and SU)
- e-HRM research group in Gothenburg



Academic background

Degree

- Engineering 1 year (STS)
- Teaching 1,5 years (social science)
- HRM and business studies

PhD courses

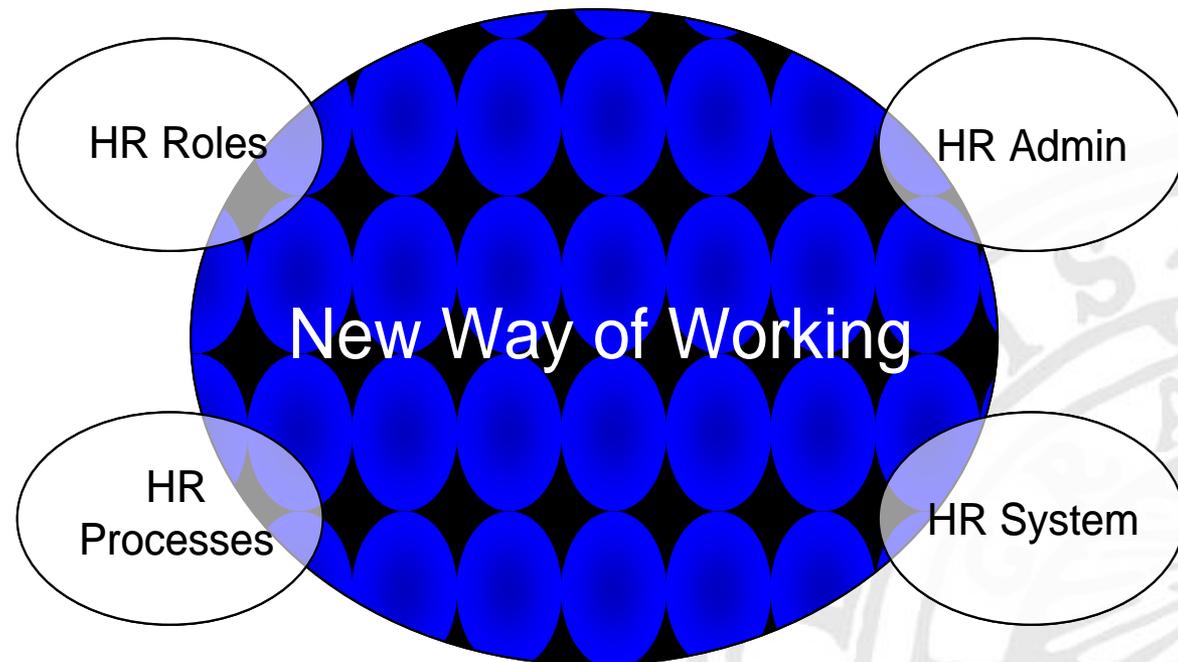
- Rhetorics, qualitative method, social science philosophy, identity
- IS research, IT & change, decision making

Self reading

- HRM, STS, phenomenology and competence



Sandvik Corp. – case study





‘...an umbrella term covering all possible integration mechanisms and contents between HRM and Information Technologies aiming at creating value within and across organizations for targeted employees and management.’

Bondarouk, T. V. and Ruël, H. J. M. (2009).

- 1) Use of HR IS
- 2) Transformation of HR work practices
- 3) New roles and relationships between top and line management
- 4) Value creating HR work



Problemization

“They [companies] are ‘stuck’ with a view of the HR system as a collection of ‘electronic filing cabinets’ that can enable the storing and analysis of employee data on particular organizational sites but with little or no integration or strategic capability.” Tansley and Newell (2007)

- IT as a tool and actors
- Hard structures in a ”soft” practice
- New roles and identities



Focus – CDPM process and time

- History of the project
 - » Key stakeholders and plot
- Processes and governance
 - » Mapping processes and role of service centre
- Breakdown and learning
 - » Negotiation and collective understanding
- Narratives and craftsmanship
 - » Interpretation of project and valueable doings



Method - ethnography

- 30 interviews
 - » All levels in the corp.
 - » Recurrent interviews with key stakeholders
- Observation
 - » Shadowing 10 HR business partners during two weeks – production and white collars
- Questionary to line managers
 - » 5 min, 50 managers
- Good access to internal documentation
 - » approx. 2000 pages



Initial findings

- From transactional back to a relational logic
- The role of negotiation and power to make sense
- Peoplesoft as a tool and force to change
- Constructing roles and identities



Sociomateriality & e-HRM

- Technology and change
 - » The magle of practice and "process"
- Reflection and improvisation
 - » Resolving breakdowns together
- Situated competency
 - » How we define HR professional competence



So what?

A relational ontology as a metatheory?

- The role of research(ers)
 - Bridge between theory and practice
 - Pragmatic relationship to theories
 - Inductive and curious in search of hypothesis