



## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This issue of Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies compiles five articles that introduce different themes and concerns in contemporary Nordic working life.

Rolle Alho's article *'You Need to Know Someone Who Knows Someone': International Student's Job Search Experiences* explores the job search strategies and obstacles that international students meet when they seek to enter the job market in Finland. Through 31 qualitative interviews with international students from Finnish universities, he investigates how the students are embedded in the Finnish community and how they make use of their knowledge and connections to obtain a job in Finland. Both formal and informal strategies are often employed, but the international students are clearly disadvantaged in lacking novel information about job opportunities that are only channeled through informal sources. Sectorial differences are significant for the successfulness of the job search; sectors with a shortage of labor leaves better opportunities for international students to enter the job market.

In *Workplace Reception of Older Workers and Implications for Job Retention*, Kjetil Frøyland and Hans Christoffer Aargaard Terjesen investigate how another vulnerable group fares on the job market. Through qualitative interviews with managers, HR- and union-representatives in 19 Norwegian companies from different sectors the authors study how the demand-side perceives older workers and the role older workers play in the work environment. In line with previous research, stereotyping and ageism prevails in the perceptions, but the study also shows more concretely that even though older workers are construed as a heterogenous group, perceptions revile a tendency to polarize and position older employees as either highly qualified, valuable, and vital for the company, or as outdated and difficult to manage. Thus, employers seem to take an ambivalent stance towards older workers as a group.

The third article *Conceptions of Gender and Competencies among Police Recruits in Scandinavia* by Lotte Bloksgaard and her colleagues investigates to what extent police recruits perceive men and women to be equally suited for different types of police work. Drawing on survey data from an international research project conducted among police recruits in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, their study reviles the gender segregation taking place within the occupation, and they show how gender stereotypical conceptions of competencies concerning communication, care, and the ability to handle physical and violent situations are reproduced within the occupation. The study also shows that there are large differences between the Scandinavian countries. Danish police recruits seem to have the most gender-stereotypical conceptions of competencies, and Swedish police recruits have the least. The authors see this result as an outcome of the different discursive significance gender equality occupies in Denmark and Sweden.

In *Employee Representatives on Company Boards – Hostages, Renegades or Fierce Opponents?* Inger Marie Hagen ask whether the conflict between the company's interests

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<sup>1</sup> You can find this text and its DOI at <https://tidsskrift.dk/njwls/index>.



and employees interests constitute a predicament. Since the 1970s, employees have been guaranteed representation on company boards in Sweden and Norway. Based on a survey among employee representatives in companies in Europe, Hagen discusses the corporate relations between employee representatives and shareholder-elected directors, and whether the employee representatives have to advocate certain interests in order to maintain good relations. Hagen finds interesting differences between the Swedish and Norwegian contexts that indicate different strategies and traditions in the way employee representatives establish relations with shareholder-elected directors and managers.

Finally, Per Øystein Saksvik and his coauthors discuss managerial intervention strategies in organizations and their long term effectiveness in *Investigating Managerial Qualities to Support Sustainable Intervention Effects in the Long Term*. The authors explore which managerial qualities are supportive in bringing about long-term effects. Based on a qualitative evaluation study of a five-year organizational intervention initiative that aimed at improving health, safety, and environment, the authors conclude that building empowerment and trust among employees, establishing a work group, and securing engaged leadership are essential for the long-term success of the intervention.

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