



## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This issue of Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies presents six new research articles from the Nordic countries.

The first article of the issue is *Working Environment Activities in Hospitals: Expansion of Scope and Decentralization of Responsibility* by Per-Christian Borgen and Bente Vibecke Lunde. Borgen and Lunde's study explores how legislative working environment regulations are understood and handled by actors responsible for the working environment in three hospitals in Norway. Through document analysis and qualitative interviews with the responsible actors at the hospitals in 1998-1999 and 2013, the longitudinal study discuss how New Public Management inspired decentralizing has expanded the scope and responsibility for line managers' enforcement of working environment conditions. The working environment activities are often not prioritized as highly as other responsibilities, and the line managers must struggle to have them recognize at the hospitals.

In *Bridging the Dialectical Histories in Organizational Change: Hysteresis in Scandinavian Telecommunications Privatization*, Henrik Koll sets out to mediate two opposing strands in the study of organizational change. By mobilizing Bourdieu's conception of hysteresis, Koll seeks to bridge a view that sees history as either objective and path-dependent or perceives history as subjective and narratively constructed. This conception makes it possible to understand the response strategies enacted by a group of technicians and shop stewards that are confronted with organizational changes following the privatization of the Danish telecommunication company in which they work. Koll suggest that this bridging of perspectives opens new avenues for exploring the role of history for studies of organizational change.

In *Being There No Matter What: Working in Publicly Provided Homecare Services*, Anika Vånje and Karin Sjöberg Forssberg set out to understand the ways in which gender is shaping female dominated work environments in the Swedish homecare system. Based on ethnographic material from two action-oriented projects, they explore doing gender in the work environments of publicly provided homecare services. The study focuses on the homecare service workers, first-line managers and environment specialists, as they are engaged in formal and informal work practices. Unclear work-descriptions, lack of appreciation of the emotional labor, and imbalances between resources and work demands strengthens traditional gender values and limits knowledge of how to identify work environment risks in relational oriented work. The authors suggest that development of gender aware work environment inspections could contribute to challenge the prevailing gender order in the sector.

Gunnar Gillberg and his colleagues explore why young recruits to the Swedish army chose a military career in *Meaningfulness and Coherence? Experiences Among Young*

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



*Soldiers in the Swedish Armed Forces.* Based on interviews with the soldiers, the authors identify a number of factors in the Armed Forces that offer a work environment that is salutogenic in a number of ways. The soldiers perceive their military career as a meaningful mission, a safe job, and appreciated the clear organizational context of the Armed Forces. Although the authors acknowledge that the specificities of selection and recruitment of the soldiers must be considered in explaining the positive image of the Armed Forces, they stress that the salutogenic aspects must not be underestimated in understanding the processes that create organizational coherence among soldiers.

In Mika Mård's exploratory article *Involuntary Childlessness at Work: Experiences of Emotion Work, Unfair Marginalization and Inadequacy*, the emotional work of involuntary childlessness is investigated. Mård study the anonymous diaries of seven women who work in Finland, and he analyzes the written material in the tradition of interpretative hermeneutic phenomenology to gain a deeper understanding of the women's everyday experiences at work. Drawing on Arlie Hochschild's conceptualization of emotion work, the analysis points to the disenfranchised emotion work related to three features of life at work: daily interactions, the organizing of work, and identity work. The author stress that the study's findings are restricted to work contexts within the Nordic welfare state and calls for further research to illuminate how involuntary childlessness permeate daily interactions at work in other settings.

The last article *Transformation of the Ghent System in Sweden: Silent Institutionalization of Complementary Unemployment Benefits* by Jayeon Lindellee outlines how the Swedish public unemployment insurance program have changed and how Swedish trade unions have kept their influence as changes in the unemployment benefit provision system has occurred. By studying policy documents, reports, and statistics, Lindellee traces the institutional origins, paths, and transformations of the so-called Ghent system – the state subsidized voluntarily operated unemployment insurance scheme – in Sweden. The introduction of different supplementary benefit schemes provided by labor unions have established a multiple pillar structure of the unemployment benefits in Sweden, and contributed positively to the membership development of the unions.

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