



Volume & Issue no 1

A short Introduction

For us in the editorial board this is a very special event - the appearance of the first issue of our new journal. Things have moved quite fast for us towards the realization of this project. We met for the first time in December 2009, and now the journal is a reality!

The vision, scope and plans of the journal will not be presented here. They are to be found at our homepage: www.nordicwl.dk.

If you haven't done it yet we will strongly recommend you to subscribe to the newsletter of this journal. We also recommend you to sign up for the established community of debate related to the journal and participate in the development of the journal.

We are very grateful for the many, high quality papers we already have had submitted to us. For this first issue we have selected papers that together illustrate the diversity in working life research both in topics and in methods. That we are able to do this confirms that our ambition to make a journal that is relevant both for researchers and 'professional practitioners' in the development of working life is realistic and should have wide appeal.

The subjects discussed in the submitted papers may be briefly summarized in the following way:

Working life research? The journal publishes working life studies, but what is working life research? That is a very difficult question to answer. The editorial board has however made an attempt to answer this question in the first article of the journal. Different topics of working life research are presented in a historical perspective, and for each of the four Nordic countries current controversies related to working life research are presented. Also current institutional challenges for working life research are described.

Innovation is the topic of Alasoini's article. Based on theoretical work and studies of national innovation strategies recently adopted in Finland, Alasoini creates a conceptual understanding of a broad-based innovation policy including the development of work organization. Alasoini demonstrates how problems in the productivity of work and the quality of working life can be simultaneously tackled through developments of work organization.

Flexicurity in working life is the topic of Ibsen's article. The flexicurity model focuses on employment security rather than job security, and competition on the basis of quality rather than on the basis of labor costs. Ibsen emphasizes a somewhat neglected aspect of the flexicurity model: the model is based on industrial relations practices at company level. These industrial relations are affected by the current economic crisis, and Ibsen documents tendencies at company level to give higher priority to job security and reduction of labor costs, which could be a weakening of the model.

Trade unions and the decline in union density is the topic of Kjellberg's article. As is well known, union density is high in Sweden and in the other Nordic countries.



However, a significant rise in fees for union unemployment funds in 2007 was followed by the largest decline in union density in the history of Sweden. Kjellberg examines where the decline is highest and why. The aim of the government was to create a higher wage differentiation. That has however not happened – yet.

Inequality in working life is the topic of Nicolaisen's article, more specifically, inequality related to part-time work alongside full-time work. This is also a matter of inequality between genders. Nicolaisen compares part-time work in banking in Norway, Sweden and Ireland. She finds that access to part time work and general working conditions in part time work are better in Norway and Sweden than in Ireland. However, career opportunities in part time work are restricted in all three countries, and it seems as if the inequality in the career dimension is somehow normalized in Norway and Sweden.

The Greening of work is a major challenge of the 21-century. However, it is a very difficult challenge to handle. The aim of Rääkkönen's article is to contribute to improving the conceptual clarity of discussions in this area. Rääkkönen's main concepts are 'environmentalism' and 'ecologism', and he uses these two concepts to examine the ideas of 'corporate social responsibility', 'green jobs', and 'downshifting'.

Working environment has in the Nordic countries mainly been regulated through two connected logics: the logic of the state (inspection) and the logic of democracy (safety representatives etc.). Dyreborg argues in his article that yet another logic is introduced: the logic of the market (CSR etc), which perhaps is a challenge for the logic of democracy. Dyreborg's article is based on historical studies and case studies in the Danish construction industry.

The future of work is uncertain, indeed. In her review article Toivanen discusses difficulties in predicting the future of work, and she presents an assessment of two research projects: a Foresight Study made in a network of European researchers, and a Delphi study based on interviews with business leaders. The two studies reach some similar conclusions, but they also present some interesting differences.

We hope that many colleagues will participate in the development of the journal and in the development of Nordic working life research by commenting and giving critique and credit for what we are publishing. It can be done at the home page and in the journal. We also hope that there still will be many submitting papers to the journal. We hope that colleagues will regard reviewing submitted paper as a challenging obligation. We hope that book reviews will be submitted. In return we will be open to suggestions for improvements, and our ambition is, that the time span between submission and publication will be shorter in our journal than in most other journals.

On the behalf of the editorial board, I hope you enjoy our new Journal.

Helge Hvid