



Introduction

Ann Bergman has in this issue an interesting commentary about the future. Bergman urges working life researchers not to look into the future, it is quite unpredictable, but to imagine different futures, and by that contribute to the creation of the future. Not only Bergman is writing about the future. A book about the future is reviewed by Pekka Kosonen, namely Dølvik et al: *The Nordic Model Towards 2030*. However, most working life researchers tend to study the past and the present, and not the future. That is also the case in the six articles published in this issue. However, all of them present research that calls for an action, to create a better future. In this issue, gender equality, health promotion, temporary work arrangements and new public management and working conditions are studied. Problems are identified, and in some cases, solutions are also suggested. The research presented in this issue thus has potentials to influence the future.

Laura Peutere and her colleagues have analyzed the importance of the employment contract (none, temporary, or permanent) at the time of the birth of the first child for mothers' labor market trajectory with a follow-up over 11 years. The study is based on Finnish register data. Both mothers and fathers have a high labor market participation rate in Finland and in the other Nordic countries, but the proportion of Finnish women working temporarily is higher (18%) than for men (12%). Peutere et al find that women who had a temporary contract when they had their first child had a high risk for a peripheral labor market status 11 years after the birth. The authors conclude that not only family leave and benefits but also the use of temporary employment should be taken into account when supporting the combination of work and childcare.

Anders Bruhn has studied the changing working conditions for public 'street level bureaucrats' – civil servants with direct contact to citizens. Traditionally these 'street level bureaucrats' had to mediate between state's programmatic policy-making and its citizens. That did imply a certain autonomy and discretion to act. Bruhn makes a thorough qualitative analysis of how working conditions in the Swedish Board for Study Support have been affected by principles of New Public Management – between bureaucratization, market orientation and advanced use of ICT. Bruhn finds that the officials have experienced decreased discretion and an increasing routinization in their work during the last decade. Their relations to the citizens have been weakened. The efficiency of handling an ordinary case has increased significantly. However, perhaps the Board for Study Support is not anymore as supportive to those who have the most need for support from the welfare state.

Ingo Winkler and Mustafa Khalil Mahmood present a study of temporary agency workers in Denmark. They find that the working life of temporary agency workers is dominated by liminal experiences: the workers have peripheral belongings to different social arenas. They are betwixt-and-between social structures and the associated positions, statuses and roles in their working life. The article emphasizes the complexity of the liminal experience. Winkler and Mahmood conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 temporary agency workers from four agencies in the region of Southern Denmark. The authors found that the workers lacked structural bonds in between the agency where they were employed and the user-firm where they worked and in between different social structures in their work setting. Winkler and Mahmood identify different dimensions in the liminality of the working experiences of the temporary agency workers.



Britt-Inger Keisu and her colleagues are studying the relation between two strong discourses in academia: the promotion of academic entrepreneurship and innovation and the promotion of gender equality. The authors ask whether it is possible for an academic institution to combine and pursue the two policy goals at once, both developing toward an entrepreneurial university and developing toward gender equality. Interviews with top managers and researchers at two Swedish universities have been conducted. Keisu et al conclude that articulations and way of speaking about the policy goal of academic entrepreneurship and innovation to some extent were interwoven with the policy goal of gender equality, especially in the broader perspectives. However, strategies or substantial interventions for merging gender equality into the agenda of academic entrepreneurship and innovation were totally lacking.

Robert Larsson and his colleagues have studied how line and middle managers experience and describe barriers and enablers in the implementation of a health-promoting leadership program in Swedish municipal organizations. Larsson et al are studying types of health interventions with an organizational perspective. That means that these health interventions can be compared with the implementation of other planned organizational changes. The study is based on organizational change theory. Managers involved in organizational health-promotion programs have been interviewed to identify enablers and barriers for health promotion. The following enablers are identified: action plans with specific goals, earlier experiences of organizational change and integration of the program content into regular routines and structures. However, a quite many barriers are identified, among them high workload, lack of senior management support, and inexperience with change.

Tuisku and Houni have studied the effects of implementation of employer-provided cultural activities in Helsinki University Central Hospital, which was the first large-scale public sector employer in Finland to introduce cultural events organized on a regular basis and available to all employees. Several previous studies have concluded that cultural leisure activities are associated with better coping with work-related stress and well-being at work. In this case, it is the employer who is promoting the cultural activities, and the hypothesis is that those who participate in the activities experience psychological detachment from strain, relaxation, recreations, new ideas, reflection on professional identity, familiarization with workmates, increased communication, better atmosphere and cooperation in the workplace. A survey has been conducted. For those who have participated in the cultural activities and have answered the survey, the hypothesis is generally confirmed. The respondents have had the opportunity to explain their experiences in their own words, which give a nuanced understanding of the experiences.

Helge Hvid