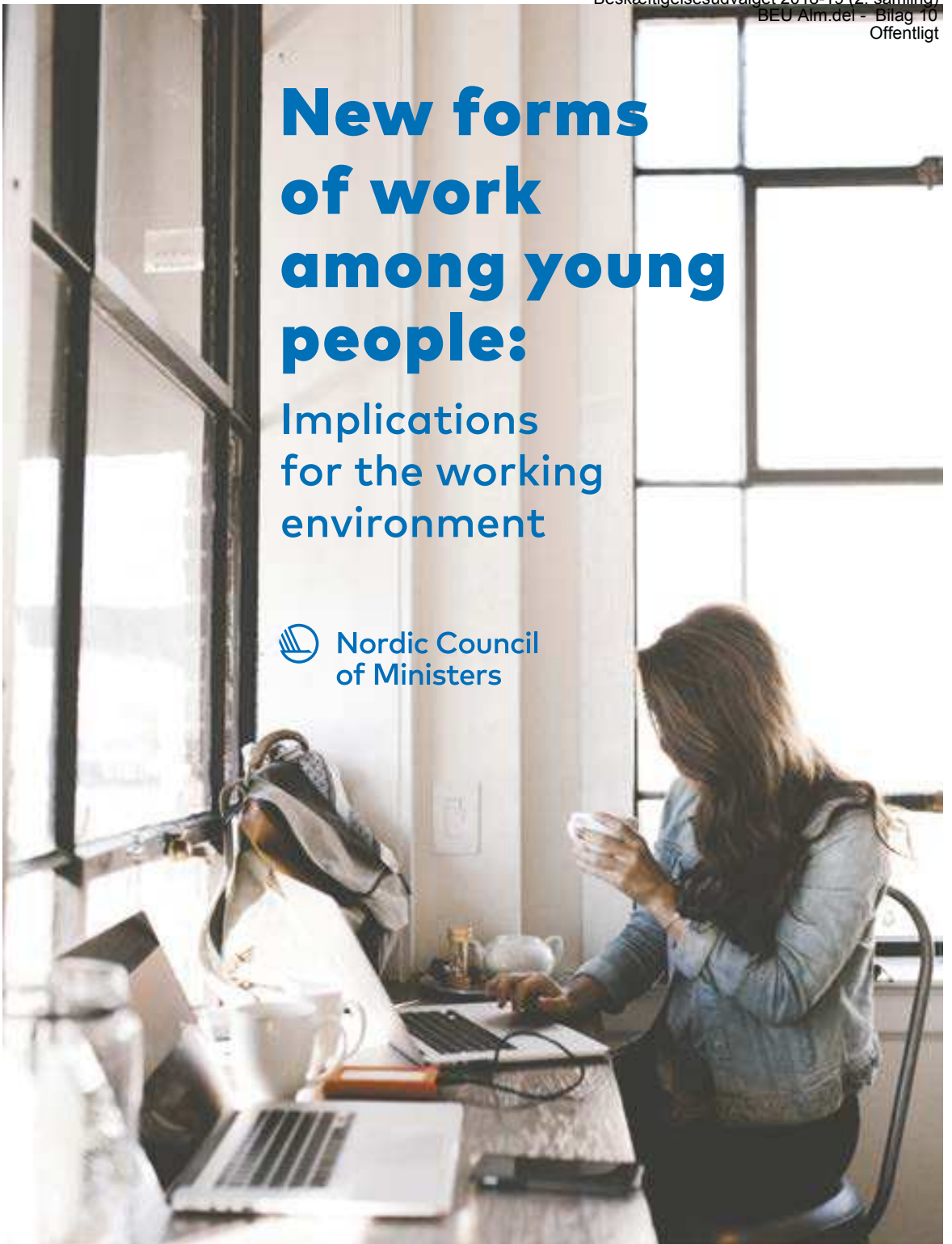


New forms of work among young people:

Implications
for the working
environment



Nordic Council
of Ministers



New forms of work among young people Implications for the working environment

Nord 2019:025

ISBN 978-92-893-6202-3 (PRINT)

ISBN 978-92-893-6203-0 (PDF)

ISBN 978-92-893-6204-7 (EPUB)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/Nord2019-025>

© Nordic Council of Ministers 2019

This publication was funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.
However, the content does not necessarily reflect the Nordic Council
of Ministers' views, opinions, attitudes or recommendations.

This publication uses model photos not depicting the interviewees.

Layout: Trine Larsen

Cover Photo: Andrew Neel / Unsplash

Print: Lasertryk.dk

Printed in Denmark



Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Shared Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

Nordic Council of Ministers

Nordens Hus

Ved Stranden 18

DK-1061 Copenhagen

www.norden.org

Download and order Nordic publications from www.norden.org/nordpub

New forms of work among young people:

Implications for the working environment

July 2019

Authors:

Mette Lykke Nielsen, Centre for Youth Studies (CeFU), Aalborg University, Denmark.

Louise Yung Nielsen, Communication and Arts, Roskilde University, Denmark.

Kari Anne Holte, NORCE, Norwegian Research Centre, Bergen, Norway.

Åsa Andersson, Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Gestur Gudmundsson, School of Education, University of Iceland, Iceland.

Thamar Melanie Heijstra, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Sociology.

Anthropology and Folkloristics, University of Iceland, Iceland.

Johnny Dyreborg, National Research Centre for the Working Environment, Denmark.



Table of contents

| | |
|-----|---|
| 8 | Preface |
| 10 | Executive summary |
| 16 | Dansk resumé |
| 23 | 1. Background |
| 24 | What is atypical employment? |
| 26 | New labour markets and new forms of work |
| 27 | Young people and atypical employment forms |
| 28 | Presentation of the included young people |
| 33 | 2. Young people in new and atypical employment forms |
| 34 | 2.1 Gaming: a professional work |
| 35 | Eirik: professional e-sport gamer (starcraft) |
| 43 | Nicolai: professional e-sport gamer (counter-strike) |
| 52 | Working as an e-sport gamer |
| 54 | 2.2 Work via digital platforms (offline and online work) |
| 55 | Stefan: self-employed and paid per translated word |
| 65 | Stefan 'the carpenter': self-employed carpenter with profiles on three digital platforms |
| 74 | Working via digital platforms |
| 76 | 2.3 Workers with different kinds of flexible work arrangements |
| 77 | Brynja: temporary employed as a waiter in the tourist industry |
| 84 | Devran: involuntary part-time employment in a supermarket chain |
| 92 | Anders: precarious employment at a supermarket |
| 99 | Working in flexible work arrangements |
| 100 | 2.4 Unskilled temp agency work |
| 101 | Lars: unskilled temporary jobs |
| 110 | Julia: work as a receptionist through a temp agency |
| 117 | Working in temporary jobs |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 119 | 2.5 Working on social digital platforms |
| 120 | Sara Jin Smidt: chief editor, blogger and fitness instructor |
| 128 | Paula: beauty blogger, art agent and influencer |
| 136 | Anette: influencer and freelance consultant |
| 145 | Working on social media platforms |
| 147 | 2.6 Young men in the creative industry (Iceland) |
| 148 | Dagur: best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator |
| 156 | Viðar: composer, dj and contractor as a sound engineer |
| 164 | Working in creative industries |
| 165 | 3. Working environment and risks among young people with atypical work |
| 167 | 3.1 Results of interview data (portraits) |
| 170 | 3.2 Results of analysis of labour force survey data |
| 173 | 4. Discussion and conclusions |
| 187 | 5. Recommendations |
| 190 | Reference list |
| 194 | Appendix 1: Method |
| 197 | Appendix 2: Nordic Workshop |



Preface

Changes in the labour market globally and in the Nordic countries entail new forms of work and atypical employment for young workers. The young people portrayed in the present report are between 21 and 30 years old, and they represent a wide variety of working lives. They live and work in Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Most of them are in a period of their lives when they are establishing themselves in the labour market; only one of them has a daily life

with children. They are included in this book because each of them represents a different type of employment and working life experience that reflects a labour market undergoing major change.

Furthermore, the focus on young workers is also important because young workers have a higher risk of occupational accidents, and they are more likely to report skin contact with chemicals, wet work, and handling of heavy loads at work,



Photo: Priscilla du Preez/ Unsplash

compared with older workers. A significant proportion of young workers are in temporary positions, working irregular working hours, and part-time work is increasing among young workers. In order to prevent and reduce working-environment problems among young workers, it is important to know more about new employment forms, and these are described in this report. Some of these new employment forms, such as working on online platforms as gamers, YouTubers or influencers, move into the borderland of the meanings we usually ascribe to the categories 'work' and 'working environment'. This development also applies to traditional professions, such as carpentry or service work, but the new aspect is that the work is mediated through online platforms, and this seems to affect the working environment for these young workers.

We can see from these cases that the young workers face many of the same challenges across the Nordic countries regarding new and atypical types of employment. Related dynamics on the labour market in the Nordic countries provide a common basis for fruitful discussions and exchange of knowledge on this pertinent problem. New and more effective initiatives might be needed in order to counter the global changes in economies and the labour market, and new ideas are needed in order to reach young people where they work and to ensure a sustainable working life for all young workers in the Nordic countries.

The project group consisted of the following participants from four Nordic countries:

Denmark:

Senior Researcher Johnny Dyreborg, Ph.D. (project leader), the National Research Centre for the Working Environment. Associate Professor Mette Lykke Nielsen, M.A., Ph.D., Centre for Youth Studies (CeFU), Aalborg University. Assistant Professor, Louise Yung Nielsen, Ph.D., Communication and Arts, Roskilde University.

Norway:

Senior Researcher, Kari Anne Holte, Dr.Ing. and Senior Researcher, Merete Jonvik, PhD, NORCE, Norwegian Research Centre, Bergen.

Sweden:

Associate Professor, Åsa Andersson, Ph.D., University of Gothenburg.

Iceland:

Professor Gestur Gudmundsson, M.Sc., Ph.D., School of Education and Associate Professor, Tamar Melanie Heijstra, PhD, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics, University of Iceland.

We also thank the young people that we interviewed, who shared valuable information and insights about working in new and atypical forms of employment. In addition, we arranged a national workshop in Copenhagen in April 2018 with the participation of researchers, working-environment authorities, and social partners from the Nordic countries to present preliminary results of the project, and to exchange knowledge about young workers in atypical work and possible measures to better reach this group. We would like to thank the participants for their engaged contributions.

Executive summary

This report presents fourteen portraits of young people working in new and atypical forms of work in the Nordic countries. Most of the young people portrayed in this report have several jobs or incomes at the same time or a number of different jobs/incomes for short periods. Exactly how many jobs/incomes is often difficult to ascertain. Some find it difficult to explain exactly how their work is actually organised and paid, because there are many different types of employment and payroll benefits systems involved.

For some of the young people included in the report, these terms are involuntary and they struggle daily to manage their situation, while for others this lack of clarity is a positive option that they enjoy. While some of the young people have insecure employment associated with financial and social insecurity, others have very privileged and highly paid work that is not connected with financial insecurity. Some talk about financially insecure work that nevertheless constitutes an opportunity to get a foothold in the labour market. Others express great pride in their working life as entrepreneurs or freelancers, but they are struggling to maintain an income.

Employee or employer?

Several of the young people have at times worked without pay to build up a CV, create networks, or just gain some work experience. None of the young people in the survey have a single permanent workplace with regular colleagues. Moreover, it is often unclear who the ac-

tual employer (if they have one) really is, and some of them are both workers and employers at the same time. This applies, for example, to the entrepreneur Stefan, who offers his own labour on a digital platform, and finds the cheapest labour for the software development that he needs for his own business on another digital platform. The employee/employer relationship is a grey zone that challenges our usual way of thinking about how work is organised and who is responsible.

Several of the young people have at times worked without pay to build up a CV, create networks, or just gain some work experience. None of the young people included in the study have a single permanent workplace with regular colleagues. Moreover, it is often unclear who the actual employer (if they have one) really is, and some of them are both workers and employers at the same time.

This also applies for e-sport gamer Nicolai and his Counter-Strike team. They have organised themselves in a completely new way within the Counter-Strike community. The players in the team own a share in the business that employs the team. Similarly, carpenter Stefan, who is employed as carpenter and also owns his own one-man busi-

ness, cannot join a union because he is his own employer. He does work that he finds through digital platforms like 'Handyhand' and it is increasingly unclear who is responsible for the working environment. Stefan is in no doubt; he must take responsibility for himself, he says. Annette, a blogger on social media has employment relationships that can be difficult to understand. For Annette, and for other young people like her, life at work is complex, both with regard to who their employer is and how they are paid.

Young entrepreneurs

A number of the young people described characterize themselves as freelancers, self-employed or entrepreneurs. Their primary source of income is from the work they do in their own company. None of these young people have other permanent employees in their company. They are what Scheuer (2017) calls 'solo self-employed'.

For a number of years, promotion of young entrepreneurship has been high on the political agenda, both in the Nordic countries and at EU level. The goal is to support young entrepreneurs to develop their ideas into successful businesses that can help create new job opportunities (Ceptureanu & Ceptureanu, 2015). The emergence of new digital labour markets has given rise to a new type of contractor; entrepreneurs working on social media platforms. This type of entrepreneurship differs from the more traditional understanding of entrepreneurship in that the work carried out actively exposes the entrepreneurs' personality through, for example, blog-

ging or streaming gameplay (Johnson & Woodcock, 2017). The focal point of these entrepreneurs' work is to display the private and the personal sphere (Senft, 2012).

The young solo self-employed people included in this report work in a variety of professional specialties and trades. Moreover, almost all the young people have a medium-cycle or long-cycle higher educational background. Accordingly, they reflect a general labour market trend; i.e. that while the proportion of solo self-employed people overall has remained relatively stable in the Nordic countries since 1995, there has been an increase in the number of solo self-employed people within the group of specialized professionals (Scheuer, 2017).

Several of the young 'solo self-employed' included in this report say that they have a primary source of income from a single permanent contractor, and that in many respects they consider this relationship to bear a resemblance to an ordinary employment contract. This is not only a tendency in our limited number of cases; it can also be seen as a general trend, as 39% of all solo self-employed people in Denmark have only had one major customer in the last six months (Scheuer, 2017). Scheuer explains this development as follows:

"In recent decades, changes in the corporations' organisational forms, technical innovations and business practices, such as subcontracting, privatisation, outsourcing, etc. have often given rise to a somewhat blurred distinction between employee and the self-employed, which

may have led to an increase in the number of people in this 'grey zone' (...). Employers may, in some cases, benefit from applying this form of association (...) as it significantly reduces employer obligations: no notice of termination of contract, no minimum wage, no normal working hours, no limitation of overtime, no salary under sickness, etc." (Translated by the authors from Scheuer, 2017, p. 85).

The important point here is that solo self-employed people often operate in a 'grey zone', where the distinction between being employed and being self-employed is blurred. This development in employment patterns is represented in several of the portraits in this report.

Although several of the young people presented here are aware of the negative consequences, such as those mentioned by Scheuer (2017, see quote above), several of them also emphasize the benefits of not being in a permanent employment relationship. Several mention that they appreciate the high degree of autonomy and freedom. The solo self-employed generally express great freedom in relation to organising and controlling their own work, freedom to perform tasks as they see fit (Manyika et al., 2016), and their own responsibility to take on new tasks. Nevertheless, what is said to be enthusiasm for work is often also emphasized as stressful (Buch & Andersen, 2009). For several of the young solo self-employed in this report, excitement and hassle are two sides of the same coin, and the relationship between individual freedom and indi-

vidual insecurity seems to be a challenging balancing act for many of the solo self-employed.

Working environment

During the interviews with the young people, we specifically asked about the ways in which the young people or their employers organised their work, their wages and their employment conditions. Additionally, we asked them about social and financial risks and working-environment problems that they had encountered, and the latter is the primary focus of this report.

Insecurity and risk are very apparent in the portraits of these young people, but not in all. If we, the authors of this report, had not asked them about their working-environment, it is far from certain that they would have thought about the problems they have encountered, as working environment problems. Some of the young people are professionally and politically engaged in (and very keen to improve) their own and others' working lives, while this is less important for others.

For example Nicolai, the Counter-Strike player, became a co-owner of his team together with his teammates because they collectively wanted to cope with the insecurity they had experienced earlier in their professional gaming career. They wanted to create an environment around the team, without the uncertainty about salary and so on that could affect their performances in Counter-Strike. Another example is Icelandic Dagur, who is engaged in improving the working conditions in the Icelandic film industry.



Photo: Kinga Cichewicz/ Unsplash

The theme of financial and social security/uncertainty permeates all the portraits in this report.

All of the young people say that a safe and secure working life is vital. Nevertheless, the meaning each of them attaches to this varies greatly. The young people talk of themes that might be recognised by the reader as traditional occupational health issues, like lower-back problems, occupational injuries, insomnia, stress and boundaryless work. While other types of risks, mentioned in the portraits will probably be new to the reader. The young people speak about how, in different ways, they take care of themselves to prevent becoming 'worn down'. Many of them do training or swimming to strengthen their bodies to be able to keep up with their work. Some use coaches, sports psychologists, or breathing exercises to manage or prevent stress at work. The different activities that each of them does to keep up with the demands of their work are mainly individual steps to deal with risk and other challenges in their working environment.

The e-sport gamer, Nicolai, talks about a working life in which he is almost always working. Although his working life in many ways differs from the majority of Nordic youth, several of the activities that Nicolai talks about are similar to those of other young people with atypical work. For example, a number of these young people work for so many hours that it has negative consequences on their relationships with family and friends. This applies for Stefan, a self-employed carpenter, who gets jobs

from a number of digital platforms. It also applies for Sara, who works as an editor, blogger, and fitness instructor, for Icelandic Brynja, who works as a waiter, and for Dagur, who works in the Icelandic film industry. For them, work and private life completely merge and they work for many, many hours every week.

All of the young people say that a safe and secure working life is vital. Nevertheless, the meaning each of them attaches to this varies greatly. The young people talk of themes that might be recognised by the reader as traditional occupational health issues, like lower-back problems, occupational injuries, insomnia, stress and boundaryless work. While other types of risks, mentioned in the portraits will probably be new to the reader.

Many of the young people in the report often work alone; their private life and daily activities are part of a personal brand (Hardt, 1999; Lazzarato, 2009; Yung Nielsen, 2016). This causes a number of occupational health issues. While some problematize or criticise their conditions, others have a positive self-representation and they appear to be successful in most parts of their life, although they may be trivialising or downplaying the problems.

Some of the young people portrayed in this report work in part-time jobs and some in temporary employment, or both. Our analyses of data from the Labour Force Survey (Statistics Denmark, 2019) show that young people working in part-time jobs less than 15 hours per week, or who work via temporary employment agencies, have a significantly increased risk of occupational accidents.

Recommendations

These fourteen cases of atypical work among young people provide an insight into a number of both new and well-known forms of work and working-environment issues. The young people do not necessarily understand these issues as problems related to their working environment, and they may not be aware that there are institutions or resources available to solve these. They mostly try to solve these issues individually and by using other approaches than are normally applied in the working-environment field.

Based on the results of this project, we recommend developing strategies to deal with the working-environment issues related to atypical work among young people. These include how to reach these young people and their employers or those who provide work through the platforms. We need to communicate knowledge about these types of work and the possible consequences more broadly to industry, governments and social partners, and to the young people

working in atypical employment forms. We recommend both legal and communicative approaches, so that working-environment knowledge and resources are made available for those working in atypical employments and through digital platforms.

The young people do not necessarily understand these issues as problems related to their working environment, and they may not be aware that there are institutions or resources available to solve these.

For those young people working through digital platforms, it should be possible to integrate working-environment standards and guidelines with the algorithms of the platforms. When a platform user offers a particular job, e.g., carpentry work, cleaning or service work on a platform, relevant guidelines should pop-up in order to inform the platform user (those who offer the job), the platform worker (the one who performs the job) and the employer (the person responsible for the platform) about the possible risks and precautions that should be taken for a particular job. Furthermore, it should be easy for the platform to link to the digital notification system for occupational injuries, so it is easy to report such cases to the authorities.

Dansk resumé

Denne rapport præsenterer fjorten portrætter af unge, der arbejder i nye og atypiske former for arbejde. Hovedparten af de unge, der er portrætteret i denne rapport, har flere jobs eller indkomster på samme tid eller mange skiftende jobs over kortere perioder (præcist hvor mange er vanskeligt at gøre op).

For nogle er dette et ufrivilligt vilkår, som de dagligt tager livtag med, mens det for andre er et positivt tilvalg, som de nyder. Mens nogle af de unge har usikre prekære arbejdsliv, der er forbundet med økonomisk og social usikkerhed, har andre meget privilegerede og højt betalte jobs, der ikke er forbundet med økonomisk usikkerhed. Nogle fortæller om arbejde, der er økonomisk usikkert, men som på samme tid udgør en mulighed for dem for at få en fod inden for på et arbejdsmarked, hvor det for nogle unge kan være vanskeligt at få fodfæste. Mange fortæller med stor stolthed om et arbejdsliv, som de selv har skabt som entreprenører eller freelancere, og som de kæmper for at opretholde.

Arbejdstager eller arbejdsgiver?

Flere af de unge har i perioder arbejdet uden at få løn i et forsøg på at opbygge et cv, skabe netværk eller få erfaring. Ingen af de unge har en enkelt fast arbejdsplads med faste kollegaer. For nogle kan det være vanskeligt helt at redegøre for, hvordan deres arbejdet egentlig er organiseret og aflønnet, fordi der er mange typer af ansættelsesforhold og former for aflønninger i spil. Hvem der egentlig er arbejdsgiver (hvis de har en sådan), fremstår ofte uklart.

Det gælder for flere af dem, at de både er arbejdstagere og arbejdsgivere på samme tid. Det gælder blandt andet for iværksætteren Stefan, der både udbyder sin egen arbejdskraft, som oversætter gennem en digital arbejdsplatform og samtidig finder den billigste arbejdskraft til softwareudvikling, som han skal have lavet for sin egen virksomhed. En arbejdskraft som han finder på en anden digital arbejdsplatform. Hvem, der er arbejdsgiver og arbejdstager, er en gråzone, og vores vante måder at tænke i arbejdets organisering kommer på prøve.

Ingen af de unge har en enkelt fast arbejdsplads med faste kollegaer.

For e-sport gameren Nicolai og hans professionelle Counter-Strike-hold gælder det, at de har organiseret sig på en helt ny måde inden for Counter-Strike-verdenen. Spillerne på holdet ejer nemlig selv aktier i det hold, som de spiller for. På samme måde kan Stefan, som er tømrer i sin egen enkeltmandsvirksomhed ikke melde sig ind i en fagforening, for han er jo sin egen arbejdsgiver. Og når han også udfører arbejde, som han finder gennem digitale arbejdsplatforme som Handyhand m.fl., så kan det fremstå meget uklart, hvem der har ansvar for arbejdsmiljøet. Stefan er dog ikke selv i tvivl; det må han selv tage ansvar for, siger han.

Også Annette, der er influencer og arbejder med sociale medier, har ansættelsesforhold, der kan være vanskelige

at gennemskue. Det gælder for hende, som for flere af disse unge, at rapportens portrætter bliver en udredning af de komplicerede måder, som deres arbejde er organiseret på i forhold til, hvem der er deres arbejdsgivere, og hvordan de er aflønnet.

Unge entreprenører

Nogle af de unge betegner sig selv freelancers, selvstændige, entreprenører eller iværksættere. Det kendetegner dem, at deres primære indtægtskilde kommer fra det arbejde, som de udfører i deres eget firma. Ingen af disse unge har andre ansatte i deres firma. De er det, som Scheuer (2017) kalder for "solo-selvstændige".

I en årrække har promovning af unges entreprenørskab stået højt på den politiske agenda både i de nordiske lande og på EU-niveau. Målet er, at unge entreprenører skal hjælpes til at udvikle deres ideer, så deres ideer kan udvikle sig til succesfulde forretninger, der kan være med til at skabe nye jobmuligheder. Fremkomsten af nye digitale arbejdsmarkeder har i den forbindelse givet anledning til en ny type entreprenør; nemlig entreprenører, der arbejder med udgangspunkt i sociale medieplatforme. Denne type entreprenørskab adskiller sig fra den mere traditionelle forståelse af entreprenørskab ved, at det arbejde, der udføres, dyrker entreprenørens personlighed gennem fx blogging eller streaming af gameplay. Omdrejningspunktet for disse entreprenørers arbejde er at sætte det private og personlige på display.

De unge solo-selvstændige i denne bog er beskæftigede inden for en række

forskellige faglige specialer og håndværk. Det kendetegner dem samtidig, at de fleste har en mellemlang- eller en lang uddannelse bag sig. Dermed afspejler de en generel arbejdsmarkedstendens. For mens andelen af solo-selvstændige har ligget relativt stabilt i Danmark siden 2010, har der været en stigning i antallet af solo-selvstændige blandt specialiserede fagfolk, som denne rapport dækker. Flere af de unge solo-selvstændige i denne bog fortæller, at de har en primær indtægtskilde fra en enkelt fast opdragsgiver, ligesom flere fortæller om en relation til denne faste opdragsgiver, som på mange måder minder om et ansættelsesforhold. Dette er ikke blot en tendens i vores begrænsede datamateriale, men kan ses som et eksempel på en generel tendens, idet 39 procent af alle solo-selvstændige i Danmark kun havde haft én større kunde inden for det seneste halve år (Scheuer, 2017). Scheuer forklarer denne udvikling således:

"I de seneste årtier har ændringer i virksomhedernes organisationsformer, tekniske innovationer og forretningsformer som 'subcontracting', privatisering, udlicitering m.m. gjort, at distinktionen mellem lønmodtager og selvstændig i nogle tilfælde kan være noget sløret, hvilket kan have medført en stigning af antallet af personer i denne gråzone (...). Arbejdsgiver kan i nogle tilfælde have fordel af at anvende denne tilknytningsform (...), da den mindsker arbejdsgiverens forpligtelser betydeligt: Ingen opsigelsesvarsler, ingen mindsteløn, ingen normal arbejdstid, ingen begrænsning af overtid, ingen løn under sygdom osv." (Scheuer 2017, s. 85).



Den vigtigste pointe her er, at der for solo-selvstændige ofte kan være tale om en 'gråzone', hvor adskillelsen af lønmodtager og selvstændig kan være sløret. Denne udvikling kan genfindes i flere af portrætteerne i denne bog.

Selvom flere af de unge er opmærksomme på de negative konsekvenser, som Scheuer nævner i citatet, fremhæver flere samtidig, de fordele, de synes, der er ved netop ikke at være i et fast ansættelsesforhold. Flere nævner oplevelsen af en høj grad af autonomi og frihed, som er noget de sætter stor pris på. De selvstændige fortæller generelt om vide rammer i forhold til selv at strukturere deres arbejde, om frihed i forhold til at løse opgaverne og om selvstændigt ansvar for at hente fremtidige opgaver hjem. Den begejstring for arbejdet, som den unge fortæller frem, er ofte også det, der fremhæves som det belastende. Begejstring og belastning bliver to sider af samme sag, og forholdet mellem individuel frihed og individuel usikkerhed synes for mange af de solo-selvstændige at være en balanceakt.

Arbejds miljø

I de interviews, som danner udgangspunkt for portrætteerne i denne rapport, har vi spurgt særligt ind til de måder, hvorpå de unge eller deres arbejdsgivere har organiseret deres arbejde samt til deres løn- og ansættelsesvilkår. Vi har desuden spurgt ind til risici og arbejdsmiljø. Usikkerhed og risiko fylder derfor en hel del i portrætteerne af disse unge, men ikke hos alle. Hvis ikke vi - forfatterne til denne rapport - havde spurgt til risici og arbejdsmiljø, var det langt fra sikkert, at de alle sammen ville være

kommet ind på emnet selv. Nogle af de unge er fagligt og politisk engagerede og meget optagede af at forbedre deres egne og andres arbejdsliv, mens det for andre ikke er noget, de er optaget af.

For Nicolai, den professionelle e-sport gamer, gælder det for eksempel, at han og holdkammeraterne blev medejere af holdet, fordi de kollektivt ønskede at gøre op med den usikkerhed, der traditionelt har været i professionel e-sport.

Alle de unge siger samstemmende, at sikkerhed i arbejdslivet har helt afgørende betydning for dem. Men den betydning, som de hver især tillægger sikkerhed, varierer meget.

De ønskede at skabe et miljø omkring holdet, hvor der ikke var usikkerhed om, hvorvidt lønnen kom ind på kontoen eller andre utrygheder, der kunne påvirke e-sport gamernes præstationer. I portrættet af den islandske Dagur, fortæller han om arbejdet med kollektivt at forbedre arbejdsvilkårene i den islandske filmindustri. Temaet om økonomisk og social sikkerhed/usikkerhed går igen i alle portrætteerne i denne bog.

Alle de unge siger samstemmende, at sikkerhed i arbejdslivet har helt afgørende betydning for dem. Men den betydning, som de hver især tillægger sikkerhed, varierer meget. Nogle af de tematikker, som de unge fortæller om, vil læseren genkende som traditionelle arbejdsmiljøproblematikker, som fx rygpro-

blemer, stress, søvnløshed og grænseløst arbejde. Andre risici vil formentlig være nye for læseren. I bogen fortæller mange af de unge således, hvordan de på forskellige måder passer på sig selv for ikke at blive slidt eller komme til skade i deres arbejde. Flere styrketræner eller svømmer for at styrke deres fysik, så de bedre kan holde til deres arbejde. Nogen bruger coaches, sportspsykologer eller udfører åndedrætsøvelser for at håndtere eller forebygge et stressende arbejdsliv. De fleste af de mange forskellige aktiviteter, som de hver især gør for at kunne holde til deres arbejde, er individuelle forebyggelsesstrategier, der er rettet mod selv at håndtere de arbejdsmiljømæssige risici og udfordringer, som de møder.

For flere af de unge i bogen gælder det desuden, at en stor del af deres arbejde er at være sig selv; et personligt brand. Dette er et forhold, der medfører en række arbejdsmiljørelaterede problemstillinger.

E-sport gameren Nicolai fortæller om et arbejdsliv, hvor han oplever, at han stort set altid er på arbejde. Selvom hans livssituation og arbejdsliv på mange punkter adskiller sig fra det arbejdsliv, som majoriteten af nordiske unge har, så kan flere af de forhold, som Nicolai fortæller om, genfindes i de øvrige portrætter af unge med atypisk arbejde. For flere af dem er det for eksempel et vilkår, at de arbejder så meget, at det har konsekvenser for deres relationer til familie og venner. Det gælder både for Stefan, der er tømmer

med eget firma, og som henter arbejde på en række digitale platforme; det gælder for Sara, der er redaktør, blogger, fitnessinstruktør m.m.; det gælder for islandske Brynja, der arbejder som tjener, og det gælder for Dagur, der arbejder i den islandske filmindustri. For dem flyder arbejde og privatliv fuldstændigt sammen. For flere af de unge i bogen gælder det desuden, at en stor del af deres arbejde er at være sig selv; et personligt brand. Dette er et forhold, der medfører en række arbejdsmiljørelaterede problemstillinger. Mens nogle problematiserer eller kritiserer sådanne forhold, bliver det af andre til en del af en positiv selv-fremstilling, hvor den unge fremstår som succesfulde i de fleste af livets forhold, og hvor de problemer, der måtte være, minimeres eller bagatelliseres.

Nogle af disse unge arbejder i deltidsansættelser og nogle i midlertidig ansættelse, eller begge dele. Vores analyser af arbejdskraftdata fra Danmark viser, at unge der arbejder i deltidsansættelser mindre end 15 timer pr. uge eller har midlertidigt ansættelse via vikarbureauer har en markant forøget risiko for at komme ud for arbejdsulykker.

Anbefalinger

De fjorten portrætter af unge i nye og atypiske former for arbejde i Norden giver et indblik i en række både nye og mere velkendte former for arbejdsmiljøproblemer. Det er karakteristisk, at de unge ikke nødvendigvis selv forstår det som arbejdsmiljøproblemer, men blot problemer relateret til dem selv og deres arbejde, som de i overvejende grad forsøger at løse individuelt og med andre virkemidler, end arbejdsmiljøfeltet



traditionelt har taget i brug. På baggrund af resultaterne fra dette projekt anbefaler vi, at der udarbejdes strategier, der kan rette sig mod arbejdsmiljøproblemer relateret til atypisk arbejde blandt unge. Dette omfatter, hvordan man når disse unge med atypisk arbejde, deres arbejdsgivere eller dem, der udbyder arbejdet gennem platformene. Vi skal formidle viden om disse typer arbejde, og de mulige konsekvenser det har, og forsøge at nå ud til relevante aktører, arbejdsmiljøinstitutioner og arbejdsmarkedets parter samt de unge, der arbejder i atypiske former for arbejde. Vi anbefaler både tiltag, der præciserer love og regler for dette arbejde samt sikrer, at viden og ressourcer i arbejdsmiljøsystemet kan blive bedre tilgængelige for dem, der arbejder i atypiske ansættelser og via digitale platforme.

For den del af det atypiske arbejde, der foregår via digitale platforme, er det oplagt at integrere love, regler og vejledninger med de algoritmer, der anvendes på disse platforme. Når en platformbruger tilbyder et bestemt job, f.eks. tømrerarbejde, rengøring eller servicearbejde via en digital platform, skal relevante retningslinjer 'poppe op' for at informere

platformsbrugeren (dem, der tilbyder en opgave), platformsarbejderen (den, der udfører opgaven) og arbejdsgiveren (den ansvarlige for platformen) om de mulige risici og forholdsregler, der skal tages for et bestemt job. Desuden, skal det være let via de digitale platforme at forbinde sig til den digitale rapportering af arbejdsulykker (fx EASY i Danmark), sådan at rapporteringspligten er klar og tydelig, og sådan at det er nemt for brugeren at rapportere tilfælde af arbejdsskader til myndighederne.

Når en platformbruger tilbyder et bestemt job, f.eks. tømrerarbejde, rengøring eller servicearbejde via en digital platform, skal relevante retningslinjer 'poppe op' for at informere platformbrugeren (dem, der tilbyder en opgave), platformsarbejderen (den, der udfører opgaven) og arbejdsgiveren (den ansvarlige for platformen) om de mulige risici og forholdsregler, der skal tages for et bestemt job.

1.

Background

In this report, we move into the borderland of the meanings we usually ascribe to the categories of work and working environment. Through 14 portraits of Nordic youth with an atypical working life, we explore how working life is being shaped in a rapidly changing labour market.

With this report, we want to look into the working life of these young people, and see what we can learn from their atypical working life in order to provide a picture of the challenges that the future labour market can bring to the working environment.

The report gives voice to the young people and their narratives about the risks and workplace issues that they have sensed on their own bodies, and that they consider the most relevant. Many of these types of work are not easy to explore through usual register data and surveys.



Photo: iStock

The report includes one of the world's best professional Counter-Strike teams, who are based in Denmark. The team consists of five young professional e-sport gamers aged between 19 and 24 years. We have included an interview with one of the team members, Nicolai Reedtz, in this report. He essentially constitutes the image of a young worker in a labour market undergoing transformation. In the interview, Nicolai tells about the many pleasures and privileges associated with his work as a professional e-sportsman. Nevertheless, he also talks about sustained high pressure to perform and the health consequences he is currently in the process of taking care of (2017, red.). His aim is to maintain his position as one of the best Counter-Strikers

in the world. Nicolai does not talk about these stress-related health problems as working-environment problems, although perhaps that is exactly what they are.

The report investigates the following basic question:

- How do young people with atypical work experience their working life and their working environment?

1.1 What is atypical employment?

This report is about young people between the ages of 18 and 30 years old whose primary activity is paid employment. Thus, we do not include young

people in education who have a job besides their study or apprenticeship. Furthermore, we have only included young people employed in so-called 'atypical' types of employment.

However, what is in fact 'atypical' employment? There are various ways to define the group of 'young people with atypical work'. International research suggests that it can be difficult to categorize and delimit atypical or new forms of employment (Aronsson et al., 2002; Scheuer, 2011; Scheuer, 2014; Quinlan et al., 2001), because these types of employment push the boundaries of what we usually understand and define as work and employment. In some cases, the employment form has changed, but not the work content, as is the case with some types of manual work, while in other cases both the employment form and the work content is new, as is the case with young people employed as 'e-sport gamers' and 'bloggers'.

The emergence of new forms of work among young people can be explained partly by the digital revolution and partly by the emergence of new markets and different forms of production

The purpose of this report is to gain knowledge about new organisational arrangements for working life; organisations that break with well-established and institutionalized ways of employment, i.e. 'the atypical employment

form'. We are particularly interested in the question of how to ensure the working environment of young people employed in these new forms of employment. We have found inspiration from Scheuer's (2011) categorization of 'atypical employment' in our selection of cases and definitions of employment forms. We have used the following overall categories:

- Temporary employment, where people are employed for a specified period (time-limited), or to carry out a specific task (task-limited)
- Temp-agency workers, where a temp agency assigns staff to jobs in a company or for private people, either time-limited or task-limited assignments
- Part-time employment, where employees have a lower weekly working time than the usual norm of the labour market, either voluntarily or because part-time work is imposed on them
- Self-employed, i.e. individuals who own a firm (VAT registered), but with no employees (solo self-employed)

In addition, we included two additional groups of employed young people who are not included in Scheuer's (2011) categorization:

- Young people with digital work, they often belong to the group of self-employed people
- Young people with multiple jobs at the same time have also been included, as this is particularly applicable for young workers (Hanvold et al., 2016)

1.2 New labour markets and new forms of work

It is well-known that global labour market is changing and new forms of work are often first visible among young people and then work up through all age groups (Furlong, 2014; Mills, 2004; Nielsen et al., 2017). The emergence of new forms of work among young people can be explained partly by the digital revolution and partly by the emergence of new markets and different forms of production (Hardt, 1999; Lazzarato, 2009; Pybus & Coté, 2011).

An array of new concepts is used to define the new forms of work following in the wake of the digital revolution. These include 'platform work', 'sms jobs', 'work on demand', 'gigs', and 'involuntary part-time work'. All of these can lead to 'precarious employment'. These new forms of work are the focus for this report and we use the term 'atypical' when we refer to these types of work (Scheuer, 2011).

Despite differences between researchers on how to define these new forms of work, there is agreement that new forms and types of work arrangements are emerging continuously, and this can challenge extant understandings of what work really is (Eurostat, 2015; Huws, 2015; Ilsøe, 2017; Jesnes, 2016).

One of the fundamental processes in the change of employment forms and work is the technological development. With the digital revolution, new ways of working on digital platforms are constantly being created (Huws, 2015; Ilsøe 2017), and these are adopted by young

people in particular. A central concept in this context is the 'platform economy'. This term refers to "(...) business models that have emerged since the turn of the millennium and which have one thing in common, that digital, often internet-based platforms, are the intermediary link between those who want to use a facility, service or activity, and those who own it" (Rasmussen & Madsen, 2017, p. 48 (translated by the authors)).

The report provides two examples of young people performing tasks provided through diverse internet-based platforms, also known as 'online platform work'. A current report defines 'online platform work' as follows:

"(...) all labour provided through, on or mediated by online platforms, and features a wide array of working arrangements/relationships, such as (versions of) casual work, dependent self-employment, informal work, piece-work, home work and crowdwork, in a wide range of sectors. The actual work provided can be digital or manual, in-house or outsourced, high-skilled or low-skilled, on-site or off-site, large- or small scale, permanent or temporary, all depending on the specific situation". (Garben, 2017 p. 4).

In addition to these young people with platform work, there are a number of other new forms of work included in the report, e.g. three young female 'influencers'. For these three women, the social digital platforms form a stage on which they, like other young people, can create themselves and position themselves in relation to the cultural communities

and consumer communities they orient themselves towards (Yung Nielsen, 2016). The social digital platforms have created a foundation for new types of work, such as fashion and health bloggers, and Instagram and YouTube stars, which modify the personal sphere and everyday life of those employed in such work.

The concept of 'precarious employment' conceptualizes how current neo-liberal policies and changed economic conditions produce new forms of marginalization on the labour market.

The three influencers portrayed in this report provide examples of these new types of work. One consequence of this development is an ever-increasing exposure of the personal and the affective personal narrative. This forms part of an 'affective economy' (Hardt, 1999; Lazzarato, 2009) and becomes part of the product being produced, so that the personal is transformed into a product, which can be part of an economy in which intentions, consumer items and money are exchanged. In this way, the mechanisms inherent in social media, the consumer culture, celebrity culture and new labour market cultures, all merge together (Marwick, 2013). This affective economy is also present in the working life of professional gamers, as two interviewees describe in this report.

1.3 Young people and atypical employment forms

In addition, the report portrays a number of young people with atypical work which may be referred to as insecure or 'precarious' employment forms. This includes different young people in various types of temporary, insecure employments and jobs. The concept of 'precarious employment' conceptualizes how current neo-liberal policies and changed economic conditions produce new forms of marginalization on the labour market (Casas-Cortés, 2014; Furlong, 2014). The concept addresses the increased insecurity and instability of modern working life. 'Precarious employment' is not an easily definable phenomenon; it includes several kinds of insecurity and vulnerability for workers, without clear definitions of exact types of working conditions (Quinlan et al., 2001; Rasmussen & Håpnes, 2012; Underhill & Quinlan, 2011).

There seems, however, to exist a common understanding of insecure employment as a growing problem, especially among young, unskilled workers with limited education (Duell, 2004; Hamilton et al., 2014; MacDonald, 2009), but also among the highly educated (Rasmussen & Håpnes, 2012). To many young workers, part-time employment or temporary positions have traditionally constituted a stepping-stone to entering the labour market. It has been argued that some of these young workers run a high risk of being stuck with insecure work, if early atypical work arrangements do not lead

to permanent or more secure positions (Duell, 2004; Nielsen et al., 2018).

However, atypical work as such should be distinguished from precariousness, in the sense of being insecure, vulnerable or marginalised. For some young people atypical employment might be successful, whereas for others it can lead to precarious employment in the long run. However, who are in fact these young people and what is their working life like? To get to a more precise picture of these atypical and new forms of work and complex employment patterns, we will present a number of portraits of young people in the Nordic countries who are working in atypical work. What kind of work are they doing, what are their employment relationships and what are the possible consequences for their working environment?

1.4 Presentation of the included young people

The young people portrayed in the report are between 21 and 30 years old, and they represent a wide variety of young working lives. They live and work in Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Most of them are in a period of their lives where they are establishing themselves in the labour market, and only one of them has a daily life with children. They are included in this report because they each represent the different types of employment and working life experiences that reflect a labour market undergoing major changes. (cf. appendix 1).

1. The first portrait is Eirik from Norway, who is about 26 years old. He works as a professional e-sport gamer playing StarCraft. StarCraft is a real-time strategy computer game. He considers himself as independent, but a professional StarCraft team also employs him. Before his gaming career took off, he studied music technology and musicology at a Norwegian university.
2. The second young person is Nicolai, who is also a professional e-sport gamer. Nicolai is from Denmark; he is 21 years old and plays Counter-Strike professionally. He has a contract with one of the world's best Counter-Strike teams; the Danish team Astralis. Counter-Strike is a team-based first-person computer-shooting game, i.e. the player experiences the action through the eyes of the protagonist. Nicolai has a business-oriented secondary education called 'Higher Commercial Examination Programme' (HHX).
3. The third portrait is about Stefan, who is 25 years old and from Denmark. He is in the process of setting up his own business, but as it does not yet make a profit, Stefan needs a supplementary income. He gets this supplementary income through translation tasks he receives through the platform 'freelancer.com', where he is paid per translated word. He has a Bachelor degree in vocational training in international trade and marketing from Aarhus Business Academy.



4. Stefan, the carpenter, is 23 years old and the fourth to be portrayed in the report. He is also a Dane. He is the director of his own one-man carpentry company. He performs most tasks as a regular subcontractor for another company. Outside normal working hours and at weekends he also works for private customers on jobs he procures through three different digital platforms.
5. Brynja is from Iceland and she is 20 years old. She graduated as a student from Upper secondary education and got work as a waitress at a sports club to save money to travel the world. The job as a waitress is temporary and very flexible.
6. Devran is 30 years old. He is from Kurdistan, and has been living in Norway for four years. He is married and expecting his first child. He has involuntary part-time employment in a supermarket chain, primarily working on the cash register. He has a 60% part-time position. He takes as many additional shifts as he can get and he has a Bachelor degree in financial management.
7. Anders is 27 years old and from Sweden. He is an unskilled worker in a larger supermarket. Anders has completed upper-secondary education and taken some basic courses at the university. He is employed on a temporary contract, under which he is secured approximately 75% of full-time employment. The contract is temporary and runs over periods of about three months at a time.
8. Lars has worked in a wide range of unskilled and temporary jobs. He is 27 years old and Danish. After a period as a machine operator, he has had jobs such as seasonal vegetable packer, seasonal gardener, and temporary work as a garbage man. In addition, he has been affiliated with a temp agency. In parallel with these various jobs, he has regularly performed tasks in his father's business, where he is paid for each assignment. Furthermore, he has sometimes had periods of unemployment and received unemployment benefit. Over a period of seven years, Lars has been doing a Higher Preparatory Single-subject Examination (HF enkeltfag), which he was completing at the time of the interview. He characterizes his working life as precarious.
9. Julia is 27 years old and lives in Sweden. Previously, she lived in London for four years, where she primarily worked in the catering industry. In Sweden, she works as a receptionist for a temp agency that specializes in office work and HR. Through the employment agency, she has worked for seven different companies for durations from half a day to a whole week. Julia has finished upper secondary education.
10. Sara Jin Smidt is 30 years old and has a Master's degree in human nutrition from the University of Copenhagen. In addition, she is a qualified fitness instructor. Sara has a permanent full-time position as editor-in-chief at FIT LIVING magazine, and works as an hourly paid team instructor in the Danish FitnessDK, where she instructs keep-fit groups for six hours a

week. Sarah is the director of her own company, which, among other things, sells dietary guidance to private customers. Nevertheless, she is perhaps best known as the person behind the blog 'Healthy Skinny Bitch'. Sara is also the author of several books on food and healthy recipes.

11. Paula is 28 years old and a beauty blogger, art agent and freelancer. She lives in Sweden and has roots in Chile. She characterizes herself as an 'influencer', a term used about people on social media platforms who have established credibility and access to a large audience and can persuade them by virtue of this credibility and their reach. As a freelancer, she organises events with different cultural institutions, among other things.
12. Anette is Norwegian and 26 years old. She has completed a one-year part-time education programme in fashion studies and she works full time with social media as both as an influencer and a freelance consultant in Norway. Anette characterizes herself as independent. She has a temporary contract with an influencer agency. The agency acts like an agent, and

they manage the advertisers she should work for. Through the agency, she recently entered a one-year contract with a large telecommunications company.

13. Dagur is 23 years old and from Iceland. He works in the Icelandic film industry with different jobs within filmmaking, such as best boy, gaffer, grip or assistant camera operator. Mostly he works as an independent contractor, but he also runs his own production company and he employs workers to work for him. He has a qualification in film making from upper secondary school, but he wants to pursue an advanced degree in film making in London.
14. Viðar is 27 years old and from Iceland. He has a Bachelor degree from the Iceland Academy of the Arts, where he also studied recording and audio mixing. He has been working independently with audio mixing since he graduated half a year ago. His working life consists of three different dimensions: as a contractor on sound engineering gigs, as a DJ, and as a composer.



2.

Young people in new and atypical employment forms

The following contains 14 portraits of 14 very different Nordic young people and their working lives. The portraits are edited versions of interviews made in 2017 with the help of colleagues in Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. We made 21 qualitative interviews with young people between 21 and 30 years of age. For this report, we portray young people who together give the widest possible insight into the new forms of work for young people (see the method chapter in appendix 1).

The specific purpose of the portraits is to give the reader a nuanced insight into some of the working-environment impacts that new forms of work may have for young people. The portraits represent the personal perspectives of the 14 young people on their working lives in the Nordic countries. Together, the portraits form a pallet of nuances, insights and knowledge about the labour market lying ahead for future generations.



Photo: iStock

2.1 Gaming: a professional work

The first two portraits are about professional e-sport gamers. One e-sport gamer is Norwegian, and plays StarCraft, and the other e-sport gamer is Danish, and plays Counter-Strike. They have in common that they both have contracts with professional e-sports teams. The two young gamers both refer to their work as being physically and psychologically very stressful, but also as having financial and social privileges. They are both familiar and successful in a market with increasing commercial interests.

Portrait 1:

Eirik – professional e-sport gamer (StarCraft)

Eirik is 26 years old and lives in Oslo. In the recent five years, he has been working as a professional e-gamer. He plays StarCraft. StarCraft is a real-time strategy game, where the gamer steers the troops around at a map, aiming to outmaneuver the enemy. He characterizes himself as independent, but a professional StarCraft team in fact employs him. Eirik is one of the best in Europe. His title 'top grand master' means that he belongs in the top two percent of StarCraft players. Eirik lives alone. He travels extensively around the world playing tournaments. During the last five years, he has been living abroad for shorter or longer periods. Before he started as a professional e-gamer, he studied Musicology at a Norwegian university for five months, because he is interested in music and always has played music. However, it was more attractive for him to become a professional gamer:

"The university became too theoretical, and I was too impatient to continue studying. For me it was more tangible to be a professional e-sport gamer. It was more attractive. I had already reached a high level, winning a couple of minor tournaments. So, I had earned like 50 \$ and 70 \$ and even 100. I travelled around the country on data gatherings competing with other gamers. And then I thought, 'this is something I can manage'. I had some savings from earlier jobs. So, I decided to use the money the first year that I played, and after a year, I evaluated it. I don't regret choosing this."

Both Eirik's parents have a university degree, with no specific relation to gaming. They have always encouraged him to play music:

"It has been difficult for me to be interested in e-sport gaming, because my parents are not very happy about it. I was not allowed doing it as much as I wanted to. On the other hand, they were not so strict as others have been. And it was my parents that sent me to music school, for which I am happy, that was nice. I have been playing piano, so I have got some mechanical skills. You have to be good at using the keyboard, and to do things fast. Everything happens fast in StarCraft (...)."

Wages and working conditions

All five years that Eirik has played StarCraft, he has been employed at a professional team. However, at the same time, he says he is independent:

"I am mainly independent, but you also sign a contract with a team. So, in a way you are employed by the team, which is often based abroad. So there is a lot of international stuff involved"

The contract prohibits Eirik from playing with other teams in other leagues. The team has exclusive rights over a player, so if a player becomes sick it is common that the teams negotiate amongst each other for a substitute and the substitute is hired on a special temporary contract. Furthermore, the contract stipulates wages and commercial obligations Eirik is obligated to take part of as a team member.

"In my case, as a StarCraft player, I become part of the team profile also belonging to the team's sponsor, and then they can use my image."

Belonging to a team provides Eirik with security because the team pays Eirik's wages and travel expenses for tournaments in which he is not sponsored. However, for Eirik belonging to a team is also about belonging to a community:

"And then I become part of the team, having contact with my teammates. Most people know each other anyway, but if you are on a team together, you have to prioritize, so you help your teammates first, of course (...). I do know the bosses on the team, those owning the team together. And I do know some of the people who work on the team."

Additional to the salary from the team, Eirik has income from tournaments and from live-streaming on 'Twitch', a commercial platform where players can livestream their gameplay. These two sources constitute the main part of his income and according to him that is the reason why he perceives himself as independent. Through live streaming, his fans can follow him on his own private TV-channel on Twitch where they can watch his gameplay.

"So, they can buy a kind of subscription on this TV-channel, and they do not become users, but subscribe, then, they subscribe your channel"

Thus, Eirik describes his income as an entity made up from several different sources of income:

"Throughout my career, the largest part of my income has been from the tournaments. (...) Then you have the streaming and your own TV-channel, and then the wage from the team. But the income varies a lot from game to game and from team to team. It is difficult for me as a professional to know how much other players earn. But I know that here have been periods earlier, when my game was more popular. At that time people earned about 10,000 dollar a month. But it has gradually decreased. When the game has decreased in popularity, the wages has also decreased.[...] The tournament that have the highest wage or prizepool in the game I play, is the year final in the USA, were about 500,000 dollars is distributed"

» I have a very few ordinary days, and mostly I can do whatever I want. Get up and go to bed at any times, unless if there are tournaments where I participate. So it is very free.

Eirik – Professional e-sport gamer

An ordinary workday

Eirik's work life is quite diverse. He says that there is almost no ordinary days. He plays between 4 and 12-13 hours a day adding that 12-13 hours is somewhat extreme. The day before the interview, he streamed gameplay for 10 hours, but other days he streams less, and chooses to look at other players to learn in order to become a better player himself. Most days he spends 8 hours or more on StarCraft.

"I have a very few ordinary days, and mostly I can do whatever I want. Get up and go to bed at any times, unless if there are tournaments where I participate. So it is very free, but you always have to do what is the best to become a better gamer, so you may reach your top level in the next tournament. In practice, you just get up in the morning, like everybody else, eat breakfast, and usually, if there is some paperwork or something that I try to do".

» I have not had any vacation, traveling south or something like that since I became a professional. But I have been on many tournaments traveling all over the world anyway. So it mixes up in a way.

Eirik – Professional e-sport gamer

In addition to the game itself, Eirik has other tasks as well. He has tasks of both commercial and of administrative nature. Occasionally Eirik is required to participate in a Skype meeting or shoot a film related to sponsors and the administrative dimension of his working life is mainly "paperwork" as Eirik himself labels it. That means answering emails, do accounting, and send expenses to accounting if the team is supposed to pay for travel expenses, or identifying tournaments and qualifying tournaments for him and the team to enter. Central for Eirik's work is that he has never received any form of training in order to solve his tasks, rather he has experienced that the

competitive gaming environment can supply both friends and enemies:

"You do 99% yourself, and then you try to learn from others, by looking at other players. But mainly, you do all yourself. The process, becoming better [at the playing StarCraft], it is usually something you do alone. You get some help along the way. You get friends in the game you are playing, some enemies, enemies and friends. Someone that can teach you something and someone that don't want teach you anything at all."

Another trait of Eirik's work life is travelling, because his team participates in tournaments around the world. During the last five years, Eirik has had between 40 and 70 days of travel a year, but in addition to this, he has been living abroad for shorter or longer periods.

"Actually, in periods I have been moving into a team-house, living there for a period of time, from 2 weeks up to two-three months. I have also been in South Korea for a shorter while and in Poland, and in Sweden. But you become homesick. [...] But it can be positive living together in a house and train together."

In addition, Eirik tells, that he has not travelled for a vacation since he became a professional gamer:

"I have not had any vacation, traveling south or something like that since I became a professional. But I have been on many tournaments traveling all over the world anyway. So it mixes up in a way."

To organize the time: 'You may always turn on the streaming'

Eirik tells that he finds it a big challenge to organize his working time. He is contractually obliged to stream a certain number of hours of gameplay a week, and in order to fulfil this demand he needs opponents on his level, because in StarCraft players cannot compete with the computer. Eirik continues to tell that it is highly unlikely to play against other players at his level before 10 PM and the game continues until one in the morning.

So, you are dependent on the time zones, so people on your level are there to play with you. [...] For example if I get up at seven, then it is useless to start streaming, so then it is better to do things like exercising early in the morning.

However, Eirik can stream gameplay 24 hours a day in single player mode if he chooses too, but he says it is important to find a balance between training and streaming:

Nevertheless, training is not the only reason for Eirik to stay offline:

"Or if you have a bad day, maybe you do not wish to be in front of a camera and do the streaming. So it varies a lot how much you want to stream. Streaming is more demanding than training without anyone watching. Because then you can take longer breaks. If you get a phone call, it is not a problem to take the call and disappear for 15 minutes. But if you stream, then you are broadcasting, and it is stupid to end the broadcast if you want to keep the viewers. So, there are

some extra responsibilities when you are streaming."

To create your own brand

The game itself is the main part of Eirik's working life, i.e., the competition, the tournaments, and the streaming. Through the game, he is able to create a brand for himself as a player. However, social media skills are also important if Eirik wants expand his personal brand and make himself more attractive for commercial partners.

"If you are good at social media, it is an advantage to create an image around yourself. It is a very important skill. For instance, many professionals have a huge talent for the game they are playing, but then they can be really wild, and do not behave well, and that is not good at social media platforms. To have good skills [ed. In social media] is very valuable for the sponsorship. Or the opposite, if you are not good at competing, you may compensate by being very good at presenting personality on social media or by streaming, or in combination. Most people choose just to compete to earn their money in that way, that is the core. But you also have these set of skills that sponsors may find attractive: If you are a professional gamer, and is very athletic and is exercising, then you are very attractive for those [sponsors] selling food supplements or proteins and such things."

Working environment: Stress, insomnia and neck pain

Eirik tells that his body is challenged by the fact that his work is sedentary. He is in front of the computer all the time and often without breaks. As a result of this

Eirik tells that he often experiences neck and back pains. In order to prevent these injuries, Eirik tries to exercise at least twice a week in a gym:

"I would say, that to sit down that much is the biggest challenge. It is easy to get neck and shoulder pain. (...) I practice a lot, and when I have tried to practice less, then my level has stagnated or has even dropped. So, I have chosen to continue. The problem is that it can be difficult for the body, if you are not good at doing your exercise."

The pain in neck and shoulders appear when Eirik skips his exercise.

"It [neck and shoulder pain] also happens, when there are a lot of tournaments to play, I just forget to do it. I am not as disciplined as I should, but I try. You spend so much time practicing in front of the screen, and the you play yourself, or you are streaming these TV-things. You have a microphone, and comment, and make a small TV-show. So either I stream, or I do not. If I do not stream, then I most often have some specific training towards the next tournament."

Eirik also describes how he in one specific tournament performed so poorly because of the pain in his neck and shoulder:

"There was a time when I did badly at the tournaments, because I was not exercising properly. I had so much pain in my neck that I was not able to concentrate. But afterwards, I took more breaks and started to focus on strength exercise. I do not think that I am able to run for many minutes, but I have never been seriously

ill, or have any complaints. So even if I perceive some pain, and sometimes have pain in the arm after playing for consecutive 11 hours or something like that, I am good taking a break, when it goes too far."

» I would say, that to sit down that much is the biggest challenge. It is easy to get neck and shoulder pain. (...) I practice a lot, and when I have tried to practice less, then my level has stagnated or has even dropped. So, I have chosen to continue. The problem is that it can be difficult for the body, if you are not good at doing your exercise.

Eirik – Professional e-sport gamer

The physical challenge of professional e-sport gaming is one thing, but the mental side is another. Thus, Eirik describes how gaming is stressful:

"Yes, stress is a challenge, because the whole game is very stressful. There are many elements of stress in the game. In some periods of the game, it is very chaotic and hectic and everything happens at the same time. But at the same time, there are also patterns and stuff in the game that can be controlled, and after a while you get used to it.(...) I have not exactly measured the heart rate while playing. Somebody has, and they have a very high heart rate when they are play-

ing. *But there have not been that much research on e-games and stress, and heart rate, and how it affects the body physically and mentally in the long run. Nevertheless, I assume, it is the same in chess, and in sport that if things go bad it can be a stressor. The game or the match in itself can be stressor and losing can also be stressful.*"

The stressful situations are interfering with Eirik's sleep:

"It's also difficult to sleep from time to time. Because you have to consider the time zones. In general, you work a lot in front of the screen, and with these time zones (...) so if you are not good at it, you may get a disturbed circadian rhythm. That happens in my case, it is difficult to get regular sleep.."

» It's also difficult to sleep from time to time. Because you have to consider the time zones. In general, you work a lot in front of the screen, and with these time zones (...) so if you are not good at it, you may get a disturbed circadian rhythm. That happens in my case, it is difficult to get regular sleep.

Eirik – Professional e-sport gamer

Eirik describes a particular day on which he played for 11 hours straight:

"This was competitions, with qualification-matches that really mattered. And

then I had a schedule that was unfortunate, combining two tournaments at the same day. So I played for consecutive 11 hours. It went so well, that I won all the rounds that I had to win. In the end, I gave 100%. And then I had a zombie-head. And in these cases, it can be difficult to sleep. I lay sleepless for three or four hours. The job has a very important mental side to it; to be able to handle these things in the right way. But I will say, eh, I have not met that many gamers that have been influenced in a negative way, who have been damaged.."

When times are tough, Eirik has his personal network of friends in Oslo. He says, that they are also the reason he wants to be based in Oslo. He needs them for support. Eirik also make use of his colleagues on the team, they chat online or skype every day. In addition to his friendships, there is also an organizational structure around the team, which often provides the players with mental support:

"Often you have mental coaches on the team; this is necessarily not the same as friends or family. Then it becomes more related to competitions and the practical things. But mostly, it is 99% me."

Economic security

Eirik has just bought an apartment, so at present economic security is very important to him:

"I have just bought a flat, so I try to pay back my loan. I do not like to have this loan at all. I find it unpleasant. So I try to save as much as I can, and pay down my loan, before I do anything else."



Photo: iStock



Photo: Sean Do/ Unsplash



Photo: Nikita Kachanovsky/ Unsplash

The loan for the apartment also influences his choice to stay in gaming:

"That is also why I am reluctant to quit as a professional gamer, because it is not reasonable to end it right now. I had my best year, last year. [...] In that perspective, I think it would be unpleasant or unreasonable to quit and start studying, and to pick up a part time job.

In terms of settling down and starting a family, the working hours are not suitable notes Eirik, and he predicts that a family life and a life as a professional gamer is not compatible.

Eirik realizes that he is in a privileged position as a gamer with a fixed income with a Norwegian citizenship meaning that he will always be able to return to his studies:

"In other countries many play professionally and live from day to day. I am lucky, that is not an issue. I have always been a year in advance [economically], and additionally, I can go back to get an education (....) That is also one of the reasons I chose to take this chance, because it is easy and possible to go back to a university in Norway. I think that opportunity has to be protected."

The future: 'If you can't give 100% of your time, then maybe it is not worth it anymore'

Eirik has always played music, and when asked about how he looks upon his

future, he returns to music as a possible focus for his future:

It is difficult to say, because my life has changed a lot until now. But I wish I could be a musician. But I do not have the time. I do not have the level that is required to become a professional musician. So even if I make music and even publish some of this music on the internet and such, this is not something I actively want to promote right now. I feel that I am not at the level I should really be at. So, that is the way it is, maybe in the future. (...) I know, I could continue to game if I wanted to. But I think that there will come a time when people may say 'enough is enough, now I want to do something else'. To set up a family, all these aspects with growing up, then you really choose something else.

In terms of settling down and starting a family, the working hours are not suitable notes Eirik, and he predicts that a family life and a life as a professional gamer is not compatible.

"I think if you cannot give 100 % of your time and attention to the game, then it is not worth it for anyone. Maybe people have an inner mental limit, for when it is not worth it anymore. Right now, I am motivated for StarCraft and e-sport games. Maybe it opens up for some possibilities, I do not know. Some choose to become commentators; personally, I do not want to be a commentator or an analytic. I think musician could be the funniest, and if that is not possible, something with the university, coding or something."

Portrait 2:

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer (Counter-Strike)

Nicolai is 21 years old. He is a professional Counter-Strike player for the team Astralis, which is currently the number one Counter-Strike team in the world. Counter-Strike is a team-based, first-person shooter computer game. Officially, Nicolai still lives with his parents in the small city of Vejle in the western part of Denmark. However, when he is not travelling the world to participate in tournaments or meeting with his teammates in Copenhagen, he spends most of his time in Stockholm, where his girlfriend lives.

Nicolai has completed a three-year higher commercial examination (upper-secondary programme). He was originally enrolled at a sports college because he was very serious about badminton. Then he injured his knee and could no longer play badminton, and instead he became interested in Counter-Strike. It soon became clear that this was something he was very keen on, and he transferred from the badminton programme to an e-sports programme. When asked about the game's sudden rise in popularity and his own life situation, he says:

"Suddenly it all exploded and the massive interest meant that we had to travel a lot. And I was allowed to transfer from badminton to e-sports. This meant that I was granted leave from my studies so I could travel in connection with e-sports gigs abroad and still manage to complete my course."

Nicolai's parents are both academics. His mother was a member of the Danish national team in badminton when she was younger and his father was very interested in computers. Nicolai has been playing both badminton and computer games from a rather young age. The thrill of winning is the best feeling in the world, as he says:

"The most thrilling thing for me is when we win a tournament. I've been programmed to win since I was a little boy - nothing beats the thrill of winning. Winning is 100% for sure what makes me the happiest in life."

Salary and employment conditions

Nicolai describes in precise terms the conditions of his employment and the players' employment contract. He says that the players do not fall under the terms of the Danish Employers' and Salaried Employees Act, but that they enjoy many of the rights stipulated in this law, such as paid holiday. He has obviously thought a lot about this.

» It's really important to know that you're covered and to feel secure... That's something you learn from day one...

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

"It's really important to know that you're covered and to feel secure... That's something you learn from day one... I signed my first contract when I was 16 and my parents helped me. Things weren't that professional then. You gradually learn that the little squiggle you make on a

piece of paper is really important for your future. We were very aware of this when we started Astralis and were negotiating."

The players get a fixed salary, "so in a way, we're regular employees," says Nicolai. But then he goes on to say that, they are more like consultants, because the prize money they win from tournaments varies from month to month, depending on their performance.

"When we win a tournament, we might win DKK 600,000 per person that month. And if we lose, we might only make DKK 5,000 or DKK 10,000. We're allowed to talk about how much we make. We make DKK 85,000 a month."

» We play practice matches, online tournaments and tournaments where we have to travel all over the world.

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

Nicolai is happy about his current player contract for the Astralis team. The players are actually co-owners of the team, and all the players own an equal share. Three members of the team reached this arrangement based on their years of experience within e-sports.

"Three of us have been playing together since 2013. That's a long time. And we've seen both the good sides and the bad sides of e-sports. We've worked under contracts that were not in our favour. And we've learnt from our mistakes, because in the past we have been tied to some terms and condi-

tions that we really didn't think about at all when we signed the contract."

But there are some strings attached to Nicolai's contract – he can't just switch to a competing team.

"If I wanted to stop today, I'd have to talk to the rest of the team about it... I'd probably be allowed to leave when I wanted to. But only if I don't start playing for another Counter-Strike team for as long as my original contract lasts."

The commercial – and sports aspect

Nicolai describes how working as a professional Counter-Strike player has a commercial and sports aspect. The sports part is when Nicolai plays Counter-Strike with his team and competes with other teams from around the world. At the time of this interview, Astralis was the best team in the world. About the sports part, Nicolai says:

"We play practice matches, online tournaments and tournaments where we have to travel all over the world. The online matches against other teams are divided into leagues and 'onside' tournaments are streamed (online (ed.)). And the practice matches where we compete against other teams are not shown anywhere."

However, in order to cash in even more on the team's success, the players have several other commitments. Nicolai describes these commitments:

"The other part of the job is the commercial aspect. You're a public figure and your job is to sell sponsorships, for example, through

our agency. They're responsible for all of our commercial contracts. You learn a lot, for example, how to commercialise yourself and in a way be an advert.."

» **Everybody expects me to perform all the time – the team, the fans, and me. People constantly want something from me. I have to give interviews, and I have to keep up with everything that's going on. So, it's easily a 14-16-hour workday. But it's difficult to say exactly how many hours I work, because a lot of what I do in my life is related to my work.**

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

Nicolai describes what a typical day at work looks like for him. The team meets at the Astralis office at 10 in the morning. Astralis has an office and training facilities in Copenhagen. They'll typically work for four to five hours on the business, for example, planning how to manage the team's commercial potential.

"So we work for four or five hours dealing with the business side of things - which direction should we move in, and writing content for the organisation. Like today, a potential sponsor came to the office and we talked about headsets. Then we'll make some videos and a few media people will come and film our ideas. And then we'll work on some content for the commercial part of our activities so that

we can sell our team to other sponsors in the future."

The content that Nicolai describes here is typically images or videos of, e.g., team interaction situations. He goes on to talk about how the team's fans are very interested in getting a peek behind the scenes of the world's best Counter-Strike team. This content is typically shared via YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Nicolai goes on to describe how, in the afternoon, the team then directs its focus on the sport aspect of work.

"Later in the day we begin to play, and then we practice. Today we'll practice from 4pm to 7pm, and from 7pm to 9pm we have league matches. League matches are streamed matches in online leagues, where you play to qualify for a tournament."

Long days and irregular hours, working 14-16 hours a day

Nicolai's workday varies and depends on whether he is working from home and playing online, whether he is travelling, or whether he is with his team in Copenhagen. Nicolai describes that it is not easy to count how many hours he actually works a day, because almost everything he does is in some way related to his job as a professional Counter-Striker.

"Everybody expects me to perform all the time – the team, the fans, and me. People constantly want something from me. I have to give interviews, and I have to keep up with everything that's going on. So, it's easily a 14-16-hour workday. But it's difficult to say exactly how many

hours I work, because a lot of what I do in my life is related to my work."

It is difficult for Nicolai to state precisely how many hours he works a day, because there is no clear line between work and pleasure.

"For example, when I go to the gym or go for a run, that's also good for my career. When I play computer games outside of our practice sessions, that's also good for my career. When I'm working on commercial stuff, or using social media, which is really just something you do in your spare time, that's also good for my career and my work life. Almost everything I do, except maybe eating and sleeping, in some way or other has an effect on my work life. So I work 14-16 hours a day quite a lot."

When Nicolai is asked, when he does not work, he answers:

"Not working for me is when I'm with my friends or with my girlfriend. When I'm doing something, where I'm not thinking about work or gaming. And of course my family. These are the three main things that help me stress down and allow me to not think about work."

Network and support

It is not just when Nicolai wants to think of other things than work that he turns to his family and network. He also talks about how his parents have been there for him throughout, but that it is the way the team works together and their joint journey that he stresses as being most important.

"There are three of us on the team, and we've been playing together since 2013. That's a long time. And we've seen both the good sides and the bad sides of e-sports. We've worked under contracts that were not in our favour. And we've learnt from our mistakes, because in the past we have been tied to some terms and conditions that we really didn't think about at all when we signed the contract. We learned that we needed to pay much more attention to the details and to include some people, including "The Danish Athletes Association". They help us with the negotiations and walk us through all the details. You know, are the basics of this contract okay?"

» Because we travel together 180 days a year, we spend quite a few hours together where we're not working, and we share a room when staying at a hotel. So it's important that we're friends and can be open about everything. Yes, that's really important.

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

Interviewer: "So you know your fellow team members very well. How important is that to you?"

Nicolai: "Well, there are two aspects here. We're colleagues and we're friends. Because we travel together 180 days a year, we spend quite a few hours together where we're not working, and we share



Photo: Tim Marshall/ Unsplash



Photo: Andre Hunter/ Unsplash



Photo: Anthony Brolin/ Unsplash

a room when staying at a hotel. So it's important that we're friends and can be open about everything. Yes, that's really important. Because then you don't feel like you're working away from home 180 days a year. It feels more like you're travelling with your mates when you're out on a job where you have to perform. That we achieve all the goals we've set together. That means a lot."

» It's the same with football – the matches are in the evening so that people can watch them. It's just part of the job. Well, I'll be honest, it has been hard. Because your social life is so limited in that regard. But I don't think it means that you lose your social skills. But it definitely means that you don't have a lot of time, and you have to plan how you spend your time an awful lot.

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

Whereas Nicolai relies on his family and his fellow team members for mental and social support, he and the team turned to "The Danish Athletes Association" when they signed a contract with Astralis.

"We play our matches when everyone else has time to watch us play"

E-sports are very popular and there are many commercial interests at stake.

This means that tournaments or league matches are played at a time of day when the audience has time to watch. Consequently, Nicolai often has a match when most other people are off work.

Nicolai: "Yes, I can work from home when we're just playing and practicing online. Or from the office (in Copenhagen (ed.)) when we're not travelling for tournaments. But most of the time when we're working from home, we work for seven hours and we play for all those seven hours. Then we meet up (online (ed.)) from, e.g. noon to 7pm. Or if we've planned to play in the evening, we might play from 4pm to 11pm, with just a 30-minute break to get something to eat. That's what it's like when we're all at home."

Interviewer: "It sounds like you play at times when the rest of us usually watch TV or meet up with friends. What's that like?"

"It's the same with football – the matches are in the evening so that people can watch them. It's just part of the job. Well, I'll be honest, it has been hard. Because your social life is so limited in that regard. But I don't think it means that you lose your social skills. But it definitely means that you don't have a lot of time, and you have to plan how you spend your time an awful lot. But I've always enjoyed what I've been doing so much that I haven't really thought about the consequences in the actual moment. I enjoy playing with the guys. They're my colleagues and my friends. And I do enjoy travelling. I'm very competitive by nature and I want to be the best. So, I really think it's been good for me to be able to specialise in something."

The team does have, however, some say with regard to how many tournaments they participate in. Nicolai explains that their tournament schedule is planned six months in advance. They used to play in several tournaments every month, but recently they have decided to slow down a little.

"We could choose to do three tournaments a month. But we've decided to do one tournament a month and instead focus on winning every single one. This lets us focus on giving a champion performance every time. We're exposed to an extreme level of stress when we're traveling. This makes it difficult to be and do your best all the time, especially if you have to push yourself more and more."

Health and safety: The level of stress has been constant for two years

Nicolai's work has not left his body unmarked. He talks about how he suffers from a condition called lower oesophageal sphincter dysfunction.

"I have felt the consequences of the stress I've been under before. I've developed a fairly serious condition where the lower oesophageal sphincter, which is the muscle between the oesophagus and the stomach, no longer works 100%. It doesn't close properly and this has led to some complications. It's the result of stress. My doctors say it's because my body's been under constant stress for the past two years. So now, I have to be very careful about what I eat and drink and how much caffeine and so on I get. That's one of the negative sides of it. That my body is under all this pressure, and it's the same for everyone on the team."

The interviewer comments that you cannot tell by looking at Nicolai that he is under stress; rather he seems very calm and composed in those stressful situations.

» I have felt the consequences of the stress I've been under before. I've developed a fairly serious condition where the lower oesophageal sphincter, which is the muscle between the oesophagus and the stomach, no longer works 100%. It doesn't close properly and this has led to some complications. It's the result of stress. My doctors say it's because my body's been under constant stress for the past two years.

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

"I think you learn to hide the stress, and you learn to deal with it on your own. I can feel that now. Whenever we lose, I push myself even more to get better. And this can be both a good and a bad thing. If you push your body too hard, you get stressed. I would never blame my team for us losing. I always take responsibility – maybe not for everything but for a lot – at least I do in my head [...] I put a lot of pressure on myself, so I can perform my best every single time. And that's just not healthy. This is also something I talk to my sports psychologist about: how can I learn to accept that I can't win every time."

In addition to the help he gets from his sports psychologist, Nicolai also mentions something else that has helped him. He recently got a girlfriend, and being with her helps him relax.

"Now I have someone I can share things with. And I can really feel how much stress I'm actually under when I have time to reflect. When I'm with her, I can let go in a way I couldn't before."

"You learn to build a wall around yourself"

E-sport gaming is a sport that has grown exponentially over the past few years. The best players become celebrities and receive a lot of attention from both the media and fans. Nicolai says that the team has hired someone to deal with the media for them, and they also have their own sports psychologist who helps them deal with the pressure they're under, and the attention they get from their fans. Nicolai describes what it is like to have fans:

"There are good days when meeting a fan can make you happy and energise you. And then there are bad days when you've played poorly and lost or where you 'meet' your opponent's fans. There's a very destructive side to the world of e-sports. Especially because so many fans are hidden behind a screen. And the things they write online usually don't have any consequences for them. This means that some people are really nasty. You learn to build a wall around yourself." Nicolai reports that he is not the only one targeted in the malicious online comments; sometimes his family, his girlfriend or his friends are targeted.

"That can be really hard to deal with. If I share a picture of someone on social media, sometimes people make really mean comments. I'm not sure whether they realise how hurtful this can be. But it's difficult because I have built a wall around myself and can take it. But if I can see that someone that I care about is hurt, then it's really difficult to do anything. I'm the reason that they're in the line of fire because I'm a public person. I'm still not quite sure how to deal with this."

» There are good days when meeting a fan can make you happy and energise you. And then there are bad days when you've played poorly and lost or where you 'meet' your opponent's fans. There's a very destructive side to the world of e-sports. Especially because so many fans are hidden behind a screen. And the things they write online usually don't have any consequences for them. This means that some people are really nasty. You learn to build a wall around yourself.

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

Involved in building his future career

Despite having a hectic work schedule, especially after his team won the world championship, Nicolai sees the increased attention as a way to shape his future work life.

"The media coverage has been intense, and so many people wanted to hear about it. And of course, we also want to tell the world about what we do. So it's become pretty intense. But this is also an advantage, because it's good for our work prospects in the future that more and more people are interested in what we do."

E-sports is still a relatively new phenomenon, and Nicolai is very aware of this. This is why it's important for him to be involved in shaping the future of the sport and in ensuring that it evolves in a way that is positive for players.

"Well yes, in a way I think that it's fair to say that I'm involved in building my future career. No matter what you work with, it's extremely important that you network and that you're out there – that your voice is heard. We're also laying the groundwork for what this profession will look like in the distant future. So we owe a favour to the people who'll be working in this area in the future. We need to make sure there's good conditions for the players of the future and find a balance between the commercial side of things and the sports side of things. This is something that we really focus on as a team. So of course, it's important to me to fight for players' rights in the future. This is our primary focus. This is where we want players to have more influence."

In line with these ambitions, Nicolai also reports that the team works very well together with their agent.

"Well, I would say that we're mostly on the same side of the table in our

approach to things. Of course, there can be some situations where you have to discuss things a bit and see them from different angles before you can reach a fair solution. But none of us is interested in having a bad relationship with one another. So it's about getting the other party to see your side of things."

Astralis is a unique team in this regard. As co-owners of the team, the players can get involved in the team and the sport in a completely different way than if they were merely employees.

"I think that if you look at the ten best teams in the world, we're the only one where we, the players, actually own part of the organisation. Because we are co-owners, we all have decision-making rights, and all players own the same percentage of the company. We're in this for the long run – not just for a quick win today."

The future

As with all other elite sports, being a professional within e-sports entails some uncertainty. Nicolai says himself that he might get unlucky one day, fall, and break his hand, and then he would never be able to play again. That is why he sometimes toys with the idea of going back to school and studying law.

"I wouldn't say it's something that I think about every day. But sometimes I find myself thinking about the fact that at some point someone's going to come along who's better than me. Someone probably will at some point, hopefully. At least I hope so. So you never know how long you've got. And you never know

when you'll be too old to play. Right now, some of the world's best players are 31, and I'm only 21, so that means I've got 10 years left at least, if I want to."

Nicolai has not considered stopping yet, but he knows that when he does not think it is fun anymore, when it has become "real work", he would like to go back to school. He also sometimes thinks about the future and starting a family.

» Since I was 19, this aspect [of financial security] has been extremely important to me... that I'm in fact securing a future for my family. You build a future for yourself...

Nicolai – Professional e-sport gamer

"I have this idea that I'll be ready to start a family when I'm 27, 28, 29, and who knows whether I'll want to want to keep traveling this much if I have a small child."

Being financially secure in the future is very important to Nicolai.

"Since I was 19, this aspect [of financial security] has been extremely important to me... that I'm in fact securing a future for my family. You build a future for yourself... I think it's pretty cool to be able to do that at such a young age."

Working as an e-sport gamer

Characteristic for both of the e-sport gamers is that their contract, salary and employment conditions seem rather

complicated to outsiders. Although several parts of Nicolai's employment conditions resemble a traditional contractual relationship, the employment relationships are blurred. Nicolai refers to himself as a 'regular employee' with a contract and a fixed income. However, a large part of his income is not fixed, and therefore he also refers to himself as a 'consultant'. Nicolai is an example of what Scheuer (2017) characterizes as a 'grey-zone' between employment and self-employment.

Both of the gamers have many types of incomes, and neither of them has a traditional employer or a traditional workplace. Nonetheless, in addition to working time spent on playing their games, they both also have contracts or agreements saying how much time and content they have to produce for their many followers on different social media. They live-stream and write on Facebook and on other social media. Some argue that working as a professional gamer can be regarded as a precarious employment (Brock, 2017). Professional gamers, like other professional athletes, cannot count on continuing their professional career much longer than the age of 40 years. At the same time, many gamers have insecure incomes because a big part of their income depends on winning prizes in competitions or from different kinds of fees, therefore the income of many gamers lacks continuity (Brock, 2017). The gamers in this report have different financial situations, but they are both successful.

In addition to the sports part of their work, they regard crucial to gain com-

mercial success as gamers. They are both very performance-oriented and they both say that their work is about 'giving yourself 100%'. Neither of them thinks that the way they are currently working will last. They think of their current working situation as a period in their lives that cannot be reconciled with the adult life that they imagine.

Their working environment is characterized by irregular and very long working hours (usually 12-16 hours a day), where they need to adjust to time zones to compete in tournaments and to communicate when their subscribers on different continents are active. There are no clear borders between work and private life, and they report having challenges to manage, prioritize and plan their work activities. Typically, they report neck and shoulder problems related to their mainly sedentary work, which is demanding both physically and psychologically.

Their working environment is characterized by irregular and very long working hours (usually 12-16 hours a day), where they need to adjust to time zones to compete in tournaments and to communicate when their subscribers on different continents are active. There are no clear borders between work and private life, and they report having challenges to manage, prioritize and plan their work activities. Typically, they report neck and shoulder problems related to their mainly sedentary work, which is demanding both physically and psychologically.

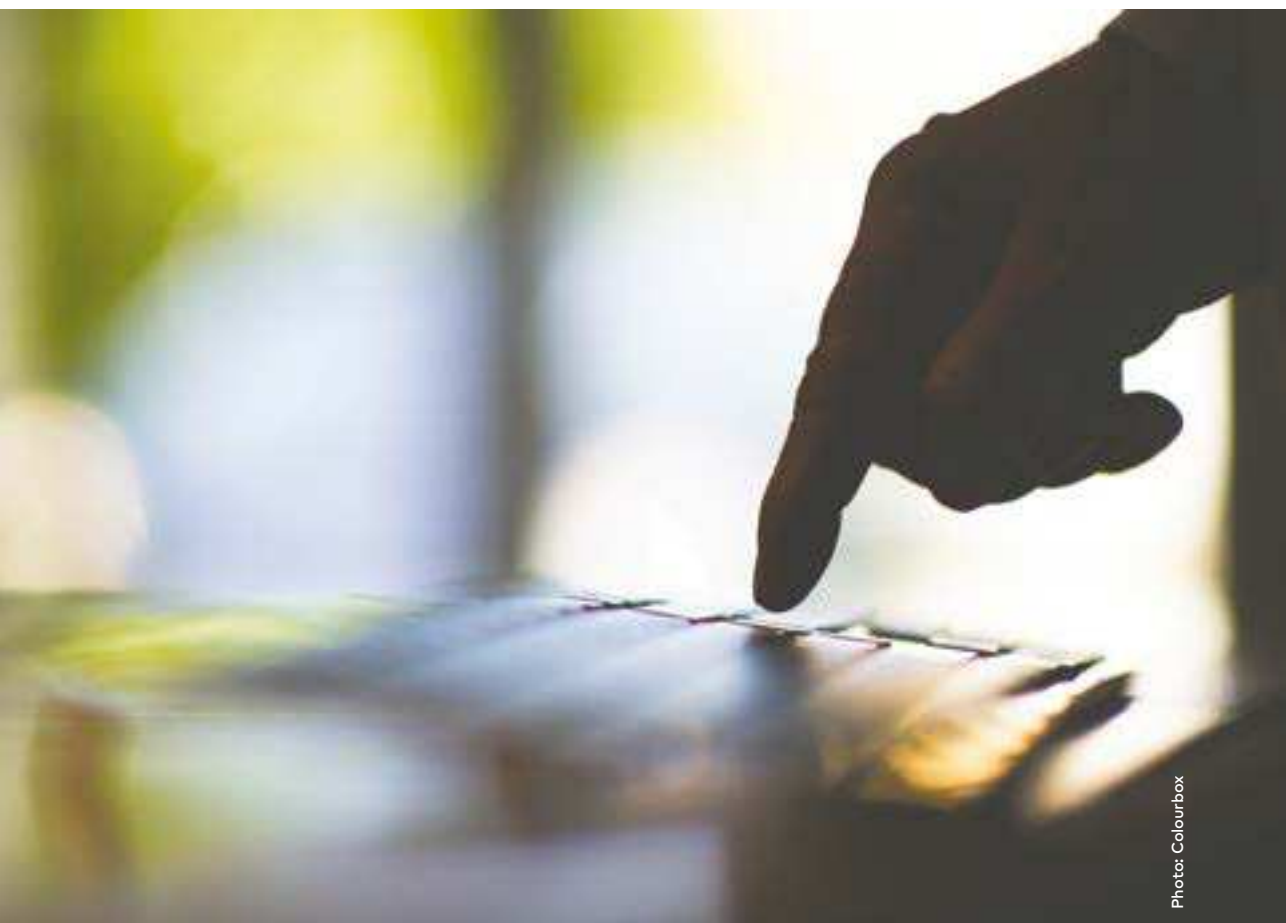


Photo: Colourbox

2.2 Work via digital platforms (offline and online work)

Even though the following two young people are not employed with e-sport activities, their work still resembles that of the gamers, as both the gamers and the online platform workers both depend on online technology.

Portrait 3:

Stefan: Self-employed and paid per translated word

Stefan Kjeldsen is 25 years old. He holds a BA in International Trade and Marketing from Aarhus Academies of Professional Higher Education, graduating in January 2016. He lives in the small town of Ikast in rural Jutland with his girlfriend. Stefan is in the process of getting a small business up and running, "One Student". Stefan describes One Student as a Trustpilot for schools and courses of education. It comprises an online platform, which gives students and pupils the opportunity to review their courses of education.

"Qualitative assessment has finally arrived in the educational sector. The educational sector is old and set in its ways, and is in need of a shake-up," says Stefan.

Up to now, Stefan has primarily worked from home in his flat in Ikast. However, just a week before we spoke to him he secured a workspace at a startup-hub, Wildskab. Since his business does not currently provide him with revenue, Stefan needs to find another source of income. To support himself Stefan takes on translation projects via the online platform freelancer.com.

Working via the online platform freelancer.com

Since graduating, Stefan has spent 3-4 hours a day translating English texts to Danish. He bids on these translation assignments on the online platform freelancer.com, for which he is paid DKK 0.15-0.35/word [0.02 - 0.05 Euro]. He

says that his hourly salary is typically around DKK 300-500/hour [40, 29- 67, 15 Euro]. He has translated texts for among others Ford, Just-Eat and My Trendy Phone.

» I'm paid per translated word.

Stefan – Self-employed

Freelancer.com is a website, which facilitates contact between workers and employers. The website is American and advertises paid assignments that can be completed irrespective of one's geographic location. The translation assignments, which Stefan takes on, are frequently texts intended for use in search engine optimization, alongside other internet-based texts.

Freelancer effectively functions as an online auction site, with employers inviting bids on assignments via the platform. Freelancers can then bid on the assignment online. A good rating and a low price are factors that influence which freelancer is awarded a given assignment.

"I'm paid per translated word. As such the way they (the customers (ed.)) differentiate between the various freelancers is entirely based on the per word price they offer. I would like to be paid DKK 0.30/word [0.02 Euro], because then I know I'll be paid an hourly wage of DKK 300-500 [40.29- 67.15 Euro]. All the same, I sometimes bid on assignments simply because I don't have any work at the minute. In

that case I'll settle for DKK 0.20/word [0.03 Euro]."

It is free to sign up to 'freelancer.com', but the site charges a commission amounting to 10% of fees paid via the site. For this reason Stefan and his more regular customers avoid arranging assignments via freelancer.com, but instead agree terms and settle invoices outside of the site. Stefan has this to say about his initial experiences on freelancer.com:

"To begin with you really hawk yourself, and earn hardly any money for the assignments you take. And then little by little you build up a good reputation. It's easier to get assignments if you have 25 reviews saying you are fantastic. If you've been given five stars and people are giving reasonably positive feedback. Things like: 'He got the job done on time.'"

Stefan also explains how freelancers from across the world are competing with one another on freelancer.com, but that he has a particular advantage because of being Danish.

"You gain an awful lot of credibility from having a little Danish flag next to your name, rather than an Indian one. Right now, I'm the highest-rated Danish translator on freelancer.com. So far, there are not a whole lot of Danes on freelancer. I think that there are only about 50 of us registered on the site."

The work of being a translator: Freedom and uncertainty

The most recent assignments Stefan has completed were for an English client,

which has four webshops selling medicine for the treatment of a wide range of medical conditions.

Stefan says that when he works he has both his tablet and his computer open. He uses the tablet to search for information on the medical condition in question, e.g. hair loss or impotence. Stefan then uses his computer to translate the English text, which he has displayed on the tablet. After Stefan has sent the text to his contact in England, it is published on the Danish language versions of the four webshops. The text Stefan has translated is used for the purpose of search engine optimization. When someone from Denmark googles 'hair loss' or 'impotence' (in Danish) the idea is that he or she will be directed to the client's webshop.

The English client has always been a good client, says Stefan. The project has made it possible for Stefan to work an average of two hours a day over the past 14 months and to earn a monthly salary of DKK 14-15,000 [1,880- 2,014 Euro]. This has allowed him the time and freedom to focus on getting his own business up and running.

"I didn't translate any articles yesterday. But that doesn't make the slightest bit of difference to them (the client (ed.)). If I could be bothered to spend the whole of today and tomorrow slaving my way through this pile of work, it wouldn't make a lot of difference to them. So I just write to them and send them an invoice and the articles, and the day after tomorrow they'll send me some more. There aren't any deadlines, and that is just marvellous! I'm truly my own boss when it comes to this stuff."

However, such freedom also brings with it uncertainty. Because even though Stefan's client, over the past 14 months, has provided him a large volume of translation work, Stefan says that, the work he receives from this client will soon dry up.

» To be honest, I'm pretty okay about it. I actually think it's going to be quite exciting to see the effect it's going to have on me mentally if I end up high and dry. If the work completely dries up, I won't have any source of income. I will get by; I have no doubt about that. But how is something I will have to figure out along the way.

Stefan – Self-employed

"There is approx. another DKK 6,000's [805,7 Euro] worth of work for me, and after that I won't actually have any more assignments. The reason for this is that my contact person is moving on to a new job. This means there won't be any more assignments until they have hired a new country manager. A fortnight from now there won't be any more work, and at that point I basically won't have an income."

Despite the uncertainty surrounding his immediate future, Stefan chooses to see his current situation as a challenge.

"To be honest, I'm pretty okay about it. I actually think it's going to be quite ex-

citing to see the effect it's going to have on me mentally if I end up high and dry. If the work completely dries up, I won't have any source of income. I will get by; I have no doubt about that. But how is something I will have to figure out along the way. If things really go wrong, well there's always freelancer.com where I can earn DKK 5,000 [671 Euro] a week can make ends meet. Right now the only assignments available on their pay (are) between 41 and 36 dollars [33-29 Euro]. That isn't going to pay the bills..."

"We're ready whenever they are"

Nevertheless, Stefan says there might be a relatively large assignment in the pipeline for a client who has contacted him.

"Right now there is an assignment about cruise liners on the horizon, so hopefully something will materialise before too long. The ball is in their court, and there are at least 15 freelancers ready and waiting to take on the job. But it's not like we (the freelancers (ed.)) are just sitting around twiddling our thumbs. We keep ourselves busy in the meantime. But we're ready to get started whenever they are, and that's precisely the problem sometimes."

Stefan still does not have the certainty of a guarantee of work. He is "ready whenever they are", and as such, he has to be flexible regarding when he can work, in case he is given the assignment. However, Stefan does not see this uncertainty as a problem, because by now his network is so large that he is not worried about the work drying up. He has loose links to a number of companies who distribute and broker translation assign-

ments. As such, he is not an employee but instead operates in the capacity of freelancer with his own business.

"They (the company (ed.)) brokered the work (translation assignments (ed.)) to us freelancers. I have been the Danish branch of this network of freelancers. They have been a kind of middleman between Google and us Danish freelancers. They asked people whether anyone was interested in participating in this cruise liner project, and I submitted a bid. It sounded exciting. It's just a matter of being pushy lots of places, and the work will come."

As far as Stefan is concerned, the key thing is that his hourly wage is high enough to allow him to spend the majority of his time running his own company, One Student, and Stefan has found that if he makes the effort to cultivate the right kind of contacts, new offers of work will continue to present themselves. It was also via his network, that a medical company, for whom Stefan had translated, once offered Stefan a full-time job at their company. He said no, however, because he thought it did not pay well enough. Moreover, the idea of regular employment did not appeal to him.

"They offered me a job in London, and offered me a contract. But I would have had to move to London and work an 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. day for a given salary. And that wasn't really something that fit with my mindset. Ideally, I want to work on a freelance basis. In general, I don't like it when the work becomes too structured, and the hourly wage wasn't particularly good. They told me what to do. So all of

a sudden I would have become nothing more than a drone following orders."

Bad ratings: "You just have to move on"

Another element of uncertainty, which looms large in the working life of a freelancer in a platform economy, is the public ratings, which Stefan receives on the platform when he has completed an assignment. For these have a major bearing on Stefan's chances of being awarded further assignments in the future. Freelancer.com features a ratings system whereby suppliers can rate the freelancers on a scale from one to five stars.

» It's just a matter of being pushy lots of places, and the work will come.

Stefan – Self-employed

"The platform doesn't tell you a great deal, because all the client can see is how many assignments you have completed and what your rating is. Fortunately, all of my clients have been satisfied with my work. You have to be 100% sure that when you submit the assignment it's of a five-star standard from start to finish. Otherwise, your overall rating will be completely ruined, which means you will no longer be able to compete with the other translators. Even if you get a 4.9 it means someone was unhappy with something."

Stefan thinks that by and large it is in his hands whether or not he receives good ratings, by ensuring that he delivers work



Photo: Png Design/ Unsplash



Photo: Ulrik Jantzen



Photo: Edho Pratama/ Unsplash

that is, as he puts it, "up to scratch". It is also important for him to establish the terms and specific criteria for a given assignment before he says yes to it. However, there are other aspects of working in the digital realm that Stefan finds is beyond his control. Because frequently the text he has produced is looked at by another freelancer who proofreads it before it can be published.

"I take pride in the work I deliver, because if it isn't good enough I risk being given a bad rating. But a client in Bangladesh once wrote to me: 'Hey, my proof-reader told me the text you delivered was a pile of rubbish... What are you going to do to remedy that?' Well, I won't be doing anything, because I'm certain that the work I submitted was of a high quality."

Interviewer: "And this is something that has happened to you?"

Stefan: "Yes, customers criticize my work when they don't want to pay full price for it. But instead pay me half (of the fee (ed.)) because some proof-reader somewhere has said... What proof is there that the client has even had the text proof-read? Nobody can say that for sure. [...]"

» I take pride in the work I deliver, because if it isn't good enough I risk being given a bad rating.

Stefan – Self-employed

You can of course raise a 'dispute', as it's called on the platform. A conflict,

regardless of how major or minor it ends up being. If for instance they (the client (ed.)) have given you, a rating of 4 out of 5 stars and the translator complains about this because it ruins his or her opportunities and chances of receiving assignments in the future. In that case, you can raise a dispute. But often as not, you just have to put it down to experience and move on. And you can block the client on Skype and tell yourself 'that's just how it goes' and move on."

Certainty and uncertainty

There are also other potential uncertainties attendant on offering one's services on a platform such as freelancer.com. For instance, Stefan was once offered an assignment, which could potentially have landed him in a sticky situation.

"I was offered a job. It involved doing something very, very dodgy. We had to puts flats up for sale on Den Blå Avis (a Danish classified ads site (ed.)) and log in using our NemID (a secure personal code (ed.)). The idea was that people interested in buying a flat in Copenhagen would see this flat that was far too cheap considering how nice it was. Then they had to pay a deposit up front or something like that. And then they (the person who contacted Stefan (ed.)) would disappear, no doubt forever with the money. The guy who contacted me wanted me to put up these ads for flats. So I contacted Den Blå Avis and told them: 'Are you aware that this kind of fraud is going on?' They weren't as it turned out. They had never heard the like."

Interviewer: "They needed to use your identity?"

Stefan: "Yes, exactly. Risky business. If I had done it, I would no doubt have got into a lot of trouble. Maybe I would have got a criminal conviction for being gullible or naive. Who knows how badly it could've ended."

The challenges of working as an entrepreneur

Stefan describes translation work as a necessity in order to put food on the table and enable him to pursue what truly interests him. First and foremost, Stefan is interested in pursuing his own project, One Student, which he has spent a year trying to kick-start. Stefan has this to say about One Student:

"After the first three sales I made with One Student I was over the moon. It was fantastic to find out that people actually believed in my brainchild, my project."

» They needed to use your identity?

Interviewer

» Yes, exactly. Risky business.

Stefan – Self-employed

To date One Student has only cost Stefan money, and not earned him any. His aim is to be able to make a living from One Student, but there is still some way to go before it breaks even. Among other things, he has paid a freelance software developer in India to develop his website because "They're cheap".

"If it was a Danish company they would have wanted at least DKK 10,000 [1,343

Euro] just for starters. So I have always looked to the East if I wanted any work done. Be it graphic design or software development, they are really good at that stuff over there."

Stefan currently finds himself in the situation that the company needs to connect with a good deal more paying customers who Stefan himself will need to meet and pitch the concept to. Three continuation schools have each agreed to pay DKK 6,000 [806 Euro] a year for membership of One Student. However, there is still a long way to go.

"Half of the work of being an entrepreneur is overcoming one's own mental blocks. Now I have been out of the whole canvassing game for three months ('canvassing' meaning unsolicited telesales (ed.)). The last time I rang up a prospective client was in November. So now I have to get myself back into the right frame of mind again."

"The most difficult part of being an entrepreneur is the solitude"

Stefan is very much aware of the challenges he faces. For this reason, he has hired a coach. The coach works in the US and costs DKK 1,000 [134 Euro] a month. In return for the fee Stefan gets a weekly consultation over Skype in which, through dialogue, Stefan and his coach identify a set of tasks he needs to complete before the following consultation. They discuss what challenges Stefan is facing and how best he can go about tackling them. The service also includes a digital platform, which provides Stefan with goal and time management tools.

"The most difficult part of being an entrepreneur is the solitude. There aren't many people to talk to. My coach has provided me with some tools to help me overcome these mental blocks. It's too easy to procrastinate and thereby avoid coming to terms with the difficult task ahead of you. What I'm lacking is a thing called accountability. I need to be responsible for someone else than myself."

» The most difficult part of being an entrepreneur is the solitude. There aren't many people to talk to.

Stefan – Self-employed

"This social aspect is something which I think I have rather underestimated"

Stefan has joined a shared office space, Innovatorium, which is part of a start-up-hub based in Herning. Innovatorium is home to over 40 entrepreneurs who provide each other with sparring and a network, and Stefan says that this office collective gives him a sense of community and of having colleagues, something that is of great importance for him.

"Up until recently I worked from home. There was nothing to stop me spending too much time sitting down or sitting with a bad posture, or not eating regular, healthy meals. It has become very clear to me that that is precisely what I was doing. But after joining this shared office space, I feel energised; a daily routine, something as simple as drinking coffee, eating meals, and meeting colleagues in the kitchen. This whole social aspect is something, which I think I have rather

underestimated up to now. It makes a big difference to one's mental state to sit and work alongside one's peers."

Stefan often finds himself very busy over the course of a working day, but nonetheless he does not consider himself as having suffered from stress.

"Stress is not an either/or thing, but more of a feeling of being overwhelmed; that there is too much going on. I think everybody has that feeling from time to time, but I'm not sure if you can really call that stress as such. Because, you know, I've had periods when I was working so much that I dozed off at eight in the evening and woke up at eight o'clock the next morning. But that is just something you deal with, by easing off the throttle. And telling yourself, 'Now I'm going to get this done in a fortnight and not a week. So in that way I'll take things a bit easier.'"

He thinks that the feeling of being under pressure comes about as a combination of having a heavy workload and simultaneously knowing that one ought to be working harder. "It comes down to feeling that you ought to be doing more even though you are already doing plenty." The feeling of pressure manifests itself in situations where Stefan finds that working hard does not pay off. For instances if he is turned down by a potential client.

These reflections on the psychological challenges presented by his work loom larger for Stefan than his physical working environment.

Interviewer: "What would happen if you suffered an injury which meant that you weren't fit to work?"

Stefan: "That's a very good question. Well, all my insurance policies still go through my father. So I don't have a clear idea of how I'm insured against work injuries. But I have accident insurance, which would probably cover most of it. I don't have work injury insurance... but I'm a member of a union, so that will help if I get into financial difficulties."

» This whole social aspect is something, which I think I have rather underestimated up to now. It makes a big difference to one's mental state to sit and work alongside one's peers.

Stefan – Self-employed

The future: Finances are everything

Stefan's plans are closely tied up with his company hopefully becoming successful. He hopes and expects that he will be able to make a living from the website, ideally within the space of five years.

"Five years from now I want to be earning a living from One Student. I have not even set a specific financial target. I just want to be financially independent so that I don't need to worry about putting myself into debt for the rest of my life if me and my girlfriend were to buy a house together. I just want to have enough of a financial buffer to be able to relax. My

ambition is to get the company to a place where I can live off it. And then go out and teach and get a proper job where I get to work with human beings. A job like the one you have (addressing the interviewer (ed.)), where I can lecture and meet people and teach."

Stefan's goal is that his own company will be able to provide him with the financial security, which will enable him to go out and find 'a proper job'. He cannot see himself achieving this security through salaried work. However, salaried work does have its advantages.

"When you have a regular paid job with a pay packet you are forced to continually improve your skill set and get to grips with new challenges. This is something I do in my work, too. But I don't feel I'm developing as much as my friends are. I don't have the experience of the job market that they have. But I hope that the experience... If One Student doesn't work out... Then I hope that the stuff I have been up to this past year actually counts for something in the eyes of employers. And that I can go out and find a job in sales and marketing."

Besides this, Stefan also plans to start a family.

"We want to have two children, and I want to drive an Audi [...] It's the classic nuclear family, isn't it? Mother, father, two children and a nice house. No fences or anything like that. A house where the door is always open and you know your neighbours and people say hello to one another."



Photo: Miquelangel Miquelena/ Unsplash

Portrait 4:

Stefan: 'The carpenter': Self-employed carpenter with profiles on three digital platforms.

Stefan is a 23-year-old professional carpenter. He qualified in 2011. He lives alone in a flat he owns in Copenhagen. Over the past two and a half years, he has run his own company. He previously employed one other person, but nowadays the company is strictly a one-man operation, which functions as a permanent subcontractor for a company, which installs bathrooms. Stefan enjoys working and says that he usually works 70 hours a week.

"A lot of people say that I must be a workaholic, and they're probably right. But that is just the way I like it."

Stefan's father is also a carpenter and at one point invited Stefan to become co-owner of his father's business. However, that was not something that interested Stefan.

"That wasn't something I was interested in doing. Because I had very different ideas to my dad about how he ran the business, not to mention his standards. That wasn't something I wanted to have to live up to. Because, you see, I want to sell a different kind of product."

On an average day, Stefan works from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. as a carpenter for the bathroom company, while from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. he works for clients, who come to him via three digital platforms: 'Handyhand', the website Care.com and the app 'WorkApp'. He has profiles on all three

platforms. Via these platforms, he typically receives projects for private clients who need everything from gardening, to regular carpentry, to odd jobs such as hanging a picture. Stefan often also works weekends.

His own one-man business

Up until half a year ago, Stefan had one employee at his company. However, having an employee meant that Stefan had to work one hour extra every day taking care of administration etc.

"That was too much, because I also had to make sure that he always had work to do. I had to make the effort to find clients for him; I had to show him the ropes."

On an average day, Stefan works from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. as a carpenter for the bathroom company, while from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. he works for clients, who come to him via three digital platforms: 'Handyhand', the website Care.com and the app 'WorkApp'. He has profiles on all three platforms.

Consequently, Stefan no longer employs anyone at his company, and the carpentry work he does is mainly for a company, which installs bathrooms. Stefan knows the owner of the company, and over the past 4-5 months, they have regularly worked in partnership with each other. Stefan's company is a permanent subcontractor in this partnership. In real

terms, the partnership means that, once a week, the contracting company passes on jobs to Stefan, and each month Stefan sends the company an invoice for the work he has carried out.

"They know that I'm available for work from 7 to 3 Monday to Friday. They can book work for me inside those hours. That is the arrangement we have. I have often worked overtime for them, too. But in those cases, we have agreed in advance that, if they needed me, I would be available."

As such, Stefan is not employed at the company, but he is rather a subcontractor. For instance, he has previously made use of his own car, invoicing the company for this service.

"So it's almost like being employed there. The only difference is that it's me who takes all the decisions. And then I invoice them for the jobs I do for them."

Because of the partnership with the bathroom company Stefan has had a full work schedule from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. If at some point, there is no work for him the company will let him know on Monday morning. In the event that the bathroom company is unable to offer him a full day of work, he can then simply tell his own clients that he is also available for work in the daytime.

Platform work: "I needed something to be getting on with"

When Stefan qualified as a carpenter, he did not have any work and was eager to get started. He came across the Danish platform Handyhand, set up a profile on

the site and soon began to receive jobs. When Stefan's company runs smoothly with jobs in the capacity of subcontractor he usually clocks off at 3 p.m. He then uses Handyhand and two other platforms, Care.com and WorkApp, to fill up the remainder of his day with work. As Stefan puts it, he cannot be bothered "just sitting around twiddling my thumbs."

» The summer months are the time of year when there is most work to be had. In the winter months, by contrast, there are slim pickings, I might get a couple of jobs each week. In the summer, I can get ten jobs a week if I want to.

Stefan – Carpenter

"There's a customer who contacts me about some work he has for me and... yeah, then I do the work. Perhaps one in twenty of the clients will go in and rate (his work on the website (ed.)), or not even that many. There really aren't that many clients who can actually be bothered to go online and leave a rating once I've completed the work for them. And so once, I've finished the job we settle up in one way or another, and then, yeah... then on I go to the next job. I've got this app on my telephone where I can keep track of the jobs I do. That way I can get an overview of what work I've got lined up each day. I can open the app and see, 'Okay, Thursday next week I'm up there on a job.'

So I know more or less what time I'll be home that day. This in turn means that I can make arrangements with my other clients via the various platforms. I can see that 'well, that job is going to take me probably 4 hours.' And that means I have time for the other job on Wednesday because I'll be home early. That's how I run things, you know.

The summer months are the time of year when there is most work to be had. In the winter months, by contrast, there are slim pickings, I might get a couple of jobs each week. In the summer, I can get ten jobs a week if I want to. In the summer-time I can work full-time if I feel like it."

Working via three different digital platforms

The various platforms essentially have the same basic structure; Stefan has a digital profile, which his potential clients have access to. However, they also differ from one another inasmuch as his possibilities for actively approaching potential clients vary from platform to platform. On Care.com and Handyhand Stefan pays a monthly subscription fee of DKK 250 and DKK 85 [34-11.4 Euro], respectively.

On Handyhand, clients set up jobs, which Stefan and the other contractors on the platform then bid on. However, clients also have the possibility of contacting Stefan via his profile. Regarding his gold subscription to Handyhand Stefan remarks:

"By paying the DKK 85 [11.4 Euro] monthly subscription fee I appear higher up the search results. And as soon as there are

more than two people bidding on a job, which usually happens within the space of five minutes, you can no longer bid on it. Whereas if I pay (for the gold subscription (ed.)), well then you can bid on a job right up until the client closes it, or says 'Now someone has been given the job.' And I can search as widely as I want, and as many types of job as I want; removals and home help, or whatever I feel like doing."

In this way, gold membership enables Stefan to offer his services under several categories of job. There are fewer limitations as regards geographic search criteria and more scope for actively seeking work. It is a way of buying better access to jobs.

In this way, gold membership enables Stefan to offer his services under several categories of job. There are fewer limitations as regards geographic search criteria and more scope for actively seeking work. It is a way of buying better access to jobs.

The platform Care.com functions differently. At Care.com, the team that runs the platform does the work of finding jobs on Stefan's behalf. He pays DKK 250 [34 Euro] a month for this service. Stefan has provided Care.com with a short text about himself, a CV and a list of the jobs he would prefer to receive.

"They represent me via the platform, for instance by sending a message to the client on my behalf. And then the client sees the message and says: 'Okay, he's sent me a message.' I can see all of the messages that they (Care.com (ed.)) send me, and who has sent the message. So if something comes up I can have a look at it and say: 'He or she has written this or that, and that isn't good enough.' But I don't have any direct contact with any of my clients via the platform. But they clearly take their work seriously, because they do this prep work for me."

» When I write to the client: 'I would like to bid on your project.' Then you can write a short message to the clients. So I write a short message, and most of them usually get back to me. I end up getting maybe 8 out of 10 of the projects I bid on.

Stefan – Carpenter

The third platform, which Stefan has registered with, is WorkApp. Stefan is new to the platform. It is easy to use because Stefan can use it via his telephone meaning he does not need to be at his computer in order to communicate with a potential client. Stefan has this to say about WorkApp:

"I don't look for work via this WorkApp thing. The way it works is that people go on the platform and search for instance: 'Who is closest to me?', or 'who comes

closest to offering the kind of work I want done.' And then they can view my profile, and then they write to me. On this app it's always the client who contacts me first."

Administration, time management, coordination and communication

A major part of Stefan's working day is spent corresponding with his many current clients, potential clients, and business partners. As such, there is a lot of planning which needs to be done before Stefan can actually start work. First up there are the jobs he receives each week from the bathroom company. After that, he schedules the jobs he gets from his other clients.

"It's rare that I end up losing work. That only happens if a job takes longer than expected. Then I have to call a client and tell them: 'I'm busy with this other job right now, so I'll have to finish up here first. I can't just leave, that wouldn't do.' I don't know if you could call it a kind of OCD, but I hate leaving a job which is half-finished."

» It all works very well as far as I'm concerned. You get to choose from a big selection of jobs. I get a lot of work out of it, so that's great.

Stefan – Carpenter

Corresponding with clients and potential clients is typically managed via the platform itself, text message or verbally either over the telephone or face-to-face.



Photo: Colourbox



Photo: Luther Bottrill/ Unsplash



Photo: Bruno Ramos-lara/ Unsplash

The written correspondence Stefan exchanges with his clients serves as a kind of documentation of the contracts, which Stefan agrees with his clients. Stefan himself says that the most important aspect of his work is to "communicate with my clients, reach an understanding, and stick to the contract." He ascribes the success he has had with platform work to his talent for communication and inspiring confidence.

"When I write to the client: 'I would like to bid on your project.' Then you can write a short message to the clients. So I write a short message, and most of them usually get back to me. I end up getting maybe 8 out of 10 of the projects I bid on. I don't actually think there are that many clients who read the reviews. All they see is 'okay he's got 4 stars – that looks great.'

I've been doing this for quite a few years now, and I know the clients. Or maybe I just know human nature. I know what to write and what not to write in order to inspire confidence."

Professional pride and taking pleasure in one's work

According to Stefan, his high professional standards led him to set up his own one-man enterprise. In Stefan's words:

"The vast majority of the companies I worked for couldn't accept that I spent the time and energy necessary to achieve those standards. If I applied for a job at a company that cared about that stuff, they didn't take me seriously. Perhaps because I was as young as I was, or perhaps I just couldn't find a company that valued those things who wanted to employ me.

» To begin with I was on the verge of getting very stressed, because I was simply saying yes to too much work. Some weeks I was working over 100 hours. I'm telling you, it was absolutely mental. I almost never got any sleep. I came home at eleven in the evening and got up again at six in the morning. Seven days a week. That was how I worked for the first six months. I didn't have a life outside of work because I just wanted to be constantly working. I wanted to earn money. I wanted to make a life for myself. I wanted to own my own flat. I wanted a car and stuff like that. And that stuff costs money, so how do I earn that money? I earn it by working. So I put the hours in and I grafted. I slept badly; I constantly had a stomachache and a headache. I was always under the weather, run down. Always ill with a runny nose because I never, ever relaxed.

Stefan – Carpenter

And that's why I ended up starting a company of my own.

"I just love using my hands and getting on with things, and doing a good job which looks good. So yeah, it's probably a pleasure in my work and customer satisfaction, which inspired me to do this. That, and the fact I love working so much. Because I'd rather spend an extra half hour on a job, and leave only once everything is finished and as it should be, down to the small details. Instead of rushing, the job and saying 'Well never mind, the painter will fix that later,' or something like that. I would rather do the job right the first time around."

Uncertainty and stress

Stefan likes the platforms, which he finds give him access to a large volume of work.

"It all works very well as far as I'm concerned. You get to choose from a big selection of jobs. I get a lot of work out of it, so that's great."

Before Stefan agreed a permanent contract with the bathroom company, he spent a lot of energy on finding work. For instance he used the Google tool AdWords to buy his company better search engine ranking when potential clients googled e.g. "Carpenter Østerbro".

"But when I get a job and a client calls me, I have to go and look at it and give a quote for the work and wait for the client to get back to me. That involved a lot of work, which you aren't actually paid for. So the thought that I might not have any work the following week was very stressful indeed."

On the other hand, for a period, the digital platforms provided Stefan with access to an almost endless supply of work. To begin with, he says, that was difficult to cope with.

"To begin with I was on the verge of getting very stressed, because I was simply saying yes to too much work. Some weeks I was working over 100 hours. I'm telling you, it was absolutely mental. I almost never got any sleep. I came home at eleven in the evening and got up again at six in the morning. Seven days a week. That was how I worked for the first six months. I didn't have a life outside of work because I just wanted to be constantly working. I wanted to earn money. I wanted to make a life for myself. I wanted to own my own flat. I wanted a car and stuff like that. And that stuff costs money, so how do I earn that money? I earn it by working. So I put the hours in and I grafted. I slept badly; I constantly had a stomachache and a headache. I was always under the weather, run down. Always ill with a runny nose because I never, ever relaxed."

In the end, Stefan's mother intervened because she could feel that her son was not well and was working too much. Several of Stefan's friends also said that he had 'vanished', and that they never got to spend time with him anymore.

"It's about finding a happy medium. That's what I've managed to find now, which I hadn't quite managed to find before because I wasn't able to stay on top of how much work I took."

He says that it is easy to end up overbooking himself. For instance, on the

same day he was interviewed, Stefan received 13 enquiries from potential clients via the platform Handyhand alone.

Negative consequences of platform work: Clients contact you at all hours of the day

Stefan's experience of working via the digital platforms has been almost entirely positive. But he has also found that clients do not respect the boundaries, which he wishes to have in his professional life.

» I can't remember the last time I took a day off sick. Even when I've got a cold, a sore throat, pneumonia, it doesn't matter what it is. I usually say to people that if I've got a vomiting bug or diarrhoea then I won't be able to come and do the work that day. Or if I need to be taken to hospital in an ambulance. But apart from that I'm always out at work.

Stefan – Carpenter

"I have to say, the only negative aspect I've found is that some clients don't accept that when I'm not at work, I'm not available. There have been times when I have answered the phone at 6 a.m. So then they think, 'in that case it's also okay to ring at 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 11 a.m. or whatever. So they call me at all hours of the day. And then they don't understand that

I don't have time to pick up the phone right at this instant. Or that I don't have time to help THEM out right this minute. Because I have a lot of things to be getting on with the whole time and because I'm booked up weeks ahead."

Stefan's perspective on the behaviour of these customers is this: "I think people go around thinking that you're a bit less commercial than the competition (on digital platforms (ed.)). And so they let themselves get away with more than if they were speaking to a company." Stefan has tried to address this by getting two telephones: a business line and a private number.

No security when it comes to being paid

When Stefan advertises his services on the digital platforms there is no guarantee that he will be paid for the jobs he carries out. Because, as Stefan explains, many of the jobs are very small.

"It's stuff where we just come to a verbal agreement about the work. So in theory most of my clients could just say to me: 'Yeah well you can stuff it' (and not pay Stefan for the work (ed.))"

Interviewer: "Has that happened to you?"

Stefan: *"Yes! Plenty of times. But, you know, in most cases... I'm insured and that, so... when my accountant sends the client an audit, which serves as a kind of debt collection service for me. And they (the accountants (ed.)) say to the client, 'Well the case is going to escalate unless you pay.' And then, well, people pay up. As long as my Central Business Register number is on there and a figure, and a*

general description of what work I carried out, well, then I've got a clear conscience.

I'm a member of [the Danish] unemployment insurance fund. Which means that if I suddenly don't have any work I'll get some financial support just like everyone else who is signed up to it. But I'm not a member of a union. Because trade unions exist to represent workers and not employers."

Working environment: I never completely clock off

"I can't remember the last time I took a day off sick. Even when I've got a cold, a sore throat, pneumonia, it doesn't matter what it is. I usually say to people that if I've got a vomiting bug or diarrhoea then I won't be able to come and do the work that day. Or if I need to be taken to hospital in an ambulance. But apart from that I'm always out at work. The times I've got a cold, I just work a bit less than usual. Because if I took the day off I would have to relax more than I'm used to. So I never really completely clock off. I take annual leave, but not because I'm ill, you understand."

On one occasion, Stefan injured his foot while lifting a heavy table for a private client.

"I wasn't wearing safety boots because I was indoors and the client was very particular about her floor. And then we were just going to move this oak table, and it weighed over 100 kilos, you know? And there were only two of us. So we rested it on a pile of newspapers because we were going to put some sticky pads under the table legs. And just as I put the table

down it slid down onto my big toe. And it took the nail right off. [...] She (the client (ed.)) was almost more worried about her floor than she was about me. But she gave me a tea towel to wrap around my foot because it was bleeding like hell. And then I drove to A&E, or actually my friend drove me."

» One thing that would make me stop working the way I do now is of course if I found myself a girlfriend. If that happened, I wouldn't be able to work 70 hours a week because then I would rather be spending more time on her. And if at some point in the more distant future I become a father then I wouldn't want to be working more than 37 hours a week, so then I'd have a regular working day just like most people have."

Stefan – Carpenter

At A&E Stefan was given a dressing on his toe and the next day he was back at work. "It throbbed a bit, but not enough to keep me housebound."

Stefan says that he is "insured up to his eyeballs." He has policies with the Employees' Guarantee Fund (Lønmodtagernes Garantifond), which is commercial insurance, as well as health insurance and his own personal policy.

"If I cut one of my fingers off I will get a huge insurance payout which I will be able to live off until I get back on my feet again," he says. But in the specific case in which Stefan would have been entitled to indemnity from the insurance company, he says:

"I can't be bothered to spend time on it. It's really time-consuming and I would rather spend my time working than sitting filling out loads of forms, sending letters and talking to people and all of that. I'd rather just get on with things."

At the same time, Stefan knows he needs to be careful not to wear himself out.

"I have learned from my father's mistakes. He hasn't taken enough precautions when it comes to noisy machinery. And his way of going about lifting things: He just grabs ahold and lifts heavy objects. That's not something I do. I think carefully about what I'm about to do. I mean, I use ear defenders, and I don't lift anything that is too heavy. I'll use equipment to help me lift it, or else I get someone to help me. Otherwise, I would end up making a complete wreck of my body. If I'm going to stay fit to work the next 40 years of my life, I'm going to have to look after myself. So if I have to lift something really heavy, I'll say: 'Hey, could you give me a hand?' Assuming that's an option. If there's no one there to help me then of course I'll lift it myself. It's not like I'm going to say 'Nah, I can't do it if there's nobody here to help me.' But most of the time, if possible, I'll go about it as carefully as I can."

The future: 37 hours a week, if I find myself a girlfriend and become a father

"At some point I would like to have a workshop and a house. But those are probably the only ambitions I have for the future. A place where I've got some machines and where I can go and busy myself with this and that."

Stefan's plans for the future include a more stable place to live; a house with a workshop. But Stefan's thoughts also turn to what the future holds for his career and what he imagines this will leave space for.

"One thing that would make me stop working the way I do now is of course if I found myself a girlfriend. If that happened, I wouldn't be able to work 70 hours a week because then I would rather be spending more time on her. And if at some point in the more distant future I become a father then I wouldn't want to be working more than 37 hours a week, so then I'd have a regular working day just like most people have."

Working via digital platforms

Flexibility is a common theme in many of the working lives portrayed in this report. The two young people presented in the previous portraits stressed the flexibility they experienced as self-employed as a positive element in their working life. For them, flexibility was about how they individually organise their working time in the best possible manner, how they solve their tasks in ways that they decide themselves and how they find tasks via the digital platforms. In the two portraits, flexibility is attributed meaning as individual freedom and independence.

The two online platform workers both receive a large part of their work through digital platforms that offer different types of work. While one platform worker performs translation tasks where he never meets the customer, the other performs tasks in customers' homes. In relation to this, it is crucial for their working environment whether the work is carried out in the customer's home and includes customer contact, or whether it is performed online without customer contact. There is a particular risk associated with performing work in strangers' homes, under precarious working conditions and without the necessary safety equipment.

Both of the two young platform workers have their own one-man businesses, into which they put a lot of energy to keep running. Both of them consider the jobs they download through the online platforms as complementary to the work in their own businesses, which they regard as their primary work. They work for long hours and at a high pace, and their work takes up such a large part of their life that work and private life are difficult to separate. If work is organised through

online digital platforms, there are no limits on how much and when the worker can work. Work becomes borderless. This means that workers have to be able to manage, prioritize and plan their working hours themselves so that work does not become a burden.

In relation to the working environment, this seems to be an important issue for both the two young people working through online platforms. They work many more hours than a normal working week, and in this context their working environment resembles that of the gamers. Additionally, private customers do not always understand and respect that workers have other tasks than theirs' to do, and cannot be available 24 hours a day, even though the digital platforms are open for 24 hours a day. If they fail to respond, workers may be subject to bad ratings and have difficulties getting a new assignment. This means that digital contact with private customers in some cases contributes to an intense working life. Both platform workers also say they miss colleagues and lack training and support.



Photo: Thomas Tolstrup

2.3 Workers with different kinds of flexible work arrangements

Flexibility plays a central role in the following portraits. One of the three young people has even won a prize for being the most flexible employee of the year at the supermarket where he has an involuntary part-time position. However, if there had been a prize for the most flexible employee both Brynja and Anders, the other two workers portrayed, would probably have won it. Nevertheless, neither Brynja, who works as a seasonal employee in the Icelandic tourism industry, nor Anders and Devran emphasize flexibility as a benefit.

Portrait 5:

Brynja: Temporary employed as a waiter in the tourist industry.

Brynja has just turned 20. She graduated as a student from college during spring 2017. She is working as a waitress at a sportsclub and is saving money to travel the world. The job as a waitress in Iceland's growing tourist industry is therefore only temporary. She is planning to start at the university when she has been traveling and is considering studying biology. Brynja still lives at home with her mom, stepdad and little brother and has a boyfriend. Her mother is working at the same place as Brynja holding the same type of position as Brynja. Brynja explains that she does the shift schedules and other things. Her father works as a driver.

Working as a waitress and selling shoes, – sport – and preparing food

Brynja explains that the restaurant in the sportsclub is newly established. It offers both fine dining options as well as a more casual menu of burgers and so on. When the members have played their sport they come to eat in the restaurant and it is Brynja's job to wait on them. But there is a lot more to her job than that:

"So it is a bit like a waitress, but I am also working at the register. We have a small shop where we sell sports equipment, and I might help a customer choosing the right shoes. I work with food, clothes and shoes, so it is quite a diverse job. If someone needs to pay the annual members fee I also handle that. There is also a bar where we sell alcohol and a lot of the members buy beer there. And sometimes

I help the in the kitchen and prepare dishes and the like."

Brynja describes how her tasks are not distinctively divided, but rather all has to be solved at the same time:

"I do everything at once, really. The bar is at the same place by the reception. Well, everything is in the same area. People end up there. It is the bar, the shop, and you also pay the annual fee there."

Wages and working conditions: 13 days straight

Excluding her boss and her mother, Brynja is the only full-time staff member working at the Sports Club. The rest of the employees are all under 18 and work part time while they are also going to school.

» So it is a bit like a waitress, but I am also working at the register. We have a small shop where we sell sports equipment, and I might help a customer choosing the right shoes. I work with food, clothes and shoes, so it is quite a diverse job. If someone needs to pay the annual members fee I also handle that.

Brynja – Temporary employed as a waiter

Brynja explains that she is working all days of the week and very long shifts. During the summer the sports club is open from 7am until 11pm and less in the

off-season. During the summer Brynja worked six days straight on three different shifts. The first two days she worked from 7am-2pm, the next two were 2pm-11pm, and the next two 4pm-11pm and she had two days off. That cycle was repeated during the whole summer, but when school started again, the sports club was short of available staff:

"But in August when school started again, they needed people on the day shifts, and I was signed on every day shift, working from 8am to 6pm for two weeks straight. Although, the weekends were a bit different. I sometimes work in the evenings in the weekends. They want me to work in the evenings now, so I have been working from 2pm to 10pm every day except on Mondays. On Mondays, I work from 9am to 5pm. currently, it is not strictly written down that I always have a day or two off, like I had this summer. Now it is more like, I will randomly get a day off. I have just been working for 13 days straight before getting a day off. So, it is a bit....."

Brynja does not have a contract confirming her employment. But it does not worry her too much. Her plan is to work there six months, and her manager gives her lots of working hours.

"She (Brynja's manager, red.) said I would need to sign some kind of contract, but I never did. No one else has signed anything either. I am not sure about my mum or those who are higher in rank, but the kids (the employees under 18, red.) and I have not signed anything."

When Brynja is asked if she is entitled to be paid during sickness, she answers:

"Yes, I think so. But I have not really been sick once after I started working here. I am not sure, but I think you're always entitled to two days of fully paid work during sick leaves."

Long working days and lack of planning: 'Can you stay any longer?'

Brynja's schedule is very uncertain, and can be adjusted by her manager from day to day. This means that Brynja has to be very flexible and she is only able to plan her time one week ahead.

"My manager plans my shifts. I have a day off coming up, but I have not gotten the whole plan for October or the rest of September yet (The interview was done in September, red.). They usually schedule a week or so at a time. Thus, I do not know far in advance when I will be working."

The sports club is short of staff when school starts and the part time staff under 18 returns to school. The consequence is that the remaining staffs are not able to cover all the shifts. Brynja describes her working conditions during that time:

» They usually schedule a week or so at a time. Thus, I do not know far in advance when I will be working.

Brynja – Temporary employed as a waiter

"Around the beginning of August it started to get chaotic. I was usually on the morning shift. There are two people supposed to work in the evening, because

it is quite hard to be alone and close up the place. In that period I was sometimes, working the morning shift from 8am to 5pm, and only one other person was assigned to the evening shift. Then my manager would say to me: 'I need to go home. Can you stay any longer? Is it okay? And I just had to say 'yes', you know? I could have said no, but I stayed and closed up with the other girl. I ended up staying the whole day from 8am to closing time at 8 or 10pm. This happened a lot: Opening and closing the place on the same day. When it was October 1st, I had clocked 270 hours for the whole month. We have a clock-in machine. A normal month is 170 hours."

Brynja describes how she is fed up with her work:

"I have already had enough. I am really tired every day because of all the work I have done. But there is only a month left so I am trying to endure it. I am really only doing this because I am going abroad. I need the money; otherwise I would not do it."

A normal working day this summer:

No breaks

The position Brynja holds at the sports club requires her to solve many different tasks throughout the day:

"If I show up at 7am, like this summer, the first thing we need to do is to scrub the floors. It is a large place. I am not sure how many square meters it is but it is fairly big and takes us an hour or so to scrub the whole hall. We start at 7am and finish around 8am, and that is when the customers start coming in. By that

time, we start making sandwiches; these are popular here at the sports club. So we make the sandwiches, and if people come in to buy food or beverages, I am also at the register. I also clean the tables, and do the dishes if I am in the kitchen. I take orders to the kitchen too".

» Then my manager would say to me: 'I need to go home. Can you stay any longer? Is it okay? And I just had to say 'yes', you know? I could have said no, but I stayed and closed up with the other girl. I ended up staying the whole day from 8am to closing time at 8 or 10pm. This happened a lot: Opening and closing the place on the same day.

Brynja – Temporary employed as a waiter

During the summer, the sports club's most busy time a year, costumers appeared in a steady stream, thus making it difficult for Brynja to take breaks:

"Because I was usually alone from 7am to 2pm. There are two people working in the evenings and just one in the morning. I could not just go and have lunch, because I did not have anyone to replace me while on break. So, whenever it was possible, I just had to grab something quickly while no one was in. We do not get a set time for a lunch break. They just go; "we are very busy at the moment, you need to find some time to eat whenever we're not

as busy". I think that there should always be a set period of time for a lunch break, not just "some time" if you are able to do it. I did not manage to eat very often."

» **So, whenever it was possible, I just had to grab something quickly while no one was in. We do not get a set time for a lunch break. They just go; "we are very busy at the moment, you need to find some time to eat whenever we're not as busy.**

Brynja – Temporary employed as a waiter

Working environment: Stress and overworking the staff

Because of the shortage of staff, Brynja tells that she felt overworked during the summer. The sports club was not even advertising for more staff, something Brynja explains like this:

"They were not advertising for more staff because they did not know the opening hours through the winter. They did not know the influx of people during the winter, thus, they did not want to risk advertising for it in case they would not need all that staff."

Brynja describes the working environment as safe, but the lack of breaks, eating breaks and the generally intense work, Brynja describes that she often felt stressed and tired:

"I did [feel a lot of tension]. Or when I was not in a good mood or feeling tired. It was busy and all the time I was here, a bit in my own little world. I did not really feel like talking to anyone. That is when it turned very stressful, and tiresome because I didn't really manage to sleep or rest enough to counteract that [...] It is not a dangerous job, really. But I do get less to eat than normal, despite it is a restaurant. And it is not good for the body. You need rest and relaxation."

Learning to do the job: Lack of introduction and communication

Despite the wide array of different tasks in Brynja's job, she never received any formal training for any of the tasks.

» **I have never worked in a clothes shop before. So I just learnt as I did it, really. There was no one around who taught me how to do this or that.**

Brynja – Temporary employed as a waiter

"I have never worked in a clothes shop before. So I just learnt as I did it, really. There was no one around who taught me how to do this or that. But I have worked with the chef in another restaurant, there I learnt how he did things. I know how he [the chef] is in the kitchen and that is why he finds it most comfortable if I am there to help him. If we get a large group, he wants me to help with the dishes. I know how he likes to plate his dishes, and I have often made salads for him. There is no



Photo: Brooke Cagle / Unsplash



Photo: Nathan Dumlao / Unsplash



Photo: Shawn Fields / Unsplash

one else who can do that there. I have just learnt how to do it watching him do it so many times."

Brynja continues by describing how her work is not described in any formal routine or programme:

"There are not any rules, really, or well, they do not tell you anything."

However, Brynja tells that despite this, she is not stressed if she is told how to solve the different tasks, but however if she is not given the right information about a new procedure, she feels uncomfortable and exposed:

"This August we started to have a new offer about an annual membership card. It was something that I had not handled before and no one showed me how to do it. Suddenly it just needed to be done and no one told me about it. There is this lack of communication, you know? I am not told about such things. I found it really uncomfortable when a customer came up to me and asked me about it, and I did not know what to do. I would just start to ask about things myself, things like 'If someone brings this, what should I do?' or 'This is new, how should it be done?' I did that many times this summer during my shifts. Only then, they tell me about things. They do not do it on their own accord."

The best part of the work, and the worst: Fun and uncertainty

Despite the stress and work overload, Brynja also sees some positive sides to her work. She is especially happy about younger colleagues and the chef. When

asked about the best part of her job she answers:

"I would say the people, well, the kids that I have been working with. They are much fun and we will go like: 'we are working together tonight? Yay!'. We have fun and we always have some inside jokes too. I also have fun with the chef."

When asked about the biggest disadvantage of the job, Brynja is quick to answer. She is quite displeased with a lot of things, mainly the fact that the work place is disorganised and requires her to be flexible to an extreme extend.

» But I am not complaining because I want the money.

Brynja – Temporary employed as a waiter

"It is what I have been saying about communication and how everything is so unorganised. If I were to be sick, what would happen? There would not be anyone to take over, and they have not been planning for that. They did not take into account when school was starting and that they needed more staff members. School started, my manger went on a holiday abroad and I was placed on all shifts. That is how they handled it. They do not put any thought into it in advance or try to organise it, she had not even made a shift schedule. In the end, we are the ones who suffered. I did not know how I was working the day after, whether it be in the morning or evening. I did not know if I had the day off. I did not know anything

and I was constantly asking when I would be working."

Brynja also tells that she has phoned her labour union several times and she is aware, that she is not allowed to work on 15 hour shifts and that she needs 11 hours of rest between shifts or paid leave. Anything other than that "is against the law", Brynja says. However, on the other hand she hesitates turning the shifts down, because she is interested in saving up money for her trip:

"But I am not complaining because I want the money. According to my labour union, I need 11 hours rest between shifts otherwise I need a paid leave of work or something, but I have not got that. And I have not complained about it because I want to work. But I would like them to take better care of us. They should make sure that we are able to eat and so on. Not just that we need to be working, and that we need to do this and that. I would rather they think of the staff as people, you know?"

The future

Brynja is not planning to stay at the sports club' restaurant, or to come back, when she has been travelling, but she has plans to start an education:

"I do not think I could last there very long. Maybe if I only worked day shifts or something like that. However, there is so much to do in the summer and not much to do in the winter. You cannot really consider it a 100% or a full-time job all the time. I am aiming to start university next autumn, in 2018. I still have not decided what I am going to study then. But I really like biology and related subjects, so I could end up doing something related to biology."

She also adds that she would not last very long, because of the demands of flexibility of her behalf:

"I would like a job that is more organized."

Portrait 6:

Devran: Involuntary part-time employment in a supermarket chain

Devran is 30 years old. He lives in one of the largest cities in Norway with his wife. She is working at the hospital. They are expecting their first child. Devran is from Kurdistan, and has been living in Norway for 4 years. He has a bachelor in 'economy management', however his education is not formally recognized in Norway. To get his education recognized, he needs to take a test, however, at the moment it is difficult for him to find time for the test. Instead, he hopes for a permanent full-time job, so he can provide for his family.

Working conditions in the grocery store

Devran got his first job in Norway in a grocery store at a large mall while he was doing language education. He still currently holds this employment. The first employment was a 5 % job, 8 hours per month. However, Devran tells, that he within short time got more hours because of his eagerness:

"Every day, I went to the information desk to ask if there were any vacancies. They became somewhat chocked because I was so eager. So I received many shifts that month. I showed a lot of interest in working. So they called me almost every day, or by need. And yes, I got many shifts and they were very satisfied with me; that I could turn up at any time. So when they saw my interest, I gradually got more hours".

Thereafter he got a 30% position and started to work at other departments

in the grocery store. In some periods, Devran therefore has had three different superiors at the same time. Now, he has a 60% part-time position, which includes his scheduled shifts. The shifts are distributed between two departments in the grocery store and taking care of the trolleys at the mall. In the largest department, there are 20 employees, where 2-4 employees have a permanent full-time position. However, Devran works more than 60%, because he takes as many shifts as he can get. He does dayshifts, evening shifts and works weekends, Sundays and on Holidays. He has recently applied for a permanent full position in the grocery store, but he did not get it.

» Every day, I went to the information desk to ask if there were any vacancies. They became somewhat chocked because I was so eager. So I received many shifts that month. I showed a lot of interest in working. So they called me almost every day, or by need. And yes, I got many shifts and they were very satisfied with me; that I could turn up at any time. So when they saw my interest, I gradually got more hours.

Devran – Involuntary part-time employment

"Monday to Monday, I do not even work 35 hours. Even if I work every day, it is just

4 hours, 5 hours, 6 hours, 4 hours, 4 hours, and 4 hours, so it is no stress for me; it is not enough. When I am finished at work, I feel, I have not been at work at all. I am not even tired. I still have energy to work. [...] I have been very active since I was a child. I worked every summer. For me it is important to work. The worst year in Norway was when I was unemployed, even though I was at school. After school, I was alone. That was boring for me, so I had to find a job as soon as I could".

Despite not getting enough hours in the grocery store, Devran appreciates his job:

"There is a lot to do. But it is fun, I like that. I enjoy a job where I can learn. Learn something new all the time. Because I am quite new in Norway, so everything is new, in a way".

Daily life in the grocery store

Devran's working routines depends on the department he works in, and it depends on at what time of day he starts working. He tells that at Thursdays, he usually works in the afternoon from 12 or in the evening from 17 until 22, and during that time, he is mainly seated in the check out and handles customers, and in between customers, he puts groceries on the shelves. In the evenings, there is not much to do.

"When I am in the check-out I get bored. You just say: 'Hi, do you want a grocery bag?' How much they are going to pay and: 'Have a nice day'. Nothing else. It is the old ones that usually work permanently in the check-out, those around 45-50+. It is nice for them to sit in the check out. But I am young, I want to walk around."

When Devran is asked about what is required from him in his work, he answers:

"My job is to give good service to the customers. Be nice to the customers, be patient, especially to the old ones. They yell all the time and you have to handle that (laughing). So that is the challenge when working at the mall. All the time they (managers in the store, red.) talk about good service, also in the check out. They want the store to be the best. [...]".

» When I am in the check-out I get bored. You just say: 'Hi, do you want a grocery bag?' How much they are going to pay and: 'Have a nice day'. Nothing else. It is the old ones that usually work permanently in the check-out, those around 45-50+. It is nice for them to sit in the check out. But I am young, I want to walk around.

Devran – Involuntary part-time employment

Devran tells that there is a sheet of paper every day, where the work tasks that need to be solved are described. But when he starts his shift at 4 pm, almost all tasks are done:

"Sometimes I get restless, I want to do something. When there is not much to do, I just walk around in the store, and see if there is something, I can do. I am quite creative. So I find something myself,



Photo: Søren Svendsen / Unsplash



Photo: Alina Grubnyak / Unsplash



Photo: Viktor Paris/ Unsplash

either checking date stamping or filling in on the shelves."

The supermarket is most busy in the morning, because at that time, new goods arrive and have to be put on the shelves.

"In the morning, you are supposed to work fast, so everything is ready before 9 o'clock, because the store opens at 9, you know. Then we have to be accessible for the customers in the checkout and in the grocery store."

The superiors, (head of department) work mostly during day, so the days where Devran work late afternoon or evening shifts, he has limited possibilities to talk to his nearest superior.

"I would like to work with my closest superior. To learn new things, to do the tasks she does, then her work becomes easier as well. Like when she is on holiday, or you never know, she can get on sick leave. Then others can do her tasks. It would be good for me, to learn something new, get more experience. Then I would have something to write on applications and on my CV."

Limited possibilities for learning

As stressed earlier, it is very important to Devran to learn and acquire new skills thus becoming better in his job. However, this is not always possible in Devran's position. Earlier Devran felt that he learned something new every day, but he does not experience the feeling of a steep learning curve any more:

"But now I feel, that has ended. I make

the same things every day, all the way through."

Devran thinks that his superior knows how he feels about his job and his possibilities for learning, but he also thinks that there is not much to be done to solve this:

Devran is very much aware that his afternoon and evening shifts are limiting in regards to access to new skills

"I think she [his superior] knows, but I do not have any possibility to ask. Because when I work those shifts I do, she does not have the possibility to use me in a way, where I can learn more. There are two or four that work full-time, and then they mostly work at daytime. If some of them is supposed to have a day off, then I can have a day shifts, if not I only have my usual shifts."

Devran is very much aware that his afternoon and evening shifts are limiting in regards to access to new skills. His colleagues working the morning shift are much more prone to solve different tasks such as ordering goods, handle contact with the people who deliver the goods as well as handle contact with suppliers and so on.

Interviewer: Did you get any training when you started?

"I was in training for 3 days. I learned fast, they were really impressed by me. It

was about 1-1.5 years after I came to Norway, and they were impressed because I learned Norwegian so fast, and get myself a job. Without having any problems with the customers. Almost every day I get positive feedback from the customers, who tell me that I give good service. That is really nice. It is motivating, yes...."

Planning and distribution of shifts: The flexibility prize of the year

Additional to his ordinary and planned shift schedule Devran work as many shifts he can get. This means that he works during most public holidays. During Easter, he will work five days, during Christmas he also works as many shifts as he can get and the same around New Year and Independence Day. Devran describes how the available shifts are being announced on social media platforms:

"At Facebook there is a site, publishing those shifts, where they [the managers] write: 'Write a message if you are interested' [in a shift]. So if you are not fast or if you do not bring your cell phone, you will lose those shifts. We are about 22 employees [in the grocery store] most of them students, and they want to work as well. So then, you have to be fast and reply at once."

Further Devran tells that he receives a message on his phone every time something is published at the Facebook group and that he knows that he will have to reply as fast as possible if he wants to work. Devran does not know if he thinks that this is a fair way to distribute the shifts:

"I do not know if there are any other ways. But I get a lot of messages. And if she [his immediate superior] suddenly lacks someone, like today when I have a day off. And if someone that should have been at work calls in sick, she calls me immediately. Because she knows, I am always available. I have told her many times 'just call me any time, don't think about me not having time, If I sleep or something, just call me'. Then I just say yes or no. I cannot remember any time, saying no, not a shingle shift".

As too further complicate matters, Devran also have to answer to several superiors due to his employment at two sometimes three different sections at the grocery store. Devran describes how during the holidays he had to inform all three superiors about the every shift he took on in order for him to organise his shift schedule. His flexibility is so appreciated that he even won a prize:

"In 2015 I got the flexibility prize of the year, even with some money (the mall, ed). That was nice. But it was also deserved. Because I worked in the cafe, that is also in the mall. I worked with the trolleys and in the check out. Actually, I worked at five different departments at different times of the day, and at different days. So, yes..."

Work-life balance: You never see your family

Devran's wife works at the hospital from 8 am to 3.30 pm so quite often when she gets home from work, Devran has to leave for the grocery store. The couple rarely has a chance to spend time together. Devran's wife is pregnant and

this leaves Devran longing even more for more conventional working hours. He predicts:

"You know, in Norway, the system is; kids go to bed at 7 o'clock, and then I cannot see him."

» In 2015 I got the flexibility prize of the year, even with some money (the mall, ed). That was nice. But it was also deserved. Because I worked in the cafe, that is also in the mall. I worked with the trolleys and in the check out. Actually, I worked at five different departments at different times of the day, and at different days. So, yes..."

Devran – Involuntary part-time employment

Devran tells that recently there was a vacant position in the fruit department due to a maternity leave. The position was full-time and would be perfect for Devran's needs.

"Three weeks ago, there was a vacant position in the fruit department, due to maternity leave. It was a full-time position and I applied for the position. It would have been perfect for me. You learn something new when being in another department of the store. And all the shifts were in the morning. It would have been perfect, since I have a family and soon a baby. And I did not get it. If the other

applicant had been a better worker than me, I would not have been disappointed. But I became very disappointed, because she was not better than me. But they said, she was more experienced considering food and such. 20% of the position was working with the salad bar"

However, it is not only the time with his family that suffers, because of his working hours. Devran has from time to time had houseguests and he had to prioritize his job over spending time with his guests because of an extra shift, he was not able to refuse.

Insecure employment: 'If you are not loyal your boss will not give you extra shifts'

Devran and his wife have just bought a house, so economic security is important for Devran. His parents in law had to guarantee for the loan, because the bank needed security because of Devran's lack of a permanent position. Overall, this makes Devran feel insecure both jobwise but also economically.

"I bought a house for 4 mill (NOK). That is a lot to pay back. So you might feel somewhat unsecured. Even if you work almost 100% and can manage. But you may become sick and then I do not get the extra shift, and I do not get the extra shifts payed. It is what you get. It is not enough. If you have 100%, then you are safe, and you do not have to take extra shifts all the time."

Devran describes how the logic of ensuring more shifts works:

"Because I got this extra shift and then I

cannot say, I want to change it, because it's not my shift. If you say: 'can I skip this shift, once, twice, three times, then you are not loyal. Then your boss will not give you any more extra shifts. If I change these extra shifts I got, twice-three times, then it becomes unstable."

That means in order to ensure a steady stream of extra shifts to supply his 60% position; he can never turn down a shift. The conditions are manageable for Devran under the current circumstances, but with a baby arriving soon, other priorities will have to be made:

"It would have been ok, if it has been just me and my wife. But when comes a child; I think it would be more difficult. Because she need to be together with me and my son we need to be together."

» Because I got this extra shift and then I cannot say, I want to change it, because it's not my shift. If you say: 'can I skip this shift, once, twice, three times, then you are not loyal. Then your boss will not give you any more extra shifts.

Devran – Involuntary part-time employment

When Devran is asked if he has someone to talk to about these issues at work, his answer is that he can complain to

colleagues. However, it is not easy to complain about this to his superiors, because he does not want to let them get the impression of him as a complaining employee. He states:

"With a colleague, yes. If I do this often [complain, ed], then they say: "You are complaining all the time", which is not nice to hear from your boss. Because I have heard several times; 'you are lucky, you are lucky you that have a job'. You have these bad schedules, and when you talk about it then you are told that you cannot complain that you are lucky you have a job. I have heard that sentence so many times. So (laughing), I know it is true. You do not need to tell me any more times."

Devran explains that these comments make him feel like he is supposed just to accept everything. Because he is in a position, where his education is not recognized and even though his Norwegian has improved, it is not his first language:

"Firstly I do not have any education here in Norway, and yes, my language has improved. But earlier, my language was bad, I was unsure if I got another job if I dismissed this job. I have to accept something, even if some of my tasks are really... like the trolleys, it is not even my job, but I have to do it. I do not learn anything; I just move them around and gather them together. Nothing to learn from. But I like it, I am obliged to work. If I dismiss those shifts, then I am back on 40% position. That is not much."



Photo: Alexandru Tugui / Unsplash

Portrait 7:

Anders: Precarious employment at a supermarket

Anders is 27 years old and lives in a small municipality outside Gothenburg in Sweden. He has worked as unskilled staff for a large supermarket for three years. Anders completed his studies as a social sciences student in 2010. Since then, he has taken on some university foundation courses in legal studies, a social-sciences subject in democracy, and a course in history. On the date of the interview, he had no plans to take any further education. He still lives with his parents.

Anders describes his employment at the supermarket as a temporary position that has never become permanent. He has a temporary contract that secures him about 75% of a full-time position. The contract runs for about three months at a time and always has to be renewed. In addition to his fixed, scheduled working hours, Anders can also 'green light' additional hours he would like to work. He says that he had no fixed hours at all at the start of his employment, but only a zero hours contract under which he had to 'green light' all the hours he was available for work. The hours he got under this arrangement were at short notice. However, over the years Anders has been given more and more scheduled hours. A typical working day starts at 2:30 pm and ends at 10:30 pm. He usually has 16 fixed shifts a month and weekend shifts every other weekend.

Work at the supermarket

Anders says that he applied for a job

at the supermarket in a period when he was at home and did not have much to do.

When Anders started at the supermarket, he was given the same general introduction to the supermarket as everyone else was given, and it had very little to do with the work he actually had to perform.

"So I thought I'd better get a job. So I applied at the supermarket and I was invited to an interview very soon after. Actually, it was the first place I applied sometime last April. So I started there."

When Anders started at the supermarket, he was given the same general introduction to the supermarket as everyone else was given, and it had very little to do with the work he actually had to perform.

"It didn't have much to do with work in the grocery department and, you know, what you have to do there. But you got a booklet, and when I arrived, they said: 'You're in groceries today'. So you just had to get to know what to do yourself but there was no real introduction to the job. To start with you go around with a manager or the person who's stopping. So you get two days where you sort of go around with her, and the same at the checkout. That's also a sort of introduction. I sort of learned it all myself to start with. But apart from the general introduction and that bit about the checkout,

there was no introduction to the work in the groceries department itself."

Anders' work primarily involves receiving deliveries and putting goods on the shelves in the supermarket. Occasionally, he also works in the checkout, but only rarely. He describes his work as physically demanding.

"When you arrive at work, it's often, not exactly chaotic, but there's a lot to do. We put stuff on the shelves most of the day, and sometimes the others don't get finished. Perhaps 'heavy chemicals' (cleaning products etc. (ed.)) haven't been sorted out, or the baby food hasn't been put away. Perhaps there's a load of trolleys to empty. So it can be a little chaotic, because you want to put it all away before the next deliveries in the late afternoon. This goes on until 4:30-5:00 pm. And those first couple of hours is when people come and do their shopping, so even if you're not on the checkout there can be a lot of questions. There are usually two of us at work. So you either have to take deliveries or carry on working on the floor (fill shelves (ed.)). There's a lot to do and we have to do it fast. Therefore, we try to have a break at around 5:30.

After our break, we check that the freezer looks OK. And we have to put the new afternoon deliveries on the shelves. At around 7:30-8:00 the others from charcuterie (department (ed.)), dairy and fruit go home and then you're hopefully finished. But it's a bit stressful because you have to continue sorting things out and answering questions if they call from the other departments. So you've

got two hours when you're responsible for the whole shop. Then, at around 9:30, you have to close up. There's things you have to do like clear up, take out the rubbish, close down the hot shelf and the salad bar and so on.

» When you arrive at work, it's often, not exactly chaotic, but there's a lot to do. We put stuff on the shelves most of the day, and sometimes the others don't get finished. Perhaps 'heavy chemicals' (cleaning products etc. (ed.)) haven't been sorted out, or the baby food hasn't been put away. Perhaps there's a load of trolleys to empty. So it can be a little chaotic, because you want to put it all away before the next deliveries in the late afternoon.

Anders – Precarious employment

At 10:00, you have a walk round the shop, sort out the last stuff and then close up. Yes, that's about it. In the evening there's checkout staff too, but sometimes it gets a bit lonely."

When Anders is asked about the most important skill at work, he has difficulty answering. He says that he had worked in a sports shop previously and that experience from the sports shop was useful for work at the supermarket.

Interviewer: "Are any competencies or personal skills especially important?"

Anders: "Naah. It's not difficult, but it can be hectic. At one time, we had someone who just couldn't cope. I mean it's slow at first. But it's best if you can work fast. Yes, that's about it. But I haven't used anything I learned at university, it's more what I learned in a previous job."

Heavy boxes you have to lift yourself

Work at the supermarket is heavy. You have to lift a lot of heavy boxes, says Anders.

"Especially on Thursdays-Fridays when more than 100 packages arrive. Even though we drive them in with a truck, they're still heavy. There's a lot of heavy boxes you have to lift yourself. Sometimes I get aches in my neck and back when I take deliveries. If it went on, I think I'd think more about it. But then you do something else in the shop the next day, and then perhaps you're off on Saturday and Sunday. I get it most after I've put a lot of stuff on the shelves. It seems hard then and you think the pay isn't worth wearing yourself out for."

Planning and allocation of work

As stated above, Anders is not employed full-time, but has a 75% employment position. He 'green light' himself for more work. The system works such that he receives a text message when he has allocated a shift.

"[When] you green light some hours, you could work from 5:00 in the morning to 10:15 at night. Let's say it's the 3rd of the month and you get booked for the 7th.

Then you get a text message that you've been booked on the 7th from some time to some time."

When Anders started his employment, he wasn't guaranteed any hours at all, he green lighted himself most of the time to make himself available for the supermarket and have the best possible chance of getting a shift. He can see that this pattern repeats itself.

"I know when you talk to the people starting now that they're green lighting an awful lot to get hours. So I guess that's like it is. I did much more two to three years ago when I started than I do now."

» The worst thing is that it's hard to plan the next few months. The next work schedule. It's mostly that. I've got this temporary job now (in April (ed.))

Anders – Precarious employment

Although Anders now has a 75% position, his job is not future-proof. Flexibility and uncertainty do not only affect Anders' work from month to month. After the summer, Anders does not know how his work situation will look.

"The worst thing is that it's hard to plan the next few months. The next work schedule. It's mostly that. I've got this temporary job now (in April (ed.)) and that's probably up to June. And then I know I'm going on holiday. That's because we have to ask for holiday leave early, at the end of January so that they can



Photo: Ulrik Jantzen



Photo: Fabio Bracht / Unsplash



Photo: Gaelle Marcel / Unsplash

plan the holiday period. And I've decided to take a month's holiday. It's paid for because I've received my holiday supplement. So I know that I've got the time off. But after that I don't know when I'll be working. Probably the end of July or beginning of August. But I don't know how I'm working in June. So it's a bit difficult... but that's how it is."

Anders says that he does not want to work full time because he needs the extra time off that part-time work gives him. His reason is that he already has a lot of evening shifts and any more would be too hard. So he would rather have the time off than more evening shifts. Anders also says that a full-time job is not always the goal for supermarket employees.

"A lot of young people work here. People go out travelling and then come back again. I think a lot of them think it's an advantage not to be employed permanently. You know more or less what hours the others work, but you don't know whether they're employed full-time. It's not really something we talk about."

"Suddenly she wasn't getting more shifts"

During his employment, Anders has gone from a zero hours contract to a 75% position. In other words, gradually he has been guaranteed, more and more hours. However, as Anders says, it is not the same for everyone.

"The nightmare example was for someone who'd been working here for a long time. She isn't here anymore. But she'd been here for a long time and she thought

she'd get a permanent job. But then she stopped getting shifts. I don't know the full story, but what I heard was a bit weird. I mean, it was like she was on the way to being full-time and then she didn't get any shifts....then it's also a bit....then it's easier to just carry on working, I think."

However, it is not a story, which makes Anders feel financially insecure. He lives at home with his parents and he is not under any financial pressure.

» Five of us worked right up to 3 o' clock. People often go slightly earlier, but we didn't on that day. But it was very motivating and the boss sent a text that evening saying 'really good job today'. That was motivating.

Anders – Precarious employment

"When you talk about financial security, I feel pretty secure. Or I don't know, what can I say? I've worked a lot now, so I've saved a little. So if they come to me tomorrow and tell me there's no more work in the next shift plan, they're welcome. But I don't think they will. But if they do, I'd get by for quite some time without a job. So I suppose financial security is important, but I think that I'm financially secure. But perhaps there's a difference if you've got a family and children to support."

Health and safety: Stress and understaffing

When Anders is asked what he thinks is best about his job, he says that he is

generally happy at work. He has good colleagues and they get on well together. That is despite the fact that the work can be heavy and sometimes stressful. He also says:

"And then I think that you can get away from the work, when you like..... or you can't always. But you get away from work when you're off. If you can get a Friday off, then you're off for four days. So the good thing about the job is the days you get off."

Anders was asked whether there are any specific situations at work when he feels motivated or he thinks it is fun to work. Initially, Anders finds it hard to answer to the question, but he comes up with the following:

"Hmm, what can I say? I don't know (silence)..... Oh yes. There are the times when it all sort of runs smoothly, and when there's a good team spirit between colleagues. There was this day when we were really busy. But we were well staffed and we were all like experienced, so everything went really well. It was last Saturday and we had a lot to do in the morning and then we worked well all day. Five of us worked right up to 3 o' clock. People often go slightly earlier, but we didn't on that day. But it was very motivating and the boss sent a text that evening saying 'really good job today'. That was motivating."

In contrast, when Anders is asked about problems in working the way he does, he replies more quickly:

"The main problem is when you're alone."

There's often not enough people at work. It's most stressful when you start in the afternoon, and everything the day shift didn't get done is still left to do. That's stressful all day, but especially when you work in the evening and you're on your own. Yeah, the problems are stress and understaffing, I'd say.

I can give you an example. It's half seven, a new delivery has just arrived and it's being unloaded. And the people from the departments go home; 'sorry we can't stay and help'. Then you're left alone and you have to deal with it all yourself. And then they call from the checkout because they need something' or there's a customer who.... And yes, you just can't do it all. Everything then just feels like one big disaster. It doesn't feel nice at all and you just want to give up and go home."

» The main problem is when you're alone. There's often not enough people at work. It's most stressful when you start in the afternoon, and everything the day shift didn't get done is still left to do. That's stressful all day, but especially when you work in the evening and you're on your own. Yeah, the problems are stress and understaffing, I'd say.

Anders – Precarious employment

Interviewer: "Do you think that your pay reflects the work you do?"

Anders: "No, not always. But then again yesterday I was on the checkout and it was very slow. On the other hand there're days when you're under a lot of stress and completely..... Yes, you can well think you should be earning more. Especially when you've got evening shifts on the floor, and when you've got a bit more responsibility. In principle, you've got the whole store until 10:00 in the evening and this is rarely reflected in your paycheck. But on some days you think; 'well, today I haven't worked my fingers to the bone and I've earned just as much as I did the other day'. Yes, the pay doesn't always reflect the work".

Anders says that he has considered quitting his job.

"...after such days with a lot of stress. But it's not like that always and then you carry on. And actually you don't just quit a job without having anything to fall back on."

Interviewer: "However, if there is something difficult at work, who would you go to?"

Anders: "Err, I don't know..... You mean about the work? No, I don't know. I've sometimes said something to my managers, but that's not quite the same as saying I'd always go to them. So I don't know. I probably don't go to anyone directly."

Anders says that he is not a member of a trade union, and when the interviewer asks whether he talks to his colleagues about work, he says:

"We talk about how things are going. Most people you talk to think there's a lot

to do and that sometimes you can't really keep up. So we talk about that there's a lot to do. But we don't talk about more difficult stuff."

The future: "I'll continue over the summer, and then we'll see."

Anders describes his job at the supermarket as a temporary position, and he has taken some legal subjects at university, but he has no immediate plans for further education.

When Anders is asked whether he has any plans for the future, he says:

» Well, I don't....I mean since I started here I've been taking one year at a time, or not a year. I've thought that I'll just take this period (as long as his contract runs (ed.)). So no, I haven't got any actual plans.

Anders – Precarious employment

"Well, I don't....I mean since I started here I've been taking one year at a time, or not a year. I've thought that I'll just take this period (as long as his contract runs (ed.)). So no, I haven't got any actual plans."

Interviewer: "But you want to continue working?"

Anders: "I do the way things are now. But every autumn, when courses start, I think about whether I should stop work. So I can't say that I have any.... But right now the plan is that I'll work for the

next month, and then I'm on holiday for a month. But I can't say whether I'll be working there in six months. It's pretty well planned for the autumn, but there's not really any more plans. When I started, it should have been for just one year, so I could find out what I wanted to do later and then I just has continued. But I'll continue over the summer, then we'll see."

Anders is very ambivalent in his approach to his work. He does not really enjoy his job, but on the other hand, he does not say that he has any specific plans to find another job or to go into further education. However, Anders does express some uncertainty with respect to his future; he would like to have a permanent job if he decides to stay at the supermarket.

Interviewer: "Do you have any dreams for the future?"

Anders: *"Noo, I don't know (silence) it's difficult, I...."*

Interviewer: "Is there anything you don't do because of your work situation?"

Anders: *"Yes, I suppose there is. It's probably more difficult to find a place to live when you haven't got a permanent job, ...If I decide to go on (with education (ed.))....then I can sort of accept these temporary hours. But if I decide to stay where I am now (instead of continuing*

education (ed.)), I'd probably like to have a permanent position."

Working in flexible work arrangements

The most problematic issue for these young workers is the worry of not being able to plan and control their own future.

» Do you have any dreams for the future?

Interviewer

» Noo, I don't know (silence) it's difficult, I...."

Anders – Precarious employment

They do not find that flexibility is a value that provides better conditions or opportunities, rather the contrary. They all have to be very flexible in order to keep their jobs, and they have all experienced that this has had negative consequences in their life, as they have not been able to plan ahead. This can be very challenging to the work/life balance, especially for young workers who are trying to establish a family. These young workers say that they often work alone without any support. They do not consider their managers as someone who can help them, and they often feel left to themselves at their workplaces. They all say that they lack training and support, and that they have many physically hard work tasks.



Photo: Colourbox

2.4 Unskilled temp agency work

In this next section, we leave the retail and tourism industry, but remain with unskilled work. In the following portrait, we will meet Lars, who has worked in a number of unskilled jobs and in insecure employment forms that he himself describes as precarious. The second young person in the chapter, Julia, works through a temp agency as a receptionist. For both of them, their working life is to a high degree characterized by temporary and short-term employment, as was the case for the three previous young workers.

Portrait 8:

Lars: Unskilled temporary jobs

Lars is 27 years old. He lives in a small provincial town in Denmark together with his girlfriend and her children. Lars comes from a family of carpenters: His father, grandfather, great-grandfather and three cousins are all carpenters. Lars, too, is good with his hands, and this has often helped him get unskilled jobs and short or long-term temporary jobs. After a year at a boarding school at upper secondary level (10th grade), Lars embarked on a Higher Technical Examination Programme (HTX), a 3-year vocationally oriented upper secondary programme. However, this was too "nerdy" for him, and he says himself that he spent too much time partying and having fun. After this, the best option seemed to him to start on a carpentry apprenticeship programme. However, as it turned out that he could not find an apprenticeship, and thought the academic part of the programme was boring, he decided to drop out. Since then, over a seven-year period, Lars has taken higher preparatory single subjects courses ("HF-enkeltfag"), and at the time of the interview, he was about to complete these. Therefore, his primary income is state education grants (SU). He is planning to apply to enter an engineering programme. Lars started working on his stepfather's farm when he was only 11.

"It could be anything from weeding the fields to mowing the lawn or whitewashing the farm buildings. And I also worked as a cafeteria boy, and at a restaurant. I was a waiter at 16."

After his many after-school jobs, his first permanent job was as machine operator. After this job followed seasonal jobs as a vegetable packer and seasonal gardener, as well as a temporary job as a waste collector. In addition, he has had a contract with a temporary agency through which he has had several periods of employment, lasting from one day to one month. In parallel with these jobs, Lars has regularly performed freelance tasks in his father's business. Furthermore, he has had occasional periods of unemployment during which he received unemployment benefits.

Lars started working on his stepfather's farm when he was only 11.

» It could be anything from weeding the fields to mowing the lawn or whitewashing the farm buildings. And I also worked as a cafeteria boy, and at a restaurant. I was a waiter at 16."

Lars – Unskilled temporary jobs

After three years of employment as a machine operator, Lars became involved with the youth organisation of the United Federation of Danish Workers. He is no longer involved in this work, but he still takes a keen interest in trade union matters. Lars talks about his work life as precarious because of his many temporary and insecure employments.

Machine operator: Would lift heavy material himself if things had to go fast

From the age of 18 to 21 years, Lars had a permanent job as a machine operator at a company producing cables. The majority of the work was computer-controlled, and Lars says that the work was mostly easy. However, when the machine he was operating broke down, he suddenly had to perform heavy work that took a lot of physical effort.

"It's hard to say how much the materials weighed. Perhaps 30 kg or so. But then we'd typically use trucks (for unloading, (ed.)) when removing the cable. You know, so you wouldn't ruin your back or something. But sometimes things just had to go faster, even if the employer was against it. But that's what we did. Back then, I didn't know any better."

After three years, Lars was laid off. It happened during the economic crisis in 2008, and even though formally he was fired on the grounds of excessive sickness absence, Lars thinks that the dismissal was really about something else.

"The crisis hit, and then it was really a matter of who was most efficient. And even though they didn't say so, we felt that we were under a lot of pressure. 'Cause we'd already had two rounds of job cuts where a lot of people had been laid off. I'd been involved in a car accident and had two periods off because I was sick, and they (the employers (ed.)) were very strict. I think it was more of an excuse because some people had to go (...). This was the when I found out what a union is all about, and then I got involved in union work. I started to take

some courses, and later on I became head of the region (for the United Federation of Danish Workers (3F) (ed.)) But to start with, I didn't really know what it was all about."

» Our job was to put vegetables into boxes. So we were standing there, doing the same thing for eight hours a day. We must have had one and a half kilos in each hand, or something like that. I don't think that was very good for you. But the foreman, he didn't seem to care very much. He just wanted me to make these twisting movements when I was working. In my head, this seems very old-fashioned. You know, like a workplace in 1930, where people generally thought that workers weren't really worth much; they could just be replaced.

Lars – Unskilled temporary jobs

Seasonal work as a vegetable packer

After being laid off, Lars was hired to carry out seasonal work as a vegetable packer. Lars explains that working as a vegetable packer is hard on your body. Both for work outside and inside the production hall.

"Our job was to put vegetables into boxes. So we were standing there, doing

the same thing for eight hours a day. We must have had one and a half kilos in each hand, or something like that. I don't think that was very good for you. But the foreman, he didn't seem to care very much. He just wanted me to make these twisting movements when I was working. In my head, this seems very old-fashioned. You know, like a workplace in 1930, where people generally thought that workers weren't really worth much; they could just be replaced."

Following an incident during working hours that was so serious that Lars considered reporting it to the police, Lars decided to quit himself due to controversies with his boss. He then faced three weeks of quarantine before he was eligible for unemployment benefits, because he quit his job himself, as opposed to being laid off.

Substitute waste collector

After a period of unemployment, Lars found employment as a substitute waste collector. Lars worked for a waste collection company as the second substitute on a bin lorry, in a scheme where the shop steward had a list of people working on each of the bin lorries, and a list of substitutes for the bin lorries to choose from when needed. The list included first, second and third substitutes. Lars says that the waste collection company did not intervene very much in how the employees organised their work, but that the company was simply interested in the waste being collected within a certain time span. Therefore, the waste collectors themselves were responsible for finding substitutes. Despite the work being physically demanding, Lars liked the job.

"It was very well-paid. We only had to work for a few hours, and it was really hard work. But [it was] a really great job! I liked it because I could feel that I'd worked hard. And I got off early, so I could go home and relax a little bit."

The work as a waste collector was organised so that the waste collectors got off when they had completed their route. Consequently, everyone was interested in finishing the work as quickly as possible. In addition, the permanently employed waste collectors put a lot of pressure on the substitutes to perform. Moreover, the waste collectors received no training, but just had to "get going". Lars describes a dispute he had with the men working on one of the Lorries:

» They sure made high demands of their substitutes. If I'd given in to the pressure, I think that I could have done some stupid things. But it came at a price, because the men on the lorry refused to use me as a substitute.

Lars – Unskilled temporary jobs

"I had a huge blister, because I was not used to wearing safety shoes for so long. You know, it was not unusual that we'd have to walk 20 kilometres a day, if not more. And when you're not used to that, it's tough. Some of them [the permanent employees] had difficulties accepting that. So I fell out with the men on one of

the lorries, because they thought that I was too slow. I felt that I 'd shown them that I was willing to work. They sure made high demands of their substitutes. If I'd given in to the pressure, I think that I could have done some stupid things. But it came at a price, because the men on the lorry refused to use me as a substitute."

When two of the permanently employed waste collectors retired, Lars was supposed to be permanently employed by the company. Then the company lost a municipal contract during a tendering round, and when another company won the tender, only the permanently employed staff was transferred to this new company. Lars:

"Since they were all new jobs, they [the company] just didn't hire the substitutes."

Seasonal work as a municipal gardener

During the last two summers, Lars was employed for two months with fixed wages as a seasonal employee in a municipality. His task was to mow the grass in municipal areas. He likes the job, and he hopes he will be hired again.

"It was actually a great job... a little bit like the waste collection job. No one was watching me and saying: 'Now do this and now do that.' So there was a lot of freedom. And if there was some problem with the lawnmower, we couldn't always be bothered to take it to the workshop, because it was simply easier to just fix it at home."

When Lars started working for the municipality, the lawnmower he was to use

was missing a shock absorber. He could not just fix it himself. Mowing a lawn with many bumps using a lawnmower without suspension was not something Lars was willing to do.

» I'd almost never argue with my bosses. I 'd leave that up to my partner. And he didn't mind [...] But if you're a temporary employee, you want to be hired again. Then I can imagine that it's not a good idea to piss off the bosses too much.

Lars – Unskilled temporary jobs

"I could feel it in my back all the time. And it didn't take more than a day before I told my partner that I wouldn't put up with this unless it was fixed. Well, if I'd been 18 years old, I probably would have just said: 'Well, ok' until it began to hurt. I mean I'd only bring it up if I started feeling pain. But I think my partner kind of liked me, because I spoke out."

However, even though Lars takes pride in speaking his mind, he is conscious about whom he argues with and whom he does not argue with.

"I'd almost never argue with my bosses. I 'd leave that up to my partner. And he didn't mind [...] But if you're a temporary employee, you want to be hired again. Then I can imagine that it's not a good idea to piss off the bosses too much."

Still, Lars remembers an incident when spoke his mind very clearly to his boss. Unlike his boss, Lars was of the opinion that, even though he was a temporary worker, he needed a phone.

"They'd not given me a phone, and my partner was on vacation. And so I went out to mow grass like I was supposed to. Then I had a flat tyre, and I was standing there, in the middle of nowhere, without a phone, and miles away from everything, thinking 'What the hell I'm I gonna do?' Then I told them: 'Well, if I have to work alone, then I need a phone'. But they said 'No, you can't have one, because you're a seasonal worker'. And then I said: 'Well, then you're going to have to pay me when I'm stuck and waiting with a flat tyre.' Well, it happens, you know."

Freelance work for father's business

Within the last year, in between other jobs, Lars has worked in the father's business, which specialises in testing the tightness of buildings. The father has bought advanced measuring equipment, and Lars has learned how to operate this equipment. Unfortunately, there are not enough buildings to be tested to warrant full-time employment. Therefore, the income is not fixed, but depends on the number of assignments the father is able to land.

"It's good extra money, but it's not enough for a living, because I can't get 20 tests a month."

Lars explains that he likes the combination of going out and performing tests, and then going back and writing the report. Moreover, according to Lars,

he can make good money, and that is important. Lars is considering obtaining state certification because it might give him access to more assignments.

Contract with temporary agency

In between the periods of seasonal work as a gardener for the municipality, Lars signed up with a temporary agency. When he was unemployed, Lars was obligated to have a job profile on the municipality job portal, and much to his surprise, a temporary agency came across his profile. They called him up and asked if he wanted to work for them when there was work available. Lars signed an employment contract with the temporary agency in which his minimum wage was agreed for each individual employment.

"Well, they have some funny rules. 'Cause when they sent me out as a temp, I was entitled to the same wage as the other employees, so that's what they paid me. In the municipality I got DKK 145 [19.5 Euro] per hour, like I was supposed to. But it also meant that if I had to go and work at a DIY centre, for example, I wouldn't even get DKK 130 [17.5 Euro] per hour. I said I wouldn't accept that. So there were probably some jobs they didn't send me to, I guess. But I don't know, I never talked to them about it."

Lars explains that the temporary agency typically called him one day in advance, if they had work for him. If they knew well advance that they had a job for him, they would call Lars straight away. Sometimes it could be one and a half months in advance. Employment periods varied from a single day to a month at



Photo: Colourbox



Photo: Thomas Tolstrup



Photo: iStock

the same workplace. One of the jobs was at a warehouse.

"My job was to put goods on the shelves where they should go. And when I'd finished that, they told me that they wanted me to vacuum with this big industrial vacuum cleaner – and then clean it afterwards. Kind of boring work, but..."

Interviewer: "Have you ever been sent out on a job or an assignment that you were unable to do?"

Lars: *"Yes, building a fence. But then I had a partner who helped me. When I've been given assignments that I don't know how to do, there's usually been someone I could ask. And sometimes, I just did it, without really thinking about it. But we've always been good with our hands in my family, so I've always been good at a lot of practical stuff."*

Health and safety

Lars says that all compulsory safety measures have always been complied with at the many workplaces where he has been employed. He has been provided with safety glasses, gloves and safety shoes. Furthermore, in virtually all the jobs he has held, he has received on-the-job training from colleagues.

"And that's also a good way for companies to train new employees. Because you learn some tricks that the managers don't even know about, because they don't think about it."

However, Lars also explains that on-the-job training may result in miscommunication, because he is not made aware of

the specific sets of rules in force at the workplace.

"Someone once asked me if I could use a chain saw, and I said yes. Later on, I found out that what they meant was whether I had a certificate. Back then, I didn't know that you were supposed to have one. But you are; you need to have a certificate. So when I figured out that they were actually talking about the certificate, well, then I had to say no, because I didn't have one."

Communication may easily go wrong if things that are implicitly understood by the employees are not explained or communicated explicitly to newcomers, and they rarely are, precisely because they are implicitly understood.

Often, the employees at a workplace implicitly understand many things, and they can be difficult for a newcomer to understand. The incident with the chain-saw is an example, says Lars. Communication may easily go wrong if things that are implicitly understood by the employees are not explained or communicated explicitly to newcomers, and they rarely are, precisely because they are implicitly understood.

"Sometimes they tell me to do something, and I actually think I know what they mean. But things may be understood by the employees, because they've been doing the same work for many... for a

long time. Then maybe I'll make a fool of myself."

Temporary employments: "Not good in the long run"

Lars is not troubled by his many temporary employments, but he is aware of the mental burden of constantly having to adapt to new workplaces and new colleagues.

Lars is not troubled by his many temporary employments, but he is aware of the mental burden of constantly having to adapt to new workplaces and new colleagues.

"I could imagine that if you're kind of shy, then they [temporary employments] wouldn't be good for you. You have to be able to learn new things fast and be willing to adapt. Driving a truck at a warehouse or operating a machine one day, and then mowing lawns, trimming hedges and planting shrubs the next. Of course, the first couple of days, you're just checking things out; how do they do things around here? You know, how do people talk to each other. Do they have – excuse me – pictures of naked women in the workshop. When's our break? Things like that. But once I've figured out the routines, I quickly get the hang of it. So if you want a good experience from being a temporary employee, you need to be the kind of person who can fit in almost anywhere."

Although Lars has been pleased with the temporary agency work, the nature of his work life also has some very tangible disadvantages that interfere with Lars' private life. For example, Lars and his girlfriend are talking about buying a house, but he is aware that getting a bank loan is unrealistic when he works for a temporary agency.

"I actually liked the temp agency work. The only problem was just that my girlfriend and I had started talking about buying a house. And I knew that if I went to my bank and said: 'I work for a temporary agency', then they'd probably say: 'Well, we can't be sure about your employment then'. If I was 19 and still living at home, then I wouldn't have thought it was much of a problem. But now, it's just not going to work in the long run."

Lars is increasingly concerned about his uncertain financial situation himself. Previously, he would think about his financial situation "from day to day", but now he feels he has to take more responsibility, as his life situation has changed.

"It [his financial situation] is a bloody nightmare. When I was still living at home, I only had my car and my phone and a few other expenses. It didn't bother me. But when you start thinking about having a girlfriend and children and your own house, you feel very insecure."

The financial insecurity and uncertainty with respect to work planning also means that being part of a family and all the aspects involved in family life can be difficult. For example, it is always difficult to plan the family's vacation.

“Previously, I'd just plan more or less from day to day. But now it's a bit annoying [not to be able to plan further ahead]. For example, when we want to go on vacation. When it's not just you going on a vacation, then you have to plan it together. And if I work at a temp agency, and I tell them that I'm going on vacation in October; well, then I just know that it can cost me a lot of money, and that it may not be a good time to be away. I just don't know yet. So it's a bit of a mess.”

» Previously, I'd just plan more or less from day to day. But now it's a bit annoying [not to be able to plan further ahead]. For example, when we want to go on vacation. When it's not just you going on a vacation, then you have to plan it together. And if I work at a temp agency, and I tell them that I'm going on vacation in October; well, then I just know that it can cost me a lot of money, and that it may not be a good time to be away. I just don't know yet. So it's a bit of a mess.

Lars – Unskilled temporary jobs

Additionally, Lars has to cope with the daily challenges of picking up the children from school. Because Lars' income depends on him being available at one day's notice, it is almost impossible to

plan ahead. Generally, Lars feels that his family responsibilities mean that he cannot be available for work at the same short notice that he used to.

“My girlfriend's children go to an after school daycare centre [SFO]. And sometimes, I've had to say no to a job at the temp agency because I had to say: 'Well, I have to leave at 3:00 because my girlfriend is working late. She's got an evening shift, and I've promised her to pick up her children'. And that's, you know... that's a problem. It's just difficult to plan, I guess. I don't think about it so much on a daily basis. But when you're confronted with it... then it's actually a bit annoying. You become very inflexible.”

Lars concludes:

“That's what's funny about precarious work. Some people do it voluntarily, and others because it's their only option. Right now I kind of feel that this type of work is my only option.”

Future

Lars' immediate plan for the future is to apply for an engineering programme. So far, his grade point average is good, so he stands a chance. One of the reasons that Lars wants an education is that he wants to create greater financial security for himself and his family. Furthermore, he and his father are talking about the possibility of Lars taking over his father's business sometime in the future. Nevertheless, there is also another reason.

“I honestly think that many people look down on unskilled workers. You know,

I felt like a second-class citizen when I was on unemployment benefits. And the worst part is that I do the same thing myself sometimes, when I see someone who is still unemployed after more than two years: 'Get a move on!'. That's what I think myself. But actually it's not fair. You can very easily feel that you're not good enough."

When asked for advice for young people, about health and safety at work, Lars says that it is essential not to have as high expectations for young new employees, as for permanent experienced employees, with regard to productivity and pace of work. Then he points out that, as young people grow older, eventually they need to be able to think and plan further. Therefore, longer employment contracts are essential, and that includes for young people.

Portrait 9:

Julia: Work as a receptionist through a temp agency

Julia is 27 years old and lives in Gothenburg. She recently returned to Sweden after spending four years in London, working first at a pub and various restaurants, and later in a clothes shop. She had to break off the career she was building up in London when she moved back to Sweden for family reasons. In Gothenburg, Julia has a contract with a temporary agency that sends her to various workplaces to work as a receptionist.

"In England, it was really easy for me to get a job. But then I came back to Sweden, and here it's really hard. So I kind of panicked, and then I got this job. And now I'm kind of stressed, because I never know when I'm going to work."

Julia has an upper secondary school leaving examination, specialising in IT and media. She has no education beyond this. Julia explains that people in her family rarely start further education. Her father finished upper secondary school, and after that, he worked his way up in the car business. Julia's mother works in retail. Julia says that she has never had periods without a job.

"I can't not work. Or you know, I have to keep busy. That's why it's so important for me to find a job and to have colleagues. My job is really important to me."

Julia explains that she just signed a new contract with the temporary agency at which she is employed. Under this new

contract, three weeks after the interview she will be starting a permanent full-time job in a reception where the temporary agency is responsible for permanent staffing. In a Swedish context, this type of employment is known as 'tills vidare anställning' [a temporary job, but with no end date]. Therefore, Julia still has a contract with the temporary agency, but she will have a 'permanent' workplace.

Wages and conditions of employment at the temporary agency

When Julia came back from England, she wanted to find a job fast, and therefore she sent her CV to all the temporary agencies she knew. One of them responded quickly.

» I can only say no if I've worked more than 100%. But I never have. It never happens. So in principle, I always have to say that I'm available for work (...) In some weeks, I may not be booked at all, and then in other weeks, I'm fully booked. I can be sent to different companies every day... So it's a very varied job, as they say.

Julia – Receptionist

"First we spoke on the phone. And then I was invited to a personal interview with a recruitment consultant. Then they sent me lots of those personality tests that I had to fill in. And then I got the job."

At the moment, Julia works as a receptionist for a temporary agency specialising in office work and HR. Through the temporary agency, over a four-month period, she has worked for seven different companies, for periods ranging from half a day to one week. During the first month, Julia was paid by the hour. Subsequently, she was employed for a trial period of six months. At the time of the interview, she has worked for the temporary agency under a fixed contract for around five months. By virtue of her contract with the temporary agency, Julia is guaranteed a fixed salary every month. This is known as a 'guaranteed salary'.

"I can only say no if I've worked more than 100%. But I never have. It never happens. So in principle, I always have to say that I'm available for work (...) In some weeks, I may not be booked at all, and then in other weeks, I'm fully booked. I can be sent to different companies every day... So it's a very varied job, as they say".

Julia explains that if, over a month, she works on average 37 hours a week, her actual salary will exceed her guaranteed salary, but that has never happened. As she explains, the reason for this is that, as soon as her total working hours exceed the level warranting her guaranteed salary, her hourly pay increases. Conversely, according to the contract with the temporary agency, Julia is committed to be available for work for a number of hours corresponding to a full-time position. Consequently, if a receptionist is urgently needed and Julia is not booked, the temporary agency can call Julia at any time during the day.

Many "first days" at new workplaces

Julia's work as a temporary worker means that it is often on her 'first day at work' in the reception of a new company where she does not know the staff and routines. Julia explains that when she is going to a new workplace, she usually receives some written material about the company, and she is expected to have read this before her first day at work. The material may describe routines at the workplace, for example how to handle incoming mail, how to forward phone calls, and where to find different things she needs for her work.

"Often, you receive training from the permanent receptionist. That's really good, because reading about the work is one thing, but actually doing it can be quite different. Usually, you get a half day of training, and then the next day, you're on your own."

But in Julia's experience, a half day of training is far from enough, because the permanently employed receptionist has to perform her usual tasks, while at the same time training Julia.

"I think more time should be set aside for it [the training], because they have to do their normal work, and at the same time show me how everything works. For example, they're showing me how the phone systems work, and then the phone rings. And then they'll say: 'Well, you'll figure it out.' And I'll just say: 'Ok, sure'. You don't always get a proper chance to see how things work. So often I just think to myself: 'I'll probably figure it out.' Then I'll just have to do the best I can under the circumstances. I went to a place

once, and I was only going to be there for two hours. And I remember thinking: 'This isn't enough' (training, (ed.)). After half an hour (of training, (ed.)) she (the permanently employed receptionist (ed.)) said: 'I think that was all. Do you have any questions?' And I just thought 'Well OK, after half an hour... I'm supposed to just... well OK.' There're a thousand things, you know. So many things are happening that you haven't learned and that you're not prepared for. (...)."

» Often, you receive training from the permanent receptionist. That's really good, because reading about the work is one thing, but actually doing it can be quite different. Usually, you get a half day of training, and then the next day, you're on your own.

Julia – Receptionist

Working as a receptionist covers a wide variety of tasks, ranging from answering phone calls to booking meeting rooms, ordering lunch and making rooms ready for meetings. Furthermore, Julia is often responsible for handling incoming mail, ordering office supplies, etc. Even though, in isolation, many of these tasks are straightforward, Julia thinks that the nature of the work and shifts between many different workplaces make great demands on her personally.

"But it depends a lot on the company, so it can be very different. You have to be a



Photo: Colourbox



Photo: Colourbox



Photo: Colourbox

quick learner in this job. You know, be able to pick up things really fast. Otherwise, it's not gonna work. And then you just have to be a good worker. You really have to be open, or, what can I say, you have to be able to deal with a situation on your own. You have to solve the problems yourself. You shouldn't be afraid to act at your own initiative, because unfortunately, you can't be sure to get any training. And then you kind of have to say: 'Well OK, I'm just going to read the material, or I'll take a look around to see if I can find what I need, or I'll ask someone.'

Changing workplaces: No colleagues and a lot to keep track of

After working as a temporary worker for around five months, Julia has gained experience from receptions in many different companies. She says:

"The temp agency's fortunate because I've been in so many different places. 'Cause the more places I know, the greater the chance that they can send a temp who knows the place. But there's a lot to keep track of. There're so many different passwords. Some workplaces want you to do things in a certain way, and others definitely don't want you to do things that way. 'Is this the place where they want me to do it like this?' Something as simple as not remembering who's who. That can be a bit embarrassing sometimes. I see so many different places."

Working in so many different workplaces is not something Julia likes. However, she imagines that people with a different personality could enjoy the nature of temporary work:

"The most positive thing about this job is that you get to work in a lot of different companies. You definitely meet a lot of different people and build many contacts. I'm not really cut out for this type of job, but I can imagine that some people would love it. If you're a very social person."

Nevertheless, Julia does not feel comfortable with the myriad of temporary colleagues she comes across at work, and the absence of long-term work relationships.

» Sometimes an employee comes to the reception and asks me to do something. And then I don't know who that person is...: 'Sorry, what's your name again?' I feel very unprofessional, sitting in a reception and not knowing people's names. But I think the hardest part is that I don't have any colleagues. I never get to know anyone. I'm not part of a team

Julia – Receptionist

"Sometimes an employee comes to the reception and asks me to do something. And then I don't know who that person is...: 'Sorry, what's your name again?' I feel very unprofessional, sitting in a reception and not knowing people's names. But I think the hardest part is that I don't have any colleagues. I never get to know anyone. I'm not part of a team."

"I want to feel a bit more important"

Julia's work assignments as a receptionist have mostly involved routine work. As Julia only works as a temporary receptionist on a very short-term basis, her employers tend to think that the important assignments can wait until the permanent receptionist returns. Julia does not find carrying out the same simple tasks everyday challenging enough. She does not think the work is sufficiently stimulating, she says. When the interviewer asks her to talk about a good experience as a temporary worker, Julia highlights a work assignment that she found both stimulating and creative.

"At the place where I'm about to start working soon, I was allowed to do a little bit more. They wanted to do something about their toilets, set up a relaxation room and fix up the staff lunch room. And then they asked me if I could do it. And I was like: 'Yes, absolutely!' So I helped design the rooms, and I thought that was super cool. It was cool, because I was part of something and because I was actually allowed to influence my own workplace. That's how I like it."

Julia reflects on the age difference between herself and the people she works with. She thinks this might be the reason that she has slightly higher expectations for her work.

"I think maybe the age difference plays a role. Because I've noticed that the people I work with are 20, 21, 22. I don't know, maybe they think it's cool. But I want to do something that's a bit more important so that it makes sense for me. Instead of just sitting there, with a pretty,

smiling face. I want to feel a little bit more important... actually, I want to have more responsibility. I think it's cool to plan and organise things. To be more involved in what's going on."

» And then when I finished at a quarter past two, they called from the agency and asked me to go somewhere else to work until six o'clock. And of course, I didn't say no, because we can't say no. But that made me a little bit... It was just too much, and the clients got really annoyed.

Julia – Receptionist

Health and safety: Lack of influence in a work life without structure

According to Julia, temporary agencies do not pay very well, particularly given the fact that Julia has not worked full time yet. Furthermore, her income varies from month to month. However, Julia states that her main problem is not financial uncertainty, but rather that she cannot plan her own time because the temporary agency demands that she is available and flexible all the time.

"If I had a full-time job, then I would earn a decent salary, or I would know how much I could expect at the end of the month. But that's not the biggest problem. You know, temp agencies don't pay very well, unfortunately. But for me, the worst thing is that I like to plan ahead. I like to be in control and to be prepared."

And if I haven't been booked one day, then they can call me between 6 and 12 on that same day, and then I have to be available."

In London, Julia worked at bars, restaurants and in shops with long opening hours. Therefore, she is used to working irregular hours, with morning, evening and night shifts, but that was not a problem for Julia, because she always had a one-month work schedule. However, this is not the case now.

"Now I don't know yet where I'm supposed to work on Friday, and that really stresses me. Usually, I only know from day to day where I'm going to work. But next week, for example, I'm booked for three days, I think. But that can change, so maybe it'll be four or five days, or sometimes jobs will be cancelled at short notice. If you look two weeks ahead, your schedule may be completely empty. Even though I have a guaranteed salary, it stresses me. 'Cause if I'm not booked some days, then they can call me if someone has called in sick. It doesn't happen so often, but it still stresses me. I like to get up in the morning, make myself a cup of coffee and get dressed without any stress. So if my morning is disturbed, then the whole day is, you know (laughs)... well, that's just really stressful. How should I put it... what stresses me is the uncertainty. I want to be able to plan ahead."

Julia explains that the temporary agency organises the work when the companies call the agency in the afternoon. Subsequently, the temporary agency calls Julia, but sometimes the agency forgets to contact her.

"But sometimes I've been booked, and then maybe the agency forgot to call me. Then it's my responsibility to call them and ask where I'm supposed to go the next day. So it's like you never really get a chance to relax."

Therefore, Julia is pleased with the new arrangement with the temporary agency. Three weeks after the interview, she will start a permanent full-time job in a reception where the temporary agency is responsible for permanent staffing. She is very satisfied with this.

"I'll be working from eight to five every second week, and from nine to six in the other weeks, and that's absolutely fantastic. I can start planning my life in a way that I haven't been able to before. And in principle, it also means that I can stop thinking about work when I go home (...)"

"It was just too much"

Another disadvantage of temporary agency work is that, as a temporary worker, you can be sent to a workplace far away, from where you live.

Luckily, for Julia, she has mostly been sent to workplaces close to her home. However, due to illness, on one occasion the temporary agency rotated five temporary workers. Therefore, Julia was sent to a workplace located 50 minutes away at 15 minutes notice. One of her managers drove her to the workplace and called them up to let them know that Julia would be coming instead of their usual temporary worker.

"When I arrived, I just said 'Hi, sorry I'm late.' And they wanted to know what was

going on because they thought it was their usual temp who had been taken ill. Then I had to explain that another person had been taken ill and their usual temp had been sent elsewhere. And they were like: 'OK, so they didn't think it was important for you to be here on time?' Then they were kind of like: 'OK, this isn't gonna work! And the following day, I had to go to the same place, and it takes me 50 minutes to get there. And then when I finished at a quarter past two, they called from the agency and asked me to go somewhere else to work until six o'clock. And of course, I didn't say no, because we can't say no. But that made me a little bit... It was just too much, and the clients got really annoyed."

Thus, Julia has had to face clients who were annoyed at things that she could not have handled any differently. The situation was caused by the agency's poor planning and unforeseen events that were out of her hands. Still, Julia is confronted with clients' dissatisfaction, because she has contact with the clients on a daily basis, and because she is not part of the workplace.

Future

When talking about her future, Julia strongly stresses that she is definitely not going to start a family. She is not interested in having children, and she does not want to get married.

"I don't know if I'm going to stay in Sweden. I don't know what kind of job I want. I don't plan on taking an education. I like these 'knegarjobben' (Swedish term for unskilled jobs, (ed.)), you know these ordinary jobs. In my previous jobs, I've been

promoted pretty fast. I became a supervisor, and I was also promoted in the shop where I was working before I moved back to Sweden. It went really fast. To begin with, I was supposed to have my own pub, you know, that was the plan. And then I got a job in a shop, and, yes, that was cool. A small shop could be cool. But you never know, maybe I'll go in a completely different direction."

Julia says that security is crucial for her, while a high income is not essential.

"Security, yes, but I don't necessarily have to earn a lot of money. As long as I can go out to a good restaurant, and buy a few things now and then. That's really all I need. A bus pass costs SEK 600 [60 Euro] a month... it's not like I have the world's highest... no, what I mean is... as long as I can make ends meet. I don't want to feel things are tight every month. But as long as I can manage from day to day, I'm happy."

Working in temporary jobs

The young people presented above have a working life where they need to be available to meet up at their workplace at a very short notice. They do not find that flexibility is a value that provides better conditions or opportunities, rather the contrary. They cannot plan their own time because the temp agency demands that they are available and flexible all the time. Constant demand for availability and readiness to work is seen as stressful.

Looking into the future, it is likely to be difficult to continue this type of work and start a normal family life. The most

problematic issue for these young workers is the worry of not being able to plan and control their own future. The financial insecurity, and uncertainty in terms of when and where they will be working can, for some, be aligned with youth life, without financial and social responsibility for anyone other than themselves. However, when young people establish their own family, then temporary and insecure employment is difficult to reconcile with family life.

These young workers do not consider their leaders as someone who can help them. Just like Brynja, Devran and Anders, both Lars and Julia often feel left to themselves. They both talk about a workplace where they must continuously

adapt to new jobs, new tasks and new cultural codes of practice.

(...) when young people establish their own family, then temporary and insecure employment is difficult to reconcile with family life.

These young workers both have constantly changing tasks and work situations. They both say that they are good at adapting and are experienced in taking great independent responsibility and performing new tasks, but that they receive very little support and help when they start at a new workplace. They say that they lack colleagues and a social community.



Photo: Colourbox

2.5 Working on social digital platforms

In the three following portraits, we will meet Sara, Paula and Anette. All three are busy developing social digital platforms and using social digital platforms for blogs and so on. However, this is not the only job function they have. All three of them work for many hours during a week at a number of different jobs and with a number of different tasks

Portrait 10:

Sara Jin Smidt: Chief Editor, blogger and fitness instructor

Sara Jin Smidt is 30 years old. She lives in Copenhagen. Sara has a Master's degree in human nutrition from the University of Copenhagen. In addition, she is a qualified fitness instructor. Sara says that she has always worked a lot. During her time at university, she worked full-time and, among other things, she was an hourly paid fitness instructor, at first in FitnessDK, later in Palm Fitness and finally in the Fitness World chain. These employments came to shape her current work situation. Her fitness classes became very popular, and in the wake of her popular classes, demands for personal training and dietary counselling emerged. In 2013, this success inspired Sara to establish her own business and her Healthy Skinny Bitch blog, which quickly got many readers. Currently, the blog has 25-30,000 unique readers per month (primarily Danish readers). In connection with the blog, Sara occasionally enters into commercial cooperation with companies that offer health and weight loss products. Through these agreements, Sara is paid for sponsored blog posts and for producing other forms of commercial content for the blog. In this regard, Sara is paid a fee and simply sends out an invoice.

While working on the blog, in 2014 Sara began writing articles about food and exercise for the magazine Elle, both for the printed and the online versions. Moreover, in 2016, she was contacted by the Nordic publishing house Egmont, which headhunted her for a permanent

full-time employment as chief editor of the magazine FIT LIVING. Therefore, today, she spends her daytime hours at Egmont's head office in Copenhagen. Now she has an employee to handle the dietary counselling that she previously did herself. In addition, Sara has a third job as an hourly paid instructor at FitnessDK, where she instructs fitness classes for six hours a week. Sara has an open-ended contract as a class instructor paid hourly. Sara has also written a book about food and healthy recipes, and she is in the start-up phase for a new book.

In 2013, this success inspired Sara to establish her own business and her Healthy Skinny Bitch blog, which quickly got many readers. Currently, the blog has 25-30,000 unique readers per month.

Establishing a network as a work method

Sara is an hourly paid instructor at FitnessDK. This means that she is paid per training hour. Sara instructs different classes with titles including 'tighten up', 'pulse/strength' and 'HIT'. The training takes place in the two fitness centres that employ Sara. As a class instructor, she has to organise and conduct the exercises together with the participants. When Sara talks about the participants in the different classes, it becomes clear that she has a special bond with them.

"When we meet up for the training sessions, we're all dressed in sportswear."

When I've arranged bootcamps, no more than 12 girls participate. They're really struggling, and they're going through an eight-week food and training programme. It's very intense and tears are not uncommon. And when you come out of the other end, you suddenly realise: "Oh my God, she's a huge career woman, she's the boss of some huge company. And she seemed like everything but that when she was working out. So, in some way, it becomes a natural network, where it's not about networking, but more about working out together. And suddenly you find out, "Oh my God, I know 20 lawyers", because, as it happens, there're a lot of lawyers in my classes. So, when I go through my contract for my book, I've got five girls saying to me; 'We can help you with that!'"

Sara's work is not confined to training in the exercise room. Over the years, the relationship between the participants and Sara has grown into something more personal. Sara calls the participants in her classes at FitnessDK 'her girls'. She explains that she does this to cultivate a team spirit. She has also set up a Facebook group that enables her to contact the girls outside the fitness centre.

"Once or twice a year, I've made a post if I'm substituting for another instructor on a class or if there's extra sessions or something like that. Also, if I'm going on holiday, I post it on the group page; 'I will be absent there and there, but someone's substituting these and these classes'. Or: 'There's an extra session in the Easter vacation'. The Facebook group has also been out to dinner together, at least those of us who wanted to. So, suddenly,

perhaps 30-40 girls have participated in 3-4-5 events. And then I arranged a huge, free party to celebrate my birthday last year, and 200 showed up. So, you can say that a lot has happened since the beginning."

» The Facebook group has also been out to dinner together, at least those of us who wanted to. So, suddenly, perhaps 30-40 girls have participated in 3-4-5 events. And then I arranged a huge, free party to celebrate my birthday last year, and 200 showed up.

Sara Jin Smidt –Chief Editor, blogger and fitness instructor

In this way, the training and the Facebook group also function as a place in which Sara can create and maintain networks and friendships. She says that training and her role as an instructor have led to several friendships.

"The reason why I won't give up my job as a fitness instructor is that I really can't see myself stopping. It's not that I make a lot of money at it. And now I have both the blog, which is getting more and more popular, and this new full-time job. But I can feel that my training sessions mean a lot to them, and they can feel that they mean a lot to me. So, it's sort of like a love affair, I think I'd call it."

"You give so much of yourself"

"You give so much of yourself. Because, when you train people and counsel them about diet and so on, all of a sudden you're a part of their lives, and you know what they're eating, and what they're thinking when they're eating. And when they're heartbroken and can't eat or you eat too much. That's what I love about it. But it's also extremely hard, and it requires a lot from me."

Sara's classes have always been very popular; always filled up and with full waiting lists. Sara herself explains the success of her classes:

"I have a philosophy that people come to me because they want to be trained and pushed to a place they can't push themselves to. One of my girls told me that one substitute had said; "If it's too hard, then make it easier by doing this and this". Where I have the opposite approach: "Start on with full body pushups, and if you're going to throw up, then you can...". So, I demand more from them, and the classes pass by faster. I'm probably also more foul-mouthed than many of the other instructors - I shout a bit more and I'm a little more militant. So, either you're totally into it or you think it's the worst thing ever."

Sara also makes use of her affective skills when she works as a personal trainer and as a dietary counsellor. However, it has a price, she says.

"Right now, it's really great to train and give dietary advice, but I realise that at some point, I'll get tired of it and I won't want to do it anymore. Also because I've

had the same group of girls, so I'm giving the same advice all over again."

Unpaid work

The network that Sara has access to through training classes and as a personal trainer has given Sara jobs that have increased the exposure of her blog. One of Sara's personal training clients worked for the fashion magazine ELLE, and she recruited Sara as a health writer for the online version of the magazine.

"I became their health expert and supplied expert statements for their online articles without getting paid for it. Later on, I was hired as their permanent health writer, and then I was paid whenever I wrote something for the printed version. And then I also began writing for iForm at one point. Of course that was also paid. [...]"

Interviewer: "Why did they only pay you, when you wrote in the printed version and not the online version?"

Sara: "Well, that was just because it was online, and I sort of had an expert role. I was more like a source. We just sort of switched. I submitted some statements and articles, and I decided on some of the content myself, so they gave me exposure. That's pretty normal. And then they linked directly to my blog and gave me more exposure. It really is pretty normal in this industry. It was more like, I got to write some things for them that I wanted to share or which could be fun to do. There were no requirements, expectations or even a contract."



Photo: Colourbox



Photo: Colourbox



Photo: Danielle- Cerullo / Unsplash

Even though Sara does not receive a fee for all of her writing, she is paid through exposure to her blog. Besides, she has accumulated experience from the magazine industry; experience which ultimately contributed to her gaining the job as the chief editor.

Loose employment conditions, fired from Fitness World

In 2015, Sara refused to sign a renewal of her contract with Fitness World; her employer at that time. Fitness World had included a competition clause in her contract, which forbade her to work with health and weight loss outside the fitness chain, and Fitness World alleged that Sara broke this competition clause when working on her blog. Sara was a member of the IDA trade union, but another trade union, HK, guided her on how to deal with the case and how she should respond. She also had help from her own lawyer. In short, Fitness World allowed some instructors exemption from the competition clause to work with health promotion and weight loss. Nevertheless, Sara was not one of them, and therefore she was asked to either close her business or stop working in Fitness World. She decided to stop at Fitness World. The case was additionally fuelled by a minor storm in the media.

"Well, I had to tell the girls that I was stopping. And I had arranged with my closest boss what I could say and what I couldn't say. But then things went fast, because there was a huge network in those hundreds of girls. So, it turned out that one of the girls was a journalist and she had an article in the newspaper. And many girls initiated petitions, which were

signed by thousands of people. Fitness World was sort of shot down. So, the next morning, the administration called me to find out what was going on, because they had been attacked by angry women."

» So, the next morning, the administration called me to find out what was going on, because they had been attacked by angry women.

Sara Jin Smidt –Chief Editor,
blogger and fitness instructor

Nevertheless, Fitness World stood by the dismissal, and afterwards, Sara was quickly re-hired in another chain; Fitness DK, where she had been employed previously. This meant that many of the people from Sara's classes transferred their membership from Fitness World to Fitness DK. For Sara, this meant that the dismissal, which she at first considered a defeat, turned into something positive.

"There's no doubt that the firing from Fitness World actually ended as a huge pat on the back for me personally. Of course, I was aware that my classes were extremely popular, and I was also aware that I did a great job. And furthermore, I was aware that I had a unique relationship with my girls. But that support they showed me... To experience that was just awesome!"

Health and safety: Continued working with a foot injury

Sara's job as an instructor is primarily physical work, and at one point, she had an injury.

"I had a fatigue fracture in my foot, and my foot suddenly started to hurt from jumping around. And I thought, 'well, that's probably not so serious'. But then it got worse and worse during the class, and then I couldn't stand on it. And then there was a doctor in my class who came up to me after the class and said, 'we need to take a look at that'. And I was like, 'are you sure? I think my feet will smell pretty bad after having jumped around on them for two hours'. But she diagnosed a fatigue fracture in my foot, caused by too much of the same kind of exercises. I'd simply been jumping too much in the same spot. So my bone was slowly fracturing."

» I had a fatigue fracture in my foot, and my foot suddenly started to hurt from jumping around. And I thought, 'well, that's probably not so serious'

Sara Jin Smidt –Chief Editor, blogger and fitness instructor

Consequently, Sara had to conduct her classes in a different way than she was used to.

"Then I instructed my girls on two step benches, where I would sit with crutches, wearing a boot-thing on my foot while shouting at the others. That's the advantage of having so many regular classes. Then you don't have to do things yourself. You can just tell them what to do. I just posted on the Facebook group that the regulars had to show up for my classes, because there had to be someone to

demonstrate the exercises now that I couldn't. So that went well. And otherwise, I wouldn't have had an income at that time. I also ran a bootcamp, which was my primary income, and I did that on crutches as well."

"You don't die from saying no sometimes"

It is not unusual for Sara having a 70-hour working week. The book she published for Politikens Forlag in January 2017 was in fact written while Sara was fully occupied with a full-time position as the chief editor of a magazine, handling the operation of the blog and her own business, as well as being an instructor at Fitness DK. Therefore, the book was written in the late evening or early night or at weekends.

"I've felt that I was working too much once or twice. There was one night a couple of years ago, when I just couldn't fall asleep. I was writing my Master's thesis, working full-time and had my own business that had just completely exploded.

At that point, my heart rate went through the roof. The next day, I cleared my calendar for a few hours, and I sat down and wrote down all my partnerships. All my tasks, all the things I was going to do. And then I cancelled everything that wasn't important. Then I found out that you don't die from saying no sometimes. I've experienced the same thing twice since then. When I start to think that working isn't the greatest thing in the world, I think; 'then I don't want to'. And then I try to stop up, cancel what can be cancelled and set an autoreply on my email."

Being a public figure: "Of course, they're getting something of the real me"

Before Sara became a permanent employee as the chief editor of a magazine, the majority of Sara's work consisted of being present on social media platforms. Being visible and keeping followers updated were crucial in her endeavours towards success. This brought with it some special working conditions, where Sara's life and whole existence are exposed to the public. Sara says that she is frequently stopped when, for example, she is out, because she is recognised as 'the girl from the Healthy Skinny Bitch blog'.

» At that point, my heart rate went through the roof. The next day, I cleared my calendar for a few hours, and I sat down and wrote down all my partnerships. All my tasks, all the things I was going to do. And then I cancelled everything that wasn't important. '

Sara Jin Smidt –Chief Editor, blogger and fitness instructor

"My blog is like 'I work out, I eat, I work out, I eat, I work out, I eat. And then I'm here, and then I'm there'. But it's not like 'this is how I feel'. It's not that personal. But of course, they're getting something of the real me. Otherwise, they wouldn't want to follow it. And maybe it wouldn't be so much fun to do either. But when me and my boyfriend were having a rough time, in the weeks leading up to our break up.... Many of my followers had actually seen it coming. Several times a week I

was asked: 'You and Toke, did you break up?' And I was like: 'Eh no, we didn't'. Obviously, I knew that things weren't going so well, but I was like: 'Why are you asking?' and they'd say 'Well, I can just see...! Yeah, my followers could sense something, and it was actually really scary."

Interviewer: "Have you ever experienced anything uncomfortable, like stalkers or something like that?"

Sara: *"I think it depends on what makes you feel uncomfortable. For example, there are people that take offence or get angry from receiving dick pics or nude pics of men on their social media. When men send pictures to your Snapchat or Instagram, or whatever they do. As long as they stay on my phone, I can just delete them and block them. I've just been featured half naked in the magazine Euroman as 'A woman we like'. So, I'm sort of asking for it myself, you could say. I'm not that offended by it. Lonely men in their late 50s, sitting in some small town and thinking you look lovely because you're Asian, that's... You know, I just block them if it's out of my comfort zone in any way. But I have thought about getting a private address."*

Plans for the future: Wishes a day was longer than 24 hours

Sara wishes a day was longer than 24 hours, but she adds that she would "probably straightaway fill them with work". Sara's immediate plans for the future are work-related, and she says that her own plans for the future are identical to her work ambitions for the magazine FIT LIVING.

» I'm not that offended by it. Lonely men in their late 50s, sitting in some small town and thinking you look lovely because you're Asian, that's... You know, I just block them if it's out of my comfort zone in any way. But I have thought about getting a private address.

Sara Jin Smidt –Chief Editor,
blogger and fitness instructor

"I really want to be here for a long time. And I really want to keep my classes and just enjoy instructing. I'm aware that if I have kids, I won't necessarily be able to check in at seven in the morning or have extra classes to eight in the evening six times a week. That wouldn't work. So, for my future I definitely hope that my work on the magazine is a success, and that I can find a balance with my blog so I can keep that too. Because it's so great to

have; I can write whatever I feel like. And with that, I always have something to fall back on. So, if people really stop reading print magazines, as it looks like they will do, then I can fall back on the blog."

However, in the back of her mind, Sara also has a future with flat purchase and starting a family.

"Well, I hope for sure that I get to have a family at some point. I'm 30 now and haven't really felt broody yet. I'm sure it'll come some day. But I don't want to get married and have kids just to get married and have kids. I want to get married and have kids because I want to.

I tried to borrow money for a flat a year ago, but the bank was really sceptical about lending me money, even though I had plenty. I mean my business had a good turnover, but I was vulnerable. You could just push me down a staircase. If I broke a leg or fell on my high-heels when I was out, then I wouldn't be able to make any money. But this has changed after I got a permanent position."

Portrait 11:

Paula: Beauty blogger, art agent and influencer

Paula is 28 years old and lives in Stockholm. In 2014, she received a Master's degree in social anthropology from Stockholm University. During her studies, Paula was a guest student in California. Here, she took courses on political science, international relations, global studies and sociology. Paula wants to go back to California someday, as she feels at home there. Paula's parents are from Chile. Her mother works as a nurse and her father is a mechanic. During her studies and after she graduated from university, Paula worked as an unskilled employee in a court of law. Nevertheless, she quit her permanent position and now works as a beauty blogger and art agent while freelancing in various contexts. She calls herself a 'influencer', but at the same time, she finds it difficult to explain what she is really working on.

"I freelance as a project manager and I've arranged a number of conferences and campaigns on culture and sustainability - and now I'm working more and more on events for bloggers, which I also do myself. So I've arranged bloggers' conferences, and I'll continue working a bit with that too. But yeah, I've also just begun working as a freelance copywriter and blogger too. And then I also run a sort of art agency for girls who paint graffiti. So, it's difficult to explain exactly what I really do. I guess you could just say that I'm a sort of freelancing creative person."

Since 2015, Paula has run her own beauty blog. On the blog, you can follow

Paula's tips on skin care and make up products, but also Paula's thoughts and everyday life. She blogs approximately 3-5 times a week. Meanwhile, she works as a freelancer, arranging and organising events for different clients including various culture institutions.

Working as an influencer: Creating your own voice

As described earlier, an influencer is a person with huge reach, who can influence, motivate and inspire followers via social media platforms. Paula uses her beauty blog as an influencer by uniting her interests in beauty products with sustainability and social justice perspectives through conscious and reflected profiling.

"A type like me probably sticks out in the Swedish blogging community. I don't think that there are many social anthropologists blogging about beauty. When I write about beauty, cosmetics, hygiene products and clothing, I write from a perspective of human rights, or even more from an environmental perspective."

Paula says that it is important to create your own unique voice as an influencer. She has positioned herself as the blogger with focus on the environment and sustainability in the vast landscape of beauty bloggers. Additionally, Paula is also motivated by giving voice to certain people who she considers are under-represented within the given field:

"I think what I've done is to create a special voice. And it's this voice I also use when I'm a project manager or when I'm arranging conferences and booking

speakers, for example. Many white, Swedish men between 30 and 40 years old are often booked to lead seminars and things like that. And in these cases, I'd rather choose other people for the job. I think it's important that other people are also heard."

» I think what I've done is to create a special voice. And it's this voice I also use when I'm a project manager or when I'm arranging conferences and booking speakers, for example. Many white, Swedish men between 30 and 40 years old are often booked to lead seminars and things like that. And in these cases, I'd rather choose other people for the job. I think it's important that other people are also heard.

Paula –Beauty blogger, art agent and influencerer

Paula has many different types of jobs, but the jobs she primarily makes her money on are jobs regarding project management and copywriting. She is paid per job delivered. Her work differs from very small one-off jobs, paid as a fee, to temporary project employments, also paid as fees. She does not receive payment for some of the jobs she does. The decision to become self-employed was taken after Paula had already found

out that she liked managing projects, and that many of her friends could benefit from her project management competences.

"I've got a lot of friends who do graffiti and art. But they don't want to do all the administrative work or sell their art. So, I felt as if there was an opportunity for me to start an art agency."

Another factor that helped Paula make the decision to become self-employed was that she was not happy employed in her old company.

"And then I wasn't happy in the company where I was employed at that time. I did have a full-time position with a fairly good salary and everything. But I thought to myself that I'd end up on sick leave if I went on working there. So, I took up a short employment in an organisation working with human rights. In that organisation, I worked as a project assistant and had my own project. And when that employment ended I thought: 'Okay, what do I do now?' I couldn't just go back to a normal desk job in some public authority or just work in administration. I wanted to be creative, and I wanted to decide my own working conditions. So I thought: 'Well, I'm just going to do it then, I'll try it out.'"

From a permanent position with office hours to creative freelancer

Paula says that she has always had a need for financial security and a permanent residence.

"I've always wanted to feel secure and have a fixed income, a permanent resi-



dence and so on, which is nearly impossible in Stockholm. But I've always wanted to live like that. So it really was a big step for me to go from a permanent position in an authority with office hours to becoming a creative freelancer."

When Paula decided to leave her permanent position to become a freelancer, she had just bought an expensive flat with her boyfriend at that time. Therefore, it did not feel financially secure enough to launch into a new life as a freelancer.

"I didn't feel secure enough to start up as a freelancer, because I'd already taken out a massive loan. However, I did have some money saved up. And I know that there are people around I can borrow money from in a crisis. And I have grandparents I can move in with. My parents can help me financially, and I also have many friends who help me too. So, I realised that I had to become a freelancer for my own sake. The financial aspect would have to sort itself out. For that reason, I've sometimes taken on jobs that have put money in the bank, but may not have been my dream assignment."

Despite her concerns about life as a self-employed freelancer, it was Paula's own decision. In line with the fact that she wants to provide a voice to minorities, Paula considers freelancing to be a liberating, almost feminist strategy. She hopes that others like her will use this way of organising work life as a liberating strategy.

"I consider my work as a form of feminist practice, in which I create my own terms and conditions. I'm my own boss and I

make my own rules (...) It could be interesting if a movement came, encouraging people to turn down those jobs that don't stimulate them like they want. Where they don't get paid what they deserve. On the labour market, women make less than men, you know, what if some sort of empowering movement emerged. Yeah, ... or is it just something I've been thinking about."

» I consider my work as a form of feminist practice, in which I create my own terms and conditions. I'm my own boss and I make my own rules (...)

Paula –Beauty blogger, art agent and influencerer

A normal workday

Paula describes a normal day at work. She says that she has work tasks with fixed routines and then more varied projects and events that come in occasionally.

"I go to the office at 8.30, 9.30 or 10.30 in the morning, depending on my mood. Then I often write on an assignment that I'm working on. Perhaps an Instagram post. I can sit there and search for hashtags for Instagram, or I can organise a document that they (the bloggers (ed.)) are going to use on their social medias. For this, I tend to use my office. At the moment, there's five of us working there. I go home at around five or six, then I often continue working in the evening. So, work and leisure time are sort of intertwined."

The day before the interview, Paula participated in a daylong event about organic skin care and did the make-up for a music video for some friends. Later this week, she is doing a photoshoot for a newspaper. In this way, Paula's everyday life is filled with routines and "all the other stuff", as she says herself. Therefore, it is important for Paula to get some stability into her everyday life.

"It's important for me to have an office space. I need something stable. I really think I need that."

Assignment: Worth getting in my portfolio

Paula says that she gets new assignments in many different ways. She is primarily contacted by people in her network. Her network is very important for getting new assignments. The collaboration with one of her biggest clients, Influencers of Sweden, a sector organisation, was established through Paula's network. They needed a project manager and they asked Paula if she could step in. Because Paula's life as self-employed is relatively new, she has had to be proactive.

"I've also contacted people myself who I wanted to work with, but that hasn't led to any jobs."

Paula's business is still very new, and she says that she takes all the assignments she can get. That is even though the assignments must be done within a very short deadline. On the other hand, the new business means that, from time to time, Paula has had periods where she has not had that many assignments.

During these periods, Paula did things she was not paid for.

"But there was a week in early April, when I didn't have anything at all for a week and a half. I just went around enjoying myself and did things that I didn't get paid for, but that I thought might generate jobs in the future [...] When I do make-up for a music video, or some kind of photoshoot, I do it because I think it's fun, or to do my friends a favour. Then I think; 'Okay, I haven't got any qualifications, I'm not a qualified make-up artist, so it's important to get something in my portfolio'."

Paula also gets worried when she has no assignments.

"You just go with the flow when you've got work, but you can also get a bit worried about what to do afterwards. But it's never been so bad that I couldn't buy food, for example. It's been pretty stable. But I also think that I'm pretty good at not pushing myself when I start to feel the pressure."

» You just go with the flow when you've got work, but you can also get a bit worried about what to do afterwards. But it's never been so bad that I couldn't buy food.

Paula –Beauty blogger, art agent and influencerer

Stress, sedentary work and yoga

Paula considers herself good at sensing her own mental state and whether she is working too much and should slow down. She considers this as an important competence if you are working like her.

» I'm really in control of my mental health, or how can I put it?" I can feel, when I'm getting too stressed out. I take really good care of myself and I know my stress and anxiety symptoms. Which is really important when you work like this

Paula –Beauty blogger, art agent and influencer

"I'm really in control of my mental health, or how can I put it?" I can feel, when I'm getting too stressed out. I take really good care of myself and I know my stress and anxiety symptoms. Which is really important when you work like this."

However, even though Paula can handle the mental challenges in her life as a self-employed freelancer, the sedentary work in front of her computer has consequences.

"On the other hand, my work does affect me physically. You know, I write a lot and my arms and hands really ache from sitting down and writing so much. And there's no boss telling me to stop, or 'you shouldn't do it that way'. So I'm actually trying to remember to prioritise work-

ing out. I do yoga, and when I don't do enough, I get totally stressed out. Which is really stupid."

Blurred work-life balance

In Paula's work, there is a high level of flexibility and freedom. She says that she is her own boss. However, she also says that there are disadvantages in having this temporal freedom. It has its ups and downs, she says.

"I think about work a lot. While I surf Facebook or watch a series, I get ideas. Or an email comes in, or I get an idea that it could be cool to do this and that with this specific person. So it's cool in a way, but at the same time, it's hard to relax. But then again, if I have friends visiting and I want to go to a party on a Tuesday, I can do it. So, it has its ups and downs."

Interviewer: "Do you know how many hours you work a week?"

Paula: "Well, I don't really know. It's really difficult to say when I'm actually working. And I don't register how much time I spend on the assignments where I don't have a client. But some of my assignments, for example the clients where I produce content for people's social media, they want me to record my hours. In these cases, I use an app to count my hours. Then I know I work 40 hours a week on those jobs. But I also work on other things that I'm not recording hours for. So, maybe between 40 and 60 hours a week."

"Crazy and outdated welfare schemes"

Paula and her boyfriend split up a month before the interview. Paula was supposed to take over their joint flat, but when she

called the bank to take over the full loan and buy her former boyfriend out of the flat, her request was rejected by the bank.

"And they just said 'no, no, you have to have had your own business for at least two years, and be able to show...' And I know other banks say five years. So, no freelancers... or none of my colleagues can borrow money. At the same time, the property market in Stockholm is crazy, so it's impossible for me to get a flat."

» We came to the solution that my parents took out a loan against their flat and gave the money to me privately. But what about those who don't have parents to help them out? In these cases, it really feels as if Swedish society is not equipped to handle new types of work.

Paula –Beauty blogger, art agent and influencer

Luckily, Paula's parents were able to step in and take out a loan against their own property, so that Paula could stay in her flat.

"We came to the solution that my parents took out a loan against their flat and gave the money to me privately. But what about those who don't have parents to help them out? In these cases, it really feels as if Swedish society is not equipped to handle new types of work."

Paula talks about several of her friends who have had children and want parent allowance' [in Swedish 'föräldrapenning'; an allowance for parents at home with their baby. It is based on income]. They have to negotiate with the authority responsible for the allowance about what level of allowance they are entitled to, because the authority is not convinced that they actually make money from their businesses. However, Paula herself also experiences problems with welfare schemes not designed for freelancers.

"And yeah, professional matters like that... there are no good trade unions for people working like me [...] When I had a permanent job and had a lot of questions about terms and conditions of my employment and pay and so on, I knew I could just call my trade union. But as a freelancer, I can't just call and say 'I have a client who's trying to cheat me, what are my rights?'. You know, things like how much I should get paid for this or that type of job, or this client won't pay me. I deal with these questions with my network, and not my trade union [...] You'd think someone could do something about this. It seems crazy and outdated."

Paula talks about an unemployment insurance fund system, which, according to her, does not align with the way she earns her living.

"And I feel very insecure about the unemployment insurance fund. To receive the insurance, your business must be closed down completely. You're not allowed to earn any money at all. But you might want to take a small job, even though it doesn't provide you with a full income."

Maybe it'll give you a little money, but not enough to live on. There's nothing for people like me."

» You know, things like how much I should get paid for this or that type of job, or this client won't pay me. I deal with these questions with my network, and not my trade union [...]

Paula –Beauty blogger, art agent and influencer

Plans for the future

Given that the welfare schemes are not compatible with life as a freelancer, Paula hopes that she will become more established in her life as self-employed in the future.

"I hope that I become more established, get more jobs and get better pay for my work, so I can relax and perhaps work less with more structure in my life. So I could take time off at weekends or something like that."

In addition, Paula reflects upon her own personal life situation. She is considering whether she wants children, but adds some financial concerns:

"I don't know if I want a kid. And if I do, I'd first have to find someone to have it with. I don't want a kid on my own. And then I'm thinking that maybe that someone would have to have an income, so that we at least have two incomes. Then it wouldn't feel as insecure, even though having kids is very expensive. But even so, I'm not having kids in the near future. I've been thinking about going back to the US to work again. Then I could rent out my flat to help cover my costs in the US."

Portrait 12:

Anette: Influencer and freelance consultant

Anette is 26 years old and living outside of Oslo. She is an influencer working with commercial partners creating sponsored content for them on her social media platforms. However, she is also working as a freelance consultant. Not long time ago her boyfriend left her, and she moved from Oslo to a small place, where she is now renovating an old house. The small city is also the place she grew up. Both the break-up with her boyfriend and the renovation of the house has generated interest from the media in Norway. Annette's education consists of a one-year part time fashion studies. Besides that, she has working experience in marketing and sales. At the moment, she works full time with social media. Anette has been an active user of social media already in the early days of social media. Blogging especially caught her interest:

"I started already in 2005 after being very active on 'Forum' and such, stuff that was cool before. This was the social media platform hosting the discussions, people was very present having friends you actually did not know. At this platform many of us had a blog. So I started early, long before there was any money involved. I did this just for fun, and continued until 2012, then it started to involve money. But that time I worked as a marketing manager as well".

Anette tells us about her blog:

"This summer I started a somewhat different project. I got some attention in

media because I started writing about being dumped by my boyfriend. We were about to buy a flat, and we had been together for four years. Then, I spontaneously bought an old house and decided to renovate it by myself. Therefore, I quit my job, which actually was a cool job, moved out of the city, and just started something new. Then I started sharing and writing about it. So that is actually the reason why I turned back to focus on my own social media channels. I had this project and a story to tell".

» Then, I spontaneously bought an old house and decided to renovate it by myself. Therefore, I quit my job, which actually was a cool job, moved out of the city, and just started something new. Then I started sharing and writing about it.

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

Employment contracts and wages

Anette characterizes herself as independent and she makes a living from working with social media platforms where engages with different types of commercial actors. The first type of engagement is through her own presence on social media platforms, on which different types of commercial actors are interested in teaming up with her because of her reach as influencer. She has a temporary contract with an influencer agency. They provide her with

office space in their offices and Anette invoices the influencer agency for her services. The agency acts like a coordinator, managing which advertisers Anette is working for. Through the agency, she has recently entered a one-year contract with a large telecommunication company in which she will function as an ambassador. This contract is almost a full time position, she says herself. The engagement with the telecommunication company means that she is contractually obliged to produce content as an ambassador for the telecommunication company and publish through her own social media channels. She has a similar contract with a digital marketplace; the Norwegian version of American Craigslist or Danish Den Blå Avis, where users can sell items they no longer have use for or search for items they need.

Second, she works as a freelance consultant. At the moment, she has two clients. She produces videos for one client to share on social media platforms, and she helps and advises the other on their social media presence. She invoices her clients for every task performed.

"I perceive it as having two jobs. The one job is my social media channels, were I cooperate with the digital marketplace and with a telecommunication company. Then I have this additional job [as a freelance consultant], that I really do not need. I keep it because, it was the job I had before I could earn enough to live from my social media channels full time. This is being a consultant for a company, assessing their social media profile, but this job is more invisible. Hence, there are these three I invoice regularly: The

influencer agency for my telecommunication company contract, then the contract with the digital marketplace and then the other company, being a so called consultant, helping them managing their social media".

Anette has a desk at the main office of the influencer agency. There she has four colleagues, who are also bloggers. Anette is very happy with the contract with the agency, because it gives her good working conditions. When she is asked about her type of employment, she gives an ambiguous answer to the question, perceiving herself as both independent and as employed:

» I perceive it as having two jobs. The one job is my social media channels, were I cooperate with the digital marketplace and with a telecommunication company. Then I have this additional job [as a freelance consultant], that I really do not need. I keep it because, it was the job I had before I could earn enough to live from my social media channels full time.

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

"I perceive myself in a way as being independent, even if I have a contract. I have a contract at the influencer agency and feel in a way as if I am employed, because

I have a desk there. I have colleagues, and I eat my lunch there and things like that. But I do invoice them. And I have other sources of income as well. And I am not restricted to be there from 08 to 16. Therefore, I perceive myself as... therefore I am my own boss. I decide myself where to be at any time and I myself has to ensure that my tasks are solved".

The contract with the telecommunication company is brokered through the influencer agency. Annette explains about the specific contract and how it defines her tasks:

"During a week, I am supposed to create three postings for (name, telecommunication company). That is what is in my contract. This can be a video on Facebook, it can be an article that I write for them, and it can be a posting at the blog, as an example."

» So yes, I do not perceive one of the companies as necessarily my customer, but I look at the agency as my work place, if you understand. If someone asks, then I answer, that I am working in the influencer agency, but I work for the telecommunication company.

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

Nevertheless, she is not required to be present at the office or required to work during specific hours. Rather she

is contractually obliged to participate in specific events for the telecommunication company:

"It is written in the contract that it is expected of me to take part in specific activities were the [telecommunication company] are present, representing them. So what we have agreed upon is some weekends and some days of travel. Like Easter, I had to take part in an arrangement for them, and in June I have to travel a weekend for the company. But yes, nothing about where I am supposed to have my workplace or... They do not care, as long as I deliver".

However, in other ways Anette's relationship to the influencer agency as well as the telecommunication company resembles an employee relationship to her employer. Anette describes how her expenses are reimbursed if they are connected to her work for the telecommunication company:

"When I get the idea about making something and I need to buy something.... as an example if I want to make a posting, were I test different selfie-lightning. Then I need to have three different lamps to test. Then I just ask my superior in the agency, if I can buy these things, because this is something I do for the telecommunication company. And then she says yes, and then I invoice the agency for the expenses. Then they take the expense on behalf of the telecommunication company, who are their customer."

When the interviewer asks whom she perceive as her employer and who her manager is, she answers:



Photo: Andrew Neel / Unsplash



Photo: Aleksandar Popovski / Unsplash



Photo: Vidar Kristiansen / Unsplash

"Yes, god question. I perceive both as my employers. However, I more perceive [telecommunication company] as my actual customer. I have a contact person that I meet two hours every week. However, this is also together with a representative from the influencer agency. So the difference is that I know that [telecommunication company] give me the tasks, but it is the agency that is my working environment. That is the place I have my colleagues; the four other girls. That is the place where I get tips and advices for content and such. So yes, I do not perceive one of the companies as necessarily my customer, but I look at the agency as my work place, if you understand. If someone asks, then I answer, that I am working in the influencer agency, but I work for the telecommunication company".

She tells that her contract is unique due to the size of the contract. However, the contract is also defining how she works with others. She explains further:

"The telecommunication company has, really in a way gone to town on me and said 'we want one girl, and she is supposed not to work with any others'. So you may say I am sold out. (...) So, if I want to do something else commercially, it has to be approved by both the influencer agency and the telecommunication company. Because I am actually sold out. But if it is something that they do not perceive as having impact on the existing job, then they will accept it".

Working as an influencer: 'I am completely honest'

The social media platforms that Anette

works on are her blog, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

"I have worked a lot helping bloggers, choosing their channels. It is wise not to focus on more than three main channels. Mine are blog, I write a blog. Then I love to snapchat, so that is an important channel for me. And then I have Instagram and Facebook. Instagram is more like an inspirational channel, and Facebook is linked to the blog, so these two are connected then. So if you do not share what is going on, on the blog via Facebook, then you do not get any traffic (on the blog, red.)".

» They act like a sponsor, and the content I make is topics we agree upon. But I write and produce the content, the way I want it. So I am the one deciding if it is going to be a video, or a text, and in which channel.

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

Anette has partnered with the telecommunication company for one and a half month. She is very happy with the partnership, because it gives her more influence on the content she shares on her own platforms, compared to other commercial actors. Anette describes how commercial companies partnering with bloggers often wants to control how the bloggers write about the company, but

the telecommunication company does not exercise control over Anette:

“They act like a sponsor, and the content I make is topics we agree upon. But I write and produce the content, the way I want it. So I am the one deciding if it is going to be a video, or a text, and in which channel. And I am completely honest. It is not as if they are deciding that I should be positive about something, or should have an opinion about something. I have to find it interesting. The perspectives and the production and the idea and things like that is up to me.”

Anette describes the collaboration between her and the telecommunication company:

“At the Monday meeting with [telecommunication company], we have agreed upon the topics. Then I have to see, if something is happening during the next day or things like that. But it can also be planned in advance, that I am going to the museum at Wednesday, and then it can be cool to talk about the new camera on my cell phone, because I can take some cool pictures there. Then I will dedicate the activity to the telecommunication company”.

However, it is important for Anette to balance the commercial content with non-commercial content:

“But then I have to make some content that is not so [telecommunication company]ish as well (...) Because the content I make for them it has to be genuine in a way, not like a commercial. But sometimes I have to include, as an example,

information about some benefits with specific subscriptions, or I have to include products, but then it becomes somewhat commercial(ish). It is also important that I talk about other things that are not related to technology. Because I also write about the renovation and the house and my life and things like that, so that has to fill in in a way”.

A regular working week

A regular working week for Anette often starts with a meeting in the group with the other four bloggers. They are on similar contracts with the influencer agency as well and share an office with Anette. The other bloggers also work with their own social media profiles with different commercial partnerships. Anette names this group a digital editorial group:

A regular working week for Anette often starts with a meeting in the group with the other four bloggers. They are on similar contracts with the influencer agency as well and share an office with Anette.

“The days differ a lot, but I may sum up how a week is. On Mondays, I start with an editorial meeting with the girls, where I have my desk. This is a small digital editorial group, consisting of five bloggers including me. We have a meeting, where everybody go through their week and their plans. If we need help from each other, then we make an agreement about that. Then afterwards I have an editorial meeting with [telecommunication com-

pany], showing them what I did last week. So we look at what went good, what went wrong. What are we supposed to do this week? If all is planned, do we then need something from each other?"

In order to manage the collaboration process with the telecommunication company, Anette and the telecommunication company uses an app that she installed on her phone and computer. Anette describes:

» It look just as a calendar. Within this system, we place different cards with ideas. On the Monday meetings, we go through these ideas. If you have a comment, you place these comments within the system and there will be a notification. Then I can see that [name telecommunication company] have made a comment on the idea in the system, and then I can go and have a look.

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

"It look just as a calendar. Within this system, we place different cards with ideas. On the Monday meetings, we go through these ideas. If you have a comment, you place these comments within the system and there will be a notification. Then I can see that [name telecommunication company] have made a comment on the

idea in the system, and then I can go and have a look. Then, they may say: 'Yes, we like the idea, but what if you change the perspective or we have to change the date, because at that day something else is happening'".

Anette uses the days between the scheduled meetings, to produce content to her different social media channels. The content, both commercial and non-commercial content, is based on Anette's daily life:

"Like today for instance, it was snowing, so I woke up and made a video-blog about being dissatisfied with the snow outside. And at the moment, I am testing how life is without a smart phone. So therefor I talk about that I woke up and wanted to check snapchat, but I did not have the possibility, because I have this challenge. Then I sit down to produce a video-blog out of that. It can also be a day, where I am inside in my house all day, making a film, taking photos, producing and posting it."

Moreover, what is really important for her is that the content feels authentic:

"For me it is important that it is newly produced. I do not fake things for my followers. It is not like when something is happening I record something at Monday, and I pretend that it is happening at Wednesday. I am very conscious about that."

An ordinary working week for Anette usually includes one or two events. If it is an event the telecommunications company sponsors, she has to attend,

but there are also other events where Anette is free to choose whether to attend or not. The night of the interview Anette will attend a big concert with Ariana Grande with some friends and she has already planned make a post on Snapchat for the telecommunication company.

Planning and work organization

Despite the fast-paced nature social media, every piece of commercial content has to be planned. The telecommunication company has a large infrastructure of professionals working with communications and they have to be prepared for the content Anette produces:

"My customers, they need to know when I will make my postings. It cannot just show up at any time during the week. So we decide in advance. But It is me that decide, because I am the one who know how my schedule are, and when I have time to produce it. [...] They [telecommunication company], have a lot of communication agencies, and this and that. If something is to be posted, then they have to plan ahead, because it has to go through several instances, and maybe they are also supposed to include some sponsorship at Facebook. And then it has to be planned, but for me it could be like from hand to mouth".

To a large extend Anette feels that she is in charge of her own working time, but on one occasion she is not able to deliver within the time frame she set for herself, thus she feels that she is still in a learning process:

"It is usually me that are setting the

» My customers, they need to know when I will make my postings. It cannot just show up at any time during the week. So we decide in advance. But It is me that decide, because I am the one who know how my schedule are, and when I have time to produce it. [...] They [telecommunication company], have a lot of communication agencies, and this and that. If something is to be posted, then they have to plan ahead, because it has to go through several instances, and maybe they are also supposed to include some sponsorship at Facebook. And then it has to be planned, but for me it could be like from hand to mouth

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

deadlines. I am the one that is in charge, and then they approve. And I may say that I am going to make this film on Friday, and then I publish it on Saturday. In my mind, I picture finishing the film during the working hours at Friday. And then it does not go like that at all. Then I have to cancel my agreements on Friday evening, to work with the film. And I have to get up early, Saturday morning and finish the film to post it. In that way I am the only one to blame for missing out on

my weekend, because I did set my own deadline, because I thought I could do it faster. It is a learning process. I am still in the middle of that learning process. It happens quite often, that I work evenings or weekends. On the other hand, unlike others, I can take a weekend or an evening at other times during the week”.

Anette thinks that the pressure of deadlines can be quite stressful, but she does not feel it is a problem:

“Some days I work from morning to night. So of course, there are days, where there is a lot to do. But I do not feel that I am thorn apart in some ways”.

To use yourself and your own life: ‘People might think what they want’. Anette writes about her daily life and sometimes her personal life on her blog. According to Anette, the content she shares at the moment is not intimate, because it is mostly about the renovation of her house or posts for the telecommunication company. However, earlier on Anette has shared private moments of heartbreak:

“When I started blogging, I was very honest about my gloomy thoughts, my broken heart. And I thought that everybody should judge me anyway, due to me taking these choices, that I was to dismiss my job, and my flat. And I was single, unemployed and choosing to live in the forest renovating this house. I thought, ‘everybody will judge me anyway, so I just write what I want, because I am already prejudged’. But actually I only got nice feedback, on these very honest texts”.

The only thing that worries Anette navigating this both personal and public space is when other people than herself is involved:

» And I was single, unemployed and choosing to live in the forest renovating this house. I thought, ‘everybody will judge me anyway, so I just write what I want, because I am already prejudged’

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

“If I am going to post something [personal], I try to think that people may think whatever they want. But I always have to think. If I for instance write about a broken heart, then I try not to paint a gloomy picture if it is about someone else. It should be my real opinion about something and it should be very clearly stated. So that is the only thing that occupies me. People might be offended by my opinions. But I do not want to offend anyone.”

Anette received quite a lot of attention from the traditional media when she blogged about her breakup. Moreover, they depicted Anette’s story.

“The only thing that I have felt somewhat unpleasant is, when I have been in media, I have had some publicity in [name Norwegian newspaper]. I have told my story, and the [name newspaper], has chosen to focus upon ‘Anette was dumped, bla. bla. bla., then she did this’. I am positive

to girl power, but I am not positive when it comes to. I mean. I am not a victim. I have got private response, at the blog, with comments like: 'Oh my god what an idiot he is the guy that dumped you'. There was a lot of people that wrote things like that. And I think; 'wow'. You know, there are two sides of the story. I have not tried to paint a gloomy picture of him. So these thing I feel is like arrh."

'I feel lucky. I know how much I earn every month'

Anette is in privileged position as a blogger. She has a contract lasting for some time. In her former job, Anette worked with bloggers, so she knows that income can vary quite a lot from month to month.

"Firstly, I do not live from month to month. I have a contract lasting for a while, something that is not taken for granted. (...) When I earlier worked with the invoices for the bloggers [in her earlier job], then one month you earned big money, and another month it reduces a lot. So I have this security. I know what I earn every month. And I am lucky because sometimes there can be some extra, but usually I know for sure what I invoice every month, because my contract tells so, the contract is lasting for many months ahead in time. I know, that it is not like that for everybody".

However, Anette is also aware of the disadvantages of working as she does:

"If I should become sick, then I cannot get a sick leave, if I do not do the job, I do not get paid. And actually I do not have any vacation. I have to manage vacation

on my own. And pensions, I just have to establish something on my own."

When Anette is asked, what she would do if she would be offered a fulltime permanent position during the negotiations of the yearly contract, she answers:

"It would depend on how much freedom it would be possible to include into the contract. Hehe, because freedom is the key here. I really do want to be permanently employed, because there is a lot of benefits, you do not have as independent. But I would not like a contract saying that I had to be at the office Monday to Friday, from eight to four. Then it should have been formulated like: 'You are employed with all the benefits it implies. You have to take part in the meetings, and the things that I do now. Otherwise you are able to do what you want."

Working on social media platforms

In the three portraits presenting Sara, Paula, and Anette, we saw that they are all busy developing and using social digital platforms. All three of them work as self-employed, for many hours a week, in a number of different jobs, and with a number of different tasks. This not only requires a rather high level of energy, it also requires a high degree of self-discipline.

They are all very successful and emphasize the joy of choosing their own way and seeing their businesses flourish. Furthermore, all three are 'influencers'. This is a term usually associated with celebrities, bloggers, YouTubers and others, who have such a strong personal brand that companies can use their position in

the social media landscape to get their message through to a specific audience.

» I have got private response, at the blog, with comments like: 'Oh my god what an idiot he is the guy that dumped you'. There was a lot of people that wrote things like that. And I think; 'wow'. You know, there are two sides of the story. I have not tried to paint a gloomy picture of him. So these thing I feel is like arrh

Anette – Influencer and freelance consultant

All the three portraits indicate that working life for them is a very personal project, where the boundaries of what is personal and what is public are constantly being negotiated. This is because their personal lives are exposed in varying degrees to the public as their personal brand. While some problematize or criticize their conditions, for others they become part of a positive self-representation where the youth appears to be successful in most parts of their life, and the problems that might be in their lives are minimized or downplayed.

When they give examples of what seems to be a very hard tone on social Media, the problems are minimized and downplayed. The three influencers portrayed above provide examples of these new types of work. One consequence of this development is ever-increasing exposure of the personal and the affective personal narrative. As described in the introduction, this forms part of an 'affective economy' and forms part of the product being produced, i.e., the personal transforms into a product, which can be part of an economy in which intentions, consumer items and money are exchanged. These mechanisms, inherent in this kind of social media work, and this form of consumer culture merge together and become an affective economy. This affective economy is also present in the working life of professional gamers, as we saw above.

The work-life balance is a challenge, as the young people are working on social media platforms and the personal is transformed into a product. It is impossible, and perhaps meaningless, for these young 'influencers' to distinguish between working life and private life. They also report that they have a lot of sedentary work. They report that they are aware of this and that they keep their body healthy by using different self-care activities.



2.6 Young men in the creative industry (Iceland)

The last two portraits are about creative young men who are both working in the Icelandic creative industry. In some ways, their working life seems to have parallels to the young female entrepreneurs and influencers portrayed in the previous chapter. Dagur works in the film industry as a best boy/ gaffer/ grip or assistant camera operator. Vidar works as a contractor doing different sound engineering gigs, as a DJ, and as a composer in his own studio.

Portrait 13:

Dagur: Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

Dagur is 23. He lives and works in Reykjavik in Iceland. He works in the Icelandic film industry with different aspects of filmmaking. He started as a best boy (assistant) and worked his way to become responsible for electricity (gaffer) or rigging the camera (key grip) or to become assistant camera operator. As a child, he went to many different schools because his mother and his stepfather lived different places in Reykjavik and he stayed a year in LA.

"I have been unusually raised because I have four parents. I have a mum and a stepdad, and a dad and a stepmom. My mother and my stepfather have both been working as independent artists. When she said that she wanted to work as a dancer, she would get looks and people was asking 'Don't you want a real job?' It has become easier now".

» I had a bit of knowledge, because I knew that the red button was for recording. That was more than the others knew. That is really when my interest started.

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

Dagur himself works in the film industry, within working conditions that he knows very well from his upbringing. The

last year in lower secondary education was crucial for Dagur because in the 9th grade he made a film with his friends and became strongly interested in filmmaking:

"I had a bit of knowledge, because I knew that the red button was for recording. That was more than the others knew. That is really when my interest started. After that my friends and I started making short films and doing all kinds of projects. We also worked at Reykjavik Film Festival, or RIFF, and made a short film that was showed there."

His grades in compulsory school were good enough to go to any upper secondary school, but on the advice of his stepfather, he chose a programme in film making in an upper secondary school.

"There I learned about writing scripts, and editing. I got familiar with Kukl, a company that rents out equipment here in Iceland, and started working with RÚV broadcasting station, and learned how to handle live broadcasts. My dad stopped nagging me and I could start doing what I wanted to do, work on films."

Dagur graduated 21 years old, a little delayed because of film making activities.

The way into the film industry: Getting to work as a production assistant and doing the light

Dagur and his friends from lower secondary school decided to make their own short film in when they were 17-18 years old. They were lucky to get recognized and established Icelandic actors to star in their short film. The film even made its

way to the Reykjavik International Film Festival (RIFF):

» Through that, I managed to develop all kinds of relationships. That is the way you enter the business, really. I just call someone or send them a message, and I know this and that guy.

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

“We got good actors on board with us, such as Björn Thors and Þorsteinn Bachman (renowned Icelandic actors), and that film makes it onto RIFF. However, we did not take this film any further, we just did it to gather knowledge and be familiarized with the film industry, both public and private companies. Through that, I managed to develop all kinds of relationships. That is the way you enter the business, really. I just call someone or send them a message, and I know this and that guy.”

Dagur is aware that the success he had with his first film has given him an opportunity within the film industry. Through the making of the film, Dagur developed a large network of contacts he has relied on ever since:

“My first project was a PA, a production assistant who works on set, for a movie by an established director, and here I got to know more people. One of them is a film producer and she got me to help her with a documentary she and her sister

were making. We worked on it for free, and it was a lot of fun. Then some time later (in 2014) she called me because she was producing a film that was financed by the public film fund and later got awards and was a box office success. In this film I assisted on set, as a PA. But there I met a lighting technician, and worked a lot with him and became well acquainted with professional work on lights. I had always worked with the lights when my friends and I made our own amateur projects, but working with this lighting technician opened up the professional world of lighting.

» Afterwards he called me and somehow brought me into that industry, because he said ‘You did well’, and he wanted me to help him. That is how I get to know better these gaffers who work with light and their assistants or best boys, as well as producers. Now I am getting more work and job prospects

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

Afterwards he called me and somehow brought me into that industry, because he said ‘You did well’, and he wanted me to help him. That is how I get to know better these gaffers who work with light and their assistants or best boys, as well as producers. Now I am getting more work and job prospects. Today most people in the business know of me, which is nice, because that give me more projects and

more chances. If someone knows how you work, you will get a job, you do not just get it out of nothing. There is always someone who either knows you, or recommends you”.

Working a a grip

Dagur has mainly worked as a best boy for the light designers (gaffers), or for the technicians who rig up the cameras (the key grips), but in some cases and in some short films he has been the responsible gaffer or key grip.

» Being a gaffer gives me the opportunity to try to take part in the shooting of films. It is a good basis of being a director because a knowledge of lighting is very important.

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

“As a gaffer I work closely with the director in terms of lighting design. He might have a specific vision, or an atmosphere in mind, and would like certain colours or shadows for that. I make those colours or shadows appear, or make them possible. I always bring up suggestion that maybe something like this or that would be good. It is a collaboration in a way, which is really nice. I have also worked as a grip, who is someone who works on the rigging for the cameras, in other words, it is the movements the camera does on the canal. I might have to rig the camera onto a car or something like that. Being a gaffer gives me the opportunity to try to

take part in the shooting of films. It is a good basis of being a director because a knowledge of lighting is very important. I have worked in many fields within the film industry, everything from sets to sound and more, but I have most experience as a gaffer.”

Dagur tells that it is not common to work on so many different aspects of movie making in the Icelandic industry. In the beginning Dagur accepted every job he was offered, meaning that he tried his hands at many different tasks. Eventually he began being working mainly as a production assistant (PA), but he was in fact more interested in becoming a gaffer and afraid to be exclusively cast as a PA:

“I had been a PA (production assistant) for a long time, and then I just decided that I had had enough. I wanted to become a gaffer, not a PA. And if I worked as a PA for any longer, people would only see me as one rather than a gaffer. It really goes up and down. Sometimes I had nothing to do and no cash, and sometimes I had a lot of things to do and some cash.”

Mainly working as a contractor

When Dagur is hired to do a job, he is hired as an independent contractor.

Dagur: “I usually work as a best boy or a gaffer, a grip or an assistant camera operator. When I do that it is as an independent contractor. I just get a contract for what I am supposed to do. But sometimes I also work with someone, like the producer or the producing company, except for that I work independently.”

However, Dagur also has his own company, which he sometimes uses to do subcontracts for production companies. His company is small, he says, but it is in the process of becoming bigger.

» I usually work as a best boy or a gaffer, a grip or an assistant camera operator. When I do that it is as an independent contractor. I just get a contract for what I am supposed to do. But sometimes I also work with someone, like the producer or the producing company, except for that I work independently.

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

“Sometimes I do sub-contracts for production companies, private or public, and at the present I am trying to organize a film production, I have contacted some of the main companies in broadcasting and filming in Iceland and I have applied for the IFF (The Icelandic Film Fund) too. I am trying to gather funds.”

Occasionally Dagur hires his own assistants, but he tells that the people he hires still have a contract directly with the producer.

“You sometimes need to fight to get paid. That comes with being a contractor.”

The producing company always provides salary and handles payments for completed work. However, it is not uncommon not to be paid. Dagur tells that there are still a few projects that he was never paid for.

“But that comes with being a contractor. You sometimes need to fight to get paid. Once I send a bill, the company has 30 days to pay me, and some companies today still do this! Thus, sometimes, I have been working on a project for a month before I send the invoice in. That means that there are times where I do not get any income for two months.”

If the company does not pay after 30 days, Dagur tells that he usually calls them and sends them a message. Nevertheless, at times it has gone even further and he needed a lawyer to collect his salary. Further Dagur tells about a project he worked on where the director cheated all the contractors:

» You need to be very careful. It is really your responsibility to make sure you will get paid and keep an eye on all of it.

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

“You need to be very careful. It is really your responsibility to make sure you will get paid and keep an eye on all of it. Last January I worked with the production for a film where the director himself handled the financial aspects of it. We (the contractors) did not really find out until we

had shot the film, that he had been lying to us and that he had betrayed us. So we just stopped our partnership, and stepped forward, told the truth and told the employees what they have to do to get their pay slips paid. But there are still some people who have not yet been paid at all. I try to fight for them. I go to meetings and I criticize the producers, telling them that this kind of thing is not ok."

Day rates, flat rates, and long hours

Dagur explains that the working conditions in the Icelandic film industry are slowly getting better. When Dagur is paid for his work he usually gets at day rate, but flat rates with one final sum for a whole period are still used in the industry:

"I have a specific amount that I charge. For example, I charge around 45-50 thousand ISK a day [about 320-350 Euro], and as a contract, the tax collected is between 20-30% of the pay slip. I try to raise my price as time goes, but for longer projects that have little funding, we usually negotiate a flat rate for the whole process. If we work overtime, we are not paid more. Overtime is really counted as being part of the final sum. That is a flat rate. But doing a flat rate is not the best. The film making industry here is not big and it is really difficult to raise the money that we need. We are finally getting more funding for the Icelandic film industry, so we are finally getting normal pay instead of having to negotiate for flat rates. Flat rate just makes you work more than you are paid for".

In addition to the struggles with the salary, Dagur tells that a typical workday

is around 12 hours. Typically, the day is proceeds with 5-6 hours of work, half an hour break and then work again the remaining hours. Dagur tells that the whole film industry is working towards becoming better organised and a labour union are in the making:

"In Icelandic film making it is usually like that, at least 12 hours or more. But we are working to fix that. We are finally getting a labour union that we can look to and will take care of us, so that producers will not use us too much. 12 hours per day is a lot of work, and in Europe, it is usually only 10 hours, which is a lot better. We usually work around 5-6 days a week. So you either work for 5 days, off work for 2 days, work 5 days, or you work six days, get one day off, then work six again. These bouts of work can last up to 3 months or half a year, or for only two weeks. It differs a lot."

» In Icelandic film making it is usually like that, at least 12 hours or more. But we are working to fix that.

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

Working environment: Heavy cameras and mental pressure

When Dagur is operating a camera, he has to take care of his back. He is often required to carry the heavy camera on his shoulder or do specific movements while carrying the camera.



Photo: Jakob Owens / Unsplash



Photo: Jonas Jacobsson / Unsplash



Photo: Jakob Owens / Unsplash

"I need to be careful, especially when I am operating the camera [...] Stress that eventually goes to my back. But I try to keep an eye on it. I go swimming regularly and stretch my back. When I am holding heavy things over my shoulder, I try to spread the weight equally between them. I am very much a right-handed person. Therefore I throw everything over my right shoulder. It is not good for my back because that strains other muscles more, which makes my back worse. I have recently felt my lower back aching up."

Filming does not only apply stress to Dagur's body, but also his mental health is sometimes on the line as the work can be quite stressful. For Dagur the mental side of his work can also be quite stressful.

"In film producing there is a lot of mental pressure. You often get stressed, but it does pay in the end because you are doing something you are happy with. It is also very stressful for your body and soul that is why many people in the industry look a lot older than they are. It is all that stress."

Dagur describes how his work was stressful during his first years in the industry, but now he has found a way to prevent him from being stressed:

"But it also relies on your attitude. [...] When I looked at the persons around me, and my role models. I could see that a certain person was not stressed, or they were taking it easy. And then you start working more like that. Consequently, I have started to become calmer on set and I have stopped worrying too much. I

have started to see that it does not pay off to worry too much, because it affects your mental health immensely."

Further Dagur tells that he has begun meditating a lot more than previous and the meditation helps him during busy times:

"I have started to meditate more than I did five years ago. I do not need longer than half an hour to do it. Two minutes can be just enough, to get your breathing down and your head to the right place instead of being all over."

Holidays, friends and family: Work takes up all of my time

When working on a project Dagur is working long hours, but that does not mean he allows himself to take longer breaks in-between projects. On the contrary, Dagur rarely has longer breaks from work. During the last year, his planned time off has eventually been overtaken by new work commitments:

"Last year I worked for 350 days. I had one day off in January. In February, and half of March I knew I had around two weeks where I could have had a holiday before doing another two month long project. But I actually took on a small commercial job for those two weeks, so I did not really get any time off, before I started the new project. I was in the north of Iceland for a month and a half for the film, and then two weeks in Reykjavík or Akranes (a small city nearby Reykjavík). After that I knew I had another two weeks before a three month long project started. Those two weeks I ended up working again, and so on. I always

thought I would have some time off, but it ended up not being the case. For example, I thought I would have the day off today, but yesterday I got two phone calls asking me if I was free for work today. So you never really know when you have some time off work, but you need to be careful. You do not realize it when you are working, but when you get some time off, you realize that you have been working way too much, and that is not good for your mental health."

» I do not have many friends from school or my childhood. I am in no contact with them at all because this industry does not really allow a lot of time off. I am not really good at visiting my family even because my work takes up all of my time.

Dagur – Best boy, gaffer, grip and assistant camera operator

Working so much of his time makes it difficult for Dagur to stay in touch with friends and family.

"I do not have many friends from school or my childhood. I am in no contact with them at all because this industry does not really allow a lot of time off. I am not really good at visiting my family even because my work takes up all of my time. I need to fix it and make it better, but it takes a while to do. You will steadily find the balance point. But that is something that comes with the industry."

The future: I want to make beautiful frames that capture a story

Regarding his plans for the future, Dagur tells that the economic uncertainty that characterizes his work life does not worry him.

"My upbringing probably helps as they are both artists and through them I have got familiar to the concept of having no income sometimes and little income other times. I know that being an artist does not bring in the dough. But that really does not matter to me. I can live on 100 thousand ISK a month. There is always a way, as long as I enjoy what I am doing, I am happy."

Dagur's plans for the future lie with in the film industry. He is happy about the work he currently does, but he wants to become a director, but in order to become that, he must study and go to school.

"That is the big question [plans for the future]. I am torn between two things. What I want to do is to be a filmmaker, but to become that I need to study, to go to school."

Dagur's main drive though is the film making in itself.

"What I like the most is to produce films and make beautiful frames that capture a story and show it in the best way possible. That is what I like best: To make something for the audience, something new, and experiment. At the moment my dream is to make films that will live long after I have passed away that I will leave something behind. But I do not

know what the future will bring. I am very happy where I am right now and where I am going."

But he adds:

"I hope, that I will be accepted into the school, but the odds are not in my favour. Out of 300 only eight are accepted."

Portrait 14:

Viðar: Composer, DJ and contractor as a sound engineer

Viðar is 27 years old. He lives with his girlfriend, in an apartment in Reykjavik. He has a Bachelor degree from the Iceland Academy of the Arts, and he has studied Recording and Audio Mixing. What he likes to do most is music. He has been working independently with audio mixing since he graduated half a year ago. His work life consists of three different parts: He works as a contractor doing different sound engineering gigs, as a DJ, and as a composer.

The main part of Viðars work is as a contractor for a company that rents out sound systems. However, he also works independently recording concerts, DJ'ing and so on, but those activities are not affiliated with the company.

Both of Viðar parents are musicians and work irregular hours like Viðar. He has grown up with both his parents often working in the evenings. They work on the stage while Viðar has taken up a career behind the scenes working with sound engineering.

Working as a contractor, wages and working conditions

Viðars work as a contractor is very diverse. The company Viðar works for (as a contractor) rents out sound systems, speakers, screens and projectors for conferences. He drives a company car to the venue and Viðars task is to assemble and disassemble the rented items. Sometimes he sets up screens, sometimes he maintains the role of the sound engineer

and manage the sound, the microphones, audio recordings and so on. Sometimes he manages live streams on the internet and deals with cameras and the streaming process. Viðar tells that the work is distributed through phone calls:

"I get a phone call: "Are you available on Wednesday and Thursday? We have this project that we need to do". They contact me, and I then have to move other projects I may have."

Viðar tells that it varies a lot how long time in advance he is asked. Sometimes he is even asked the same day if he can work:

"I might be asked: "Are you free tomorrow?" or "Are you free today?". I have worked for them for half a year now so I have gotten more involved. A couple of days ago I was working and I was asked if I could work next Wednesday, the Saturday the week after, and such."

» I get a phone call: "Are you available on Wednesday and Thursday? We have this project that we need to do". They contact me, and I then have to move other projects I may have.

Viðar – Composer, DJ and contractor as a sound engineer

I can have a glance around 3-4 weeks ahead in time. But sometimes there are projects that suddenly become available. We might get a word on the same day that there is a conference, and so on. It

does happen quite often that they need to have something done right away. We always try to be able to react right away, even though that may not always be possible."

The company has three owners and 5-10 contractors. Viðar tells that the owners of the company are the ones that are working the most; often they just use one contractor per week. Viðar and the other contractors 'join in' and works with the owners. Viðar tells, that his hourly wage is so good, that he can work for three days a week per month and still get what for him is a full monthly wage. It gives him room to do more of the other projects he is doing. He tells that it suits him well for the time being.

"I sometimes get my own projects for a few weeks, and whilst I do those I am not working for the company. I would just tell them that I am shooting a TV series for the next few weeks, and that I am unable to work. And they'll tell me it's alright. I am not in any way contracted to come to work whenever they wish".

**A normal working week:
Often it feels like the very first day at work, it is very diverse**

The week before the interview Viðar worked for the company renting out conference equipment four days, he describes a typical workday for the company.

"I arrived at 9am, sorted out the inventory, and prepared orders or packages for delivery. Then, last Wednesday, there was a conference at the University so I arrived there shortly after lunch at 1pm and man-

aged the sound system. I had to watch over the mics and then we had to pack up the system at 5pm. So for the company that was a 9-5 workday.

When Viðar began working for the company he was introduced to the work, but on his first job, he still felt new to the job:

"Sometimes I feel like every workday at the company is my very first day at work. Because you arrive and you do something completely different to what you did the day before (...).

One of my first jobs was taking care of the stage at the shopping Centre for Christmas, audio mixing for a Christmas act. It was like being thrown into the deep end of the pool. I just showed up and – there is not a lot of help really. They just go over with you how things work, but then you have to find out things by yourself".

» Sometimes I feel like every workday at the company is my very first day at work. Because you arrive and you do something completely different to what you did the day before (...)

Viðar – Composer, DJ and contractor as a sound engineer

This is a basic feature of Viðars work for the company. He is always sent out to different venues and different events:

"The company gets projects booked with them and we do the projects. It can be

anything. Yesterday I was live streaming for reading competition for children at a bookstore. There were kids reading comics and I operated the camera and streamed it for a website. I had never done anything like that before. I was basically just told something like; 'you need to do this now'. This is why I often feel like it is always my very first day at the job."

When Viðar is not working for the company, he works as an independent sound engineer. He records sound for a TV show and those days can be quite long:

"If I am recording sound for a TV show that is starting this autumn on RÚV, I arrive at 8-9am in the morning at the shooting location. I record an interview, pack it all up, and go to the next location and so on. That day we went to four locations, so I worked until evening. So there are longer days as well."

However, other days Viðar works in a studio he runs with some friends. In the studio, he records music, work on his own music and occasionally they have recorded sound for TV series:

"For a normal day at work, if I am showing up at the studio, and there I am a bit more free to do my own things. I arrive in the morning and if I am not working on something that is on a deadline, I work as much as I want to. I am not paying any attention to the clock. If I am DJ-ing, I prepare for that during the day, and arrive at around 10pm and work until 5am the next morning. So it is not always the same things."

When Viðar is asked how he gets booked

for the freelance assignment he answers:

“Good question (laughs). It is a bit like a buddy system. I have not really been advertising that I am doing this kind of thing. It is just how the small Icelandic community is.”

How many working hours?

Viðar cannot really set a number on how many working hours he has a week because his work life is so changing.

“It depends really. I have had a lot to do for the last two months because I had been doing assignments that required a 9-5 schedule. So maybe like last March, I was working for 4 days a week. I would not really consider my DJ job as a job. It is also a hobby for me. It does not feel like I am going to work, because I love doing it. I forget to think of that as work. However, I have difficulties answering this question because my working hours are so irregular”.

However, Viðar says that he believes that he works less than 40 hours a week.

Working environment: Lifting and stress

For Viðar it is obvious that there is a lot of stress related to the way that he is working. The stress comes with the job, he says:

“You are usually responsible for many things. If something goes wrong, it is somehow your fault. If they have booked a contractor, then there is a lot of pressure and a lot of stress that comes with it. However, at the same time, time goes by quickly in that way. Adrenalin

and excitement also comes with it, so it both good and bad. However, you probably need to be a certain type of person, someone that will not just freak out.”

» Adrenalin and excitement also comes with it, so it both good and bad. However, you probably need to be a certain type of person, someone that will not just freak out.

Viðar – Composer, DJ and contractor as a sound engineer

As a sound manager working behind the scene, you also have to lift many heavy objects and even though Viðar tells that he has trolleys available for him he still has to lift speakers and so on from the car and onto the trolley and again onto a rack, and the other way around when packing down.

“I had not mentioned this before, but this is a tough job physically. We often have to lift heavy objects around. I can feel that my body is tired if I have been working for a long time. Because of all the lifting in and out of cars, up and down the stairs and so on. If I were to end up with any back problems, I would not be able to do this job any longer.”

Viðar is very much aware that he is not secured in his working life:

“If I were to have an accident, I probably would not do so well because it could mean I would need to quit. At least, for now, I hope that will not happen.”



Photo: iStock



Photo: krys Amon / Unsplash



Photo: Marvin Meyer / Unsplash

Working as a DJ: It is more personal, you represent a specific brand

In addition to the work for the company renting out conference equipment and his independent sound engineering, Viðar is working as a DJ playing house, dance and techno. Viðar tells that he would not be able to live of being a DJ in Iceland; his income would be too low. For Viðar it is a passion, he only plays music that he likes.

"I started DJ-ing, or playing music for places of entertainment, like dances and clubs. I play certain music and I get booked for that kind of music rather than something else. It kind of entails making yourself represent a specific brand, or a type. Therefore, it takes a while to be noticed and get bookings. I play mostly house, dance, techno, and that kind of music, and there are really only two places that offer those kinds of gigs."

Viðar has chosen to DJ because of his passion for music. In the beginning he mainly DJ'ed because of the pay, but he has made the choice to play music he likes:

"When you start, you really just have to do something to earn some good cash. But then you either want to continue doing that and do it like a job. Or it becomes more of a passion, and you start playing music that you like. You cannot just play these top pop hits. It becomes more personal, and you start to represent something. It is about how you want people to perceive you. Or what you want to represent."

The DJ'ing is not just a night job, but it

also requires preparations such as identifying new music, prepare playlists:

"If I get a normal gig, I just prepare a playlist of songs I've been listening to on a daily basis for a while. When I'm working on the computer, I'm listening to music, checking e-mails, and finding new tracks and putting them on playlists. Then I need to buy the music, download it and put it on an USB. There's a lot of preparation, but it's more spread out. But you know it takes a while, so you try to work on it all the time."

» If I have been working for a long while then it is good for me to take a day off on a Monday and just do nothing. You cannot work all days in a month. However, if you work more, you are paid more.

Viðar – Composer, DJ and contractor as a sound engineer

Viðar's job as a DJ also keeps him from having the weekends off as he DJ's most weekends:

"No, not really. I do the DJ work on the weekends so I am not really used to have the weekends off. What I try to do, when I am working weekends, is to take one day off midweek. If I have been working for a long while then it is good for me to take a day off on a Monday and just do nothing. You cannot work all days in a month. However, if you work more, you are paid more, so it really depends on what you

want. And sometimes there are not that many projects, and that gives you plenty of days off work. Therefore, you just need to find a way to balance it out”.

Sometimes Viðar works for the company renting out equipment for conferences in the daytime and DJ's in the night. On those days he works around 15 hours and they are tough says Viðar, adding that it fortunately does not happen very often.

You are always representing yourself

When DJ'ing Viðar feels that, he represents a specific preference in music. Viðar's own taste becomes the reason he is hired for a DJ gig. However, Viðar tells that this feeling of always representing himself transcends into most of his working life:

“You need to be able to keep an eye on everything. Being organized is important because you might forget to turn up where you need to turn up at, and such. You could be a really good sound engineer but if you are bad at communication, you will not get any work because the most important part is that element. People will remember you for being nice, or for being tedious or difficult. You are always representing yourself.”

Viðar stresses that the most important skill in his working life is the ability to relate to people. When working, Viðar is always talking to people, listening to them:

“If you are bad at communicating, you will not do well. You need to be a bit, how shall I say this, tolerant or patient. Often you are blamed for something you did

not do, or if something goes wrong with stuff that you do not have anything to do with, people might take their irritation out on you. So you need to know how just to go: “Hey, I am doing my best here” and not just get angry and irritated and fight back. And what else? (...) You cannot stress too much over things. You need to be more chilled. That is what it is really about, being good at human relations, being calm and well organized.”

Doing unpaid work

Viðar describes how he during his education sometimes would work free:

“When I was in my last year of school, I took a few unpaid projects because I decided it would be good for me to get some more experience. I thought: “Yes, I recorded music for a short film for free.”

Viðar tells that short films and films do not often have big budgets to pay all contributors to a production. Recently Viðar declined to work as an unpaid sound engineer on a short film, because he is already occupied with other paid projects. Once he graduated, he made an active decision to say no to unpaid work unless it is for a friend. The short film Viðar turned down was actually made by a friend, which made it a bit more difficult to refuse.

“But once I graduated, I started saying no to unpaid work. It takes a while... You can work for free if you offer to do something. But I am not doing that now. Not unless my friends needed something. Or, I don't know, it would need to be a special favour for me to ask for no pay. Otherwise I would not do it, unless it were some sort

of special concert, for relief or anything like that. But I try to avoid all projects that I won't get paid for."

Economic uncertainty: If I am sick, I just miss work

Viðar is in the middle of a process where he is learning how to balance periods of free time with periods of much work; periods with no pay and periods of wage income. Since he has lots of work, he is currently most engaged in how to manage his own time right, but the economic uncertainty is also an issue:

» My work is still quite unreliable. I mean, if there are no projects, you get no salary. That makes me the sole person responsible for how things are doing. There is not a lot of support for that kind of things. I have no rights because I am a contractor. If I am sick, I just miss work and I do not get sick leave

Viðar – Composer, DJ and contractor as a sound engineer

"My work is still quite unreliable. I mean, if there are no projects, you get no salary. That makes me the sole person responsible for how things are doing. There is not a lot of support for that kind of things. I have no rights because I am a contractor. If I am sick, I just miss work and I do not get sick leave. These kinds of things as

a contractor are thus very dangerous. Or, at least, quite insecure in terms of becoming sick and missing work, getting compensation and such. That is a clear disadvantage."

During the time of the interview, Viðar did not know what his income during the summer would look like. He had work planned for the next couple of months, but his planned work does not extend so far into the future. In order to secure himself, Viðar has a savings account for months without pay. Nevertheless, the months without pay free time to make music:

"There are months where I have a ridiculous amount of free time, and that is the time when I get really busy making music. That is a balance that I am trying to get used to. A balance I am trying to learn how to deal with."

Viðar finished his degree and has worked independently for six months at the time of the interview. During those six months, it has never been a problem to find work; in fact, he has been quite busy and has had to decline many projects because his schedule was full. Despite of his apparent success, Viðar remains uncertain of his preference for his working life, thus acknowledging the stress it also produces:

"I am in a very privileged position because I can control what I will do and not do, at least so far. At the same time, if I do not have a lot to do in one work place, I try to do more in the other. The freedom that I have is governed by the projects I undertake. It is stressful to a certain degree,

yes, but at the same time I enjoy that I am doing so many diverse things, and that I have my fingers in many pies."

The future: It suits my life pattern right now

Regarding his plans for the future, Viðar tells that he does not wish to change anything about his working life now:

» There are months where I have a ridiculous amount of free time, and that is the time when I get really busy making music. That is a balance that I am trying to get used to. A balance I am trying to learn how to deal with.

Viðar – Composer, DJ and contractor as a sound engineer

"It suits me very well where I am right now. I enjoy it and I enjoy having a lot to do. But maybe in a few years, this will not suit me as it does with my life pattern now. Maybe then, I just want to work for set hours and know how much I am being paid. [...] In the future I think that I would like to study more, but for now I am good."

Working in creative industries

The two young men portrayed are both very successful and upcoming. They both enjoy their working life, but for

both of them, working as contractors in the creative industry also has negative consequences. For example, Dagur says that he worked for 350 days last year, which made it difficult to see family and friends. They both have demanding jobs and they often have to find solutions in unknown and complex working situations. As Dagur says: "I often feel like it is my very first day at work". Getting fair and good working conditions and payment is a struggle for both of them.

They are also both aware of their working environment, and they say that there is a lot of stress related to the way that their work is organised. This stress comes when they are responsible as contractors if things go wrong. Viðar says that even if he has trolleys available, he still has to lift speakers and so on from the car, onto the trolley, and again onto a rack, and behind the stage – there is a lot of heavy lifting too. "This is a tough job physically," Viðar says. Dagur is often required to carry a heavy camera on his shoulder or to do specific movements while carrying the camera on his shoulder. They both need to solve such working-environment problems at individual level, by themselves. They are also aware of that days off or periods with sickness absence are days without payment. It is likely, that the creative industry is similar in the other Nordic countries, even though the Icelandic film industry represents a smaller community, and might be organised differently.

3.

Working environment and risks among young people with atypical work

In the previous 14 portraits, we have explored how working life is being shaped for young people working in atypical employment. The characteristics of their working environment might be familiar to the reader, as they bear a resemblance to conditions known from standard employment forms.

However, some of the characteristics seem to be more extreme, e.g. very long working hours, physically demanding work for many consecutive hours and boundaryless work, which also involves affective work among the influencers and gamers. In the following we present the characteristics of the working environment for six types of atypical work.

It is not easy to explore all new forms of employment through usual register data and surveys. However, we have included data on the risk of accidents among young people, which shows an increased risk for some types of atypical employment forms.



3.1 Results of interview data (portraits)

In table 3.1 and in the following summary, we review the working-environment themes and risks associated with the atypical working life reported by the young people portrayed. It is important to stress that the characteristics are based on these 14 portraits, and we present no data on the prevalence of these problems among all young people in atypical work. The aim of the portraits is to identify possible working-environment problems related to the various types of atypical work and related to the employment characteristics.

The new and digital forms of work represented by the portraits in this report indicate that the limits of what we traditionally have understood as employment have to be reconsidered, if future

initiatives and policies regarding the working environment are also to benefit this group of young people.

The characteristics of the working environment among these young workers can be recognized from more traditional or standard employment forms. However, some of the characteristics seem to be more extreme, e.g. very long working hours, physically demanding work and boundaryless work. Constant availability and being required to appear at their workplace at very short notice make long-term planning difficult for some of these young people. They also report on the lack of income security, and that a number of issues merge together and expose them to a new and more intensive form of work.

| Types of atypical work | Characteristics of employment | Characteristics of working environment |
|---|--|---|
| Gaming (e-sport) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed-term contract • Monthly salary plus supplementary income (e.g., bonuses, streaming, subscribers and Twitch). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours (usually 12-16 hours a day) • Irregular, evening and night work (adjusting to time zones for tournaments and when subscribers are active) • Boundaryless work – borders between work and private life highly blurred. • Organisation of work: challenge to manage, prioritize and plan work activities • Mainly sedentary work, difficult to have breaks • Demanding physically and psychologically, work tasks with high intensity. • Reported problems with neck and shoulder, sleeping disorders and stress-related symptoms and illnesses. |
| Work via digital platforms (off-line- and online work) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solo self-employed • No fixed or stable income • Work tasks (gigs) via social digital platforms • Hourly pay or fee, often negotiated • Lack of income security • Usually many shifting workplaces/tasks during a short period of time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours (about 12 hours a day) • Boundaryless work: work/family borders fluid • Lack of colleges, training and support • Online performance evaluations with the use of 'likes' • Reported neck and back pains, stress-related illness, risk of accidents • Availability 24/7 • Organisation of work: challenge to manage, prioritize and plan work activities. |
| Influencers via social media platforms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solo self-employed • Usually also temporary contracts • Hourly pay or fee, supplementary income (sponsorships etc.) • Lack of income security. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours • Boundaryless work – borders between work and private life fluid. • Organisation of work: challenge to manage, prioritize and plan work activities • Hard tone on social media • Stress and sleeping difficulties • Neck and back pain. |

Table continues next page ▶

Table 3.1. Characteristics of employment and working environment for six types of atypical work based on 14 portraits of young people in the Nordic countries

| Types of atypical work | Characteristics of employment | Characteristics of working environment |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Flexible work arrangements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing working schedules and working hours from day to day • Time limited work arrangement • Involuntary part-time position • Supplementary working hours offered with short notice (Facebook, text messages) • Lack of income security. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of opportunity for long-term planning • Many physically hard work tasks • Working alone without support • Lack of training and support • Stressful to be available and ready to work 24/7 • Challenges with work/life balance. |
| Temporary agency work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary agency employment • More than one job in the same period of time • Many shifting jobs and workplaces over a period of time • Changing work schedules and working hours from day to day • Supplementary working hours offered via telephone calls with short notice • Lack of income security. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constantly changing tasks and work situations • Many physically hard work tasks • Lack of training and support when new • Lack of colleagues and a social community • Lack of opportunity for long-term planning • Constant demand for availability and readiness to work is seen as stressful. |
| Work in creative industries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different sources of income in the same period of time (includes self-employment and funding) • Temporary contracts • Fees (payments when task is completed) • Very short response periods, when offered jobs (sometimes the same day) • Lack of income security. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long working hours (typically 12–16 hours a day) • Evening, weekend, and night work • Few breaks and holidays • Work is demanding both physically and mentally • Reported neck and back pains • Constant availability is stressful • Boundaries between work and privacy are fluid and unclear • Work situations, tasks and workplaces are ever changing • Lack of opportunity for long-term planning. |

Table 3.1. continued

Table 3.1. Characteristics of employment and working environment for six types of atypical work based on 14 portraits of young people in the Nordic countries

3.2 Results of analysis of Labour Force Survey data

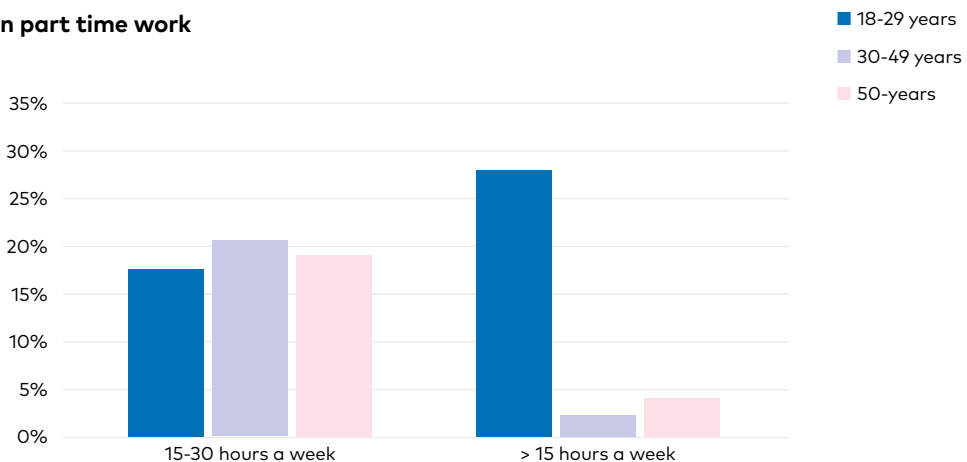
Information on part-time work, temporary work, fixed-term contracts and consequences for occupational accidents was available from the Labour Force Survey data in 2007 and 2013 (Statistics Denmark, 2019). We made analyses for three age groups: 18-29 years 30-49 years and 50+ years. We investigated the proportion of young workers in the age group 18-29 years with one of these three types of atypical employment forms and compared the results with the other age groups. The results are shown in the figures below.

The proportion of young people working part-time in Denmark is significantly higher than for the other age groups.

This applies in particular to marginalised part-time work, defined as less than 15 hours work a week. Mostly young workers work for less than 15 hours a week, and many of them are young people with a job besides their studies. This work pattern in particular applies to Danish workers, as the proportion of marginalised part-time work is less in the other Nordic countries (Rasmussen, 2018).

The proportion of people in temporary employment is highest in the age group 18-29 years. This is partly related to youths working besides their studies and partly expresses young people having difficulties in getting a foothold in the labour market.

In part time work



Proportional, in percentage

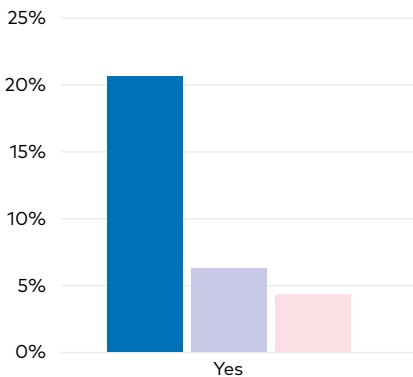
Figure 1: The proportion of part-time work among employed people in three age groups, in Denmark (Statistics Denmark, 2019).

This is also associated with a higher proportion of young people working on fixed work contracts with an end date (Figure 3).

In Table 3.2 below, the risk of occupational accidents is shown for the three employment forms: part-time work, temporary agency work and fixed-term contracts. For people working on marginalised part-time work there is an increased risk of occupational accidents for all age groups, compared to people on normal working hours, whereas part-time work between 15 hours and 30 hours indicates a lower risk for the group of young people.

The proportion of people in temporary employment is highest in the age group 18-29 years. This is partly related to youths working besides their studies and partly expresses young people having difficulties in getting a foothold in the labour market.

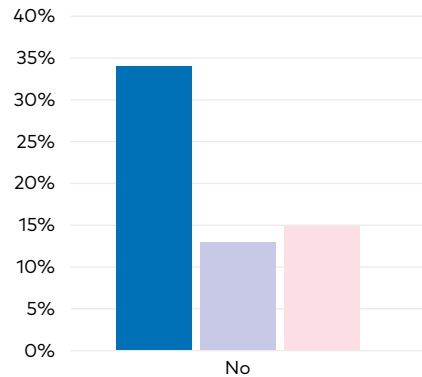
Temporary work



Proportional, in percentage

Figure 2: The proportion of temporary work among employed people in three age groups, in Denmark (Statistics Denmark, 2019).

Fixed-term contract



Proportional, in percentage

Figure 3: The proportion of fixed-term contracts among employed people in three age groups, in Denmark (Statistics Denmark, 2019).

In addition, there is an increased risk of occupational accidents for the group of young people doing temporary agency work, compared to those not doing temporary agency work. Such an increased risk is not seen for the other two age groups.

There does not seem to be any significant difference in risk between those working on fixed-term contracts and those who do not work on fixed-term contracts, although the risk seems to be a little higher for young people on fixed-term contracts (Table 3.2.).

The proportion of young people working in the three atypical employment forms presented above is higher than for age groups above 29 years. Marginalised part-time work, temporary agency and fixed-term contracts are associated with

a higher risk of occupational accidents. These employment forms are characteristic of the young people portrayed in this report. Another characteristic of the young people included here is that they work many hours a week. An earlier study on the LFS data found no association between long working weeks and risk of occupational injuries (Larsen AD, 2017). However, this previous study defined long working weeks as more than 48 hours, which is relatively short compared to working weeks of about 70 hours for some of the cases included in the portraits. In addition, solo self-employed work is also represented among the young people portrayed, but we could not obtain data on the risk of occupational accidents for this type of work. We have not investigated other working-environment outcomes in this report, but this would be relevant in future studies.

| | 18-29 year | 30-49 year | 50+ year | Total |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------|-------|
| Part-time work ¹ | | | | |
| > 30 hrs a week | 7.8% | 4.4% | 3.6% | 4.6% |
| 15-30 hrs a week | 4.9% | 4.5% | 5.3% | 4.8% |
| < 15 hrs a week | 11.0% | 14.8% | 9.9% | 11.1% |
| Temporary agency work: | | | | |
| No | 4.7% | 4.4% | 3.5% | 4.2% |
| Yes | 8.3% | 4.8% | 3.1% | 6.2% |
| Fixed-term contract: | | | | |
| No | 3.0% | 4.0% | 2.9% | 3.3% |
| Yes | 4.6% | 3.9% | 3.5% | 3.9% |

¹ The rate of occupational injuries is adjusted with the average working hours for each of the three groups.

Table 3.2. Rate of occupational accidents among employed people for various types of atypical employment forms, in percentage (Statistics Denmark, 2019).

4.

Discussion and conclusions

We have interviewed young people with new and atypical employment forms in the Nordic countries and asked them about how they experience their working life and their working environment.

The results were presented as 14 portraits of young Nordic people working in new and atypical employment forms. The portraits provide a detailed and integrated description of the working life of these young people.

The aim was to contribute to important insights into employment forms, daily practices, perspectives and future orientation in their work.

We also asked the young people about their working life and working-environment problems they might encounter during their activities. We have endeavoured to include young people who represent new forms of work that challenge current categories and definitions of work and employment in the Nordic countries.

However, there might be types of work in this new and emerging field that we have not encountered in our search for atypical employment forms.



Photo: Friscille du Preez / Unsplash

Categorizing the different types of atypical work in a simple table like the one above is not straightforward. The portraits in this report explain why. Each of the new forms of work listed in table 3.1 above represents a variety of work and employment arrangements. Most of the young people portrayed have several jobs at the same time (up to five jobs), or a number of different jobs over short periods. Exactly how many is often difficult to ascertain. For some, it may be difficult to explain exactly how their work is actually organised and paid, because there are many different types of employment and payroll benefits at work. The actual employer (if they have one) often appears to be unclear.

Most of the young people portrayed have several jobs at the same time (up to five jobs), or a number of different jobs over short periods. Exactly how many is often difficult to ascertain.

Several of the young people included have different types of temporary and flexible employments. These young people are far from alone in having temporary and extremely flexible employments. The extent of part-time work, underemployment and non-permanent work is increasing in all of the Nordic countries, and in particular among young employees under 30 (Statistiska Centralbyrån,

2015a; Statistiska Centralbyrån 2015b; Aagestad et al., 2015; Hanvold et al., 2016; Kines et al., 2013; Scheuer, 2011; Scheuer, 2014). For some young people, these types of employment can be stepping-stones to more stable work, but for other young people this is not the case.

For some young people, these types of employment can be stepping-stones to more stable work, but for other young people this is not the case.

Stepping-stones?

The portraits presented can thus be seen as examples of young workers who all inhabit different positions in a transition 'to and through the labour market' (MacDonald, 2009). The transitions to and through the labour market are characterized by 'multiple dropouts, detours and seemingly dead ends' rather than 'smooth operations' (Pless, 2013; Plug & du Bois-Reymond, 2006).

We identified a number of quite diverse paths between studying and work in the portraits, for example, the gamers Eirik and Nicolai see their gaming career as a period in their youth. At the end of this life phase, they hope to establish themselves in a more permanent career through education. Their life course resembles football players, pop stars, fashion models etc. in the way that they consider it a limited period of their working life and in the longer run they will have to find their way into other activities.

Brynja, who has a short time horizon in her temporary unskilled job and can be categorized as a 'sabbatical year worker', represents another path (Nielsen et al., 2013). Her job provides an opportunity to work long hours and save money for her 'gap year' before she starts her university studies. Brynja's working situation is temporary, and she does not think of this work as a stepping stone to a career and future job. For both the gamers and for Brynja, the negative consequences of their working environment are thus restricted to a shorter period, if they avoid accidents and health implications. In his book, *The Precariat*, Guy Standing divided youth into two groups: 'The Grinners' and 'The Groaners':

We find it important to distinguish between young people in a transitional phase in their life, like Eirik, Nicolai and Brynja, and young employees who are more or less stuck in their work situation and thus at risk of ending up in precarious employment.

"Among youth, the 'grinners' are students and travelling backpackers, happy to take casual jobs with no long-term future; the 'groaners' are those unable to enter the labour market through apprenticeships or the equivalent, or competing with 'cheaper' old aagers with no need for enterprise benefits." (Standing, 2011 p. 59).

We find it important to distinguish between young people in a transitional phase in their life, like Eirik, Nicolai and Brynja, and young employees who are more or less stuck in their work situation and thus at risk of ending up in precarious employment (Nielsen et al., 2018).

Stefan the carpenter and Stefan the entrepreneur also see their present life as a chapter in their life story, but they believe that their future will be built upon their present working life, and thus they see their digital platform work as a 'stepping-stone' to their future work (MacDonald, 2009).

Many of them describe their life as a journey 'up the ladder', where they gather resources, experiences and contacts.

Devran and Anders are at the entry point of their working life. They have a foothold in the labour market, but not yet the stable job they are striving to get. However, they represent a group of young workers at risk of being involuntarily caught in social and financial insecurity (Nielsen et al., 2017a). Lars' and Julia's life course and future orientations are similar, though not quite the same. They both seem to be making their way to a more stable working situation, which they also want to achieve. However, Lars has a new life situation with financial and social responsibility for a family, which means that the insecurity he has had for many years is now experienced as 'a bloody hell'. He plans to make his way out of it through education.

Solo self-employed – creative workers and influencers

The life plans of some of these young workers are not characterized by a choice of either security or insecurity. They are all in many ways adjusting to insecurity as a life-long condition. A number of them appreciate their present life, and they do not seem to be aiming at more secure positions on the labour market, but those who seem more vulnerable are striving for strongholds like education or long-term contracts. Many of them describe their life as a journey 'up the ladder', where they gather resources, experiences and contacts. Their very different working situations seem to have one thing in common: access to their career is primarily through 'learning by doing' rather than 'by studying' (Katznelson et al., 2018). Vidar, Sara, Paula and Anette all have educational degrees, but these degrees alone will not help them, and to some extent they have to invent their jobs and then sell them! This applies in particular for the solo self-employed.

For several of the young self-employed, excitement and hassle are two sides of the same coin, and the relationship between individual freedom and individual insecurity seems to be a balance for many of them.

The young solo self-employed included in this report are employed in a variety of professional specialties and crafts.

One example is the three influencers, all three of whom organise their working life unconventionally, with many different activities. As for several of the other young people portrayed, their way of working cannot be defined within a single category; they go beyond traditional forms of working arrangements and job categories. For example, Sara is a full-time employee, a temporary employee, and she runs a self-employed business.

What in general characterizes these young self-employed workers is that they have a medium or long-term educational background. Accordingly, they reflect a general labour market trend; while the proportion of solo self-employed has remained relatively stable in Denmark since 2010, there has been an increase in the number of solo self-employed within the group of specialized professionals (Scheuer, 2017).

Many of the young workers in this report (especially those performing work organised through online platforms) articulate permanent access to work tasks as a privilege. Permanent access to paid work is of great value for many of them, and not something they take for granted.

Although several of the young workers presented in the report are aware of the negative consequences of being self-employed, several of them emphasise the benefits of not being in a permanent

employment relationship. Several mention the high degree of autonomy and freedom as a situation they appreciate.

The self-employed generally stress their freedom to organise and control their own work and perform tasks as they wish (Manyika et al., 2016). Nevertheless, what is said to be enthusiasm for work is often also emphasised as stressful (Buch & Andersen, 2009). For several of the young self-employed, excitement and hassle are two sides of the same coin, and the relationship between individual freedom and individual insecurity seems to be a balance for many of them.

From full-time jobs to short-term work tasks

When the young people tell us about their working lives, they do not necessarily concentrate on the work in itself; often they focus more on how they get access to work tasks as something essential and valuable. This is the case for the self-employed, but in particular it applies to the young workers with work organised through online platforms. For example, Stefan the carpenter talks about how he uses a large part of his working time to manage the various digital platforms he uses to get access to work tasks. Stefan can either have direct contact with his customers online, or indirect contact, where the platform organises his work tasks and customer contracts for him. Stefan pays the online platform to manage this specific task to administrate his work. For Stefan, gaining access and managing these tasks is a task in itself: it is an ongoing part of his work and takes up many working hours. In particular, many smaller tasks are a challenge for

him, as they take up a relatively large part of his time compared to the time he spends doing the actual work he is being paid for.

Many are working hard to secure themselves a position in the labour market by being good at gaining access to work tasks.

For many of the young workers, this condition causes high demands for them to manage, prioritize and plan their work individually. Many of the young workers in this report (especially those performing work organised through online platforms) articulate permanent access to work tasks as a privilege. Permanent access to paid work is of great value for many of them, and not something they take for granted. On the contrary, access to work is something that many of them work hard to gain. In line with this, several of the young 'solo self-employed' included in this report say that they have one primary source of income from a single permanent contractor, and that they consider that, in many respects, this relationship resembles an ordinary employment contract. This is not only a tendency in our limited number of cases: it can be seen as a general trend (Scheuer, 2017).

For several of the young people portrayed in this report, the absence of full-time employment reduces their ability to establish the adult life they desire. This applies both to those who have deliber-

ately chosen this type of atypical work and to those who would prefer something else. Many are working hard to secure themselves a position in the labour market by being good at gaining access to work tasks. For these young people, the value in their work is their ability to access work, and not necessarily the actual performance of the job itself. Work tasks are described as something these young people have to earn individually, and where they are in competition with others for each job. A good network or good online ratings are of high value in this context.

Work tasks are described as something these young people have to earn individually, and where they are in competition with others for each job.

For example, Stefan the translator points out that his Danish nationality is an advantage to him when he is competing for translation tasks globally. Stefan the carpenter similarly regards it as a privilege that the bathroom installation company that he is a sub-contractor for sends him an order for a week's work every week. Stefan does not describe the sub-contract with the bathroom installation company as problematic, because he is not an employee. On the contrary, he regards it as a good deal that he works as a subcontractor, and that the company gives him access to tasks. The financial security that Stefan the carpenter talks about is primarily related to the kind of security that relates to his



relatively permanent access to work, it is not security that relates to a permanent employment relationship. For them the labour market is organised through access to tasks, not a full-time job. This is in line with the other young solo self-employed workers portrayed in this report.

For many of these young people, access to and management of work is often of particular importance for their working environment, for their social and financial security, and thus for their well-being.

Two forms of availability

For Lars, Julia, Anders, Devran and Brynja, their work activities are linked to the physical workplace. When they have left the workplace, the job is done. This differentiates their work from the other young people portrayed in this report, who in fact never leave their work. These five young people appreciate their free time, and keep work and leisure completely separate. However, they all have to be available and able to appear at their workplace at very short notice.

Some of the young freelancers and self-employed people talk about the many changes in their work as something positive and developing, but some are also concerned about the insecurity they experience when they are constantly in new work situations and at new workplaces with new and ever-changing tasks.

The most problematic issue for many of the young workers is the worry of not being able to plan and control their own future. The financial insecurity, and uncertainty in terms of when and where

to work can, for some, be reconciled with a youth life, without financial and social responsibility for anyone other than themselves. However, when young people, like Lars or Devran, begin to establish their own family, temporary and insecure employment is difficult to reconcile with family life. Several of the young people in this report point to this condition: the way they currently work is considered temporary, as it is only possible to maintain such a working life as long as they do not have a family to support. Interestingly, the majority of the young people portrayed say that they dream of getting 'a regular job' with a fixed salary and fixed working hours, if they have a boyfriend or children at some point.

Several of the young people in this report point to this condition: the way they currently work is considered temporary, as it is only possible to maintain such a working life as long as they do not have a family to support.

Several of the young people talk about a working life in which they have to continuously adapt to new jobs and/or new cultural codes they will be part of for a short period. "All the time it feels like the first day at work" say several of the young people, including Julia, who works as an unskilled temporary receptionist, and Vidar, who works as a contractor in the creative industry in Iceland. This indicates that a general characteristic across the young people portrayed in

this report is the lack of continuity in their working lives.

Everyday life is my commodity

For some of the young people their everyday life has become an important part of what they produce on different social platforms, such as blogs or videos on YouTube. Consequently, the borders between work and leisure time, publicity and privacy, often become fluid and unclear for them. This can have consequences for their relationships with family and friends, as it can be difficult to disconnect from work (Brock, 2017; Gregg, 2011; Yung Nielsen, 2016). The professional gamers and the influencers talk about working-environment challenges that resemble those known from previous working-environment research related to 'the boundary-less work' and stress (Holt et al., 2013).

As shown above, many of the young people say that the boundary between what is work and what is leisure, what is private and what is professional, is not clear, and they have to deal with these boundaries individually all time. The three young influencers are examples of this; they use their personal selves in their work, and share in different ways their personal lives. All three run a blog, but also use other channels like Instagram and Facebook to reach their followers.

Work thus becomes borderless in several different ways. For all three, the boundaries between privacy and working life are constantly being negotiated, and often remain unclear. For example, Anette talked about going to a concert with some friends and sharing her attendance at the concert on one of her social media

platforms as part of the sponsored content that she is contractually bound to deliver.

This also indicates that many of the young people work outside normal working hours, for example if they rely on live audiences, or if they need to play against competitors globally in other time zones than the Scandinavian time zone. For example, the professional E-sports gamer Eirik tells that he sometimes games for 12-14 hours a day. The day before the interview, he was live streaming for ten consecutive hours. Live streaming is a form of work where it is difficult to hold any breaks because the audience is constantly watching.

Parallel to this, Stefan the carpenter states that the online digital platforms create a working environment where it can be difficult to shield yourself from too much work and that digital contact to private customers contributes to a more intensive working life. Private customers do not always understand and respect that he has other tasks than theirs to do, and that he cannot be available 24 hours a day, even though the digital platforms are available 24 hours a day.

When work is organised through online digital platforms, there are actually no limits on how much and when a worker can work. Work becomes borderless. Consequently, this requires that workers are able to manage, prioritize and plan their working hours themselves to prevent work from becoming a burden. In relation to the working environment, this seems to be an important issue for both



of the young workers, who get their jobs through online platforms. For example, Stefan the carpenter says that in the beginning of his working life it was difficult for him to manage and control his tasks. He says that he worked so much that it became both a physical and a mental strain for him. This is similar to the situation of the gamers, and to other young workers presented in this report – they work many more hours than a normal working week.

The necessity of being available 24/7, and how technology is facilitating this, is a theme that most of the unskilled young workers talk about. This availability is experienced as stressful, as it is difficult for them to opt out of this relationship because they experience that they must show that they deserve more hours by showing their employers (or platform owners) that they are available immediately when labour is needed. In addition, their ranking on the platforms can go down if they are fail to show their immediate availability for platform users. This kind of 'bonding' also applies to the creative freelancers.

In this report, we portrayed a number of young people whose access to work varies, and they talk about how their working environment connects closely to their access to too little or too much work, or to their inability to plan their work. Likewise, the opaqueness of how to gain access to tasks, or to be paid, is a very important issue for several of the young people's well-being.

Occupational injuries

We used data from the European Labour

Force Survey (Statistics Denmark, 2019) to investigate associations between atypical employment forms and occupational injuries. There was an increased risk of occupational injuries for young people working in marginal part-time work, in part-time employment, or with fixed time contracts. This is supported by international research that has found an association between the degree of temporary employment and the risk of occupational injuries (Bena et al., 2013; Marucci-Wellman, 2018; Quinlan et al., 2001; Underhill & Quinlan, 2011).

Young people who have stable working conditions with certainty in recruitment are not affected to the same extent as young people with a peripheral connection to the workplace.

Furthermore, we know that there is a particular risk of occupational injuries among young people under the age of 30, and that the risk is increased for new employees, and for those working part-time (less than 30 hours pr. week) (Arbejdstilsynet, 2013). Young people who have stable working conditions with certainty in recruitment are not affected to the same extent as young people with a peripheral connection to the workplace (Rasmussen & Håpnes 2012). The young workers in this report fortunately did not mention any serious accidents at their jobs, but they mention a number of other issues related to their working environment. A recent Nordic survey of young people (18-34 years old) in six European countries concludes that:

"(...) the weaker the link to the labour market, the less likelihood of happiness, optimism and health" (Bergqvist & Erikson, p. 27, 2015).

This indicates an increased risk of injuries and health problems among young workers with peripheral connections to the workplace, even though they say that they are good at adapting and dealing with changeable work situations. Although none of the young people had been hurt at their workplace, we know that there is a special risk associated with being new in a workplace in relation to the risk of occupational injuries or accidents (Dyreborg et al., 2018; Arbejdstilsynet, 2013).

The constant experience of being new is a condition experienced by most of the young people. It has to be considered whether the changes currently taking place in the labour market are accelerating some of the occupational health issues that we already know are related to being new.

The constant experience of being new is a condition experienced by most of the young people. It has to be considered whether the changes currently taking place in the labour market are accelerating some of the occupational health issues that we already know are related to being new.

Introduction of formal safety learning routines and instruction is a classical way to prevent occupational accidents (Hale,

1984; Kjellén, 2000), including work injuries among young employees (Arbejdstilsynet, 2010; Arbejdstilsynet, 2015). However, as is the case with several of the youngsters in this report, the two young people with unskilled precarious employment experience say that they are often left to themselves when starting a new job and in charge of new work tasks. This situation may be associated with a particular safety risk (Nielsen et al., 2017a; Nielsen, 2019).

They are often left to themselves when starting a new job and in charge of new work tasks. This situation may be associated with a particular safety risk.

A recent Danish report points out that young people in particular perform unskilled routine work that does not receive training, as this type of work is often understood as a form of work that anyone can perform, and therefore does not require training (Nielsen et al. 2017b). Parallel to this, both Julia and Lars say that there are often a number of conditions in the workplace that the experienced employees take for granted. Following this, the experienced employees are often not aware of the necessity to pass this information on to the new one. This kind of tacit understanding is difficult to grasp when you are new in the job. Any communication can quickly go wrong, if tacit understanding is not made clear for the new employee. However, this rarely happens, exactly because it is tacit understanding (Nielsen et al., 2017b).

Uncertainty about access to, and allocation of work, lack of opportunity for long-term planning, lack of training, and lack of financial security are mentioned by many of the young workers in this report as the main problems in terms of their working environment and well-being.

Long working hours

Working in the Icelandic creative industries seems to have some resemblance to several of the other types of work portrayed. Similar to most of the young people portrayed in this book, they have quite long and intensive working days. For example, Dagur says that he worked for 350 days last year, which made it difficult to make time for family and friends. Both Vidar's and Dagur's work seems to be without borders, and they are both in a process of learning how to balance periods of much work with periods of free time, and periods with no pay with periods with wage income. Consequently, planning and prioritizing tasks is quite central to their working life.

Uncertainty about access to, and allocation of work, lack of opportunity for long-term planning, lack of training, and lack of financial security are mentioned by many of the young workers in this report as the main problems in terms of their working environment and well-being.

Getting fair and good working conditions and payment is a struggle for both of

them. However, like most of the other young workers portrayed in this report, all of these issues are something that they most often deal with individually. Working in the film industry can be both physically and mentally demanding. As Vidar explains: "Adrenalin and excitement also come with it, so it is both good and bad. However, you probably need to be a certain type of person, someone who will not just freak out."

Working environment and digital online platforms

There is still very limited research that specifically focuses on occupational health problems on digital platforms. However, Jesnes et al. (2016) and Huws (2015) provide examples of this. The authors distinguish between 'online work' organised via online digital platforms, and 'offline-work' organised via online digital platforms. In this report, Stefan, who is a self-employed carpenter in his own company, performs offline work organised via online digital platforms.

Some researchers suggest that offline work organised through online digital platforms often encounters the same kinds of risks and working-environment issues as seen in standard employment forms, such as lack of training, lack of safety equipment and lack of breaks (Jesnes, 2016; Huws, 2015). The portrait of Stefan the carpenter supports this argument. He says that it is very important to him to take care of his body when he is working, for example to lift heavy materials correctly. Nevertheless, he also says that this is not always possible when he is working in a private home. Here, he does not always have the right

tools or a colleague by his side. He says that the working conditions in customers' private homes can be a challenge to his safety, and customers might lack understanding or prioritization of his safety. This supports the conclusions of Jesnes (2016) and Huws (2015) that there is a particular risk in working in private homes because of the lack of relevant safety equipment and limited knowledge of safety.

Offline work organised through online digital platforms often encounters the same kinds of risks and working-environment issues as seen in standard employment forms, such as lack of training, lack of safety equipment and lack of breaks (Jesnes, 2016; Huws, 2015). The portrait of Stefan the carpenter supports this argument.

In relation to both 'offline' work and 'online' work organised through online digital platforms, there can also be psychosocial impacts associated with the insecure income and working hours, and psychosocial impacts in relation to negative feedback via different rating systems that can lead to annoyance or being stressful (Jesnes, 2016; Huws, 2015). In addition, it seems that the logics behind the platforms, e.g. likes and ratings, might further increase risk taking by these young workers because

looking after one's own health can be counter to being rated as a good provider.

Some of the young people report more or less serious problems with neck, back and hands associated with prolonged sedentary work in front of a screen. In many cases, the young people talk about very long working days of 10-12 hours. An example of such 'online work' is when Stefan the entrepreneur, who is self-employed in his own company, supplements his income by translating English texts into Danish at home on his own computer. Another example is Paula, the influencer, who also works many consecutive hours at her computer, and the professional gamblers who sit at home and play matches or train online.

Another important working-environment issue that several of the young entrepreneurs, temporary workers and freelancers point to is their mental well-being; the opportunity to join a social community and share work with colleagues. For several of the young people in this report, colleagues are not a standard, but a framework around their work that they have to create themselves. Work activities are seldom initially linked to a permanent workplace with regular colleagues. Again, many of the working-environment conditions mentioned are perceived as individual issues, which are primarily solved individually. Lack of colleagues and labour organisation among these young people contributes to the individualization of the working environment.

5.

Recommendations

Most of the young people portrayed in this report have several jobs or incomes at the same time (up to five jobs) or a number of different jobs over short periods. They work in different types of atypical employment. For some, these terms are involuntary, associated with financial and social insecurity. Others have very privileged and highly paid work not connected with financial insecurity.

In addition, the employee/employer relationship is a grey zone which challenges our usual ways of thinking about how work is organised. This in particular applies to the solo self-employed, but we have identified this employment pattern in several of the portraits in this report.

Some of the young people characterise themselves as freelancers, self-employed or entrepreneurs. They have their primary source of income from the work they do in their own company. The emergence of new digital labour markets has made these types of jobs easier to establish, as the transaction costs are low. This type of entrepreneurship differs from the more traditional understanding of entrepreneurship in that the work carried out actively exposes the entrepreneur's personality through, for example, blogging or streaming gameplay. This increases the risks of boundaryless work, as the product is these young people's private and personal spheres. For many of the interviewed young people, a great deal of their work is 'being themselves'; a personal brand. In fact, this represents extreme cases of boundaryless work.

It is important to note that even though the work of these young people can be seen as very different from usual work, they face some of the same traditional working-environment problems, and they might even be more exposed to them than those in typical employment, as the data from the Labour Force Survey indicates

Another characteristic of the working life of these young people is the very long working hours, for some of them up to 16 hours of consecutive work. For them, work and privacy completely merge and they work for many, many hours every

week. Several of the young people emphasize both the benefits of not being in a permanent employment relationship, such as the high degree of autonomy and freedom, but also the other side of the coin, which is the stressful work. Freedom and hassle/stress seem to be two sides of the same coin.

All of the young people say that a safe and secure working life is of vital importance for them. Nevertheless, the meaning each of them attaches to this varies greatly. These young people in atypical employment report back problems, insomnia, stress and boundaryless work, which are known from more traditional employment forms. It is important to note that even though the work of these young people can be seen as very different from usual work, they face some of the same traditional working-environment problems, and they might even be more exposed to them than those in typical employment, as the data from the Labour Force Survey indicates (Statistics Denmark, 2019).

A number of the young people included say they are trying to improve their health by various approaches such as training, breathing or swimming to strengthen their bodies or mental resources in order to keep up with their work.

All these factors contribute to providing an insight into a number of both new and more well-known forms of working-environment issues that the young people do not necessarily understand as problems related to their working environment, and which they mostly try to solve indi-

vidually and by using other instruments than the working-environment field has traditionally used. The question is how the OSH system and labour inspections should meet these challenges in the future.

We recommend that strategies are developed to deal with the working-environment issues related to atypical work among young people. These include how to reach these young people and the employers or the users who deliver the work through the platforms.

We recommend that strategies are developed to deal with the working-environment issues related to atypical work among young people. These include how to reach these young people and the employers or the users who deliver the work through the platforms. We need to communicate knowledge about these types of work and the possible consequences more broadly to industry, governments and social partners, and to the young people working in atypical employment forms. Based on this information we recommend both legislative and communicative approaches to be implemented,

so working-environment knowledge and resources can be available for those working in atypical employments and through digital platforms.

For those young people working through digital platforms, it should be possible to integrate working-environment standards and guidelines with the algorithms of the platforms. When a platform user offers a particular job, e.g., carpentry work, cleaning or service work on a platform, relevant guidelines should pop-up in order to inform the platform user (those who offer the job), the platform worker (the one who performs the job) and the employer (the person responsible for the platform) about the possible risks and precautions that should be taken for a particular job. Furthermore, it should be easy for the platform to link to the digital notification system for occupational accidents or diseases, so it is easy to report cases of occupational injuries to the authorities.

For those young people working through digital platforms, it should be possible to integrate working-environment standards and guidelines with the algorithms of the platforms.



Reference list

Aagestad C. T., Tynes T., Sterud, T., Johannessen, H. A., Gravseth, H. M., Løvseth, E. K., Alfonso, H. J., & Aasnæss, A. (2015). *Faktabok om arbeidsmiljø og helse*. Oslo: Stami.

Arbejdstilsynet (2010). *Fagligt grundlag for prioritering af arbejdsmiljøindsatsen: Fremtidens arbejdsmiljø 2020*. [The Danish Working Environment Authority 2010, Professional basis for prioritizing work environment efforts: The future of working environment 2020]. København, Arbejdstilsynet.

Arbejdstilsynet (2013). *Arbejdstilsynets årsrapport 2013. Anmeldte arbejdsulykker 2008-2013. Tema: Unges og nyansattes ulykkesrisiko*. [The Danish Working Environment Authority, Annual report 2013, Reported work accidents 2008-2013. Theme: The risk of accidents to young people and new employees]. København: Arbejdstilsynet.

Arbejdstilsynet (2015). *At-intern instruks IN-1-2, 6 marts/2012, senest redigeret: 1. januar 2015*. [Danish Working Environment Authority, Internal instructions IN-1-2, 6 March / 2012, Last edited: 1 January 2015]. København: Arbejdstilsynet.

Aronsson, G., Gustafsson, K., & Dallner, M. (2002). Work environment and health in different types of temporary jobs. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 11*(2), 151-175.

Bergqvist, T., & Eriksson, B. (2015). Passion and exploitation among young adults with different labor market status in Europe. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies, 5*(2), 17-31.

Brock, T. (2017). Roger Caillois and E-Sports: On the problems of treating play as work. *Games and Culture, 12*(4), 321-339.

- Buch, A., & Andersen, V. (2009). Begejstring og belastning i videnarbejdet. *Psyke & Logos*, 30(2), 585-611.
- Ceptureanu, S. I., & Ceptureanu, E. G. (2015). Challenges and barriers of European young entrepreneurs. *Management Research and Practice*, 7(3), 34-58.
- Casas-Cortés, M. (2014). A genealogy of precarity: A toolbox for rearticulating fragmented social realities in and out of the workplace. *Rethinking Marxism*, 26(2):206- 226.
- Duell, N. (2004). *Defining and assessing precarious employment in Europe: A review of main studies and surveys*. Munich: Economix Research and Consulting.
- Eurostat (2015, 15-08-2015). *Accidents at work (ESAW 2008 onwards)*. European Commission. Retrieved from: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>
- Furlong, A. (2014). Foreword by Andy Furlong. In L. Antonucci, M. Hamilton, & R. S. Roberts. (Eds.), *Young People and Social Policy in Europe. Dealing with Risk, Inequality and Precarity in times of Crisis* (pp. x-xi). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Furlong, A., Woodman D., & Wyn J. (2011). Changing times, changing perspectives: Reconciling 'transition' and 'cultural' perspectives on youth and young adulthood. *Journal of Sociology*, 47(4), 355- 370.
- Garben, S. (2017). *Protecting Workers in the Online Platform Economy: An Overview of Regulatory and Policy Developments in the EU*. European Risk Observatory. Discussion Paper. Luxembourg: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.
- Gregg, M. (2011). Part-time precarity. In *Work's Intimacy*. PolityPress.
- Hale, A. R. (1984). Is safety training worthwhile? *Journal of Occupational Accidents*, 6, 17-33.
- Hamilton, M., Antonucci L., & Roberts, R. S. (2014) Introduction: Young people and social policy in Europe. In L Antonucci, M. Hamilton, Roberts R. S. (Eds.), *Young People and Social Policy in Europe. Dealing with Risk, Inequality and Precarity in Times of Crisis* (pp. 1-12). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hanvold, T., Kines, P., Nykänen, M., Ólafsdóttir, S., Thomée, S., Holte, K., Vuori, J., Wærsted, M., & Veiersted, K. (2016). *Young Workers and Sustainable Work Life: Special Emphasis on Nordic Conditions*. Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Hardt, M. (1999). Affective labour. *Boundary*, 2, 26(2).
- Holt, H., Hvid, H., Kamp, A., & Lund, H. (2013). *Et arbejdsliv i acceleration*. Roskilde Universitetsforlag.
- Huws, U. (2015). Online Labor Exchanges, or 'Crowdsourcing': *Implications for Occupational Safety and Health: Review Article on the Future of Work*. European Agency for Safety and Health at work.
- Ilsøe, A. (2017). The digitalisation of service work—social partner responses in Denmark, Sweden and Germany. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 23(3), 333-348.
- Jesnes, K., Øistad, B. S., Alsos, K., & Nesheim, T. (2016). *Aktører og arbeid i delingsøkonomien. Delrapport*. Fafo-notat 2016:23. Oslo: Fafo.
- Johnson, M. R., & Woodcock, J. (2017). 'It's like the gold rush': The lives and careers of professional video game streamers on twitch. tv. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(3), 336-351.
- Järvinen, M., & Mik-Meyer, N. (2005). *Kvalitative metoder i et interaktionistisk perspektiv*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Katznelson, N., Sørensen, N. U., Nielsen, M. L., & Pless, M. (2018). *De topmotiverede unge*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

- Kines, P., Salmi, A., & Bengtson, E. (2013). *Young Workers' Occupational Safety and Health Risks in the Nordic Countries 2013*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Kjellén, U. (2000). *Prevention of Accidents Through Experience Feedback*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Larsen, A.D., Hannerz, H., Møller, S. V., Dyreborg, J., Bonde, J. P., Hansen, J., Kolstad, H. A., Hansen, ÅM, & Garde, A. H. (2017). Night work, long work weeks, and risk of accidental injuries. A register-based study. *Scandinavian Journal of Work Environment & Health*, 43(6), 578–586.
- Lazzarato, M. (2009). Neoliberalism in action inequality and the reconstitution of the social. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(6), 109-133.
- MacDonald, R. (2009). Precarious work: Stepping stones or poverty traps. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*. London: Routledge.
- Manyika, J., Lund, S., Bughin, J., Robinson, K., Mischke, J., & Mahajan, D. (2016). *Independent Work: Choice, Necessity, and the Gig Economy*. McKinsey & Company.
- Marwick, A. E. (2013). *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Marucci-Wellman H. (2018). Precarious employment and occupational injuries in the digital age – where should we go from here? *Scandinavian Journal of Work Environment & Health*, 44(4), 335-339.
- Mills, M. (2004). Demand for flexibility or generation of insecurity? The Individualization of risk, irregular work shifts and Canadian youth. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 7, 115-139.
- Nielsen, M. L. (2019). Forskerpositioneringer i etnografisk ungdomsforskning. At forstå læringspraksisser blandt unge nyansatte i detail. In N. U. Sørensen & M. Pless, M. (Eds.). *Ungeperspektiver. Tænkninger og tilgange i ungdomsforskningen* (pp. 222). Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetsforlag.
- Nielsen, M. L., Dyreborg, J., & Lipscomb, H. J. (2018). Precarious work among young Danish employees—a permanent or transitory condition? *Journal of Youth Studies* 22(1), 7-28.
- Nielsen, M. L., Dyreborg, J., Kines, P. Nielsen, K. J., & Rasmussen, K. (2013). Exploring and expanding the category of young adult workers. Situating young workers' risk management in the retail industry. *Nordic Journal of Work Life Studies*, 3(3), 219-243.
- Nielsen, M. L., Görlich, A., Grytnes, R., & Dyreborg, J. (2017a). Without a safety net: Precarisation among young Danish employees. *Nordic Journal of Working life studies*. 7(3), 3-22.
- Nielsen, M. L., Jørgensen, A., Grytnes, R. Nielsen, K. J., & Dyreborg, J. (2017b) *Sikkert Arbejde For Unge Gennem Læring og Instruktions (SAFU-Læring). Slutrapport til Arbejds miljøforskningsfonden*. (Projekt 41-2014-09). København: Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Arbejds miljø.
- Pless, M. (2014). Stories from the margins of the educational system. *Journal of Youth Studies* 17(2), 236-251.
- Plug, W., & du Bois-Reymond M. (2006). Transition patterns between structure and agency. In A. Walther, M. du Bois-Reymond, & A. Biggart (Eds.), *Participation in Transition: Motivation of Young Adults in Europe for Learning and Working* (pp. 107-26). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang
- Pybus, J. & Coté, M. (2011). Learning to immaterial labour 2.0: Facebook and social networks. In M.A. Peters & E. Bulut (Eds.), *Cognitive Capitalism, Education and Digital Labor* (pp. 169-94). New York: Peter Lang.

- Quinlan, M., Mayhew, C., & Bohle, P. (2001). The global expansion of precarious employment, work, disorganisation and occupational health: A review of recent research. *International Journal of Health Services*, 31, 335-414.
- Rasmussen, B., & Håpnes T. (2012). Permanent temporariness in social contracts in knowledge work. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 2, 5-22.
- Rasmussen, S., & Madsen, P. K. (2017). Platformøkonomien og Prekariatet. *Tidsskrift for Arbejdsliv* 19, 1. 46-60.
- Scheuer, S. (2014) *Atypisk ansatte i Europa og i Danmark –Baggrund, udvikling og vilkår 2000- 2011*. København: FTF.
- Scheuer, S. (2011). *Arbejde på risikovilkår- fleksibilitet og manglende tryghed. Atypisk ansatte på det danske arbejdsmarked*. LO-Dokumentation, 1.
- Scheuer, S. (2017). *Atypisk beskæftigelse i Danmark: Om deltidsansattes, midlertidigt ansattes og soloselvstændiges vilkår*. LO-dokumentation, 1.
- Senft, T. M. (2012). Microcelebrity and the branded self. In J. Burgess & A. Bruns (Eds.), *A Companion to New Media Dynamics* (pp 346-354). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Standing, G. (2011). *The Precariat - The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Statistics Denmark (2019, 23-02-19). *Arbejds-kraftundersøgelsen (AKU) [Labour Force Survey (LFS)]* Retrieved from <http://www.dst.dk/da/statistik/dokumentation/statistikdokumentation/arbejdskraftundersogelsen>.
- Statistiska Centralbyrån (2015a). Utvecklingen av tidsbegränsat anställda [Trends for persons in temporary employment]. *Sveriges Officiella Statistic. Statistiska Meddelanden*, AM 110 SM, 1501.
- Statistiska Centralbyrån (2015b). Utvecklingen av undersysselsatta 2005-2014 [Development of underemployment 2005-2014]. *Sveriges Officiella Statistic. Statistiska Meddelanden*, AM 110 SM, 1504.
- Staunæs, D., & Søndergaard, D. M. (2005). Interview i en tangotid. In *Kvalitative metoder i et interaktionistisk perspektiv. Interview, observation og dokumenter*. København: Hans Reizels Forlag.
- Underhill, E., & Quinlan M. (2011). How precarious employment affects health and safety at work: The case of temporary agency workers. *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 66, 397-421.
- Woodman, D., & Wyn, J. (2015) *Youth and Generation. Rethinking Change and Inequality in the Lives of Young People*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Yung Nielsen, L. (2016). *Udfoldede og indfoldede kroppe – En undersøgelse af kropslig performance på modebloggen*. Ph.D afhandling. København: Center for Ungdomsforskning. Institut for Læring og Filosofi, Ålborg Universitet.

Appendix 1: Method

From February 2017 to October 2017, we conducted 21 qualitative research interviews, five interviews in each of Iceland, Sweden and Norway, and six in Denmark. We included 9 women and 12 men in the interviews, with an average age of 25 years.

Criteria for recruiting interviewees

The overall criterion was to interview young people that represented new forms of work challenging available categories and definitions of work and employment. Thus, the criterion was to find informants with forms of work that challenged traditional concepts of work in the most radical way in order to be open to new forms of work emerging in the labour market. Of course, this had some practical limitations in relation to which young people and forms of working we knew of and able to contact.

The starting point of selecting and recruiting interviewees was inspired by Scheuer's (2011) description of employees included in the category of 'atypical forms of work':

- Temporary staff that a company hires either to perform a job function, for a specified period (time-limited) or to complete a specific task (task-limited)
- Temporary workers where a company assigns time or task-limited staff from a temp agency
- Part-time employees, where employees have a lower weekly working time than

the norm. (Here we sought to interview young people with involuntary part-time employment)

- Self-employed, business owners (VAT registered), but with no employees other than themselves.

In addition, the research group decided to interview two additional groups of young people, not included in Scheuer's categorization:

- **Digital work:** Since online labour exchanges are continually developing, challenging and transgressing traditional concepts of work (Jesnes et.al., 2016; Huws, 2015; Ilsøe, 2017; Eurostat, 2015), we prioritized recruiting young people with different forms of digital work (often they belong to the self-employed category).
- **Multiple jobs:** Young people with multiple jobs at the same time, because this is particularly common for young workers (Hanvold et al., 2016).

In addition, there was a criterion that the interviewees should be between 18 and 30 years old and perform paid work. This excluded students or apprentices only working beside their studies.

The informants were not selected out of scientific ideals about representativeness or generalizability, but because they could contribute to important insights in relation to the project's knowledge ambitions. However, we aimed at variation in relation to length of education, as well as an equal distribution between gender, age and ethnicity.

Recruiting interviewees

In order to find 'the new types of work', we were informed by social media and various kinds of news and research articles. However, we are aware that this method is limited in terms of finding 'the new types of work'. What is 'the new' or non-standard, is difficult to define and limit.

Young people with publicly available profiles online were recruited using the young people's own publicly available online contact information (gamers, bloggers and young people with profiles on digital platforms). We contacted them through mail, text messages or by telephone, and most of them agreed to do an interview.

Young people without public profiles (temporary workers, unskilled, freelancers, etc.) were recruited through social media platforms and through the Nordic researchers' professional and personal networks. The participating Nordic researchers have had individual recruitment strategies. Among others, the researchers contacted unions, the board of a cooperative association, a local supermarket, Facebook groups for temporary workers at specific work places, friends, colleagues and acquaintances, etc. In some cases, we used the snowball method, where one interviewee recommended the next. We also used Facebook and LinkedIn.

Subsequently, the research group coordinated data collection to ensure that each participating country met the above criteria as far as possible. This recruitment procedure clearly entails that we have not generated knowledge

about the types of work that are so new that the research team is not familiar with them. There will probably be young people with new forms of work of which we have no knowledge.

Before their interview, all interviewees received written participant information about the research project and signed an informed consent about the criteria of their participation. While someone wanted to participate with their full name and without anonymization, others have been anonymized. This was agreed before the interviews.

Interview Guide

Based on the research questions, we developed a joint Nordic interview guide. The semi-structured questions were formulated in an open and investigating manner (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005, Staunæs & Søndergaard 2005), where the themes were the young employees' life situation, working routines, work organisation, pay, introduction and training to the work in general, as well as to safety, social and financial risks, and working environment. We were particularly interested in investigating the many types of blurred borders due to the transgression of conventional concepts of work that the 'new forms' of work have led to (Huws 2015, Pybus & Coté 2011), and we wanted to investigate how these new forms of work and the related working life are perceived by the young people. From the employees' experience of such complex and ambiguous phenomena, we can produce nuanced and detailed knowledge about with qualitative research interviews (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005, Staunæs & Søndergaard 2005).

Qualitative interviews

The duration of interviews lasted from approximately one hour to 1.5 hours. They were collected at times and places that suited the young people's everyday lives. Some were done at their workplaces (if they had one), some in the young people's private homes, some at the researchers' workplaces and some at cafes. Project researchers conducted the interviews in their native language. We recorded and fully transcribed all interviews in verbatim.

Selection and producing the portraits

We selected 14 interviews out of the 21 interviews collected to be included in further analysis, and in turn presented in the book. We selected those interviews that we considered to provide the widest possible variation in the data material in relation to new forms of work, and the best possible insight into these new forms of work. This also includes insights into new types of work and considerations on how these influence the working environment. In addition to this criteria,

we have had the criterion that interviewees from all participating countries should be represented in the book. We excluded some interviews because they had too many overlaps with others, and we excluded other interviews because in the end they did not represent new forms of work.

We processed and condensed the selected interviews to give a brief insight into the young people's overall life story and current life situation. We held three meetings in the Nordic project group, where we worked with the material and discussed the interpretation of the themes of the interviews. Moreover, we zoomed in on the main purpose of this book: To focus on the working environment, impacts and risks that new forms of work may have for young people in these types of jobs.

All interviewees have read and approved the portraits. Overall, the interviewees had only few comments, and in one case we were asked to take out a contractual detail.

Appendix 2: Nordic Workshop

New forms of work among young persons
– consequences for the working environment,
Copenhagen, April 25, 2018

List of participants

[Evy Martinussen](#), Arbejdsmiljørådets Sekretariat
(Secretariat for the Working Environment Council), Denmark

[Amalie Ebler Blichfeld](#), Arbejdsmiljørådets Sekretariat
(Secretariat for the Working Environment Council), Denmark

[Astrid Jørgensen](#), NFA (National Research Centre for the
Working Environment), Denmark

[Jon Henningsen](#), 'Jobpatruljen', HK (The Union of Commercial
and Clerical Employees in Denmark), Denmark

[Steen Scheuer](#), Department of Marketing & Management,
University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

[Merete Dengsøe](#), Dansk Industri (Confederation of Danish Industries),
Denmark

[Lisa Gemmel](#), Fackförbundet DIK (Dokumentation,
Information och Kultur) (The DIK Association), Sweden

[Kari Lysberg](#), Arbeidstilsynet (The Norwegian Labour
Inspection Authority), Norway

[Mette Lykke Nielsen](#), Centre for Youth Studies (CeFU),
Aalborg University, Campus Copenhagen, Denmark

[Louise Yung Nielsen](#), Communication and Arts, Roskilde
University, Denmark

[Kari Anne Holte](#), NORCE, Norwegian Research Centre,
Bergen, Norway

[Åsa Andersson](#), Department. of Cultural Sciences,
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

[Gestur Gudmonsson](#), School of Education,
University of Iceland, Iceland

[Thamar Melanie Heijstra](#), School of Social Sciences,
Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics,
University of Iceland, Iceland

[Johnny Dyreborg](#), NFA (National Research
Centre for the Working Environment), Denmark

Invitation to Nordic Workshop:

New forms of work among young persons – consequences for the working environment

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Time: | 25. April 2018 from 9.30-15.30 |
| Place: | The National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NFA), Lersø Parkallé 105, Copenhagen |
| Program: | (presentations will be in English, discussions in Scandinavian/English): |
| 9.30 – 9.45 | Coffee/tea and welcome on behalf of the Nordic project team, Johnny Dyreborg, NFA, Copenhagen. |
| 9.45-10.00 | Presentation of the draft book of portraits about young and new forms of work in the Nordic Countries (portrait book), Johnny Dyreborg, NFA |
| 10.00-11.30 | Portraits of young workers in new forms of work: Gamers, bloggers, workers on digital platforms, solo-self-employed, freelancers, short-term contracts, multi-jobs, etc. Perspectives from four Nordic countries. (a) New forms of work and working environment among young workers, Mette Lykke Nielsen & Louise Yung Nielsen, Centre for Youth Research, Aalborg University, Denmark (b) Experiences about autonomy among young workers in atypical work, by Kari Anne Holte, IRIS, Norway (c) Creative influencers Empowering strategies on a precarious labor market, Åsa Andersson, University of Gothenburg, Sweden (d) New types of work and employment forms: The atypical working life of millennials in Iceland, Tamar Melanie Heijstra & Gestur Guðmundsson, University of Iceland, Iceland |
| 11.30-12.00 | Feedback: What particular themes and problems have the workshop participants observed during the presentations? |
| 12.00-12.45 | Lunch |
| 12.45-13.15 | Atypical employment in Denmark, working conditions among part-time workers, short-term employed, and self-employed without employees'. Steen Scheuer, Professor, dr. merc. University of Southern Denmark. |

Short introduction to the discussion theme:

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 13.00-14.00 | Nordic experiences with new forms of work among young people: What is new, what is usual business? How should we approach the working environment of these young people? |
| 14.00-14.30 | Coffee/the |
| 14.30-15.00 | Plenary discussion |
| 15.00-15.30 | Further work and wrapping up |

Group work 1: What particular themes and questions have the workshop participants observed during the presentations?

Observation: Working on the digital platforms is really the new thing.

Group work 2: Nordic experience with new forms of work among young people

- What is new?
- What is usual business?
- How should we approach the working environment for young people in new and atypical forms of work?

Group 1 observations:

- Multiple jobs are not new. What is new is that it has become more difficult to get a permanent job and join the workforce.
- Discussion about a new profession? – Entrepreneurs are not new, but maybe the extent of the atypical jobs e.g. the number of bloggers, influencers or the like are new.
- The role of platforms: Platforms act like an employer? But what about regulation and law?
- Employment in general: Dynamic employment for all, not only for younger workers.

Group 2

observations:

- How do you define the young workers' digital working environment (computers, platforms etc.)? This would be interesting to investigate.
- Discussion about the concept 'digital working environment'. The new aspect is that the working-environment borders are broken up.
- Talking about computers and working environment as such is not new. We have had working environment and regulation of computer work for decades. It is not new to sit in front of a computer and regard it as a part of the working environment.
- But intensive work for a long time in front of the computer is new, and how it breaks up borders, e.g. disturbing the work-life balance.
- The new aspect is the digital platforms and how to reach and regulate work on these platforms, and difficulties in determining who the employer is.

Group 3

observations:

- Digital platform is the new thing here.
- Technology supports crossing boundaries – between privacy and working life, between countries, between time and space etc.
- Stefan the carpenter as a case – day-to-day jobs are not new, but how they are organized on digital platforms is new
- Work is broken down into jobs.
- "My personal life/personality is my commodity"
- Who has responsibility for OSH and physical and mental disabilities of those working on platforms? Who is the employer? And what is the responsibility of the employer?

Research assistant, Astrid Jørgensen, MSc. the National Research Centre for the Working Environment, organized group work and made up the main observations from the workshop.



Photo: Aubrey Rose Odion / Unsplash





Nordic Council of Ministers
Nordens Hus
Ved Stranden 18
DK-1061 Copenhagen
www.norden.org

New forms of work among young people: Implications for the working environment

This report presents fourteen portraits of young people working in new and atypical forms of work in the Nordic countries. Most of the young people portrayed in this report have several jobs or incomes at the same time or a number of different jobs/incomes for short periods. Exactly how many jobs/incomes is often difficult to ascertain. Some find it difficult to explain exactly how their work is actually organised and paid, because there are many different types of employment and payroll benefits systems involved.

None of the young people in the study have a single permanent work place with regular colleagues. However, they all say that a safe and secure working life is vital. Nevertheless, the meaning each of them attaches to this varies greatly. The young people talk of themes that might be recognised by the reader as traditional working environment issues, like lower-back problems, occupational injuries, insomnia, stress and boundary-less work. While other themes, mentioned in the portraits will probably be new to the reader.