

In this number

MARIA OHISALO, TUOMO LAIHALA & JUHO SAARI

The Worst-Off in a Welfare State: Coping and Wellbeing among Clients of Food Queues and Needle-exchange Points

This article analyses the coping and subjective well-being of the most vulnerable groups in Finland, often classified as one of the most advanced societies in the world. The analysis is based on three fully comparable samples of Finns, representing the adult population (N = 1,003) and the clients of food queues (N = 3,474) and of needle-exchange points (N = 527). The article describes who these disadvantaged people in Finnish society are, how they are coping and what their subjective wellbeing is. The analysis also shows how the latter groups differ from the majority of society at large who are well off. A descriptive analysis shows that the levels of quality of life and standards of living vary significantly between and within the groups: clients of needle-exchange points are far more disadvantaged than the two other groups; yet clients of food queues are also more disadvantaged than the population in general. The social distance between disadvantaged people and the well-off population is considerable, and as a result the clients of food queues and needle-exchange points have become strangers in a welfare state. This study forms part of a broader research project at the University of Eastern Finland concerning the most disadvantaged members of Finnish society.

ANNA JUNTUNEN

My Purposeful Life: Young People's Agency and Experiences of Being an Outsider

Problems among young people prompt much debate in Finland, focusing mainly on their education and employment. The social causes of exclusion remain in the background. The present article discusses young people's agency in experiences of being an outsider. The data for the article consist of twenty interviews and spirals. The result shows that young people consider themselves outsiders on three levels: in close relationships, at the institutional level and at an existential level. The experiences of being an outsider may be selected or unselected by the young people themselves or by others.

HELI AALTONEN

Theology of Life and the Struggle for Power: Attempts at Solutions out of the Financial Plight of the Lutheran Church of El Salvador in 2004 – 2009.

In 2004, the Lutheran World Federation initiated a process called Mutirão (market place in Portuguese) with the major partners of the Lutheran Church of El Salvador. The aim was to find solutions for avoiding the heavy financial dependency on the foreign supporters of the church and to work together to become a self-supporting church. The process turned out to be a power struggle and a struggle between the independence and guardianship of the church. The process also had elements of a gender and age based oppression of women.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi