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Cultures of Solidarity in the 2003 Municipal Workers' Union Strike

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Cultures of solidarity in public sector strikes

In 2003, the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union called a nationwide strike, demanding a significant pay rise for all members in the public welfare sector. Based on oral history interviews with striking workers and local union representatives, the paper argues that the collective struggle over the conditions of daily life enabled changes in subjectivity and generated cultures of solidarity. The cultures of solidarity were shaped by everyday work life experiences of feeling invisible and undervalued as public sector care workers, but also by the public pickets and rallies where strikers modeled the kind of visibility they demanded for their labour. The paper also explores wild cat strikes in the Swedish public sector in the 1980's, specifically how striking workers remember the reasons for taking collective action, how the strikes were organized and the impact the actions had on individual and collective subjectivity.