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Editorial: A piece of Nordic contemporary history

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Mapped: Nordic migration between 1960 and 2010

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What about the next 60? New report predicts continued success for the Nordic model

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Bold Nordic agreement without a political “father”

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Theme: Celebrating 60 years with a borderless labour market



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Editorial: A piece of Nordic contemporary history

On 22 May 1954 the agreement on a joint Nordic labour market was signed. 60 years on the Nordic Labour Journal talks to Nordic citizens who in each of the six decades tried their luck in a different Nordic country — and we look at how the agreement came to be.

COMMENTS

08.05.2014

BY BERIT KVAM

The journey from Vörå in the Swedish speaking Ostrobothnia in Finland to Stockholm in the autumn of 1954 was long, but rumours said Sweden had jobs. With that began the flow of people leaving Finland's post-war poverty for Sweden's plenty. Just months before 17 year old Gösta began his long journey, the agreement on a joint labour market had been signed. In July came the Nordic passport union. It was now possible to move without seeking a residence permit.

The story is unique, as is the extensive cooperation which has developed between the Nordic countries, and which has been so important for the development of the Nordic working life model. Civil servant and Nordic enthusiast Rune Solberg reminisces over the anniversary and provides glimpses behind the curtain to show how the jewel of the Nordic cooperation began.

Gösta Helsing's journey from Ostrobothnia to Stockholm in 1954 is a historical snapshot of a 17 year old travelling to the unknown and getting a job the day he arrived. Three years later unemployed Dagny was picking raspberries to make money for the boat to Stockholm. Later the two became a couple, in Finland, before starting a family in Sweden in the 60s. When they pined for retirement in Finland the children said no: we are Swedish citizens now, no more moving. A summerhouse in Vaasa is enough. For Gunnel Helanders it was the other way around. She too came to Sweden in 1954 with her Finnish parents. In the 70s she chose to return to Finland.

The longing and dual belonging is typical. Norwegian Per Billington's career started in Sweden in the 80s. He still wonders whether it was wise to move home. Erik Rundle, who moved to Denmark in the 90s to play badminton and now has family there, always longs to go home. Life just happened, like it did for Danish Janne Sigurðsson. In 2006 she moved with her family to her paradise, Iceland, for good.

60 years have passed since Gösta Helsing tried his luck in Västerås. Today's reality is very different. In 2010 Swedish Charlotte Lundell googled her way to her dream job in Norway. She googled for moving tips, and when she started work Google Translate became a handy tool. Technological advancement underlines that history is history, yet the cooperation and closeness which was institutionalised in 1954 has more than contributed to the Nordic model.



Mapped: Nordic migration between 1960 and 2010

There have been major changes between 1960 and 2010. Sweden has the most emigrants, Norway takes in the most immigrants - not only from other Nordic countries, but from former eastern European countries and other parts of the world too.

THEME

08.05.2014

NORDREGIO FOR THE NORDIC LABOUR JOURNAL, MAP: JULIEN GRUNFELDER; DATA COLLECTED BY LINUS RISPLING AND JULIEN GRUNFELDER



1960

- Sweden received the most Nordic immigrants, especially from Finland
- Denmark also received a considerable number of Nordic immigrants.
- Considerable emigration from Finland and Iceland
- Emigration to the Nordic countries: Mostly from European countries, followed by North and South America.



2010:

- Norway receives more Nordic migrants than any of the other Nordic countries
- Denmark is the second country with a surplus of Nordic migrants
- The situation is more balanced in Sweden and Finland
- Iceland still tops emigration statistics
- Emigration to the Nordic countries: Mainly from other European countries. Considerable amount of emigrants from Asia. Sweden is the main destination.



Rune Solberg

Bold Nordic agreement without a political “father”

The common labour market is the jewel in the Nordic cooperation. It was established as early as 1954, three years before the five first member states of what would become the EU signed the Treaty of Rome.

THEME

08.05.2014

TEXT AND PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL

“The project’s boldness was linked to a belief in a planned economy,” says Rune Solberg.

As the top civil servant at Norway’s Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs he has been living with the Nordic labour mar-

ket for all of his working life, but was not himself part of the negotiations leading up to its birth.

“But I had a boss who was, Hans Cristian Arisholm, and he has told me enough to always keep my interest in the issue alive,” he says.

He has been doing some digging in documents for a speech he will give during the dinner to celebrate the 60 year anniversary in Reykjavik on 22 May.

“It’s not my ambition to be a historian, though. To be that you need to explore all of the footnotes,” he says.

The basis for the Nordic labour market cooperation was a result of the second world war. Sweden received refugees from Norway and Denmark, who were allowed to work.

“Norwegians could chop and float timber. The organisation springing up around the refugees became the beginnings of the Swedish Public Employment Service. It also led to more liberal attitudes to how labour should be able to move across borders.”

Sweden and Denmark most keen

In the beginning Sweden and Denmark were driving the issue. Sweden’s industry was intact and the country had an export industry which made what Europe needed for its post-war reconstruction — steel, wood and engineering products. Norway, and even more so Finland, had serious misgivings. Both countries needed all the manpower they could muster for the reconstruction.

“Norway and Finland made sure to include a separate section within the agreement’s paragraph that stipulated that there needed to be full employment in a country before vacancies could be filled with workers from the other neighbouring Nordic countries.”

All of the Nordic countries — Iceland joined later in 1982 — agreed that the labour exchange should be the responsibility of public authorities, and that there would be no private recruitment.

“The large companies did what the politicians said, and let contracts go through the local employment office. But other factors were probably more important, like having people you knew who had already moved there.”

Hard to measure

The common labour market was introduced at the same time as a passport union which allowed Nordic citizens to travel between countries without a visa or a passport. Migration became hard to measure. At the same time the cooperation between the Nordic ministries of labour became close and substantial.

“Today the common Nordic labour market is more symbolic, as the EU and EEA agreement make the rules. The Nordic agreement is also in breach of EU rules in certain areas,” says Rune Solberg.

One such breach is allowing public labour exchanges the exclusive right to match employers and workers. EU’s freedom of movement of labour is also defined from an individual’s standpoint. No macro-economic considerations are made when European citizens are allowed to move freely.

No political father

The common Nordic labour market was created without big political initiatives, nor was it a result of individual politicians’ efforts. Perhaps they got burned in the attempt at creating a Nordic defence union.

“I think, when I study how the agreement came to be, that it is hard to find the agreement’s political ‘father’,” says Rune Solberg.

But the open Nordic labour market became a success with citizens and it was established 15 years before all restrictions on the movement of labour were lifted within the EU.

The Nordic labour market’s greatest impact was on the relationship between Finland and Sweden, but there were also many who moved between the other countries.

One million migrants

“Until the 1980s we are talking one million moves all together. 500,000 of these were between Finland and Sweden.”

The movements became so numerous that Finland started talks with Sweden which led to a bilateral ‘channeling agreement’, which put certain limitations on movement.

Other factors impacting on movement patterns include the bridge between Sweden and Denmark which opened in the year 2000, Norway’s oil industry which has led to a much more rapid salary increase and the 2008 economic crisis which hit Iceland the hardest. Sweden has gone from being the main recipient of workers during the first 50 years, to being the country with the most citizens working in a neighbouring Nordic country.



“Sweden was somewhere you could make money”

Early autumn 1954, and Gösta Helsing is 17, one of nine siblings living at home in a small village in Vörå in Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia. Post-war Finland is poor from paying reparations to Russia and there are few jobs. The small farm cannot sustain all nine siblings. Many neighbours, friends and relatives are moving to Sweden.

THEME

08.05.2014

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN, FOTO: ANETTE ANDERSSON

Swedish companies have recruited labour from Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, but the more who leave the more travel on the rumour that it is easy to get a job in Sweden.

“Sweden, which didn’t take part in the war, was a bit like a fantasy world and somewhere you could make money,” says Gösta.

The journey begins on a bus to Åbo, then on a boat to Stockholm. He can’t even consider getting a cabin. He will need the 150 kronor he has saved and borrowed while he waits for his first pay check from the job he is quite certain he will get. He travels with an uncle and the plan is for both of them to go to Västerås, where another uncle lives.

In the morning the boat docks at the heaving Skeppsbron quay in Stockholm’s Old City. A cousin meets them and they are going to take a tram to Centralen station to travel on to Västerås. The cousin and uncle get on board. When Gösta wants to pay, the conductor refuses to give change for his paper money. Gösta is left alone on the Skeppsbron quay with no bag and no relatives. It is his first meeting with Sweden.

“I felt a bit lost, I had never been to such a big city. But then I remembered that my cousin Signe worked at Hotel Carlton. I found it and I found her. The next day I caught the train to Västerås.”

Occupation: farmer’s son

Once there, he goes to Asea’s employment office. “What is your occupation?” asks the man behind the desk. “I am a farmer’s son,” answers Gösta. He gets the job and a few days later he is twining electric motors at a conveyor belt and lived in a boys’ home, run by Aesa.

“It was very big, but I had put myself in this situation so I just had to put up with it. Life as a youth was completely different in Sweden compared to Finland.”

After a few years and further job experiences he returns to Finland and military service. He also trains as a plumber at the Vaasa vocational school and returns to Sweden to work for shorter periods of time.

Around the same time as Gösta’s return to Finland, 19 year old Dagny Kullman from Maxmo ends her job in geriatric care in Vaasa and can’t find another job. “I’ll go to Sweden and find work,” thinks Dagny. She picks raspberries to get money for a ticket and in the autumn of 1957 she takes the boat from Vaasa straight to Stockholm. The first workplace she visits is the Stockholm South General Hospital. The next day she starts work at the department of surgery, ward number 35. She gets a place to live in central Södermalm – in a home for young girls with a trustworthy caretaker on the door. Many of the girls come from Finland and Dagny makes new contracts, not least through the Ostrobothnia Association.

“They were fun times. I met many in the same situation and we explored Stockholm together. It was a safe city then, you could walk home at night without feeling scared.”



Woke up homesick

She stays in the same job for three years, but one beautiful spring morning she wakes up homesick and thinks “should I stay at the hospital all my life?” That same day she quits and returns to Finland. Once home she trains to be a nanny and she meets Gösta. After six months training she returns to Sweden and finds work at Crown Princess Lovisa’s hospital for children. Gösta stays in Finland for the time being and letters fly back and forth. In 1962 he returns to Sweden for good, and they start a family.

“We have always been well received in Sweden,” they both say half a century later in their livingroom in Hemmesta på Värmdö.

All siblings moved to Sweden

Gösta took evening classes and became a heating, ventilation and sanitation manager with insurers Trygg-Hansa. Dagny became a nursery teacher and has worked for 30 years for her home municipality. Their son and daughter and six grandchildren live nearby.

The links to Sweden are strong, but so are the links to Finland. They are now Swedish citizens, but have bought Dagny’s childhood home and spend a lot of time there. She was one of four siblings and all of them moved to Sweden. Few people they know have moved back for good.



Gunnel Helander with her mother Götha and aunt Helle, and two brothers on Stockholm's Skanstull bridge; Fred-Johan standing, and in the pram Göran

Moving gave several identities

Gunnel M Helander came to Sweden with her family aged four in late summer 1954. She now lives in Hanko in Finland's south-westernmost point and is a retired architect. She feels Nordic: Swedish, Finnish and Ålandish. Her removal van has made many trips between Sweden and Finland.

THEME

08.05.2014

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN, PHOTO JOHANNES RUNEBERG

The first time the Väinömöingatan street in Helsinki was swapped for Grafikvägen street in Enskede. Here's a childhood memory:

"We always had girls' parties on my name day because my birthday is in the summer, and was celebrated in Bromarf in Finland. Mummy always made tjunuskitårta [a caramel cake]. When school ended we took the big boat to Finland. We took a taxi to Skeppsholmen quay and the bags slid into the ship's storage room. We had brought a demijohn full of juice from the Apotekarnes [a Swedish soft-drinks manufacturer]. When we returned home it was filled with currant juice."

We then jump forward to the early 1970s when she finished her architect training at KTH, Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm:

"During my first two years as an architect I worked for Aarau in Switzerland. I then applied for work in Sweden, but times were bad and I remembered we had a well-known architect in the family, Erik Kråkström. I wrote him a letter and he contacted his friends in the Åland Islands. That's how I ended up at Pejo and Myrielle Svahnström's architect agency in Mariehamn in Åland. That was in 1975 and I was going to stay for one year."

“Sadly there wasn’t enough work there, so I went to the mainland (Finland) and did some freelance work, came to Ekenäs and went to Curt-Ove Backman’s planning agency. He had failed to find an architect and thought it very strange that I suddenly popped up. I worked there until 1981 when I moved back to the Åland Islands, but I kept working from a distance.”

Married a priest

“That same year I married Henrik, who is a priest, and we settled in Hammarland in Åland. Little by little I established contact with city architect Folke Wickström in Mariehamn. He had just lost a fight with politicians for a new vision for city planning and wanted to take a year off. I got the job and got Finnish citizenship, which you need when working for the government. But process planning, city planning and committee meetings wasn’t quite my thing.

“In 1984 i founded my own architect agency which is now celebrating 30 years. I have drawn all kinds of buildings over the years, from schools to hospitals to detached houses and parish houses. I have also planned the renovation of churches and vicarages. In the mid-90s I felt my identity as an architect was quite weak, because I spent most of my time as a mother and priest’s wife. Then I read an article about an architect who had won several competitions but none of his designs had ever been realised. I checked my own projects and made a list, noticed there were 63 of them and only two had not been realised. That strengthened my professional identity and provided inspiration for new projects.”

“We bought our house, Villa Ina, in 1996 and totally renovated it. The old drawings were still available from when it was built in 1910. Neither Henrik nor I have ever lived in one place for so long. Other people seem to think I am not at home here, but to me that has never been a problem. I feel like a Nordic citizen: Swedish, Finnish and Ålandish.”



“I used to draw on paper and make copies using a spirit duplicator. In the year 2000 I realised I could no longer put off entering the computer age. I bought a design program and learned to draw 3D models. Now I always know how a building looks and I’m able to create things in a completely different way.

“I am also politically engaged in Hanko and I’ve been on the environment committee from 1997 and in the city council since 2005. I take great interest in city development issues, and I have taken the initiative for an environment award. If public spaces are planned and properly looked after you create a better environment for citizens.”

Ice swimmer

“Each morning we go Nordic walking to De fyra vindarnas hus (the house of the four winds) and then we go for a dip in the sea, every day during winter. This is my close encounter with the sea. I also do some picture painting and have learned to see the nuances, it is really fantastic.

“Both of my brothers live in Sweden, but I have not wanted to return to Sweden. I have completely assimilated with this place. When you marry a priest you enter into a social setting. We who live in the church always have a congregation wherever we move.”

Gunnel has five children together with husband Henrik, two of them from his previous relationship.



An interest in engines took him to Sweden - but it didn't pay enough

Per Billington moved from Norway in 1984 to work at Volvo's research department in Gothenburg for one and a half years. It shaped his entire career. This is where he learned 'ordning och reda' — Swedish 'proper order' — and he learned to love diesel engines.

THEME

08.05.2014

TEXT AND PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL

"I grew up on the other side of the water. So I haven't moved far."

Per Billington looks out of his office window. Outside flows the Sandvik river and above it runs the railway in to Oslo. Hundreds of red NSB trains zoom past every day outside the sound-insulated windows, along with the coal grey Flytoget Airport Express which runs to Oslo Airport Gardermoen. Some 20km outside of Oslo, Sandvika is still central. This is where Per Billington has created his own company PBT with eight employees and with the oil sector as customer. The company specialises in simulating how oil moves from reservoirs and up through the platform. But it all started on a smaller scale.

"I have always been interested in engines. I studied mechanical engineering with focus on process technology at NTH, as the Trondheim university of technology was known back then — now it's called NTNU. Volvo in Gothenburg was the nearest car manufacturer, so I applied for a job there."

Record number of Norwegians

Per Billington was not alone. In the mid-80s many Norwegians were moving to Sweden. There has never been so many Norwegians in Sweden after the war as there were in the 80s. The number rose from 26,000 in 1980 to 38,000 in 1990.

Accommodation was an apartment hotel in Hisingen.

“When I first arrived there were flowers on the door. The card had a greeting from Volvo CEO Roger Holtback. This made you feel welcome.”

He worked in a small team of six to seven people in the research department, which employed a couple of thousand people.

“My task was to test different fuel injection systems and their performance”

“On my first day I was given a map where a red line indicated where I should go to find the test vehicle I was going to use. When I got there I found a large welcoming cake instead, which the team had ordered in my name.

Wages doubled

Per Billington enjoyed the work and his colleagues. The fact that he stayed for a shorter period of time was a result of a change in Norway's economic cycle. The price of crude oil, which had fallen from 35 dollars a barrel to only 10 dollars a barrel in the summer of 1986, had begun to climb again.

“Wages for engineers exploded. When I moved to Gothenburg I was paid 112,000 Swedish kronor (€12,300) a year, which was approximately the same as in Norway. After one year Norwegian wages had doubled.”

Per Billington also had a girlfriend in Oslo which he commuted to see every week. The flat he lived in was in an area where foreign production workers lived.

“If Volvo did something wrong it was to put everyone in one place. The area wasn't a very nice place to invite my girlfriend back to.”

After paying rent and his student loan, there wasn't much was left of his wages. Per Billington considered whether he should become even more Swedish and buy a place to live in Gothenburg.

“But it was hard to get a mortgage since I didn't have a customer relationship, I had built a cabin in Risør [in Norway] and the oil industry was crying out for people.”

He moved home in the autumn of 1985.

“On my last day at Volvo there was a smörgåsbord. But all the 'ordning och reda' which I learned at Volvo I have brought to my own company. Returning to Norway was a bit of a downer, to be honest. Where organisational development was concerned, Norwegian industry was far behind in those days.”



Today he employs eight, soon to be nine people including one person in England and another in Belgium. Three of them, Arne Gulbraar, Katrine Plüneck and Simen Haukås Martinson are seen above. He uses video conferencing and planning programs which helps everyone see who works with what.

“There is no longer the same need to move. My motto is that you should work where you enjoy living.”

His wife also works for the company - she is responsible for the economy. But in the parking space sits a little piece of Sweden — an 18 year old Volvo.

“I have a Mercedes too, but it is the Volvo that I love to drive!”



Always Norwegian at heart

This August Norwegian badminton player Erik Rundle has lived in Denmark for longer than he lived in Norway, and he doubts he will ever return for more than holidays and to defend his badminton titles.

THEME

08.05.2014

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER, PHOTO: TOMAS BERTELSEN

Norwegian Erik Rundle arrived in Denmark at 16 to attend a school for young badminton talents. It would change his life: he has never returned to his home country and has just bought a house in a Copenhagen suburb together with his Danish girlfriend Stine.

“It’s a perfect fit for me. I have a fantastic job, my girlfriend Stine is Danish and we have just bought a house together here so there’s plenty of space for my family to come and babysit when we have children,” he says.

The best years

In August Erik Rundle will have lived in Denmark for 16 years, which is longer than he lived in Norway. He used to

think that he would probably move back to Norway at some stage, at least when he became old. But with a Danish girlfriend and the possibility of starting a family in Denmark, that perspective has changed.

“I have always thought Norway is a better country to grow old in, but the way my life here has developed means I will probably never go back.”

His life in Denmark started in 1998 when his parents dropped him off at a badminton college in the small Southern Danish town of Assens, where he and a Norwegian badminton buddy would spend three years. Before that, Erik Rundle had only visited Denmark a few times when attend-

ing badminton training camps, and he didn't know any Danes.

"They became the best years of my life, even though I suddenly had to do my own washing, which I hadn't tried before. The mentality was also very different from Oslo, where I'm from. Danes seemed to be more open."

He clearly remembers a Danish car driver who willingly offered him his parking ticket. A Norwegian would never have done that, thought Erik Rundle, as he held the ticket in his hand.

Scandinavian workplace

After three years at badminton college Erik Rundle chose to study and play badminton in the elite division. He moved to Copenhagen and studied marketing parallel with playing badminton, and later he started a bachelor degree at Copenhagen Business School. He then got a job with the American IT company Dell at their Scandinavian headquarters in Copenhagen. He has been there for ten years and is now head of sales for the Danish market.

Before that he headed Dell's customer relations in the Nordic region — where he had Danish, Swedish and Norwegian colleagues and all of the Scandinavian languages were spoken.

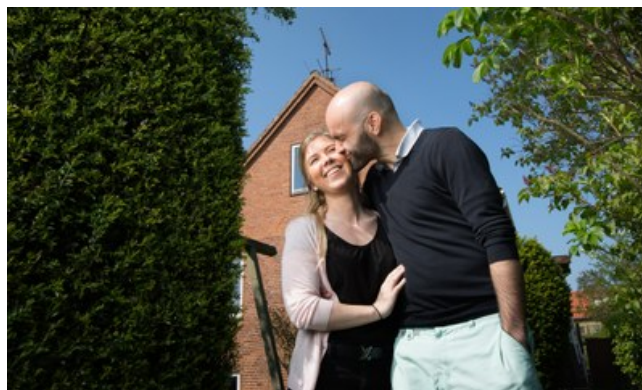
"I spoke Norwegian. It was very nice. In my present job as head of sales for Denmark, all my colleagues are Danish so I only speak Danish," says Erik Rundle in fluent Danish with only a hint of an accent.

Norwegian champion ten years running

Parallel to his work career, Erik Rundle has enjoyed an outstanding badminton career and is the reigning Norwegian champion. He plays for Hvidovre Badminton Club, where the Danish badminton elite traditionally has been playing. He has had a secure place on the Norwegian national team for many years.

Erik Rundle takes part in only one Norwegian badminton tournament each year — the Norwegian championships. Every year for the past nine years he has returned from Norway with gold or silver medals in double or mix double — or in both disciplines.

"The Norwegian players have become used to me coming up to beat them. But there are many strong young players who are ready and dreaming of beating me one day," he grins.



What he misses most of all from Norway is nature. So he and his girlfriend spend summer holidays in Erik Rundle's family cabin in Kristiansand, and Erik Rundle and his brother have bought land next door where he wants to build his own cabin.

"I have always been a man of nature. I've been hunting since I was 15 and I have done a lot of skiing. So this is a deep longing."

He also reckons the weather is better in Norway.

"It is colder but it feels nicer because it's not blowing. The worst thing with Denmark is sideways rain or storms five months a year," he says.

Even though Erik Rundle expects to stay in Denmark for the rest of his life, he will always feel Norwegian. He is quite sure of it:

"As a badminton player I have represented the Norwegian national team many times, and that always makes me proud. I am a part of Norway and have a strong national identity, even though I love Copenhagen and Denmark."





Longed for Icelandic nature — became head of an aluminium plant

When US aluminium giant Alcoa built a smelting plant in Iceland in the 2000s, Danish Janne Sigurðsson quit her job in Denmark and moved to Iceland. She was a stay-at-home mother for a while. Now she heads Alcoa's largest aluminium smelting plant in Europe.

THEME

08.05.2014

TEXT: GUÐRÚN HELGA SIGURÐARDÓTTIR, PHOTO: JÓN TRYGGVASON

Janne Sigurðsson wanted to live closer to nature in eastern Iceland. The family had long been considering a move to Iceland where Janne's relatives live, but hadn't dared because of bad job prospects. When aluminium producer Alcoa started up an aluminium smelting plant in eastern Iceland in the early 2000s, her husband could get a job.

"We reckoned I would be able to find work too," says Janne Sigurðsson.

It was hard leaving her job in Denmark. As head of department Janne was responsible for 40 to 45 employees at the mobile development centre Siemens Mobile Phones. Her man worked in the construction industry and baked rye bread in Denmark.

They moved to Iceland in August 2005. Early on Janne took it easy but soon started looking for a job. Alcoa needed someone to head the IT team at the smelting plant. It suited her

perfectly. She started working there in May 2006. In early 2012 she became the Managing Director for the entire Icelandic smelting plant.

“Life in Iceland is lovely,” says Janne Sigurðsson happily.

“Me not being Icelandic has never been a problem. I got a warm welcome from day one, both here in the town and at work.”

Perfect timing

Janne had been living in eastern Iceland for one year when she was 18, but of course it was a great change for the family to go and live in Iceland. Janne had always longed to move there. The children were interested in living there too. They were 11 and 15 when they moved, and spoke no Icelandic. So the move was a major decision. And perhaps not a particularly sensible one at that stage in their lives.

“We were living on a beautiful farm in Denmark and had family and many friends. We had fantastic jobs. The family had a good life in Denmark,” explains Janne.

But the timing was actually perfect, it was now or never. And it was a happy decision.

When the Sigurðsson family debated whether to move to Iceland they were wondering about their finances and how it would change. But the family economy is neither better nor worse than it was before. They knew from the start that life would not be the same as it had been in Denmark.

Today Janne lives in the small town of Eskifjörður in eastern Iceland. The smelting plant is in the neighbouring town of Reyðarfjörður.

Janne and her children are Danish citizens. The paperwork only took two to three weeks for them. Janne’s husband is Icelandic, and it took him six months to get into the Icelandic system, strange as it may seem.

The great advantage of living in a small community is that they have good contact with neighbours and are close to nature.

“I love getting out into the wilderness, far away from anyone else,” says Janne.

The Icelandic language is her greatest challenge.

“Icelanders are patient and we laugh heartily when I email staff in bad Icelandic,” she continues.

It is hard to live so far away from family and friends. They have bought a summer house near Ålborg in Denmark and can meet everybody when they are on holiday. That is a good compromise.

Janne always looks forward to going to work.

“I like it best when I’m not in the office all day, but am allowed to go to the factory for two to three hours and meet the factory workers,” she says.

At work there are 500 employees who say hello and chat when they meet, and it doesn’t matter whether it is factory workers or management.

“I am also happy when I’m back home again, enjoying the view,” says Janne, looking out at the beautiful mountains on the other side of the fjord.

“I love living in Iceland.”





“Swede moving to Norway, what do I need to know?”

On 13 December 2010 Charlotte Lundell started working as Brand Manager at Orkla Confectionery & Snacks. The first thing she did when she got the job was to google: “Swede moving to Norway, what do I need to know?” At the time she was one of 80,000 Swedes working in Norway. In 2013 she is one of 90,000.

THEME

08.05.2014

TEKST BERIT KVAM, FOTO CHRISTOPHER OLSSØN

“I love chocolate. When I was little I used to dream about working in a chocolate factory, and now I am so lucky that I actually do, I am Brand Manager at Orkla. I’m responsible for the budget, marketing and innovation for Nidar Favoritter. Nidar Favoritter’s annual turnover is 185 million Norwegian kroner (€22.4m). It is fun to be responsible for a product which is selling so well among Norwegians.”

Charlotte Lundell has been a travelling youth since leaving her childhood home in Stockholm at 18. She first went to

France, then she studied at the Uppsala University and in Australia before getting the job in Oslo.

“The Uppsala University is known for its student life. I wanted to experience that. I took a master in economics and marketing. Orkla was among the companies introducing themselves at the university. When I graduated the following year I wanted to find a job as Brand Manager. I could not find one in Sweden at that time. Then I remembered Orkla, went to their webpage and saw they were looking for a Brand Manager. I applied just like all the Norwegian applicants. After a

long recruitment process with four interviews I got the job. So, suddenly I was here. The first thing I did was to apply for a personal number. It said on the web that that should be a priority. After two weeks it was Christmas holidays, and when I returned after the break I had got the personal number. Everything was going really smoothly. The only problem was the language. It was an obstacle at first. But I decided to write and work in Norwegian from day one — so Google Translate came in very handy.

“The worst thing was the canteen which has very bad acoustics. I understood very little at first. I also remember a time when I was going to send a costume to be dry cleaned [kemtvätt in Swedish, renseri in Norwegian]. I called them and told them in Swedish ‘I have a fancy dress outfit which looks like a cow which must be cleaned’. They didn’t understand a thing. They asked and I explained over and over. When a colleague came to pick up the costume, the person at the dry cleaners’ asked: what was the matter with her?

“The misunderstanding was just ‘rolig’ [fun]. I don’t think about whether people speak Norwegian or Swedish anymore.

She has stopped using the word ‘rolig’, by the way, because it means something completely different in Norwegian; in Swedish it means ‘fun’ or ‘funny’, in Norwegian ‘quiet’ or ‘calm’. She has stopped using words that can lead to misunderstandings when she speaks Swedish. She speaks more Swedish when she is in Stockholm to visit family and friends, but she is not there as often as she used to. Her boyfriend has moved to Oslo and has found a job too. They have moved in together and are renting a flat in the west of the city.

“I love Oslo. The streets are so nice. The houses are so charming. Everything is just around the corner. You’re close to nature. One of my first days in Oslo I saw a guy with a snowboard in the city centre. Strange, I thought. Later I realised he had come straight from the piste. You can take the underground straight from the city centre to the hills, and ten minutes on the bus takes you to the best beach. There are coffee bars everywhere. It is easy to grab a cup of coffee before going to work, or to meet friends for a five minute break in the afternoon. I have time to meet the lovely people I have met here, both Swedes and Norwegians. Life is more than work. The quality of life is very high in Oslo.”

Her working hours are normally between 8am and 3.45pm. She works more, often much more. She earns more than in Sweden, but the cost of living is also higher, so it evens out.



“Oslo is not so much different from Stockholm in general. Oslo is like a smaller version.

“I do miss shops that are open on Sundays. When you work the whole week it is difficult to do the shopping in the week. In Stockholm all shops are open on Sundays. I wish that was the case in Oslo too.

“In Oslo people go for walks on Sundays, out in nature. I like that, walking in the forest, take a break for snacks in a cabin, meet people. It’s nice.

“I love Oslo. When my friends ask, I tell them: we have no date of return.”



Vesa Vihriälä is optimistic for the Nordic region

What about the next 60? New report predicts continued success for the Nordic model

“We need to make adjustments going forward, but if we do we have every chance of succeeding,” says the Managing Director of the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy, Vesa Vihriälä. He is just finishing a report on the challenges facing the Nordic welfare model in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

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Working on the report has made Vesa Vihriälä optimistic about the future. The Nordic countries are challenged by the same mega-trends as the rest of the world, like the digital revolution, globalisation, ageing and climate change, writes Vesa Vihriälä in the final part III of the report: The Nordic Model – challenges and reform needs.

“But there are some features which we have seen in the Nordic approach to this development which make me optimistic,” Vesa Vihriälä tells the Nordic Labour Journal.

Employers' initiative

The report was originally commissioned by Nordic employers' organisations. They wanted a comprehensive research-based overview of the challenges facing the Nordic welfare

model in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. The report has been written for the Nordic Council of Ministers with contributions from researchers from across the Nordic region. The project has used reference groups made up of representatives from both employers and employees in a three-partite cooperation with the authorities.

Early last year, The Economist launched the Nordic region as the next super model. Vesa Vihriälä thinks that made a lot of sense. Yet he doesn't deny that the Nordic model is a difficult term. There are great variations between the countries' welfare state models; they are not standardised or uniform. Still the term can be defended because there are so many more shared traits, he says, and quotes his Swedish colleague Lars Calmfors. Lars Calmfors has been responsible for part 1 of the report, which discusses the term a Nordic Model. Part II analyses more in detail some important themes related to the challenges faced by the Nordic countries.

Vesa Vihriälä thinks the Nordic welfare states could be particularly vulnerable to two challenges. Firstly, an extensive public welfare state could create expectations and political pressure for the public sector to take responsibility for an increasing number of services, for instance new and expensive medical technology. It could prove difficult to find enough public money to cover this.

Small countries, big shocks

Secondly, he points to the fact that the Nordic countries are small and open economies which operate close to the technology frontier. Major focus on innovation and highly specialised export industries could make the countries particularly vulnerable to shocks to the market.

Such shocks could create a larger relative adjustment need in a small country than in more diversified economies, as exemplified in the crisis that hit mobile telephone producer Nokia.

On the other hand the Nordic countries are better placed than many other countries, says Vesa Vihriälä.

"The Nordic countries have shown that they can adjust to economic pressure and structural change. The countries enjoy high productivity, high employment, low unemployment, high levels of education and they have a culture which allows them to adjust to structural change."

An ageing population is one of the challenges, but here too the Nordic countries are well prepared:

"Because we have already reformed our pension systems and are planning further reform. Finland in particular is exposed to a rapidly ageing population and needs to continue to reform its pension system, and to carry out reforms to increase public sector efficiency," says Vesa Vihriälä.

Technological challenge

Another mega-challenge is the technological development. Nobody knows how it will pan out in the near future, let alone over the next 60 years. Automatisations of many 'ordinary' jobs is a major challenge in any case for the Nordic countries. This could undermine the middle classes in a way which would increase demand for a public safety net while the tax intake is reduced. On the other hand the Nordic countries can benefit from the fact that the Nordic region so far has proven capable of adjusting to new technological challenges.

Climate change represents a third mega-trend. Yet the forces of nature could help the Nordic region too, says Vesa Vihriälä.

"The Nordic region is an outpost. This could prove beneficial in several ways. When the Northeast Passage opens up to traffic for longer periods of the year, it could lead to better communication and improve access to Eastern markets."

Globalisation could as such benefit the Nordic region. Taxation and education reforms could be important political adjustments. An emphasis on equal opportunities provided by the education system could for instance reduce the risk of an increase in social inequality and low mobility.

"The Nordic model does not need dismantling and reconstruction, but there is a need to refocus and recalibrate policies," says Vesa Vihriälä.