

**Portrait**

Elisabeth Vik Aspaker, the government minister in charge of Nordic cooperation in 2017

**News**

Why are suicide rates higher for farmers and firefighters than for librarians?

**Editorial**

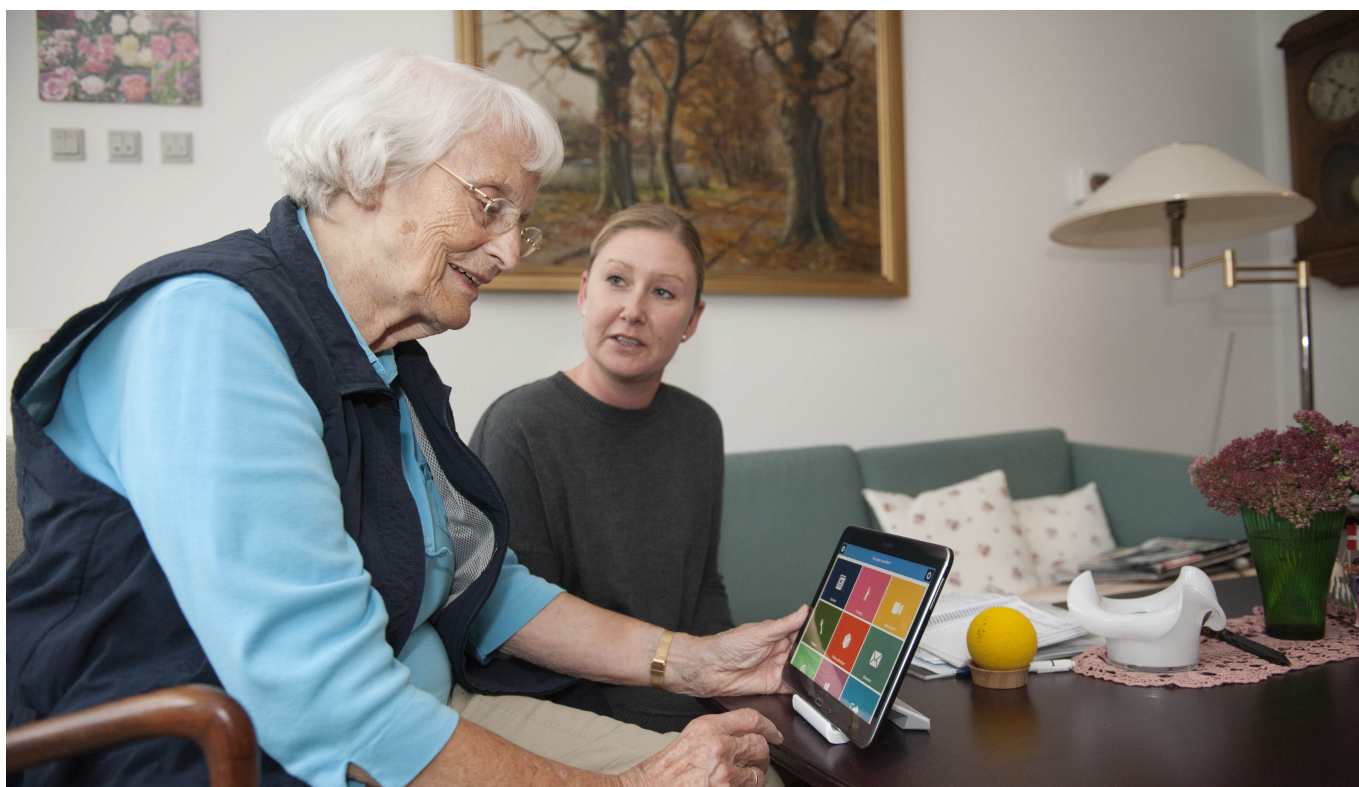
The Nordic region – not cheaper, but smarter?

**News**

Martti Ahtisaari: Who would vote for the Social Democrats – hijacked by the trade unions?

Oct 14, 2016

## Theme: Digitalisation - Nordics in the front



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# The Nordic region – not cheaper, but smarter?

Smart solutions are often digital. Digitalisation is central to how society develops and it affects our lives in completely new ways. How does this development work in practice and how is the Nordic region contributing? There are several questions: Can the future become too smart? Do we need to pose more questions? Discuss more?

EDITORIAL

14.10.2016

BY BERIT KVAM

All of the Nordic countries are writing reports on the opportunities presented by digitalisation. When Norwegians receive their tax returns ready filled in by the tax authority, we consider it to be a good thing, we only need to check that the information is correct.

“We have e-government expertise. No other country beats us when it comes to tax returns for instance,” says Norway’s Minister of Nordic Cooperation Elisabeth Vik Aspaker in this month’s Portrait. Our introduction ‘Cycling into the future’ shows that all of the countries have big ambitions. We also look at what digitalisation actually means.

The Nordic Labour Journal has visited the Danish Solbjerg nursing home, where staff are living through a digital revolution. When planning and communication becomes digital, it makes it possible to spend more time with the residents, services can be better tailored to the individual and it becomes easier for the residents to find out about activities and food plans. This is one example of how Denmark think they might secure the welfare services.

Driverless busses are Finland’s best example of how digitalisation is taking off in the transport sector. Although the future is not quite here yet. The drivers are still needed. The Minister of Transport Anne Berner has focused on digitalisation since day one in her job. As the head of the Nordic cooperation she feels digitalisation is *the* area where the Nordics can be at the forefront also internationally, and Finland can spearhead developments in transport.

Digitalisation knows no borders. Cooperation is only a question of ability and willingness, and of who benefits. A small example of cross-border cooperation is the Finnish-Swedish project aimed at helping small businesses in the Swedish and Finnish archipelago. Those behind the project want to find new knowledge and create cooperation clusters to share resources and learn from each other.

It is a fast-paced development. It is in our nature to constantly look for new opportunities and better solutions. This also goes for the digital development. Perhaps that is why critical questions are now being asked about whether the smart development is nothing but smart.

“Digitalisation is being taken for granted, but there is little discussion about what it really is about,” says Malin Granath who recently defended her thesis on the topic at the University of Linköping.

“It is time to put it into context, to discuss who we are doing it for and how it can be done,” she says and asks: Are we sure technology is always useful?

Nordic countries are at the cutting edge and want to be in the lead. It is important that the debate happens in parallel with developments.



## Cycling into the future

There are great ambitions to be found in the Nordic region: “Sweden will be a world leader in exploiting the opportunities of digitalisation”. Danish businesses will be “among the best in Europe when it comes to using IT, Big Data and e-commerce to create growth”. 97 percent of Norwegians have access to the internet, Iceland is third in the world for information technology while the Finns’ digital skills are said to be the best in the EU.

THEME

14.10.2016

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: FOODORA

Despite the grand words, there is also a worry that the Nordic region is lagging behind countries like the USA and China. That is why all the Nordic countries have carried out or will carry out major digitalisation reviews.

When the Swedish digitalisation commission presented its first preliminary report in the summer, it started with a quote in Latin:

*Tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis.*

In English: Times change and we change with them.

What drives that change more than anything is digitalisation, a term which also has Latin roots. Digitus means fingers or toes. We often count on our fingers, but they are also indispensable for all kinds of craft. Ironically few people think about digitalisation as meaning to work with your hands. Handicraft is rather undervalued in most future planning. Working with digits is to prepare for the future, and we



should adapt to it. We cannot live from cutting each other's hair, the saying goes.

- Still there are 22 000 hairdressers in Sweden. That is 16 times more than the number of people working at Statistics Sweden. The hairdressers turn over ten billion kronor (€1bn) a year – more than the Norwegian telecommunications company Telenor makes in Sweden, Oréal points out in a report.
- There are 21 000 active, certified masseurs in the Nordic countries. 2 500 new ones are trained every year in schools which are completely separate from the public education sector.
- People in Stockholm are said to be the most tattooed in the world. One third of Swedish 18 to 49 year olds have a tattoo. Every day 6 000 Swedes get some body art done.

In changing times when we are forced to change with them, is it not safer to advise our sons and daughters to choose an occupation like that, rather than one which might be digitalised away?

### Digitalisation changes competition

That is the wrong question to ask, however, because digitalisation is not mainly about introducing IT to businesses or robots taking over our jobs. It is about making use of the new digital ecosystem in order to satisfy customers or provide a better service for citizens. Digitalisation carries an equal amount of risk or opportunity for hairdressers, masseurs and tattoo artists to change their relationship to their customers, as it does for other providers of goods or services.

There are two words describing what is happening, points out Markus Bylund in the Swedish digitalisation commission's report 'The data-driven society'.

*Digitisation* is the process of turning analogue signals into digital ones, like we have already seen when music from vinyl was turned into ones and zeroes on CDs, and later streamed online.

*Digitalisation* is the changes to processes, organisation and systems which the use of digital technology contributes to.

"Both of these terms contain both opportunities and limitations which frame what is possible to achieve with data-driven digitalisation," writes Markus Bylund, whose day job is head of research at SICS Swedish ICT, a research institute for applied information and communication technology.

### Analogue to digital

Products or entire trades are still undergoing digitisation, the change from analogue to digital. Norway will be the first country in the world to turn off its analogue radio network. From 2017 only DAB radios will work. Electric cars have been described as computers on wheels and smartphones already replace tens of products like calculators, radio alarms, record

players, cameras and so on. In 2000 all these would cost at least 6900 kronor (€700) in that year's money.

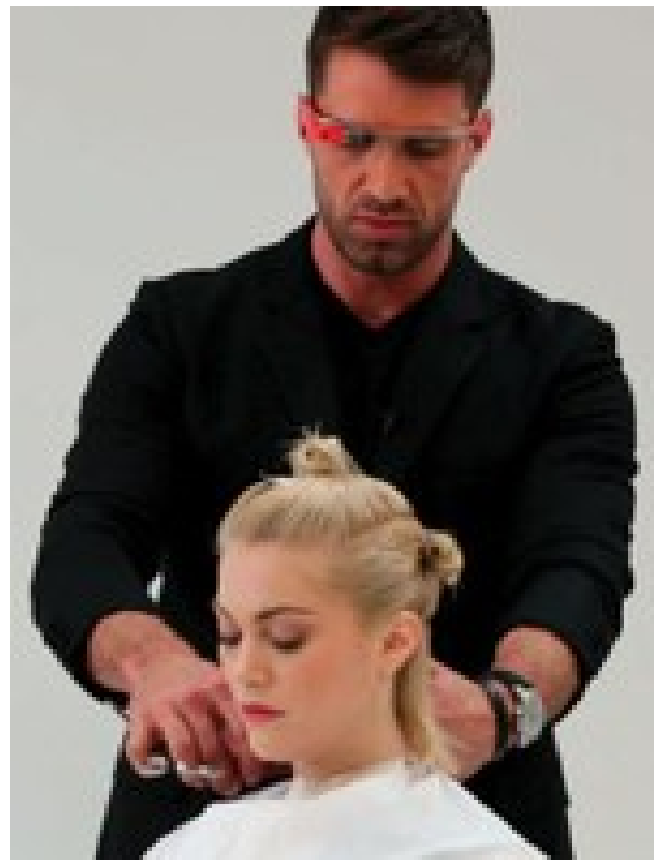
But digitalisation, which is about processes, organisation and systems, can happen at least as rapidly.

We have already seen how the taxi trade is being challenged by Uber, which works as a middleman linking customers with private drivers, or Airbnb which similarly links people looking for a place to stay and private individuals who want to rent out their house for short periods of time, making them competitors to the hotel trade.

Private individuals would of course not be able to be taxi drivers without digital maps being accessible online, with special apps like Google Map which shows how to get from one place to another. For Airbnb it is more about the company working as the agent creating the trust which guarantees pleased customers and owners who get paid.

Even hairdressers can be influenced by digital technology, like when Google Glass is being used by the exclusive Matrix hair salons.

The customer can take a video home showing exactly how the



hair has been treated. This allows them to recreate the hairstyle themselves, or they can show it to their local and cheaper hairdresser.

But the disruptive changes come when someone invents a new way of organising a business. Sticking with hairdressers – Finnish M Room has quickly become Europe's largest hair-dressing chain for men, with 60 salons in Finland and a rapid expansion into foreign markets.

The customers are being offered a membership where an annual fee includes unlimited haircuts in any of the chain's salons. The membership guarantees barber, shaving and colouring services without the need to book ahead.



Using an app or the home page, customers can see how many people are in the queue. At the same time, they build customer loyalty which makes it possible to sell hair products via e-commerce. M Room deals exclusively with men. The salons all look the same, and there is no sign whatsoever of magazines for women. There are dart boards, however.

### Foodora creates simple jobs

Linking a demand with customers by using the internet, smartphones and underused resources is often called the platform economy. The German company Foodora was founded in 2014 and offers home delivery of restaurant food using bikes. The company has seen explosive growth. It is now present in ten countries, including Finland, Norway and Sweden.



*One of Foodora's 270 bikers in Oslo, where 150 restaurants have signed up.*

5 000 restaurants have signed an agreement with Foodora, which guarantees the customers food within 35 minutes for a set fee. The company doubled its earnings every second month in the past 12 months, during which time more than 750 bikers delivered four million meals. That way many non-skill jobs were created – in this case the bikers don't work with their hands as much as with their feet.

In the face of such rapid development, what can governments do to enhance the positive effects coming from digitalisation, and limit the negative ones? There is now a digital jungle of different systems which customers, citizens and employees must relate to:

We see the emergence of an increasingly complex ecosystem of technological solutions within everything from transport to health and smart cities. Today this is sometimes a problem. Stockholm County Council alone reckons it has 1 600 different systems, writes Darja Isaksson, a member of the Prime Minister's innovation council.

"When these do not function well together, it damages both the working environment and efficiency. At the same time the opposite solution – few but gigantic systems – would be more of an innovation dampening dystopia than something to hanker after. It should actually be easier and cheaper to complement or replace digital solutions with others," she points out.

The infrastructure can still be better developed. Not even Denmark, which is small and flat, thinks it has sufficiently expanded its broadband services. The government's goal is to have all households and businesses linked up to broadband with speeds of at least 100 Mbit/s download and 30 Mbit/s upload no later than 2020. But that kind of concrete goal is rare when looking at the state's role in digitalisation.

### A lack of staffing

To avoid bottlenecks you must of course make sure to train enough computer programmers and other important staff who are important for the digitalisation process. But the enormous amounts of data now being gathered, which makes it possible to measure not just what people say they want to do, but what they actually do, also means there will be a lack of people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills, with a particular lack of statisticians and mathematicians.

Mapping how anonymous commuters with GPS-equipped mobile telephones behave can improve commuting traffic and provide algorithms which can be compared to historical data so that we can predict how traffic jams develop.

You need standardisation, making it easier to share information between different systems, but you also need clear rules for how information can be gathered and used.

“Do we accept that we will pay higher insurance premiums if our food purchasing history links us to a profile of someone with a higher risk of falling ill? That we don’t get a job interview because the computer has found out that our profile indicates a higher risk of sick leave?” asks Erik Lakomaa, a researcher at the Stockholm School of Economics in his chapter.

Perhaps researchers studying digitalisation must also use unconventional methods? The Norwegian Ministry of Labour has asked the Norwegian research foundation Fafo to study the sharing economy. They ask all visitors to their website to come up with an example of new businesses within the sharing economy. Already there are around 50 listed.



## Youths monitored – voluntarily – by 2000 sensors

There is much talk about digitalisation and smart cities, but it is high time we posed some critical questions around how technology is being used, thinks Malin Granath. In early October she defended her thesis on the subject at the University of Linköping.

### THEME

14.10.2016

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN, FOTO: FELIX GERLACH

When five students moved into the HSB Living Lab at the start of June, each of them had decided to be part of research into sustainable living. HSB Living lab is what it sounds like – a living space which is also a place of research.

“Developing Sweden’s research is crucial for the country. This good example of an open research arena allows us to get important habitat innovations out to the market faster,” said Minister for Higher Education and Research Helene Hallmark Knutsson as she spoke during the lab’s official opening on 5 September.



## 2000 sensors working 24/7



The Living Lab consists of interchangeable modules and will operate for ten years. The idea behind the modules is that you can easily change them to test new types of insulation and materials. The house is situated in Chalmers in Gothenburg, and there are 12 different participants in the research project. The talk is about cubic metres of living space rather than square meters.

The students' rooms are small in square meterage, but extend far upwards. The five students also share many areas, like washing room and living room. Water will be separated from the kitchen waste and there is a compost bin on the balcony. 15 different research projects will start this autumn and the tenants are well aware that their activities in the house will be measured by its 2000 sensors 24/7.

“For me personally it is really important to be able to contribute to the research which hopefully will result in new innovations and solutions for future living. The fact that everything we do and how we move will be monitored does not bother me at all, it is just fun to be part of it and to add my bit to the development of a sustainable world,” says Rebecca Eurenus, a student and one of the 5 tenants.

### Optimistic yet blurred

She and the others were thoroughly briefed about how the house works before moving in – what will be measured and how it might be like living in a combination of research lab and a home. Moving in is a conscious choice. But if you look beyond HSB Living Lab to the more general debate about digitalisation and smart cities, it is unusual to find concrete examples of what the word means, and what it will mean for people and societies in the future.



That is the conclusion of the theses ‘The smart city – how smart can IT be. Discourses on digitalisation in policy and planning of urban development’ defended by Malin Granath at the University of Linköping in early October.

“There is quite an optimistic view of digitalisation on all the levels I have studied, from the EU and down. But it is a blurred view which lacks knowledge and focus. So it is difficult to see what digitalisation might mean in practical terms,” says Granath.

She has spent four years analysing the terms digitalisation and smart cities. Her subject is informatics, the social science part of technology which studies the impact of technology on people, businesses and organisations. Malin Granath has studied how the term has been used in different policy documents from an EU level down to the planning of a new area in Linköping called Vallastaden.

The planning of the new Linköping neighbourhood, which aims to link the university with the city, started a few months before Malin Granath started work on her thesis. This has allowed her to document the thinking around how to integrate technology from the very beginning. And IT solutions are indeed mentioned in planning documents, but it is not particularly concrete, she notes.



The technology is mostly viewed as solutions for various functions, for instance how to measure energy use, book laundry time and shared areas through a shared digital platform. But there is no mention of who should have the main responsibility for the digitalisation and keep an overview over what is being measured and link this to something.

“In reality there is no definition of digitalisation. It means different things to different people, and the same goes for the term smart cities. It is a metaphor for something you can relate to, and you can add whatever you like to this dependent on where you’re coming from,” says Malin Granath.

### **Who wants to be a stupid city?**

She understands that there is a desire to launch yourself as a smart city and that more and more cities want to define themselves as smart.

“Who wants to be a stupid city, and do they even exist?” Malin Granath asks rhetorically.

“When you define yourself as a smart city you express a desire to attract businesses, residents and labour and to make yourself attractive to citizens,” she says.

Malin Granath believes the thinking around the smart city exists in the policy document in order to create debate and plans for a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable city. It becomes a way of thinking and as such it is quite all right that the term is so unclear and can contain many dimensions. However, she believes it is more serious

that digitalisation is being embraced so enthusiastically and pretty naively.

She says the technological development is undergoing a change and mentions Pokémon go as an example. Suddenly you could include sensors in mobile phones which create new interaction between the player and the environment, which also opens up for new uses of technology in other areas.

“I think this is the beginning of something big. Tech people see what is possible and are ready to equip cities with IT solutions and link different functions which can provide enormous amounts of information. But we have to start looking at the consequences of this. Digitalisation is being taken for granted and everyone is bandying the term about, but it is time to put it into context, to discuss who we are doing it for and how it can be done. Is for instance all technology useful?” asks Malin Granath.

### **Questions needing answers**

She provides a long list of examples of questions she reckons will soon become big. Who should own the data? Who will own the distribution channels? What will the impact be on people? Who will drive the development?

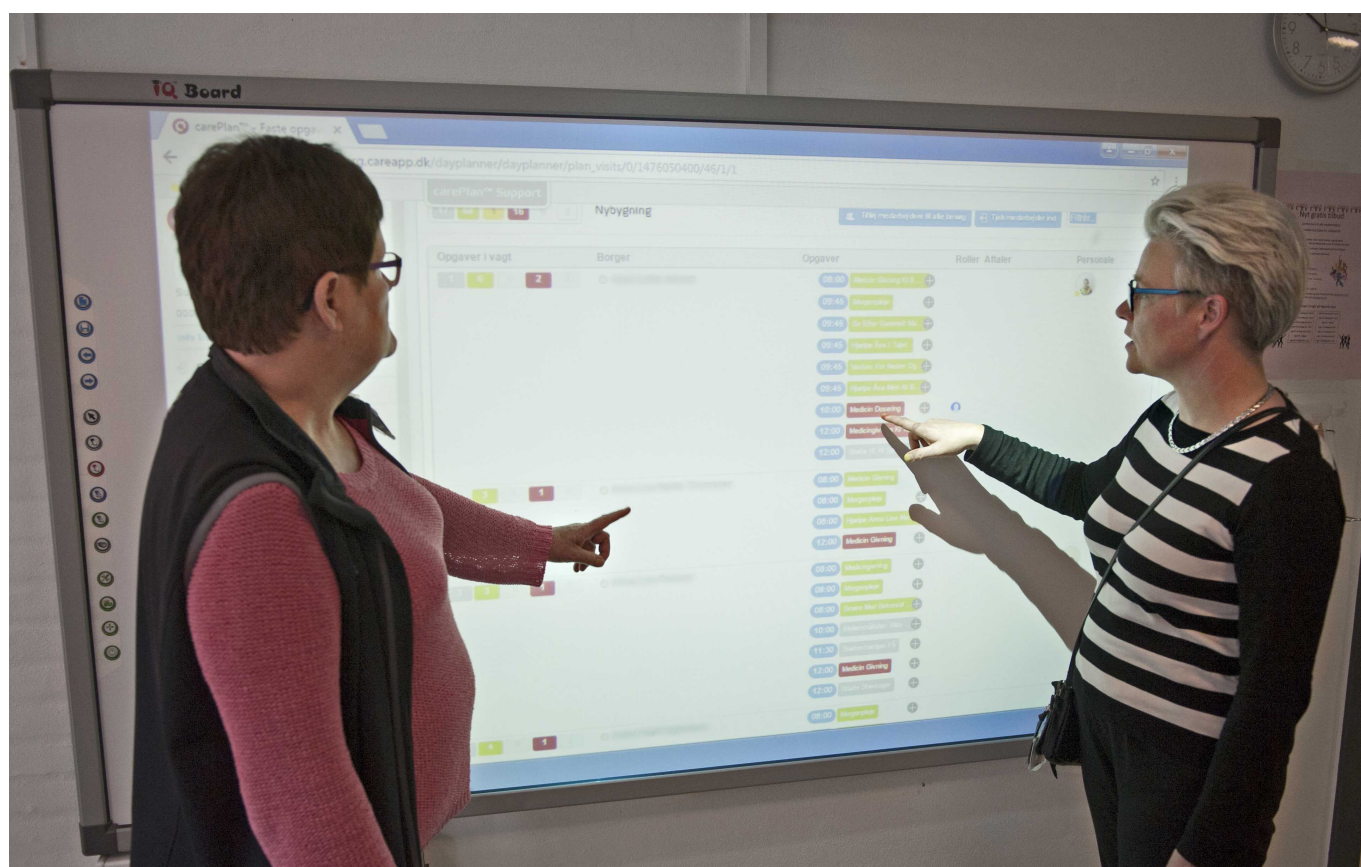
“We have to ask the questions and realise we are getting more vulnerable too. What, for instance, is a safe solution?” says Malin Granath.

But will there be space for everyone in the digitised city? What happens to the ill, the very old or other vulnerable groups?

“The gap will not manifest itself in access to technology, but in how we understand it and what we are able to do with it. Will we sign up to everything or stay critical – this is a question of skills and that is where you will find the future gap between people,” says Malin Granath.

She is not negative to neither digitalisation nor smart cities, but wants to inject more than technology into the terms. Business development is not only technology, it is also about the people in the organisation.

“There is strong faith in technology today, and the technology norm is still very strong. But solutions to problems might not always be found in engineering, and that is why it is important to maintain the human aspects and look after the needs of different groups,” she says.



## Digital revolution in the nursing home

At the Solbjerg nursing home, new digital solutions have freed up more time for employees to spend with the residents, and this is just the first phase in a digital revolution. In ten years from now, all of the home's offices will be gone, predicts the nursing home's coordinator.

THEME

14.10.2016

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER, PHOTO: THOMAS SØNDERGAARD

It used to take Jette Hejlskov a lot of time every day to get an overview over what needed to be done at the Solbjerg nursing home in Aarhus, Denmark's second city. Since the summer, however, much of the daily planning and communication has been carried out digitally, and it has freed up a lot of time, she says.

"Our new digital planning and communication platform has really been a bonus both for employees, residents and relatives," says Jette Hejlskov.

The new digital solution – EG Sensum carePlan – creates a better overview and strengthens communication both among

staff and between staff and the residents and their relatives. Jette Hejlskov can now easily plan and change rotas and move tasks between employees.

"With the new system I can make both ends meet. It allows me to swiftly and easily change the plan which was laid in the morning if there is an emergency, like a resident falling ill."

EG Sensum carePlan also makes it easier for the 40 residents and their relatives to find out what is going on. They can find out about meals and the day's activities via tablets which the residents have been given. 90 year-old Tove Inge Jensen is happy about this.



“You just stroke your finger here, and you get a meal planner, activities and news. There is quite a lot of useful stuff here if you can figure out how to use it. It is nice to be able to keep track of developments, and you do when you get into this,” she says.

Residents and their relatives can also use a large digital information board which hangs in the administrative unit near the nursing home entrance. It shows who is working and what activities are going on. It also gives Jette Hejlskov a useful visual overview over the more than 40 employees and students and the many tasks they are busy solving for the residents.



### **More time with residents**

Many employees in the public health sector feel they spend too much time on patient journals and other documentation. It ties them to a computer away from their core job of spending time with the people they are caring for. This is also the case at the Solbjerg nursing home, but Jette Hejlskov reckons the answer is digitalisation.

“We spend a lot of time on the computer to keep the residents’ journals up to date. We would much rather spend that time together with them, and this is where digitalisation can help a lot. Our new system allows us to access journals via a tablet, while we are still together with the residents,” she says.

So far there are limits to that functionality, however. Staff still need to move to an office with a computer in order to write in the residents journals, but this is going to change. Jette Hejlskov believes there will be no offices at all in the nursing home in ten years time

“In ten years from now we won’t be spending time in front of the computer, and the offices will be closed because we can write the journals on the tablets while spending time with the residents and their families. It is also an advantage that each resident knows what we are writing about them in the journal.”

### **Easy to use**

Many of her colleagues are not experienced IT users, and some of them were not sure whether they would be able to use the new system. But that was all laid to rest and very quickly replaced by excitement, explains Jette Hejlskov.

“It has been important that the system should not be difficult to learn, since many of the staff are not part of the IT generation. The system is very intuitive and even the most sceptical of our staff have loved it from day one.”

Neither has there been any concern among employees or union representatives over the fact that the system allows staff to follow what others are doing in detail. The system has a built-in log which shows when and for how long an individual employee has been in a certain place. But no staff have expressed concern that they were being observed, and when the union representative got a demonstration the reaction was that this should be introduced everywhere, says Jette Hejlskov.

### **More warm hands**

She is convinced that the digitalisation will result in much improved welfare – both at the Solbjerg nursing home and in the public sector in general.

“Digitalisation is here to stay, and we have only seen the start of it. This is really a way of freeing up warm hands which can provide even better care,” she says.



# Securing Danish welfare through digitalisation

Municipalities, regions and the central Danish government authority will explore new digital opportunities while maintaining citizens' experience of the public arena as an accessible partner. Many public sector institutions are already well underway.

## THEME

14.10.2016

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER

A central tenet to Denmark's new cross-public sector digitalisation strategy is that citizens should to a greater degree be co-players in the delivery of their welfare services. The strategy covers the central government authority, municipalities and regions.

Administrative units like government ministries, administrations, municipalities and regions as well as individual public institutions like social services, hospitals, schools and universities are all committed to the new strategy.

## Big potential

The strategy has been developed by the Danish Agency for Digitalisation on behalf to the Danish government, Local Government Denmark (KL) and Danish Regions. The overarching aim is to make Denmark a stronger and safer digital society.

The vision behind the strategy is that public digitalisation should create value, growth and improved efficiency and maintain the Danish people's trust in the digital society. It has also identified untapped potentials: Digitalisation can improve the quality of public service and a more cohesive and efficient public sector which creates value for citizens and businesses.

The new digitalisation strategy covers the period 2016 to 2020 and has identified three main goals for the development of a more digital public sector:

- Digital services should be easy, fast and secure good quality
- Public digitalisation should create good growth potential
- Safety and trust should remain centre stage

## Citizens as partners

Digitalisation can, according to the strategy, help make citizens more active 'co-players' in the delivery of their welfare services in many different ways. It can for instance strengthen citizens' experience of user centricity and influence over

their own life situation, because they can easily access high quality services and information from their own home or their local area:

'Digital services are becoming increasingly more adaptable to the needs of the individual, i.e. they are becoming ever more user-centric.'

The strategy also says that the welfare state has no choice – digitalisation is a must:

'It is not whether or not the changes will happen, but how, as a society, we are prepared to adapt and to exploit the opportunities offered by the new technologies to produce more prosperity and welfare while still preserving the uniquely Danish sense of security and confidence in each other and in society.'

Denmark has worked systematically with public digitalisation strategies for the past 15 years. Concrete digitalisation measures have been introduced in the public sector, including Digital Signature, NemKonto, Digital Post and digital self-service solutions for issuing passports and applying for sick pay.

[Read more here](#)



## Bus drivers – a dying occupation as Finland goes for digitalised transport?

Finnish commuters are facing a very different journey to work in the future. Many transport sector jobs can disappear, or at least change. New traffic legislation aims to make transport services more flexible, based on the sharing economy and call control. And the self-driving robot buses are just around the corner.

THEME

14.10.2016

TEXT: BENGT ÖSTLING, PHOTO: CATA PORTIN

The bus is filled with technology and enthusiasts. There is space for no more than ten people, and six seats. The electric bus EZ10 slowly starts moving to drive just under half a kilometre between three stops. It goes slowly, no more than 11 km/h, softly and quietly.



For the first time this autumn two self-driving busses are being tested among other vehicles in Finnish traffic. First at Helsinki's waterfront, later at the tech city of Otaniemi in Espoo and then in Tampere.

### **Traffic and mobility as a service**

Harri Santamala from Metropolia University of Applied Sciences is coordinating the project which can become part of the Finnish government's aim of developing an intelligent traffic system. The bus is small and light, but also has space for goods. It can be used for carrying people the final kilometres in a coordinated chain of transport from home to the workplace. All that is needed now is to develop a sustainable business idea, according to Santamala

This could become a part of the Finnish transport code, which aims to prepare the ground for traffic and mobility as a service.

### **Far from self-driving**

There is no driver's seat in the EZ10. It can drive equally well in both directions. The bus is made in France by the Ligier company, which specialises in moped cars. The bus has all the latest technology, like sensors, cameras, laser and GPS

It moves very precisely down a prepared route. On a gravel road the track would deviate no more than 1.5 centimetres from the previous trip, explains Santamala.



He is doing the talking during our test drive, but he has an operator on hand who will take over if a problem arises, for instance sounding an alarm bell to alert a taxi which has parked along the route. The robot bus is not yet intelligent enough to make a detour.

Next to the route is a third helper. He controls the newly installed traffic lights along the special circuit, so that our bus always has a green light. All other traffic is stopped by a red light. He can also take over the manual steering of the bus with a remote control.

### **“Safe and hard working, but stupid”**

When the AKT transport union's member publication wrote a story about the bus it was called safe and hard working, but stupid. The bus drives well if everything goes according to plan, and very safely. But it is not particularly intelligent. It cannot predict how passers-by will react or act.

Robot cars are news. There is great interest among students and teachers passing by. Many want to take a ride, but even more want to take pictures with their smartphones – also while they are driving a car or riding a bicycle. That is not good, says Harri Santamala. The last thing this experiment wants is an accident.

### **No threat to transport jobs – yet**

So far the bus cannot deal with the Finnish winter or uneven surfaces. Probably not animals either, for instance elks which sometimes pop in to the Otaniemi campus. The experiment is halted as it starts snowing. The bus cannot determine whether it is crawling children or a snow bank along the side of the road. There is no heating either.

This prototype cannot learn, but that is sure to come, automation marches on. Harri Santamala nevertheless tells transport workers to take it easy. This solution also needs staff for controls, maintenance and more. Buses which are really self-driving will not enter traffic until 2030, according to Santamala.

Drivers are worried nevertheless. Can the robot make passengers safe, can it change a tire if there is a puncture? Transport professionals remind people of the kind of service which bus drivers have been able to provide. The older generation might find it difficult to relate to the new technology too, since time tables, bookings and payments will happen on the mobile telephone in future.

### **More or fewer jobs?**

The new transport code is part of the government's project to create an environment for digital growth. The aim is a 'productivity leap' in both public and private services. This happens by exploring the opportunities presented by digitalisation, and by getting rid of unnecessary red tape.

There is a desire to prepare the ground for new technology, digitalisation and new business models within the transport



sector. The environment will benefit as public transport improves and moves closer to customers, making private cars less relevant.



It will become cheaper too, both for state funded transport and private travel. Finnish households spent 19 billion euro on transport in 2012, which amounts to 17 percent of their total consumption. The government talks about a considerable market and efficiency potential for the transport sector, when for instance the school bus can also transport goods and post, and when people can share transport.

Everyone knows an efficiency drive could mean fewer jobs. But the Finnish government believes things could go in the opposite direction. When you get free competition, supply of and demand for services is likely to increase, which helps employment figures, according to the new transport code.

Transport and supporting sectors employ around 10 percent of working Finns. The government proposal predicts an increase of nearly 15 000 new jobs in the transport sector by 2020.

### **Domestic politics threatened transport reform**

Finnish taxi drivers represent a powerful lobby and have been vocal in their opposition to plans of deregulating the taxi sector. They say jobs will disappear if anybody can start driving a taxi without a license or price regulation. It ended with a compromise from the government, where the Minister of Transport from the Center Party, Anne Berner, gave in on some minor points regarding the licensing of providing taxi services, in order to keep her own party, and not least the Finns Party, happy.

The protests also centred on what can be demanded from taxi drivers. They should know the language, which makes it harder for immigrants who do not speak Finnish to find work as a taxi driver.

### **Uber OK if they follow the rules**

The parliamentary debate also expressed worries about taxi services in rural areas. It is under threat if the obligation to have taxi ranks in all towns disappear, or becomes more ex-

pensive when regulations on prices are lifted. There will be no wild west like in Sweden when it comes to price structures and competition, the government coalition partners now promise.

The transport code also makes Uber legal in Finland, as long as they open up their data to other operators and if their drivers report their income, pay taxes and get the same licenses as other drivers.

### **A new Nokia?**



The Minister of Transport Anne Berner considers the transport reform to be Finland's chance to be a trailblazer in digitalisation and technology. There are even those who believe this could be the new Nokia. The present state of the transport sector could be compared to the telecoms market in the 1970s, when the sector was strictly regulated, monopolistic and inefficient. When the government allowed for competition in the telecoms market, Finland got high quality basic services for all, complete coverage across the country, new services for customers and new business opportunities for companies.

### **Are we ready for the sharing economy?**

Anne Berner has had to defend her transport code. She says digitalisation and interoperability is needed to improve efficiency and user-friendliness within all of the transport sector.



She also talks about the courage which is needed to open up the taxi trade to competition. But Finland might still not be ready for the sharing economy.

“I actually believe our neighbours will be faster than us in certain areas,” says Anne Berner.

### **Ideology**

Critics say Anne Berner has turned the transport code into a matter of ideological privatisation and deregulation. There is talk about private companies being established instead of allowing the transport network to stay in public hands, and the transfer of ownership and money into private pockets.

There is more to come, including a new company structure for the transport network and how it is being financed. A state company should be responsible for the maintenance and development of the state owned transport network. The company reform would allow for the company to accept external investments, but not for a privatisation of the roads, the Ministry of Transport and Communications says.

There are also changes afoot for trains.

Right now Anne Berner can enjoy a growing sector and many new innovations from new start-ups in the transport sector. There are enormous expectations for coordinated transport with shared solutions.

Her transport code focuses a lot on the flexible wage structures found in the competition-driven economy, and workers’ ability to be flexible and move from one trade to another

Strong regulation and little competition results in low productivity and puts Finland on the back foot in international competition.

The entire transport reform can be sold on a promise of a functioning transport system which makes it easier to work and study and which generally improves people’s welfare, the national economy and spending.



## Joint Finnish-Swedish project develops businesses in the archipelago

The three year long project starts in October. It will develop small businesses in the Finnish and Swedish archipelago, across borders and disciplines. The aim is to create new businesses, new knowledge and new clusters of cooperation, where digital opportunities play an important role.

### THEME

14.10.2016

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN, PHOTO: CAMILLA EKMAN

“We hope to find synergies between the Finnish and Swedish archipelagos by working across the borders,” says Maria Westerlund, head of education at the Swedish-language Novia University of Applied Sciences, with campuses in Vaasa, Turku, Jakobstad and Raseborg.

The Central Baltic Programme gave the project 'Archipelago – strategic partnerships for business development' its go-ahead this summer, and it is now waiting for the final formal decision which will give them 1.6 million euro over three years. The Central Baltic Programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund, and one of the terms for getting a grant is cross-border cooperation.

The Novia University of Applied Sciences is the project leader, and will work together with the Åbo Akademi University, Södertörn University in Stockholm and the Swedish Drihuset, which helps new entrepreneurs start and run companies. The aim with 'Archipelago Partnerships' is to create new business models, companies and cooperation in the archipelagos of Turunmaa (Åboland in Swedish), Åland and Stockholm.

### **Tough conditions**

The archipelago between the Finnish and Swedish coasts today hosts small companies which often operate under tough conditions. Many companies are seasonal, and local popula-

tions are dwindling, which leads to a lack of young people ready to take over when the older generation retires. This development can now hopefully be turned around with the help of researchers and students in cooperation with municipalities and businesses.

“The aim is to create as many clusters of cooperation as possible so that smaller businesses can share resources while also learning from each other,” says Maria Westerlund.

The project will start by mapping how business in the archipelago operate today – what works and what are their needs? Data will be collected and structured in order to be available digitally. Little by little digital platforms will be developed experience sharing, recruitment, marketing and more. The idea is that different kinds of meetings will generate new ways of corporate thinking, and that ideas will be born across generations and types of skills.

Older business owners in the archipelago will share their knowledge and experiences, and young students who know about business economy, tourism, media technology and marketing will share their areas of expertise. In order to make ideas market ready and to develop new business models, they will use the so-called LOOPA model, developed by Drivhuset. In short, it means developing an idea while continuously testing it out in the marketplace.

#### **“We offer fresh heads”**

“We want students and business owners in the archipelago to meet face to face. Together they will map the businesses’ needs, for instance for digital solutions, logistics, economic models and more. We still don’t know exactly what the businesses’ needs are, of course, but our aim is to help them formulate those needs,” says Camilla Ekman, senior lecturer of business economy and marketing at Novia.

“It is crucial that we find key players who want to do this. Sometimes companies in the archipelago don’t have enough time, and there can also be a degree of project fatigue, a feeling of ‘Someone else who wants to do something for us’, since there are many current development projects in the archipelago,” she says.

The students will play an important role. They will take courses, exams and also spend their internships in archipelago businesses.

So why should archipelago businesses with project fatigue want to work with you?

“We offer free development work, and companies that take part get help and knowledge directly from the University. We offer fresh, new heads who will look at things in a new way, and who perhaps can help create new business opportunities. But this requires commitment from the businesses,” says Camilla Ekman.





Elisabeth Vik Aspaker

## Elisabeth Vik Aspaker, the government minister in charge of Nordic cooperation in 2017

Elisabeth Vik Aspaker is Norway's Minister of EEA and EU Affairs, and the Minister of Nordic Cooperation. She comes from Norway's northernmost county and is used to working across the Cap of the North. She has been an advisor and state secretary in several centre-right governments and is well prepared for 2017. That is when she will be in charge of Nordic cooperation. What will be her priorities?

PORTRAIT  
13.10.2016



TEXT: BERIT KVAM

Elisabeth Vik Aspaker smiles and laughs. She has a sense of humor and a temper, especially when she talks about what opposition politician Trygve Slagsvold Vedum has said about the need to renegotiate the EEA agreement in the wake of Brexit. She would rather talk about the Nordic region and how it can influence Europe and be seen by the rest of the world.

***What is the most important political fight you have had?***

“That’s quite a question,” she says, clearly surprised and in her clear northern Norwegian dialect.

Being an experienced politician, she keeps the conversation going while her brain is figuring out the answer.

“I think I would have to say the fight for the quality of Norwegian teachers.”

Education politics? Elisabeth Vik Aspaker is the Minister of EEA and EU Affairs and the Minister of Nordic Cooperation in Erna Solberg’s conservative coalition government. After the 2013 election victory she became the Minister of Fisheries and Minister of Nordic Cooperation, and she has held her present posts since 2015. This means she will be leading the Nordic cooperation when Norway takes over the Presidency in 2017. But she is not after a victory for herself as a government minister.

“The new five year long master degree for Norwegian elementary school teachers might be the most important change we are now making for our children’s future.”

***Do you have a particular stake in that?***

“Yes,” she answers firmly. She sat on the parliament’s education committee and was the Conservatives’ educational spokesperson when this was passed and ‘fought through’ parliament.

“Knowledge and skills is our future, and that is why teachers represent the most important building block for every child when they start their education. As a government we are now carrying this through, and a five year master degree for teachers becomes a reality from next autumn.”

Elisabeth Aspaker comes from Troms, Norway’s second northernmost county. She trained as a teacher and started her political career in local politics. She is used to working across the Cap of the North. She has been a political advisor and state secretary in several centre-right coalitions.

***Dialogue about Brexit***

The Nordic Labour Journal meets her on the day the leader of the opposition Centre Party Trygve Slagsvold Vedum

launched a fierce attack in the Dagens Næringsliv daily, criticising the Government for not seeking a closer dialogue on Brexit with Great Britain.

“It looks like Norway would rather avoid provoking the EU than putting Norwegian interests first,” he told the paper. His claims were later refuted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But since this interview took place the same day his statement was printed, the Minister of EEA and EU Affairs was agitated.

“I have to say I am quite shocked that the Centre Party is willing to put Norwegian jobs at risk. Because this is about having access to what is the most important market for Norwegian fisheries, for Norwegian minerals and for many other industries. They all need the EEA agreement for all it is worth.

“So let them carry on, but this really is to undermine Norwegian industry’s market access, and I hope Norwegian workers see this.”

***It makes you cross?***

“No, but it makes me really upset when a party which says it cares about the districts wants to cut what is safe and good access to the internal market in such an efficient way.”

The British Prime Minister Theresa May says “our laws should not be written in Brussels, but in Westminster”. You have said that around 70 percent of Norwegian legislation comes from Brussels.

***That is food for thought?***

“Yes, but we see that Norway gains a lot from an EEA agreement which has created many new jobs, and given us access to an important market. This is a cooperation which works very well for Norway.

***Life-long learning***

There has just been a review of Nordic labour market cooperation in order to see how this can become more efficient. It identified life-long learning as one area where Nordic countries could work better together.

***What are your thoughts?***

“I think we must learn from Finland and what they have achieved in Finnish schools. Look at the status Finnish teachers have gained. We will never be the cheapest producer. We need to be the smartest, we need good teachers who provide a firm basis when you start school, but also good educators who can provide life-long teaching. Whether we are surgeons carrying out keyhole surgery or welders, we have to relate to digitisation and automation and that means we have to have life-long learning.”

## **A changing Nordic region**

### ***Do you have a victory you are proud of when it comes to Nordic cooperation?***

"I'm thinking of what is happening in the Nordic region now, the focus we have for the Norwegian Presidency next year where we will follow three main paths: a changing Nordic region, the Nordic region in Europe and the Nordic region in the world.

"A changing Nordic region and the Nordic region in Europe is about our important shared agenda and the shared agenda between the Nordic countries and the EU. If we want to protect the Nordic welfare state which we have become used to, we must manage to create new jobs, do more research, share knowledge. We have very exciting cooperation and the world outside is looking to us."

She calls it "exciting", although the refugee crisis did upset that cooperation with the introduction of new border controls?

"It was an emergency situation which arose last year. I think all countries felt the flow of refugees at the time meant there was a danger of losing some control."

She has just been to Sweden where she met Minister of EU Affairs Ann Linde and the Minister of Nordic Cooperation Margot Wallström.

"I heard that in Malmö alone they are building 26 new schools to take care of the unaccompanied minors who arrived last year. I believe gaining control of the situation, creating good integration, helps our Nordic societies develop in a good direction. The temporary border control is just that, temporary. The Nordic passport union is something we shall protect carefully."

## **The Schengen outer border**

### ***But the emergency situation has not gone away?***

"Yes, until we know that the outer Schengen borders work the way they should. You need to know who enters Europe, you must process applications and make sure the safety of the border control is well looked after."

The border between Norway and Russia in the north is also part of the outer Schengen border. Norway is currently constructing a fence between the two neighbouring countries. It even had to be torn down and moved because it was too far into Russian territory.

"Norway feels it is important to uphold our obligations when it comes to Schengen, also in Finnmark. That is why we are building a fence.

### ***Don't all these fences being built everywhere worry you?***

"I see that Europe has some way to go to before achieving shared responsibility and getting the asylum and migration politics back on track. But Norway must live up to our Schengen responsibilities and we have a border in Finnmark where this must be dealt with. I think that is important. We must not forget about the importance of maintaining good control there."

### ***The Nordic region in Europe is one of the slogans for Norway's 2017 Presidency. What is important here?***

"We are all part of the internal market as EEA and EU members. It is in our interest to influence other areas of EU development too. It can be energy, migration or digitisation. In areas where the Nordics have done smart things and are ahead of the EU, it is useful to be able to stand together in the region and gain an even clearer voice in the EU. We can drive the agenda together with the three countries who are at the table in Brussels. So Norway's ambition is to continue the work started by the Finnish Presidency, to try when it is relevant for the Nordic region to get in early enough in Brussels to be able to influence things. Digitisation is one such area, climate is another."

## **Digitisation**

### ***There have been repeated requests for a Nordic personal number which would make it easier to move between the countries. Is this part of the cooperation on digitisation?***

"That question has been aired, but there might be other ways of getting these systems to talk together than having a common Nordic personal number. We must try to find systems which manage to handle different personal numbers, also digitally.

"New digitisation solutions could be to introduce more efficient welfare services, more efficient geriatric care, more effective education systems. When it comes to migration, we could imagine that the Nordics developed digital learning aids which could cross borders and be used in several countries. Or ticketing systems. Our imagination is the only limit.

"The Nordic countries Estonia are frontrunners when it comes to digital organisation within the EU. We are now looking at how the Nordic region and Estonia can accelerate this development."

### ***What can Norway bring to the table?***

"We have expertise on the digitalisation of the public sector. No other country beats us when it comes to tax returns for instance."

### ***What other work started by the Finnish Presidency will Norway follow up?***

“Migration. Both Finland and the other Nordic prime ministers have taken important initiatives in this area. They are also focusing on gender equality, that the Nordics share a culture of women being able to be part of the labour market and that we help families.”

***What do you like the best?***

"I think we have created a very exciting programme for our Presidency, and I am looking forward to the Prime Minister's presentation at the Nordic Council of Ministers on 1 November. We have areas where we excel, and we can carry the baton after Finland and keep building on the good work they have done."

Nordic cooperation is often criticised for being an inefficient gathering that does not achieve much.

***Is there something in it?***

"I feel that is very unfair. I think we should look forwards and also see what we have achieved. We have modernised the administrative system at the Nordic Council of Ministers to make it more streamlined, which means we can work in a way which makes us able to address topical issues. During the Norwegian Presidency the new changes to the structure of the Council of Ministers will come into force, allowing us to be even more up to date.

"We have also argued for establishing ad hoc councils, so that we don't need to establish new permanent cooperations between ministers but choose areas where it is important to act immediately. It is absolutely my ambition as leader of the Norwegian Presidency that we will make sure the Nordic Council of Ministers remains as politically relevant as possible."

***A more politically relevant cooperation***

"Yes, we will work in a way that allows us to raise topical issues. Even if they don't fit into one of the permanent ministerial councils. Migration is one such issue. It is a complex area which includes health and education among other things.

We have initiated work in the Council of Ministers to address this issue because it is so important to establish cooperation between the Nordic countries here.

It is the day before the government presents its budget to parliament and to the Norwegian people. She need to learn the context. Our time is up.

***You got married this summer?*** I add at the end.

"Yes," she says with a broad smile. Better late than never, said Elisabeth Vik Aspaker and ran.



## Martti Ahtisaari: Who would vote for the Social Democrats – hijacked by the trade unions?

This is the book which has created an uproar among Finnish trade unions. The former President and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Martti Ahtisaari distances himself from both the trade union movement and his former political party SDP (the Social Democratic Party). Who would vote for them? he asks. Because they are ruining the welfare state...

### NEWS

11.10.2016

TEXT: BENGT ÖSTLING, FOTO DOCENDO, BJÖRN LINDAHL

The book 'Miten tästä eteenpäin' ('How do we move forward?') paints a bleak picture. In it are gathered 60 conversations which Martti Ahtisaari has had with his advisor from his time as President, Jaakko Iloniemi, and with Tapani Ruokanen, former editor-in-chief for the Suomen Kuvalehti magazine and a priest.

They have been friends for a long time. Now they have reached mature middle age. All of them have already published their memoirs, but have more to say.

The three men been meeting over a year of taped and typed conversations, ending in late summer 2016. The result is out, and the book has caused a stir among many on the left of Finnish politics.

### **Critical discussions with the President centre stage**

The discussions keep returning to the SDP and trade unions, Finland's economic crisis and the centre-right government's incompetence and inability to act. The trade union movement's inability for fresh thinking is completely exhausting the country's economy, according to President Martti Ahtisaari.



The three of them want to put Finland in the West, both in spirit and militarily. They discuss security policy, immigration, overseas aid and Russia. But it is the final chapters on the SDP and the trade union movement which have created the most debate in Finland.

### **“The left hinders integration – to the detriment of trade unions”**

How can an ageing population come as a surprise, the debaters wonder. President Ahtisaari argues for a universal duty to work. If people carried on working, instead of drawing benefits, you would also be able to employ newly arrived immigrants and refugees. At lower pay, he reckons.

It would see useful work being done, immigrants getting work experience and knowledge – and then little by little wages from which they would pay taxes.



The other two point out the political left would never accept the idea. Immigrants should not be organised or pay membership fees to The Congress of the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK). And the trade unions only represent people with regular income, like an interest organisation for the employed, adds Ahtisaari.

### **“Who would vote for the Social Democrats...”**

The Social Democrats have come in for a lot of criticism, also in parliament.

Martti Ahtisaari joins in:

“Who would vote for a gang like that? Why did they allow the trade union movement to seize power? Amazingly the Social Democrats and the trade union movement are now about to ruin the welfare state,” continues Ahtisaari.

He defends Jutta Urpilainen who narrowly lost the party leadership against Antti Rinne during the 2014 party conference. It has been called SAK’s revolution in the SDP.

“I think she should run for president for the Social Democrats,” says Ahtisaari.

“I told her that I cannot vote for the Social Democrats after what was done to her.”

### **Politicians cannot run the welfare state on borrowed money**

The Nordic welfare society’s principles are challenged when you do not manage to deliver a big enough budget surplus. The trade unions have become a movement for the employed. An interest organisation for those who have a salary to defend, says Ahtisaari in one of the discussions quoted in the book.

Earlier, economic growth was shared, that is what gave the trade unions legitimacy. Now there is no growth, but the policy of sharing continues with borrowed money, which leads to an economic crisis, according to Ahtisaari and his discussion partners.

### **We must not overvalue ourselves**

Jaakko Iloniemi, a former civil servant at the Foreign Ministry among other things, talks about power games in the book.

“In the trade unions there are for instance old communists who fight for power and oppose all sensible change.”

Globalisation has changed the world to a far greater extent than what the common citizen has understood. There are many things Finland can no longer decide, say Iloniemi and Ruokanen.

Martti Ahtisaari agrees: Trade has totally changed in the past 30 years. We used to be linked to trade with the Soviet Union. You reached an agreement on price regardless of the quality. But then you got international competition.

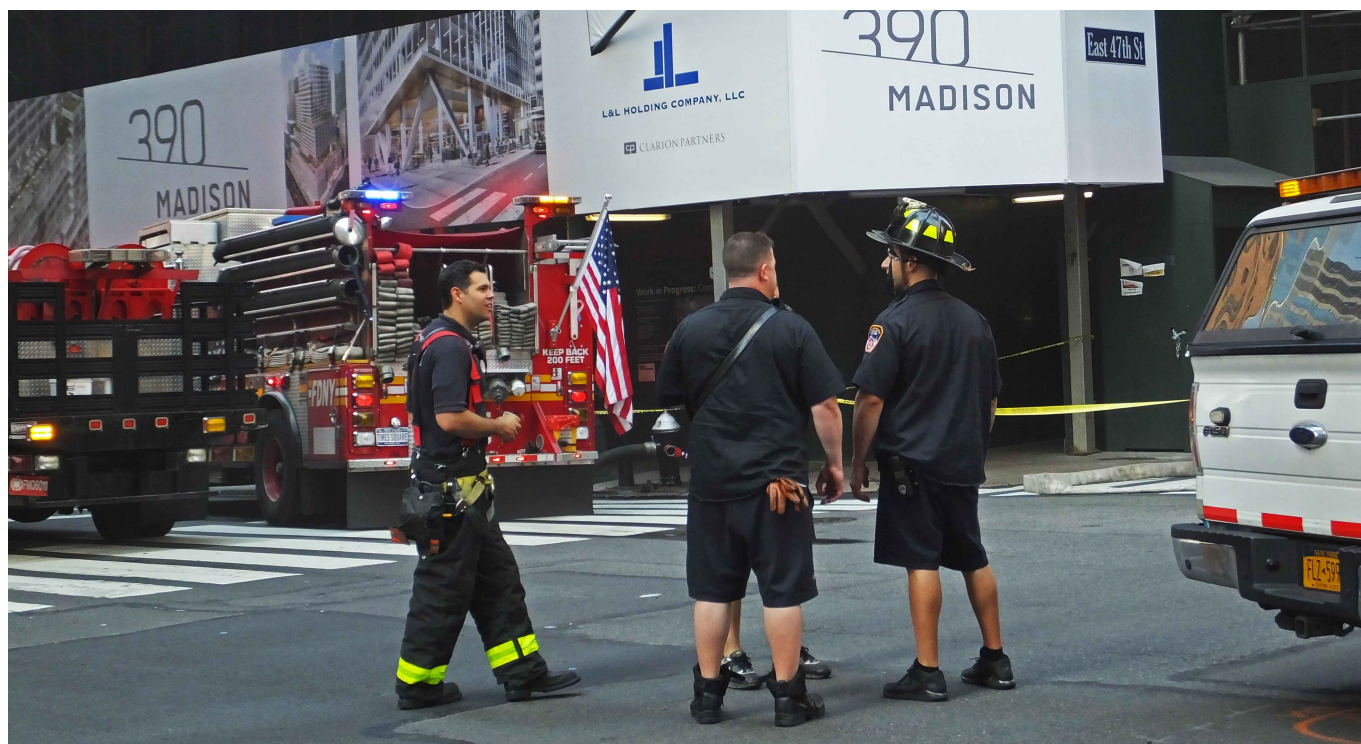
“Do we once again have to go through a phase when industry stops caring about people and move production to new places, like Bangladesh?” wonders Ahtisaari.

If there was any sense among workers and employers, negotiations would be completely different. You should know that we cannot survive if we overvalue ourselves. If you can produce at a cheaper rate, you set the price. If you share what has been saved, we can pull through.

### **Tough criticism, tough answers**

One reason behind the tough words directed at trade unions and the SDP is thought to be that Ahtisaari is still bitter over having had the chance to serve as President for only six years, between 1994 and 2000. After that he was challenged by candidates from his own party, the SDP, and chose not to run.

He got the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008 for his work as a peace negotiator in Indonesia. SDP leader Antti Rinne does not believe that the SDP’s former President Martti Ahtisaari really thinks employees are overvaluing their work. Many Finns already struggle to get by, he told the daily Demokraatti.



Text: Björn Lindahl, photo: Björn Lindahl, Arild Vågen, Wikipedia

## Why are suicide rates higher for farmers and firefighters than for librarians?

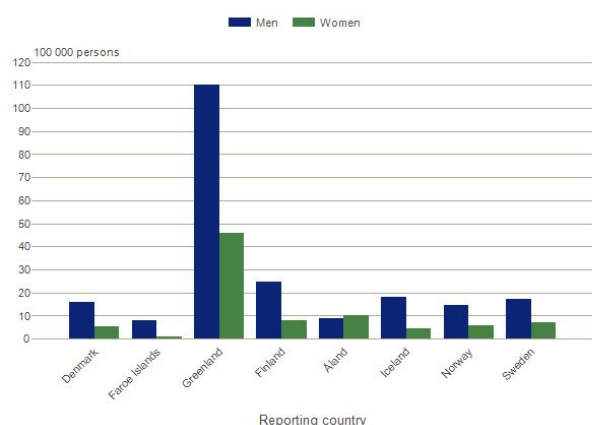
The largest survey of suicide rates by occupational group shows suicide is ten times more common among farmers than among librarians. For women, the highest rates are found among emergency workers, like firefighters.

### NEWS

10.10.2016

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL, ARILD VÅGEN, WIKIPEDIA

There are complex reasons for why people commit suicide. Genetic, individual and social factors are all at play. There are also clear differences between different occupations, ages and between the genders. Greenland tops the statistics in the Nordic region, where 14 times as many men take their own lives compared to men in the Faroe Islands.



Agriculture, fisheries and forestry are all sectors with high suicide rates. One explanation for the high rate among farmers is that they often work alone, while potential financial losses are great in case of failing crops.

But even medical doctors and dentists run a higher risk compared to other occupations. Here the access to knowledge about how to take your own life and access to drugs could play a role.

Teachers and librarians represent the occupations with the lowest suicide rates. A fresh American study covering 17 US states looked at 22 different occupations. The study was carried out by researchers at the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC. Previous studies have mainly looked at single occupations and states. The numbers are from 2012, when 40 000 Americans committed suicide. It is the tenth most common cause of death in the USA. The researchers classified over 12 000 suicides committed by people above 16 according to different occupations.

The suicide rate among American farmers, fishermen and forestry workers was 84.5 per 100 000 people working in those occupations in the 17 states. The rate among teachers and librarians was less than one tenth of that. These two occupations had a rate of 7.5 suicides per 100 000. The US national average is 12.6 per 100 000 if you include under-16s.

### No comparable Swedish study

“It is very positive that so few librarians commit suicide, of course. I have never heard of a comparable Swedish study, but it would be good if the same is true in Sweden,” says Stina Hamberg from DIK, the professional association and trade union for university graduates in the fields of culture and communication.

“One explanation could be that librarians have a higher education, which is usually linked to better health,” she says.

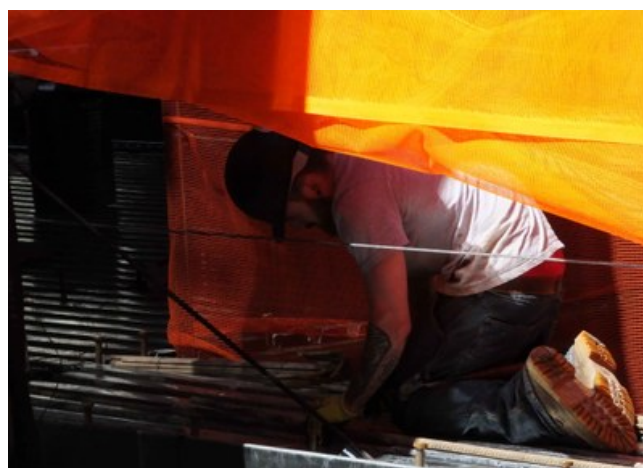
In all of the 22 occupations covered by the study, there are more suicides among men than among women. 77 percent of suicides were committed by men, and 23 percent by women. That is similar to European figures, where there are approx-

imately four male suicides for every female one. China is one of the few countries where more women than men commit suicide.

Among women in the USA, the occupations with the highest suicide rates were police and firefighters, with a rate of 14.1 per 100 000.

### Cause and effect

Cause and effect is unclear here. Would a person who is genetically predisposed to commit suicide refrain from doing it if they were in a different occupation? Or are certain high risk groups drawn to certain occupations?



The working environment for some occupations can also influence suicide rates. The American researchers considered whether farmers are being affected by pesticides which influence the nervous system and potentially lead to depression. In the construction industry there are solvents and other chemicals with similar effects.

“No study of the same magnitude has been done in Sweden, so it is difficult to comment on any specific figures in the report. You should be careful drawing firm conclusions on the connection between suicide and different occupations,” says Gergö Hadlaczky, senior researcher at the National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of Mental Ill-Health (NASP).

NASP was established in 2007 as Sweden’s national expert institution on suicide prevention. It is part of Karolinska Institutet.

### Income more important than occupation?

“The reason why you should be careful is that there are many other variables at play. There are studies that show that income, education and other socio-economic factors to a great degree can explain why occupations sometimes influence the suicide risk. It has also been shown that unemployment can be at least as strong a suicide risk factor as any individual occupation,” says Gergö Hadlaczky.



He points to other studies, like a meta-analysis of 34 scientific papers on suicide published by The British Journal of Psychology. The authors write that one problem with this kind of research is that the limited nature of the source material makes it difficult to identify statistical differences.

According to the researchers in the British study, farmers' high suicide risk can be explained at least in part by their ease of access to weapons. One New Zealand study showed guns were more often involved in farmers' suicides, while health sector workers often used a drugs overdose. But the access to weapons cannot fully explain the difference, since guns were not more common among army personnel committing suicide.

One of the largest mental health surveys carried out by the American Army, STARRS (Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service members), looked at 1.6 million soldiers who were in active service between 2004 and 2009. The suicide rate was higher than the national average before the soldiers entered into combat and after. During their active service in a conflict zone the number of suicides fell, however, which might be due to the camaraderie formed among the soldiers. The total suicide risk among the soldiers in the US was 18.7 per 100 000. The numbers are from 2013.

Compared with soldiers, librarians have a peaceful workplace. But it is not all a bed of roses. A working environment survey carried out by the DIK association in early 2016 showed librarians often take care of people with social problems or gangs of youths who have no place to go when their youth club closes down. Karin Linder, chair of DIK, summed up the survey like this:



“The working environment in many libraries is unsustainable. One in five have been threatened in their role as a librarian, four in ten have either experienced violence or have witnessed violent episodes in their place of work.

“84 percent say they have experienced aggressive behaviour from visitors, and two in three have experienced vandalism. One in four experiences altercations at least once a week. Half say they have experienced abusive language at work and

many are being attacked because of their gender and have their skills questioned.”