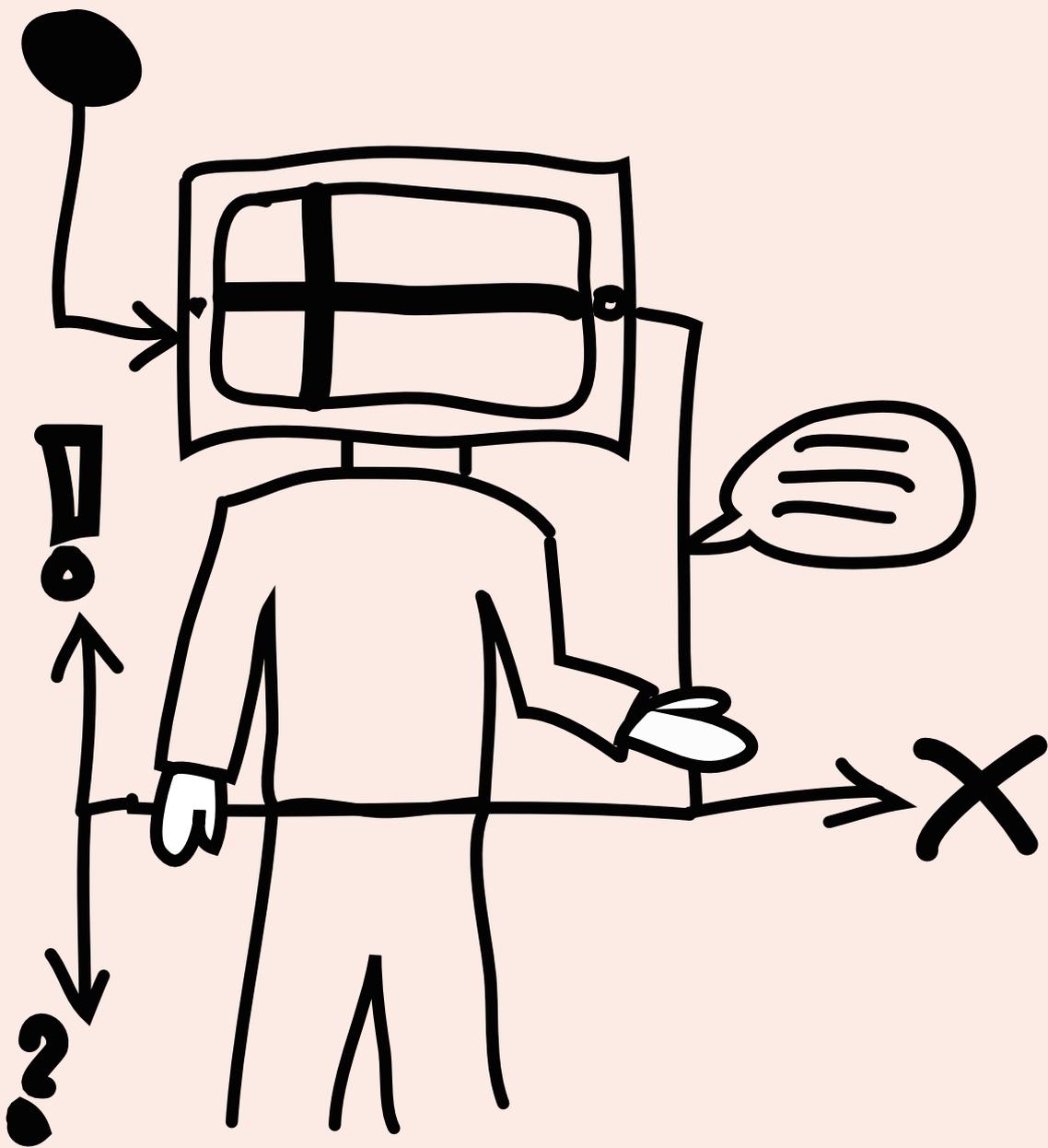


‘Schools and/or Screens’

Scenarios for the digitalisation of education in Norway



1. Introduction & Methodology

On 28 October 2019, the Media & Communications Department of the University of Oslo convened a **scenario planning workshop to generate future contexts for the digitalisation of education in Norway**. These contexts are intended to inspire, challenge, and support the selection of future research directions for the Department's 'Screen Cultures' programme.

Attendees included university researchers, educators, government officials, and both public and private sector organisations with interests in the intersection of education, youth, and technology.

The workshop facilitator was Matt Finch of MechanicalDolphin.com, using a variant of the Oxford Scenario Planning method. This approach uses group work and collective sense-making to devise multiple future scenarios, articulated as systems and stories.

The method does not seek to predict the future, but to generate plausible futures - that is to say, ones which definitively challenge current assumptions while still opening useful debates as to practical strategic choices. There is a strong emphasis on uncovering potential situations which are currently being avoided, or not being imagined, in accepted framings of the future.

The session began with an activity to identify the currently accepted framings held by the group, including "known unknowns" - the things which participants knew were currently not being prepared for or taken into account.

Scenarios were then built around the role of school headteachers. Headteachers were chosen because they serve as decisionmakers within the education system who are linked to many communities and levels of hierarchy - from national, county, and city governments through to suppliers, teachers and their unions, parents, and of course school pupils.

Participants mapped the system of interactors surrounding the figure of the headteacher, and then identified driving factors for those interactors.

Three groups of participants then each selected a small number of factors from the map, and arranged these into relationships that could serve as the basis for a plausible future scenario.

The **scenarios were iterated twice** during the one-day workshop, and subsequently elaborated by the facilitator to emphasise the most challenging elements. They are deliberately turned into the form of stories so as to tease out the experiential qualities of the respective future.

The compressed nature of the workshop delivery means that these **scenarios are only starting points**; however, they succeed in presenting questions, challenges, and future visions which go radically beyond the "known unknowns" identified during the first part of the session. They are intended to complement existing educational perspectives and strategies by highlighting aspects of Norwegian education's future which lie beyond the currently accepted strategic framing.

In the following, readers will find a **presentation of the three scenarios**, elaborated into story form and complemented with a more analytical perspective unpacking the respective scenario's sociocultural implications. This is followed by comments on the various scenarios by Philippa Collin (University of Western Sydney) as well as Niamh Ni Bhroin and Steffen Krüger (University of Oslo), who co-organised the workshop.

2. Scenarios

Scenario (A): “Barnet som måtte vokse opp” (The child that needed to grow up)

Stavanger, 2050. It's a bright sunny day as **Anna walks towards the Library** in the Civic Square. Its transmission spires catch the light and dazzle; beyond them lies the sea, and the offshore algae farms where their¹ parents work.

Anna **has to work with the little kids** today, leading a worldbuilding class with virtual Moomins. They are proud of the way that the little ones are looking after the digital characters, helping to resolve conflicts, manage resources, and achieve community goals.

After that, Anna has a lunch date with their **boyfriend and girlfriend**, Leif and Samira. The weather is so good that the three of them will head down to the rocks and eat their algae rations by the sea while planning birthday celebrations. Leif and Anna both turn fifteen next month.

Their triad has been together for eighteen months now, but Anna has also been intimate with a few others outside the group, in person and via telepresence. The in-person stuff happened on rarely-used hiking trails or islands in the fjord, after switching off their personal tracker. They sometimes imagine the city eases off on surveillance there, precisely so that kids learn some self-reliance and non-digital survival skills. Anna snuck into a clump of trees with a kid from Rennesøy and they made out awkwardly for ten minutes. It wasn't great.

Anna had more success online, slipping into a bodysleeve and making out with boys and girls in Iowa, Antarctica, Osaka, Berlin, plus some digital avatar like a velvet octopus that gave its location as Shenzhen. Experimentation was encouraged; one of the first things you figured out was how to set the bodysleeve to give yourself pleasure. **Consent was taught young** and

as you learned to own your body and control permissions, you also learned about sharing as well as denial.

Anna suspects that, just as you were supposed to learn how to hack the sleeve even though no-one explicitly instructed you, probably you were also meant to figure out how to instruct the food machine to turn algae into cannabis. Otherwise the police would be all over you for that kind of stuff. They'd go out to the islands, where they must have gone as kids themselves, and bust everyone. Didn't they say learning wasn't about instruction any more, it was about solving problems for yourself - in all aspects of life?

Anna's mother, Grethe, says to have fun while you can, because as you get older, the problems only get harder, and the responsibilities greater.

Anna knows how important their work is, teaching and learning with the other kids and teens at the Library. **Developing the Norwegian social model** is the part they play in the Silk Road to the Stars - humanity's great hope for escaping this dying world.

When the old powers fell, the human race was grateful for Chinese compassion and strength, rewriting the world order just as had happened before, in 1945. With the planet burning, drastic action was needed. A global human mission had been agreed at the Beijing Conference of 2039: stabilise, sustain, and then strive at all costs to find a way to escape Earth's fast and now-inevitable decline.

In Norway, **not-for-profit organisations evolved into community organisations somewhere between a county and an extended family**. They took responsibility for

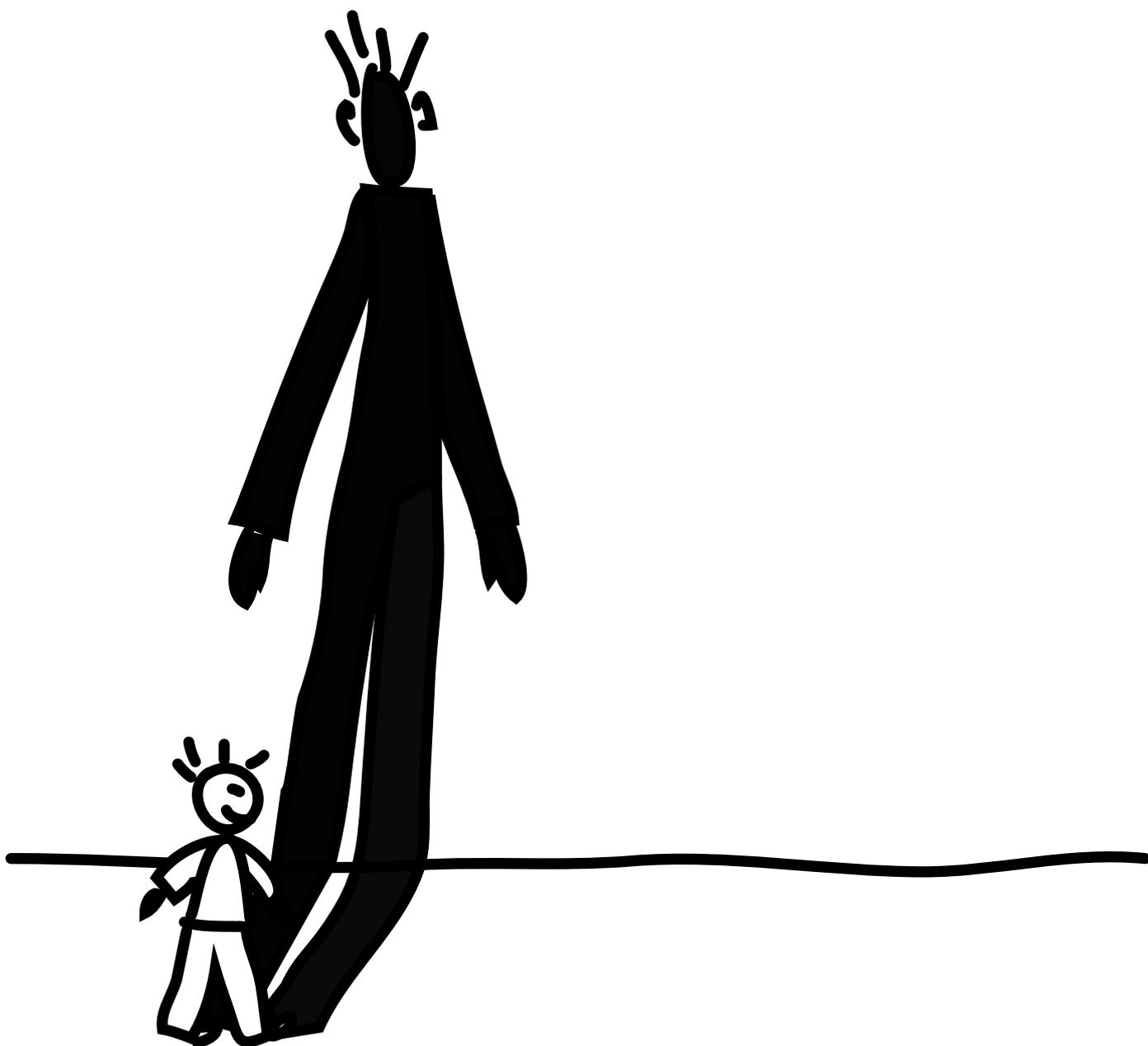
¹Anna, in this scenario, identifies as nonbinary and in Norwegian would use the inclusive third-person pronoun "hen". "Språkrådet vil ikkje rå folk frå å bruka ordet i den vidare tydinga privat. I denne sfæren er det språkbrukarane som bestemmer. Vinn denne bruken av ordet fram, vil hen med tida koma i norske ordbøker òg, for ordbøkene speglar grovt sett den vanlege bruken av ordtilfanget." - <https://www.sprakradet.no/Vi-og-vart/Publikasjoner/Spraaknytt/spraknytt-20162/spraknytt-12016/han-ho-eller-hen/>

meeting Norwegian Silk Road goals, and ensuring that young learners like Anna hit the standards set by global education assessors. But there's still **a great deal of freedom** - unimaginable, compared to the days when children used to be sent to schools and instructed by teachers.

Anna harbours the secret **hope that not only would the Norwegian social model be the one chosen for the future colonisation of the stars**, but that Anna's own work raising children and teaching them to care for communities of digital characters would shape that success. One of their young pupils could grow up to be captain of the first starship on the new

Silk Road. The way Norwegians lived, loved, and learned in 2050 could be the start of the path to a way of living which would let the human race survive incredible trials and incredible journeys, on or off this world.

Anna doesn't really have the same concept of "childhood" that their grandparents had - by the time Bestemor and Bestefar passed away, both its start and end points had become blurred and unrecognisable to the previous generation's eyes - but if Anna was going to phrase it in an old-timey way, they might say: **Norwegians are the children of tomorrow.**



About this scenario

This scenario addresses a **world where schools do not exist and young people teach one another** across age groups with the aid of digital devices. To a Norwegian from 2019, this world would seem materially tough and morally wild, but people in this world are industrious, happy, and hopeful despite their acceptance of Earth's eventual demise.

Childhood has become a blurry concept and even the distinction between school and work has evolved. Young people's education is locally delivered but globally ranked, with a focus on research and real-world applications - more like the current university system than schooling.

The climate crisis limits international travel, but telepresence technologies have allowed a **new globalism** to evolve. The need to address climate change has led to a new global status quo, led by an Asian project to help humanity evolve beyond Planet Earth in a way that is harmonious and sustainable. This may in fact be impossible, but the sense of a shared global mission has given humanity hope, now that the climate crisis is known to be irreversible.

The combination of self-directed learning, autonomy for young people, and advanced internet technology has also changed our understandings of maturity and sexuality.

What should we look to in the present?

- **Increasing autonomy** of children and young people in both formal education (problem-based challenges) and informal environments (unsupervised socialising via online platforms such as Fortnite)
- **A blurring definition of childhood** - pre-teens behaving in ways which were once considered "adolescent"; adults still being considered as "youth" or requiring parents' support into their twenties or even thirties
- **Changing ideas of sexuality** and debates around the right to decide what you do with your own body
- **The reduction or retreat of formal education** institutions and schooling on the industrial-era, factory model; use of peer mentoring among young people; the rise of alternative education providers such as [Los Angeles Public Library awarding high school diplomas](#)
- **Deeply local arrangements of digitalized citizenship and work** - [note the Norwegian tech firm Bolder's experiments with citizen data in Stavanger](#)
- **School systems increasingly resembling universities**: international networks of teaching and learning, [real-world challenges](#), the need to demonstrate relevance, formal comparisons at international levels
- **Mission-based approaches to policy** at the national or international level - see [Mari-ana Mazzucato's work on mission based innovation for the EU](#). What missions would Norway participate in? How would missions affect education?
- Public policy initiatives embedded in local civic spaces - [could Innovasjon Norge work with public libraries to deliver future missions and challenges?](#)

Scenario (B): “Norway Prime”

Hoda is eased awake by her smart bedroom with a subtle adjustment of light and air temperature. **The Dot in her wrist**, a little display disc set flush with the skin, smiles at her and confirms that she achieved her 8 hours of sleep last night. The animated number 8 on-screen jumps into a container which is filling up with all her successful nights of sleep: there are leisure time bonuses for Partner-Citizens of Amazon Norway who take good care of their wellbeing.

Hoda's partner Berit has already left for the day - she's working on a pilot project together with a team from Amazon Indonesia, and **today the algorithm called her in early**. But the shape Berit makes on her side of the bed is still there, a comforting impression, even still warm. The bed could smooth it out for her, of course, but Berit told it not to, so that Hoda would still wake up to the trace of her partner's presence.

By the time Hoda gets to the kitchen, her coffee is waiting, the selection made for her according to previous preferences and current metabolic data supplied by the Dot. She sips it and thinks on the meeting scheduled for this morning: Kristian, the **Diversity Generator** who attends to her child Abdulahi's education, has convened a parent's meeting which will take place at the end of Berit's shift.

Hoda suspects they're planning to put Abdulahi into logistics, managing a fleet of autonomous vehicles via an enhanced sensory apparatus. It may mean tailoring his intelligence, his aptitudes, even his physique to suit the future task, but he's excited. He's one of Amazon Academy Grünerløkka's gaming stars, and logistics seems like a **dream job** to the eyes of a high-school gaming jock. He could be shepherding a great whirling cloud of self-driving drones, trucks, and - if he's lucky - even space vehicles, around the world. Hoda suspects he'll be disappointed when he realises that most of the flying, routing, and management is done automatically; **he's only there for oversight and accountability**.

The Dot also has another message relating to Hoda's parenting. It's an automated alert relat-

ing to her younger child Astrid. It was noted that Hoda refused to wipe Astrid's dripping nose well beyond the childcare AI's acceptable limits. It is Hoda's second parenting alert this quarter and if she gets another she'll receive an intervention and training. But Hoda remembers lessons from her own childhood: that kids should learn to wipe their nose for themselves; that exposure to germs builds resistance, that her grandparents had laughed about excessive fuss and “helicopter parenting”.

She knows that the system disapproves, that it might cost her some of her time allowance if she is a neglectful parent, but she believes she's showing Astrid a little tough love. She's not like those weirdos - all the cases of **Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy** which are coming up, parents making their kids sick in order to then care for them.

The news outlets are calling it an epidemic. Probably in The People's Republic of China-Huawei they'd cover these cases up completely, but **for Partner-Citizens of Amazon Norway**, access to information is guaranteed by a double legacy: Scandinavian social democracy, plus the Founder Bezos' past as a bookseller and newspaper owner. All of the corporate communities have slightly different citizen benefits, but the Norwegians voted to join Amazon rather than Google or Apple in two referendums. At the time it was perceived as having the best alignment with Norwegian values.

After the coffee, Hoda showers and dresses for the day. As she styles her hair into place with a static comb, the 3D display in the lounge hums to life and Hoda's Dot prompts her to get to work. The shift passes quickly - she's looking at **social analytics for a long-running information project**, preparing a strategic report - and soon it's time to talk with the Diversity Generator.

The Dot blinks to show that he, and Berit, are already in the virtual meeting. Hoda wished she'd spent some of her 78 allotted minutes of mandated leisure preparing to talk about this last night, but **time is always hard to come by**.

About this scenario

This scenario explores a **world in which corporate dominance is complete**, and knowledge workers serve corporate communities which have effectively replaced the nation state.

Although “Partner-Citizens” are expected to serve the community 24/7, corporate leaders are not foolish: the data tells them that they need to attend to **workers’ health and wellbeing**, to train the next generation, and ensure whatever degree of autonomy and perceived choice that is necessary for workers to survive and thrive. Amazon Norway and its equivalents own every hour of your life, but that also means looking after it: “A Partner-Citizen is for life, not just for the Christmas shopping rush”.

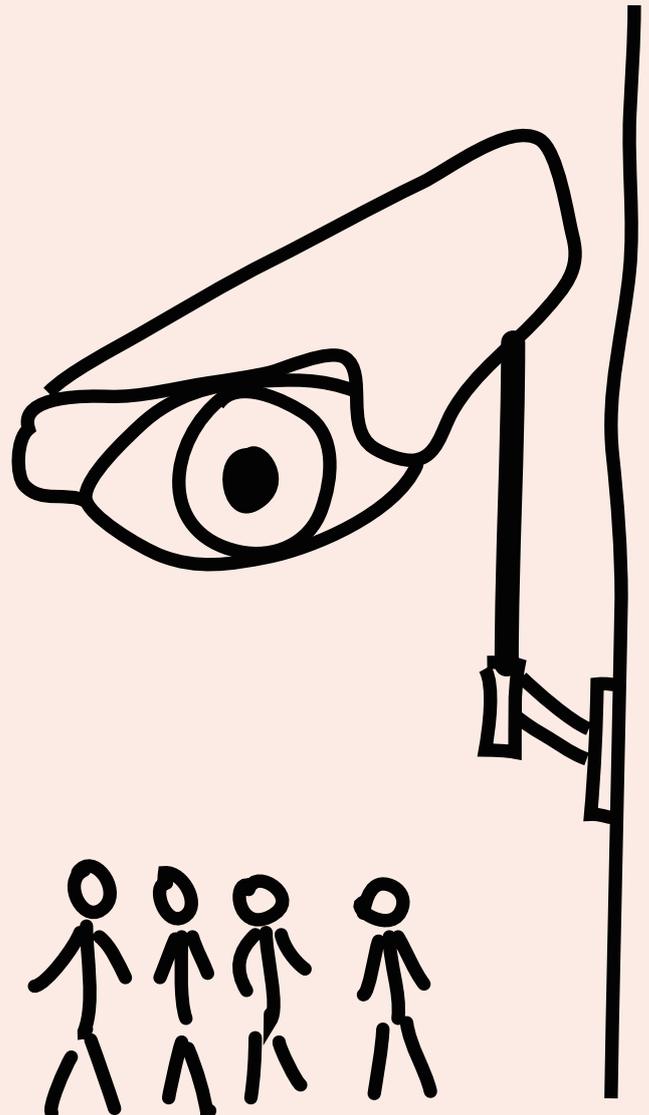
The rhetoric of education is about maximising children’s potential to shape the future and become an empowered generation of “Partner-Citizens”, but in practice education is **highly instrumental**, with every aspect of a child’s life tailored to meet the community’s future needs. This is presented as ensuring diversity, personalising education, and avoiding homogeneity, but in practice the teachers of this world – “Diversity Generators” in the language of 2050 – are really moulding children based on estimated future workforce needs.

This scenario’s world has **only vestigial democracy** but is materially quite comfortable. The Norwegian social model has been co-opted by for-profit forces which seek to control and profit from the totality of our existence. In a world where wellbeing is determined from above, and every moment of your life is monitored against numerous criteria, parents express love through complex and even perverse means - bordering on conditions like Munchausen’s Syndrome by Proxy.

This world is experiencing an **intense moral panic** over health and parenting, similar to those which have previously occurred around 1980s horror videos, Satanic ritual abuse, and the “antivax” movement. This panic may be serving as a “release valve” for parents in a world which is both asphyxiatingly overcontrolled and so comfortable that it is hard to protest against.

What should we look to in the present?

- **Increasing monitoring** of employees and students, marrying surveillance and control but also sincere attention to wellbeing. [The US insurance company Aetna offers bonuses to staff who show healthy behaviours e.g. a good night’s sleep.](#)
- **Growing penetration** of both private life and national decision-making by digitalised corporate interests
- **Corporations being treated similarly to nation-states.** In 2017, [Denmark created the world’s first ‘Digital Ambassador’](#) to liaise with top tech companies
- **The blurring of lines** between the worlds of school, home, and work
- **Top-down definitions of diversity and wellbeing**, sometimes more for appearance than substance
- **Resistance to policy** in the form of “irrational” acts: antivax, climate change deniers, Brexit protest votes



Scenario (C): “Can We Make Norway Great Again?”

Hanne drinks “Erstatningskaffe” and skims social media in the last few minutes before school. She hasn’t logged in, because her own profile is deeply linked to a number of progressive activist groups. None of them are on the banned list, but **the new social identity law** doesn’t allow public officials to show open allegiance and the school network would detect it.

She’s trying to distract herself because she knows **she has to deal with a gang issue** first thing this morning, but what comes up on social media is of little comfort.

There’s a new speech from the Norwegian Prime Minister at **the Nordic Truth Party’s annual conference**: “Norway has always played a leading role in helping to address the global question of refugees and displaced persons. But figures like Fridtjof Nansen didn’t insist on throwing Norway’s doors open to all. He created an agency to manage the stateless at a global level. We call on the so-called great powers of the world, Brazil, India, China, to manage this crisis of migration which the old world order failed to address. Norwegians are kind, but we’re not fools. Would you invite a thief, murderer or rapist into your home? We only put out the welcome mat when we choose to, for the guests we wish to invite.”

Hanne hates these racist gangsters, but since the sudden ban on oil and the ensuing financial collapse, their grip on power has seemed unshakeable. However, even the gangsters know they need to find a way to work with migrants - hence that line about “the guests we wish to invite”. **The dirty secret** is that Norway needs warm bodies - workers, nurses, carers - to sustain its population. Only the richest can afford the new **autonomous care robots** coming out of Japan and the USA; the days where Norway was in that league are long gone.

After school, Hanne will be going to her mother’s house to provide a little care and support of her own - cheaper than hiring a worker to do it, more effective than waiting for the crum-

bling state to deliver. Her mother, who had expected a long, active, and healthy retirement, is still working remotely as a content moderator removing hate speech from American digital environments, to supplement her meagre pension. After **the double shock of the global oil ban, and the scandal around mismanagement of Norwegian public funds**, Norway was suddenly just a small Nordic country with **little to offer** but a high level of English language among its population.

Hanne is shaken from these thoughts by the sound of the self-driving bus - a shabby Volvo that must be twenty years old, lumbering down the road towards the school, scraping the curb. She can already see that the kids on board are fighting.

She curses and minimises her social screen to review the mandated five-step **“Peace Process”** which teachers are expected to use in resolving gang issues. She has two gang-affiliated teenagers who were involved in a fight last week; they were picked up by **police drones** and now it is her responsibility to carry out the box-checking procedure which passes for “restorative justice”.

The drones had seemed like a good response to yet another police strike at the time, but of course it just ended up putting more pressure on social workers to defuse **youth tensions** - and when the money ran out for youth workers, that responsibility got passed on to the schools. It seemed pretty symbolic of the **New Norway** that the most expensive pieces of technology you saw on the street were police robots, and that while there was **no extra money** for school resources, of course you now had a hologram of the Prime Minister looking down on you from every classroom wall.

At least, Hanne thinks ruefully, the winters are much warmer - the lingering consequence of **the climate crisis** we couldn’t stop. It might seem unpatriotic, but she had never much cared for snow anyway.

About this scenario

This scenario explores the consequences of a **sudden end to Norwegian wealth**, prosperity, and preeminence. In this world, a sudden ban on oil production and consumption was followed by a financial scandal and crisis which spoiled Norway's long-term planning for "life after oil".

Far right politicians have risen to power and, while **Norway is now deeply impoverished** relative to the present day, they have invested in police technologies to maintain their grip on the nation as Norway **drifts away from democracy**. Schools are treated as tools of the state and are operating in an environment which more closely resembles the American rustbelt than the Scandinavian dreams of 2019. The Nordic social model has been **warped** by a resurgent nationalism and xenophobia, largely endorsed by a fearful population. This is, however, challenged by both lingering progressive elements and an ongoing but hard-to-acknowledge need for more immigrants to carry out menial, manual, and unpleasant tasks.

In this world, teachers are expected to manage youth behaviour and deliver instruction in line with the education policies and agenda of the "Nordic Truth" party. Many teachers find this goes against their values, but in **desperate economic times** they do not feel they can leave their steady employment.

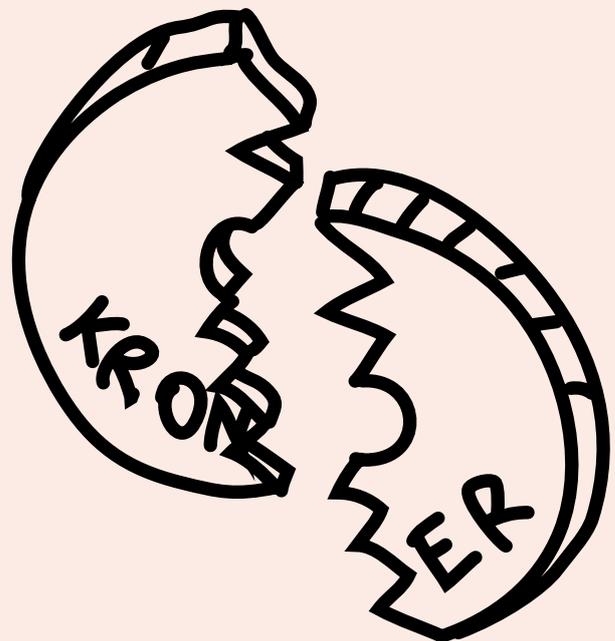
Education technology is as much about **surveillance and control** as it is growth, learning, or instruction. Data from schools and law enforcement is shared freely, with an emphasis on policing behaviour. The language of **peace-keeping**, personal development, and conflict resolution is used to frame teachers' work in addressing violence and community tensions.

This scenario's institutions are more recognisable to us in 2019 than those of the previous scenarios. Norway remains an independent nation-state with a **functioning, though troubled**, democracy: most people do vote for Nordic Truth party, though they are **fearful**, and miserable, and in time the failure of the regime to deliver happiness and prosperity may cause

it to collapse. Schools still exist and teachers are increasingly expected to address interpersonal relations as well as provide instruction in the curriculum. One of the challenges of this scenario is that, although it feels dystopian in many ways, it would probably be the easiest of the three futures for someone from our time to recognise and navigate.

What should we look to in the present?

- The operation of 21st century **far right politics** within Nordic social models - for example, the Sweden Democrats. More broadly, battles over public values: Trump's America, Brexit Britain, AfD in Germany, the gilets jaunes, the Australian right's response to climate change. How is schooling being affected in these areas?
- **The restorative justice movement**, especially as applied in youth work and in economically deprived areas
- **Attention to "warning signs"** in the Norwegian way of life. There is a risk of believing that Norway has solved certain social problems from which it may only have been insulated by oil wealth and its social model. What "outlier" events might be a sign of deeper structural tensions or problems?
- **What work could be done today** - as research - to prepare for "life after prosperity"? What research needs to be done to test the robustness of the current social model, identify its vulnerabilities, and prepare a playbook of options for its evolution?



3. Comments

Subsequent to the writing of the scenarios, drafts were sent to scholars working in related fields. Their responses to the scenarios, identi-

fying key themes and factors within each future vision and relating them to the present, can be found in this section.

Philippa Collin, University of Western Sydney

These scenarios describe a wide range of topics, issues and dynamics in contemporary youth studies, education, science, technology, society and politics that resonate and should prompt education stakeholders to think expansively about the opportunities and challenges of the future of education in a digital society. All of these scenarios feel possible and probable – a rather frightening thought on most accounts! Some things that I think could be considered in future work are:

1. **The Control Paradigm** (Third, Collin, Black, Walsh 2019): This describes the current dominant approach to youth+digital that focuses on how to manage what young people do with digital technologies, and delimits the opportunities and possibilities of ‘thinking’ the digital BY young people. If not disrupted to promote more intergenerational approaches to living well in digital society, what might the legacy of this paradigm be for future education scenarios? To some extent, this is reflected in the first two scenarios, insofar as education is an ‘over designed/determined’ process (including the ‘engineering’ of problem-solving skills into the social environment). But the broader question is about whether or not we are equipping students to think creatively about technology, society and the complex challenges of our time.
2. **Youth Agency and Citizenship**: “Barnet som måtte vokse opp” suggests the developmental model of childhood/youth may be abandoned in the future. You could push the idea of agency and citizenship further, particularly in terms of considering the ways so-called ‘anti-social’ or non-normative youth cultures and participation might be an expression of rights-claims, agonism and the need to be heard as pillars of democratic citizenship (see Isin, 2008 ‘Acts of Citizenship’; Anita Harris, ‘Citizenship Stories’, 2012; Third & Collin, 2016).
3. **Informal learning**: Students are increasingly learning in informal education settings – such as in online gaming environments, via YouTube as well as extra-curricular activities which are delivered outside the formal education system. How might a future education ‘system’ leverage or interface with informal learning settings? What are the diverse ‘actors’ or institutions that would regulate/manage learning ecologies and would they address or exacerbate inequality? (Michael Dezuanni’s 2019 book on learning in Minecraft might be instructive here).
4. **Disadvantage and Social Justice**: In most societies, inequality is becoming more extreme. How does education serve or overcome disadvantage and inequality in 2050? How would education do this in each of these futures? Recent PISA results offer a clear example of how social inequality that is mirrored in the education system perpetuates a decline in learning outcomes for the most disadvantaged, with implications for the whole country.
5. **Health and Wellbeing**: All signs are that young people’s mental health is declining to epidemic proportions. As they face greater uncertainty, more responsabilisation, individualization, the demands and pressures of technology and climate crisis (imagine how kids are reacting to the mega-fires we have in Australia right now!) it is unlikely that any individual-level interventions we offer to enhance their biopolitical management of social problems and fear will make a difference. How might education serve a growing cohort of students who have experienced

trauma, whose brains are in fight/flight mode and where the social structures and care required to support optimal learning have been stripped away from schools, families and communities? Is it more likely we'll live in a future where learning is networked, online and instrumentalised to manage the affects of the terrestrial world, rather than address the social and environmental determinants of m/health?

6. **Globalisation:** there is a strong sense in each of the scenarios that Norway is part of a globalized world where interconnections have intensified. Do students see themselves as 'global citizens' in the future (in any/all of these scenarios)?

7. **Polarised world:** Over the last few years my mind has continued to return to Marge Piercy's "Women on the Edge of Time" – a brilliant piece of speculative utopian/dystopian science fiction. In this brilliant book, the world becomes polarized into a technoutopia and an eco-dystopia which reflect aspects of each of these scenarios. My view is that we're likely to end up with a planet, geo-politics and technological intensification that is more advanced, unequal and precarious (but still viable) for the inevitable future. How might Norwegian educational futures address these tensions together?

Niamh Ni Bhroin and Steffen Krueger, University of Oslo

While these scenarios developed in late October might strike us as tragicomic sci-fi material, along the dystopian lines of a long string of Black Mirror episodes, they disclose a strange actuality and currency when one dwells on their respective logics.

Turning to the first scenario, even its strange sexual constellations have a place in contemporary Norwegian life. Spending vast amounts of time on online streaming services has been particularly characteristic of the Nordic countries, and the cold climate and long winters definitely have a say in this. Going towards warmer winters, due to the climate crisis, the combination of darkness and rain during the winter months will only exacerbate the Nordic dependence on online home deliveries of entertainment and other life occupations. Hence, for schooling to become ever more integrated – or even dissolved – in similar live-streaming practices does not seem implausible at all and seems to be a development to be aware of.

The other central aspect of this scenario that strikes us as extremely plausible and current is the idea of a shared global mission. Norway has a very strong sense of self-identity and seems very keen on perceiving of itself as a part of a bigger whole, while remaining distinct and relatively independent from this whole never-

theless. With schooling already now having a strong focus on project-based work, the orientation towards global goals, in combination with tasks received and performed at home, as part of a schooling turned project-based learning is another development that seems worth of close observation.

Turning to scenario two, this again appears as a stereotypically dystopian vision of the future of Western countries as staged in a movie or television series. Especially the preoccupation with the double-edged sword of convenience and surveillance is front and centre in discussions of the digital in everyday life – and rightly so. However, as exaggerated as the depiction of corporate penetration of public life might seem, the instrumentalisation of education, which is driven by corporate control over the public, is an exceedingly important aspect to look out for in the present. Already, white papers on education and the official discourse accompanying the current Norwegian educational reform, are preoccupied to a high degree with 'keeping up' with global competition and with a vague idea of international developments that threaten the wellbeing of the Norwegian nation. Such fear of losing out to the competition creates a fertile ground for a willingness to uncritically adapt to standards that are oriented towards serving and meeting the demands of private corporations.

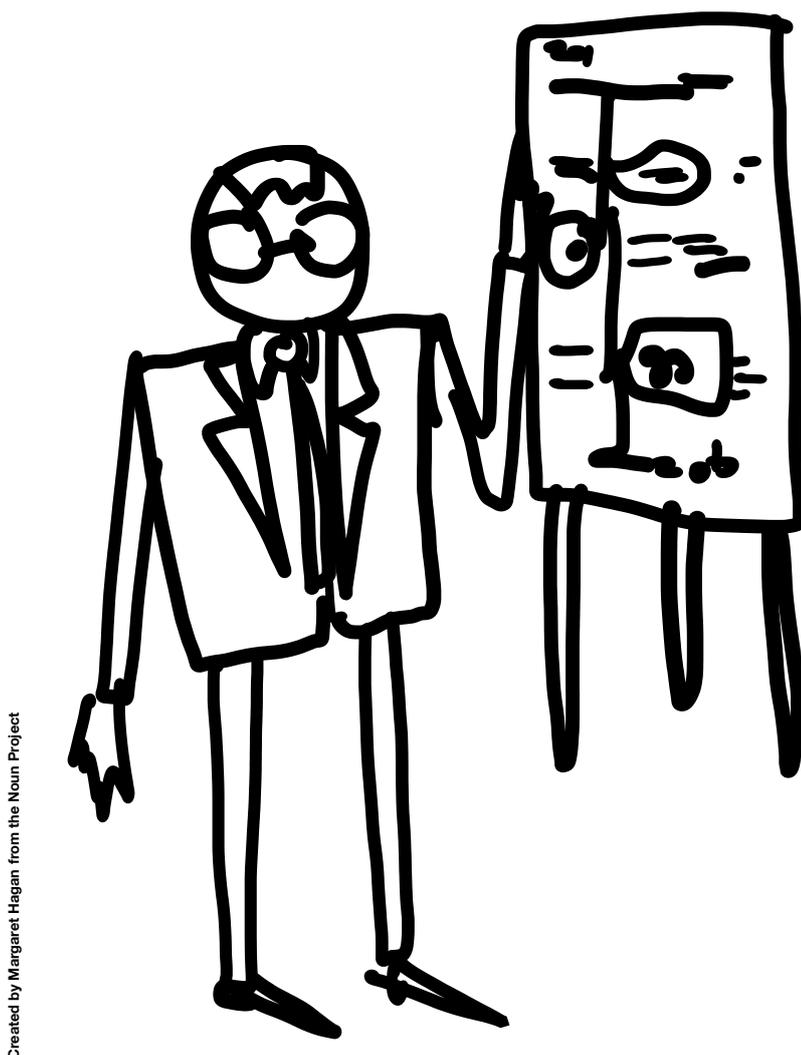
Such processes of uncritical adaptation are prone to change our cultural outlook over time. A highly instrumental attitude towards schooling as a form of preparing young people for the existing job market already seems to be widely accepted as an unquestioned norm.

Finally, with regard to the third scenario, while we do not fear that a majority of Norwegians will turn towards far-right politics any time soon, we agree with the scenario's implicit logic that the relatively healthy democratic outlook of the present is vitally dependent on Norway's strict immigration laws, its wealth based on oil and other natural resources, paired with its position outside of (direct) EU jurisdiction.

Stripped of any of these, a substantial move to the right seems plausible (just as Germany's rise

of the right is strongly connected to a sudden laxation of immigration and asylum practices in 2015).

However, even more troublesome is the overall drift of the three scenarios in relation to the state of democracy. Thus, what all three indicate is that we will easily surrender some of our democratic rights when challenged to do so: in the first case in order to join a collective cause (under Chinese leadership), in the second in order to live comfortably and carelessly in a corporate digital ecosystem; in the third case as a response to a sudden decline in national fortunes. Hence, the disinterest in, or disregard of a democratic political system is another tendency to have an eye on, especially in the context of learning and education.



Created by Margaret Hagan from the Noun Project