



# **The future of work (FoW): Opportunities and challenges for the Nordic models**

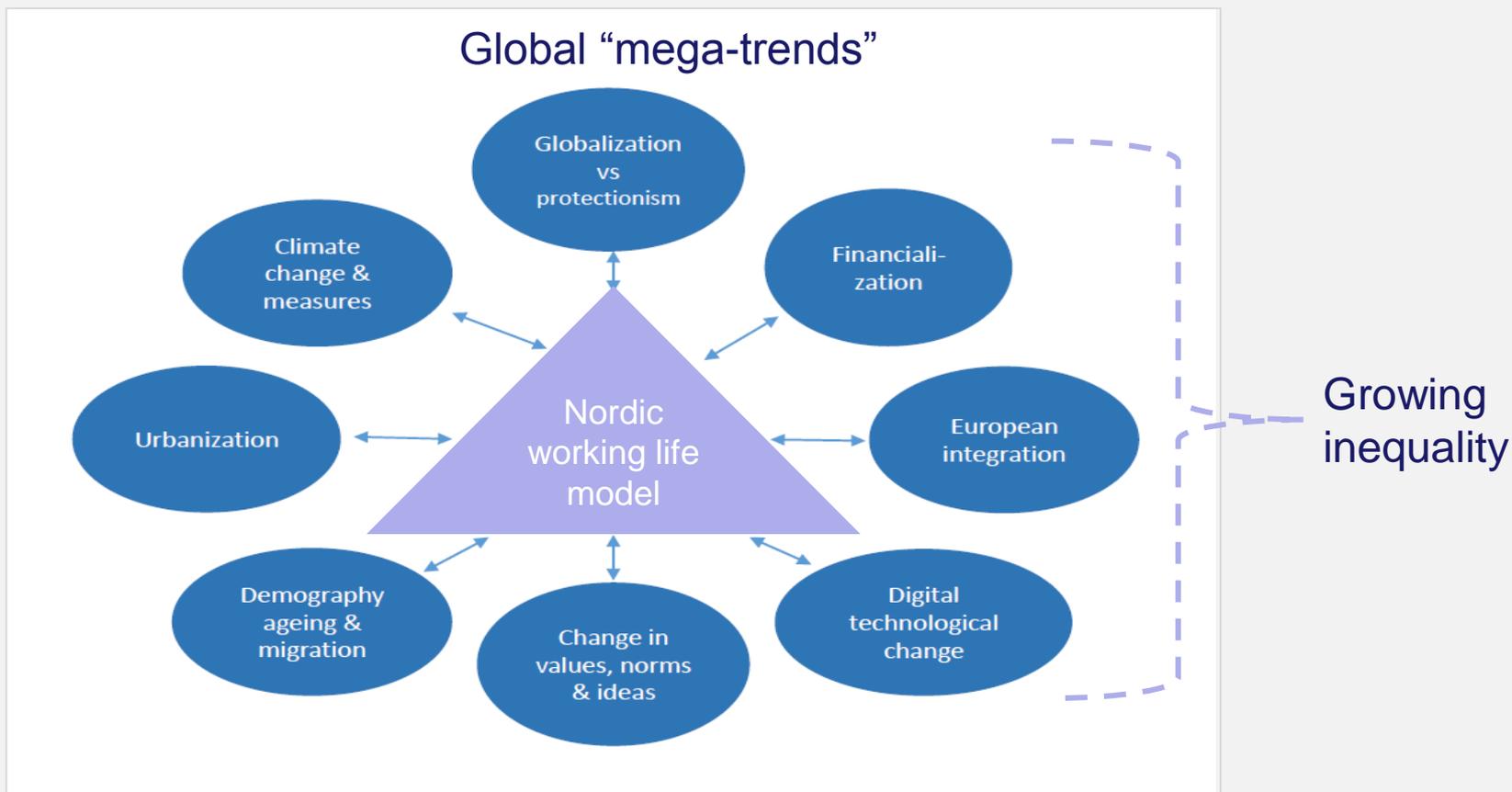
Project 2017-2020 funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers involving researchers from all five Nordic countries coordinated by Fafo

Jon Erik Dølvik, Fafo  
Stockholm, Future of Work Conference  
15-16 May 2018

# The “Future of Work” debate is not new

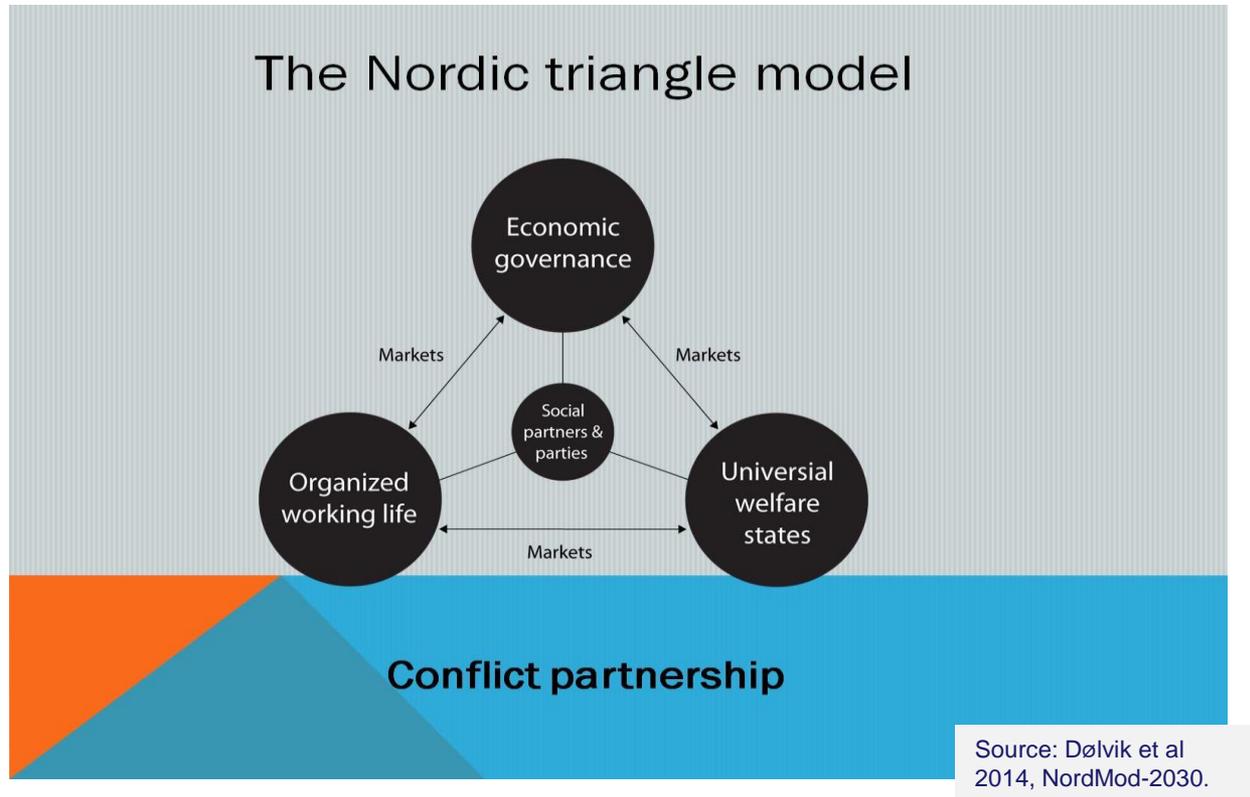
- **Contested theme with shifting and divergent perceptions of drivers, contingencies, and prospects**
- **TODAY, simultaneous concern about envisaged....**
  - **Lack of jobs** – due to robotization and automation
  - **Shrinking labour supply** – due to ageing and demographic change
  - **Surplus of labour lacking needed skills** – education failure & mismatch
  - **Joblessness & welfare dependency** – amplified by migration
  - **Polarization of occupational structures** – reinforced by digitalization
  - **Casualization of work** – new business concepts & forms of employment
- **Adieu to the wage-earner relationship of modern capitalism?**
- **Analyzing the FoW – and how to shape it – requires knowledge about the PAST and PRESENT dynamics of change at work**

# The *unknown* FoW will be shaped by a variety of *drivers and constraints* (Pillar-1)



- National consequences are filtered by markets, human agency, and economic, political and social institutions
  - Avoid determinism and “one-dimensional” scenarios
  - Uncertainty, versatility, scope for political action

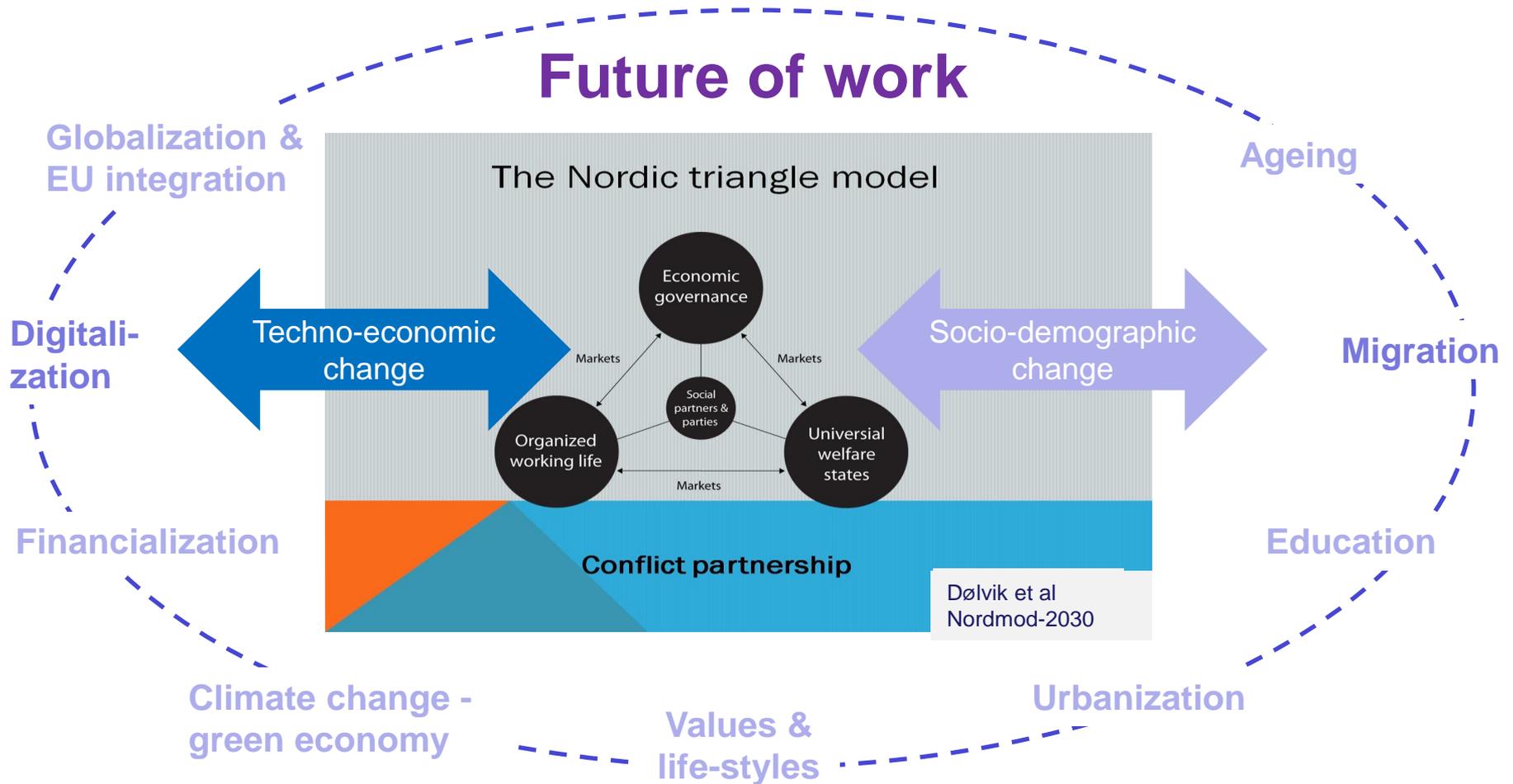
# The Nordic model – liability or asset in the reshaping of future work?



## CREDO:

- Work, equality, knowledge, and productive justice
  - Technology friendly trade unions
- Strong institutions – but are they fit for the future?

# The Nordic model – liability or asset in the reshaping of future work?



→ Impact on jobs, skills, work organization, health & safety, labour relations, inequality, labour markets, and regulatory institutions?

# Project overview 2017-2020:

- **Thematic pillars**

1. *Drivers of working life transformation* (Coordinator: JE Dølvik, Fafo)
2. *Digitalization & robotization of traditional work* (B Rolandsson, GU)
3. *Self-employed, independent and atypical work* (A Ilsøe, UoC/FAOS)
4. *New agents: platform mediators & managers of work* (K Jesnes, Fafo)

- **Transversal pillars**

5. *Impact on occupational health & HES policies* (JO Christensen, STAMI)
6. *Labour law: Needs, hurdles, and pathways for regulatory reform?*  
(MJ Hotvedt, UiO, and K Alsos, Fafo)
7. *The Nordic model: Reshaping the roles of markets, actors and the state?*  
(JE Dølvik, Fafo)

- **Policy-oriented, experience exchange, dialogue, and dissemination**

- Linked to the FoW-agenda of the ILO 100th Anniversary
- Consortium of appr. 30 scholars from Nordic universities & institutes (list behind)
- Steering Committee set up by Nordic Council of Ministers

# Pillar-2: Digitalization & robotization of traditional work – threat or opportunity for Nordic working life?



- Robotics, automation
- 3D printing, nanotech
- Machine learning algorithms,
- Artificial Intelligence
  - Big data
- Networks, sensors,
  - AR and VR
- Biotech, genetics
  - Cybernetics
- Fintech
  - Blockchain
  - Cobot-care
- Platform work...

## Opportunities

- Innovation, efficiency, productivity growth, home-sourcing, job market matching...



## Threats

- Will the robots steal our jobs?
  - Frenzy phase: Massive eradication of jobs...
  - Maturing phase: Modest job effects, perhaps even positive ...
  - **Crux: Are added values invested in new jobs & labour?**
- Polarization of skills & jobs -> the “squeezed middle”?
- Control, monitoring, alienation & degrading of work?
- How will the new co-workers – “cobots” – behave?



## Comparative, multilevel approach

- Analytical perspectives on studies of digitalization
- National reviews of knowledge status, research, and policy approaches

## Empirical studies – linking analyses of

- Occupational upgrading or polarization
  - Quantitative study (LFS) of changes in skill & wage structure 1995-2017
- Handling the digital shift in manufacturing work
  - Qualitative interviews with firm and social partner reps in selected branches
- Varieties of service sector trajectories
  - Expert/focus group interviews with reps from 4-5 services sectors

## Overall purpose

- Provide illustrations, experience & research based knowledge aimed to frame and stimulate policy debates across Nordic boundaries

## Fragmentation of work – undermining or reshaping the employment relationship and the Nordic Model?

Local



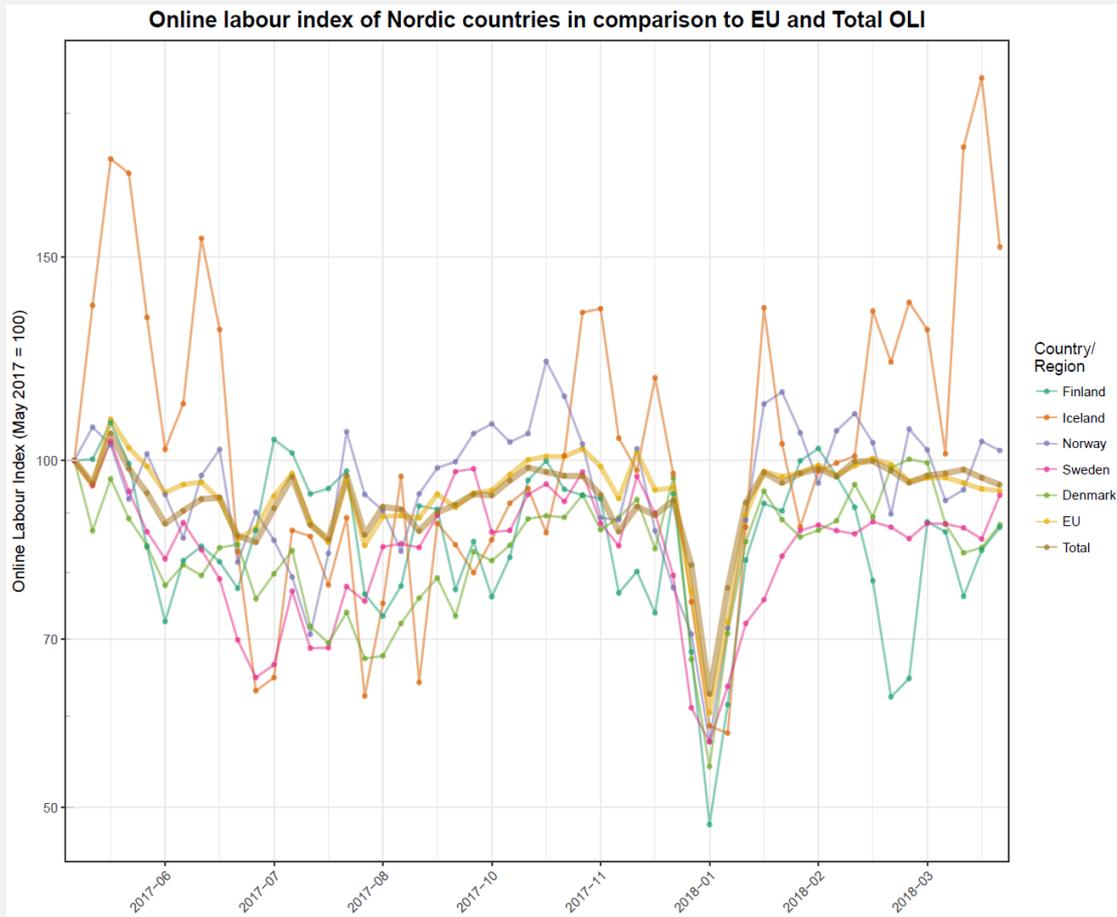
Global



- Conventional forms of atypical work seem pretty stable in the Nordics (Nätti et al. forthcoming) – but under the radar ....?
  - Emphasis on developing data and methods to study new forms of atypical work uncovered by standard LFS/statistics
- “When your boss is an algorithm” (Alsos et al 2017) – which rights, responsibilities, and remuneration apply?
  - Compare evolution of platforms, crowd-workers, organizing, and regulatory responses across the Nordic countries

# An innovation in the making: “Nordic Online Labour Index”

Figure 1: Growth in crowdwork - tasks posted by firms on the 5 largest English-language labour platforms 2016/5- 2018/3 (Oxford Online Institute)



- Platforms representing 70% of the market by traffic (Upwork, Freelancer, Guru, Peopleperhour, Mturk)

- Tasks are classified by **occupation** and by ordering firm **country**.

- Index is normalized, i.e. 100 points on the y-axis equal the daily average number of new tasks in May 2016

## Message:

**Virtually no rise in the Nordic countries, mirroring the pattern in EU; slight decrease in Denmark and Sweden**

Source: Online Labour Index (OLI), Kässä & Lehdonvirta (Oxford Online Institute).  
Visualisation: Braesemann

# The “Future of work” is unknown – but is likely to challenge important features of Nordic working life

Pressure for renewal of

- Occupational health & safety regimes (pillar 5)
- Labour law & the regulation of work (pillar 6)
- The Nordic model of labour market governance (pillar 7)
  - Organizations, bargaining & tripartite concertation
  - Social security & welfare systems

→ Leap in *training & life-long learning* – funding, access, incentives

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The future of digitalized work  
will test the Nordic capacity for  
**INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION!**

# Thank you for the attention – and don't hesitate to contact us!

- Follow the project at [#FoWNordics](#) and at website in the making at [www.fafo.no/Fownordics](http://www.fafo.no/Fownordics)
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- + Alsos, Dølvik & Jesnes (P-6, P-1, P-4)

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