

AVIATION IN THE KVARKEN REGION

- A SHORT HISTORY AND SOME LESSONS LEARNED

The history of aviation in the Kvarken strait is almost as long as the history of aviation as such. The first aircraft passed the strait in 1918. Then, in 1951, the first commercial flight was made. In 1960 Finnair began to fly regularly. In much, aviation thus developed in parallel with the regular ferry traffic over the strait. However, aviation over the strait of Kvarken in much has faded away. Forces in both the market and in public transport policies may explain this.

In 1903, the Wright brothers made the first controlled flight by use of an airplane with an engine. Fifteen years later, on March 6, 1918, an airplane passed over the strait of Kvarken. It was brought to Umeå by train and set together in the gym at the infantry. Nils Kindberg was pilot and Eric von Rosen passenger on the flight to Vaasa. The airplane was handed over to the Finnish army. A gift that became the founding of the Finnish Airforce.

Thereafter, aviation in Finland and Sweden developed rapidly. In 1923 the Finnish company Aero OY was established with flights to e.g. Tallinn, Stockholm, Berlin, and Warsaw. After WW2 the Finnish government acquired a majority in Aero OY, today this is Finnair.

In parallel, Karhumäki Airways (Kar-Air) was founded. It started services in 1951 between Helsinki, Joensuu, Jyväskylä, Vaasa, as well as internationally - to Sundsvall and Stockholm in Sweden. Hence, the Kar-Air route between Vaasa and Sundsvall marks the first attempt to introduce a cross-border airline in the strait of Kvarken. However, it seems not to have been maintained the following year.

AIKATAULU - TIDTABELL - TIMETABLE									
26. 5. – 27. 9.									
UK 17 2 4.6	UK 15 1 3.5	UK 13 1 2.6	UK 12 2 4.6	UK 9 10	UK 8	Lokaliset Lohdus	Puhelinno aikaa - Lokali - Localtime	UK 9 10	UK 11 1 2.6
—	—	—	—	11.30	7.30	HELSINKI	10.30	18.45	—
—	—	—	—	—	8.50	JÖNSKÖPING	—	19.10	—
—	13.00	12.30	12.05	—	—	TAMPERE	—	18.50	17.30
16.00	—	19.20	—	—	—	VAAJA	—	17.00	16.20
—	13.30	—	—	—	—	SIOGÖLMO	—	19.00	—
13.55	—	—	—	—	—	SANDVÄLL	—	—	14.20

1 = maanantai / måndag / Monday 2 = tiistai / tisdag / Tuesday 3 = keskiviikko / onsdag / Wednesday 10 = 1 + 6.

Timtable for Karhumäki Airways. Photo: Unknown.

In Sweden, AB Aerotransport (ABA) was established in 1924 with the German aircraft producer Junker as main financier. A first route was between Stockholm and Helsinki. Both ABA and Aero QY thus flow on this route.

ABA was bought by the Swedish government in 1935. In 1948 the Wallenberg family became a half part-owner of ABA, and in 1950 ABA became the Swedish part of SAS.



Advertisement for ABA. Photo: SAS Museet, Gardermoen.

From the beginning, the focus of ABA/SAS was on international flights. Initially, in Sweden domestic air was mainly developed for post and newspaper distribution. When passenger demand increased, Linjeflyg (LIN) was in 1957 formed as the domestic airline for Sweden. After some turbulence, LIN was merged with SAS in 1993.

THE FOUNDATION OF AIRPORTS IN THE KVARKEN REGION

For aviation, appropriate airports are a crucial infrastructure. Vaasa Airport opened in 1938, with traffic by Aero OY. Hence, Vaasa Airport is the pioneering airport of the larger Kvarken region. In the thirties, also Kauhava airport was built, and primarily used by the Finnish Airforce. Kokkola-Pietarsaari (Karleby-Jakobstad) Airport opened 1960, while Seinäjoki airport opened 1976.

In Sweden, Olofsfors airport (near Nordmaling) was established in 1939, as a military airfield. From 1957, Olofsfors was the regular airport for Umeå, Örnsköldsvik and Skellefteå, with services by LIN. Those cities got their own airports in 1961 and Olofsfors Airport was closed for regular traffic. Luleå/Kallax and Midlanda (Sundsvall-Härnösand/Sundsvall-Timrå) airports were opened in 1944, Lycksele Airport in 1968, Vilhelmina Airport in 1972 and Arvidsjaur Airport in 1990. In 1993, the airport in Hemavan (Hemavan-Tärnaby Airport) got an extended runway to allow for commercial flights.

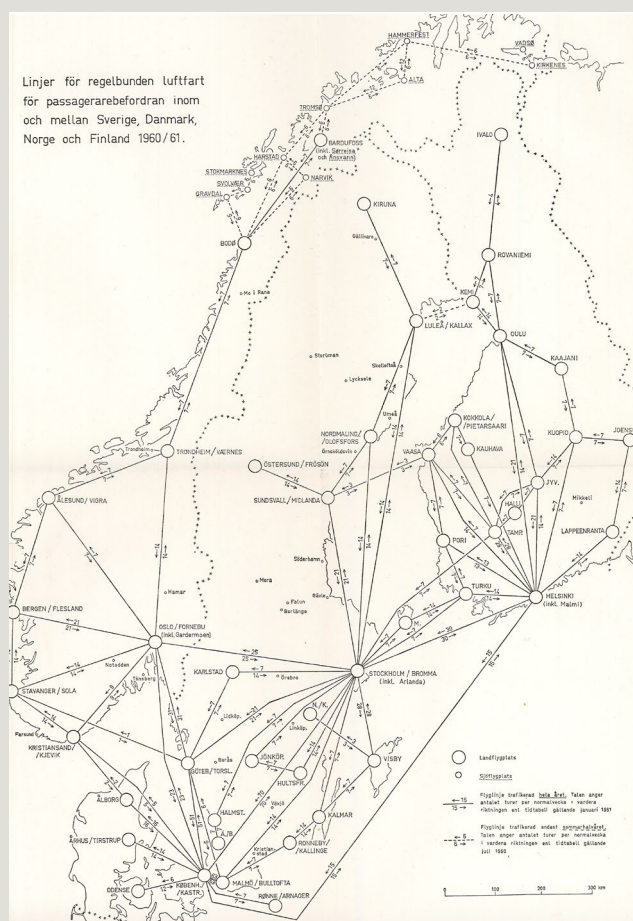
Along the Norwegian coast, aviation with seaplanes started in 1935 by "Det Norske Luftfarts-

selskap". Later it became the Norwegian part of SAS. The current airport of Bodø was completed in 1956. Mo i Rana Airport/Rossvoll, Sandnessjøen Airport/Stokka and Brønnøysund Airport/Brønnøy were opened in 1968. Mosjøen Airport/Kjaerstad in 1987. Decisions have been taken for the construction of new airports in both Bodø and Mo i Rana.

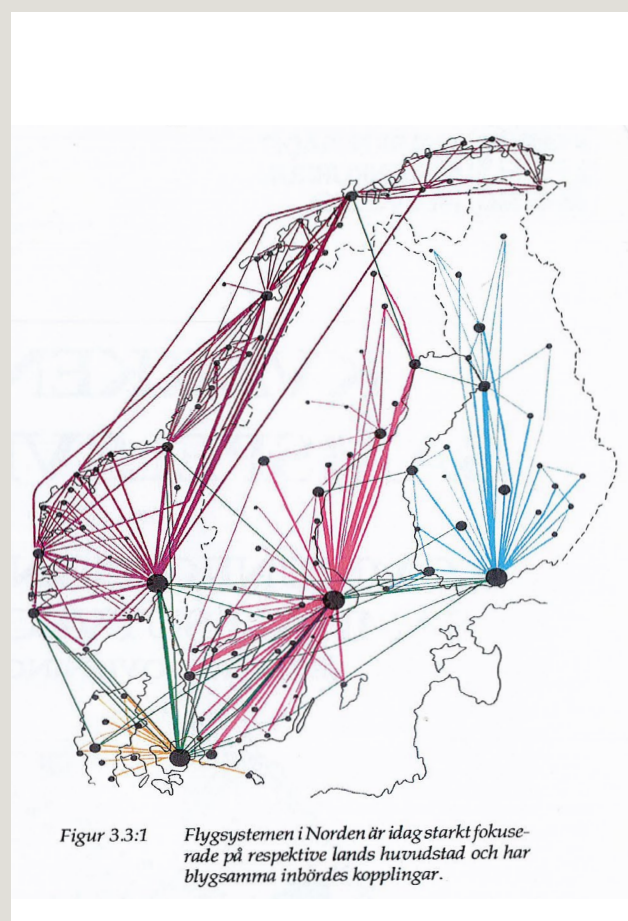
The map of the Nordic network with their airports from 1960/61 shows an emergent hub and spoke structure developing, with focus on the national capitals. Some airports at a distance from the capitals although also functioned as minor regional hubs. Sundsvall, Luleå, Vaasa, Oulu, and Bodö are examples of this.

Still in the 1990s, Umeå, Luleå, Oulu and to some extent Vaasa, although at a small scale and not regularly, were nodes for regional and cross-border aviation. For the moment those positions as nodes for regional aviation are lost.

Hence, the core of regular land-based aviation in the Kvarken region developed during 1950-1960. The first publicly procured route in Sweden, Umeå-Östersund opened in 1993, a year that mark the start of a period with changing



Nordic airline networks in 1960 and 1991. Source: Godlund, S. (1961) Några utvecklingsdrag rörande den regelbundna luftfarten för passagerarebefordran i och mellan Danmark, Finland, Norge och Sverige. Meddelanden från Geografiska institutionen vid Stockholms universitet, Nr 132. Kvarkenrådet (1992) Kvarken - Samspevisions för Kommunikationer och Samhällsutveckling, etapp 2.



regulations, a new market structure, new policy initiatives and new risks. Ironically, it also marks the beginning of the end of regional aviation in the Kvarken region.

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF REGULAR REGIONAL AVIATION IN THE KVARKEN REGION

Regular regional aviation within the Kvarken region starts in 1960 when Finnair/Aero OY opened year-round flights between Vaasa and Umeå, Sundsvall or Skellefteå. Finnair managed to uphold those flights over the strait until the end of the 1980s.

REGULAR REGIONAL AVIATION IN THE KVARKEN REGION STARTS IN 1960 AND IS UPHOLD UNTIL THE LATE 80'S.

In parallel, and especially when Finnair withdraw, many attempts to initiate new lines were made, none of which was long standing. Swedewings from Skellefteå was established in 1985 as a regional airline. They planned different regional lines, and had during 1989 traffic on Vaasa-Umeå-Skellefteå. The airline Reguljair was also from Skellefteå and tried the route Skellefteå-Umeå-Vaasa-Umeå-Sundsvall. Nordic Airlink/Fly Nordic upheld the route Umeå-Vaasa when the ferry company Silja Line ended the traffic on the strait. The Kvarken council was an important customer. Around 2010 Air Baltic tried Umeå-Vaasa-Riga, while Finnair/Flybe Nordic/NoRRA thereafter returned with a seasonal route Umeå-Helsinki.

In parallel to such regular attempts, airlines have offered "taxi/charter" flights in the Kvarken region. Jonair from Umeå is the most long standing of those with flights since 1973.

Between Norway and Sweden, Widerøe tried a route Bodø-Hemavan-Umeå in 1994. That was during the recession in Sweden and probably too early for the ski resort Hemavan to be a strong enough node in a regional network for the Kvarken region.

OBSTACLES TO REGIONAL AVIATION IN THE KVARKEN REGION

Finnair ended regular traffic in the late 1980s. However, the number of passengers on the ferries over the Kvarken strait since then still indi-

cates that a potential demand for air travel over the strait exists. On the other hand, the failures to establish regular flights indicate the contrary. How can this be understood? The cost and fare may be too high, or demand too limited and volatile to be profitable for smaller airplanes and airlines that are not part of larger airline networks. This could indicate a low willingness among travellers to pay for a shorter travel time over the strait. It may also indicate failures related to policy, appropriate technology or applied business models. The total costs of aviation (permissions, staff, terminals, handling, etc.) may have developed in a disadvantageous way for aviation on short routes.

Generally, but with Norway as an exception, Nordic aviation has prioritised outbound international flights. The size of airplanes and airports have increased and are now designed for continental and intercontinental travellers. Production of new innovative small and medium size airplanes has almost stopped. In this respect, the electric engine may offer a vitalization of the regional segment of the market for aviation. Regional aviation could then also be an integrated part of regional public transport networks.

THE KEY TO A REGIONAL AVIATION MAY LAY IN THE COMBINATION OF NEW MARKET SOLUTIONS AND NEW POLICIES REGARDING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

In Sweden an obstacle to this is that aviation by law is excluded from the domain of the regional public transport authorities. Within northern Sweden, procurement of regional routes in Sweden is, with two exceptions, focused on direct flights to Arlanda instead of to regional hubs within e.g. the Kvarken region. It is thus likely that regional aviation is hampered by a combination of market and policy failures.

CROSSING THE STRAIT OF KVARKEN - FERRIES AND AIRCRAFTS

For long time, since after the ice age, people have travelled over the strait of Kvarken. For long, the waterway was the only way available. The steamboat "Norrland", e.g. offered summer transport on commercial terms from 1837. The first ferry that could take cars, "Korsholm III", was put into sum-

mer traffic from 1958. As mentioned, in 1960 when regular aviation was introduced, the travel time over the strait was reduced substantially. Only in 1972, when icebreakers and considerably larger ice-going ferries were available, could regular year-round ferry traffic be established. Hence, although skips and ferries have been important means of communication for long time, regular commercial aviation existed in the Kvarken strait before ferries could offer year-round traffic over the strait.

WORK PACKAGE

WP 1 – Regional effects of electric aviation

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ABOUT FAIR

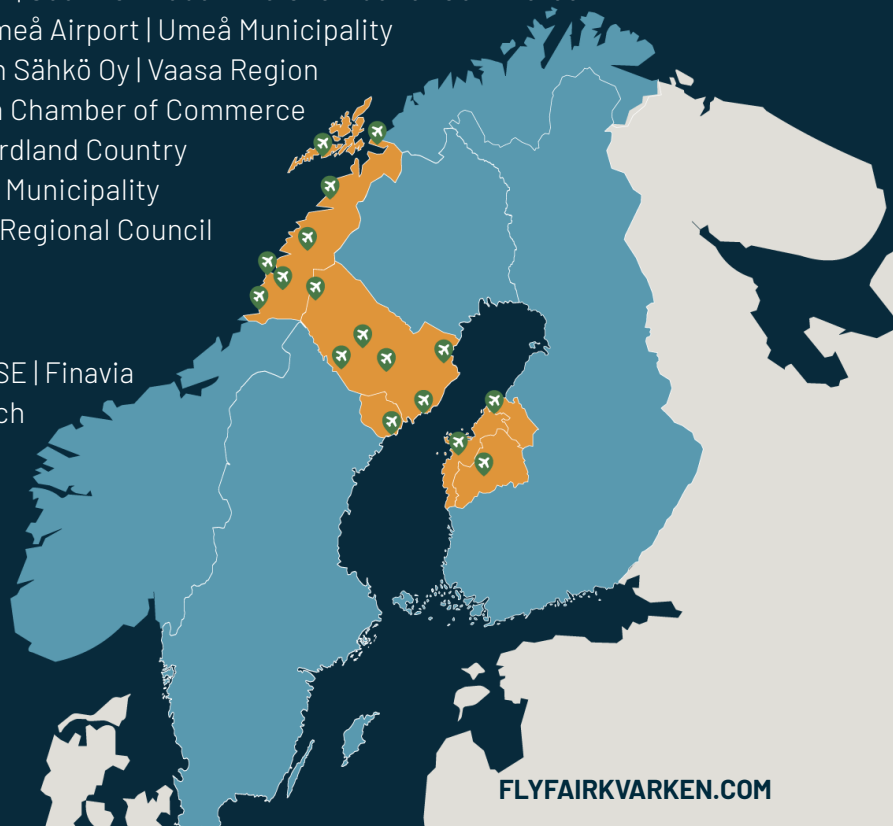
FAIR (Finding innovations to Accelerate the Implementation of electric Regional aviation) is to be seen as a first step of preparing the Kvarken region for an early implementation of electric aviation. The project increases the knowledge base about electric aviation, investigates the possibilities and surveys both the needs and the required technical investments.

FINANCIERS

Interreg Botnia Atlantica | Region Västerbotten | Regional Council of Ostrobothnia | Kvarken Council (Lead part)
BioFuel Region BFR AB | City of Vaasa | FAB Kronoby Flyghangar | Into Seinäjoki Oy | Lycksele Airport AB
MidtSkandia | Ostrobothnia Chamber of Commerce | RISE Research Institutes of Sweden
Skellefteå City Airport AB | Skellefteå Kraft AB | South Ostrobothnia Chamber of Commerce
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Development Company, VASEK | Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce
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Municipality Brønnøy Municipality | Alstahaug Municipality
Helgeland Regional Council | Indre Helgeland Regional Council
Rana Utvikling

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