

Keys to Intelligent Industry

with Caroline Segerstéen Runervik
and Fredrik Gunnarsson

EP 21

Impressions from Almedalen, a digital Europe and the future role of AI,
in this special summer edition with
Åsa Zetterberg, CEO of TechSverige.



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[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

In one country, you have one kind of way of doing it and other country do it another way. Then for a company, it's not that easy to scale a product or a service or anything. So we need more harmonization and simplifying the regulation, I would say.

00:00:23 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Welcome all to a special summer edition of our Capgemini podcast, Keys to Intelligent Industry. We are recording this special edition directly inspired by Almedalen, where technology, security, AI, sovereignty, and leadership has been some of the most discussion topics. I will come back shortly to what Almedalen is for you who does not know. But I couldn't think about two better guests to help make sense of what happened in Almedalen and talking about these key technology topics than; Åsa Zetterberg, CEO of TechSverige. Welcome, Åsa.

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

Thank you so much. So nice to be here.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

..and my dear colleague Ann Hellenius, who is leading Capgemini's Management Consulting Business in Sweden and also leading our Business Unit for Defence, Public Energy and Utilities. Welcome, Ann.

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

Thank you so much.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

And you know, I know you are in Spain and Ann, you are in south of Sweden in Skåne. So how is the summer feeling with you both?

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

Oh, it's just wonderful, I would say. I think maybe my vacation brain, so to say, is finally starting to kick in. But I'm looking forward to this discussion here today, of course.

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

I should have been with you, I think. I'm in Skåne and here it's raining. But I have a summer feeling in my heart anyway.

00:01:45 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

And with the heat wave we had throughout Europe, some rain is needed, at least for everyone who loves the garden, right? So I'll start with you, Åsa. So your journey to become one of Sweden's influential voices in terms of tech, could you tell us a little bit about your journey and how did you end up becoming the CEO of TechSverige and what really drives you?

00:02:10 [Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

I went to Uppsala studying political science and business administration and not too much technology, I would say. I then started the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, and I actually started to learn to know Ann at that time. I tried to help the local authorities and regions to drive their kind of digitalization. I didn't think I was ending up to work with digitalization, but if you want to be part of developing the society and make this place a better world, then you need to use and take advantage of the most powerful tools for doing that. And it's digitalization and technology, I would say. And now I'm very proud of being part of TechSverige and representing around 1400 member companies.



[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

You were just elected last week, right, into the Digital Europe Executive Board, which also of course means that we will have another important voice to influence what we believe is important in Europe in terms of tech, but also continue to set Sweden on the agenda. Maybe for some people, what is Digital Europe and what's so important to being part of that executive board according to you?

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

So it's like an interest organization on the EU level that we collaborate together to find ways for the best policy for tech businesses. And to be part of that, I hope, of course, to bring all the Swedish perspective on how we strengthening the competitiveness of EU. And of course, Sweden has a strong tech ecosystem. We're one of the most innovative countries in the world and we built our competitiveness around openness, trust and close collaboration. So I hope that I and of course together with all our companies and good people around in Sweden and Europe to make Europe move faster.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

So Ann, you as a leader has worked of course a lot with transformation across your career. You have also been involved a lot in the intersection between business and technology. Can you describe briefly your leadership journey and what has been your personal drivers for where you are today?

00:04:39 [Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

I started up my journey at a strategic consultancy firm in London. And then after that, I joined Ernst and Young in management consulting. I also was an entrepreneur and I started up my own consultancy firm. And then six years ago, I joined Capgemini. My personal drivers has always been the same. I mean, first of all, it is curiosity. I've always been very curious on how technology can impact us as individuals, and also how it can impact companies and the society as such. And I've never been motivated by technology per se or for its own sake. I'm much more motivated in how to solve real problems and helping individuals, organizations or the society as such. And I would say sort of the last driver I like to mention is I have and always had a very strong desire to always keep learning. It's not just my own learning. It's also I really, really love to see other people grow and the people around me develop.

[Transition Sound]

00:05:34 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Let's start with Almedalen. So Almedalen is one of the most influential events of the year in Sweden where political leaders, business executives, civil society organization and citizens come together in an open and democratic discussion. And I think it's truly unique. Every time, every year when I'm visiting Almedalen, I have that incredible strong feeling that this is unique and something for us to truly preserve. You could say it's like a democracy festival and public affairs summit where you engage in open dialogue, but also informal, very important discussion and exchange ideas. So I start with you, Åsa. Do you want to mention a few themes that you engaged in during Almedalen and maybe one or two of your key takeaways.

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

Some of the major themes that I was part of was around AI, AI and AI. But also it was like competitiveness. It's also security and defense was a major theme I would say. I was part of some discussions around research, scaling and deep tech and some really important discussion around health care and how we could develop health care with good technology and of course talent and skills and how to make the capital market work even better.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Ann, I suppose it was similar topics you discussed?



[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

One reflection from my side is that I think the conversation have shifted compared to last year and the year before. I mean, AI is not discussed anymore as a sort of a side project. I mean, it is fundamentally changing and reshaping the core business and I think it was more discussions about that. I think it's also more discussion of the fact that we cannot talk about tech and AI as a part of sort of only as a part of an efficiency agenda. So in the conversation I was part of, I was also more focused on innovation, how to improve quality, not just talking about efficiency, even if that, of course, is still an important part. And as you mentioned Åsa, I mean, a lot of conversation about resilience, sovereignty, natural security, and also how tech is playing a crucial role in that. I felt quite encouraged after Almedalen. And I think, I mean, in Sweden we have fantastic talents. We have strong companies and a high level of trust. We just need to accelerate implementation and accelerate the speed in how we're doing things. And I think the winners, I mean, they will not necessarily be those with the best strategies and sort of have that in place. It will be the one that are executing the fastest.

00:08:10 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

I agree. And coming back to where Åsa started on AI, one of my key takeaways, which I truly think we've seen in the business as well, this year we didn't discuss proof of concepts and ideas. Of course, the productivity and efficiency agenda is there, but I would say it's much more a value-driven discussion. On the AI topic per se, I think Forbes, I think it's a month back, announced, you know, Stockholm as... after San Francisco, Silicon Valley is the second city where you have AI entrepreneurs, you have a lot of capital going into AI startups. So of course we are in an innovation hub if you want to connect it to AI. What do we need to do to really make that something larger, bigger and taking a leading position?

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

We definitely have some of the best conditions for that since you come to our vibrant tech and AI ecosystem, our world-class universities, our engineering tradition, all the institutions we have also of lifelong learning, and so we have many things in place, but as you said earlier, we're still struggling with some of the AI startups, they actually move away from Europe or Sweden to scale, to attract talent, to attract capital and all that. So we need to have a single market that truly enables companies to scale across boundaries in Europe. That's one of the things. And it's not only a Swedish question, of course. So that's why I think it's really important for us to engage more on an EU level.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

How do you do that then? Sorry, but to double click on that one because we're 27 countries, right? So of course it's a much bigger and difficult topic for us to do that. How do we do that?

00:10:09 [Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

One of the good things about EU is to make a single market, to make it possible to scale. But if we on the other hand make it more of the boundaries with the regulations, in one country you have one kind of way of doing it and another country do it another way, then for a company it's not that easy to scale a product or a service or anything. So we need more of harmonization and simplifying the regulation, I would say. But that's one of the things. The other things is really to attract more of the investments, the capital and the talents. And I think I would say that we see some of the change coming now that Europe is more of an interest on a global level. We can see that in some of our statistics within TechSverige and not at least in Sweden. So we attract more of the capital and the risk investments in companies. So we need to continue to do all of that, I would say.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

And talents attract talent. So we always said that it's the same as we work in the service business with consultants. You need to have the best talents that people want to work with, right? And today you're not necessarily following the leader. You're following the person you want to learn from, the experts, the



talent that you looked up to. So I think it's a very, very important topic.

[Transition Sound]

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Tech industry per se in Sweden is contributing, is it to 8% of the GDP also or something like that, right? And we have 30% growth over the next coming years. So what are the strengths that we should build upon that we have today to really make that growth of 30% over the next couple of years?

00:12:02 [Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

Some of the recipes for us, the answer why we are so successful is really that we have been always working with great ideas and innovation to scale globally. I mean, we're an export nation. 50% of the GDP of Sweden is from the export industry. So we have a strong business to business case in Sweden with the tech industry helping the competitive export oriented industries to scale globally. And that's really a success factor. So that's one of the things. But of course, we need to be strong in our own capabilities in the future. And I would like to see more of the scaling and commercialize the deep tech, the research to become new companies and to become new innovative services and products to scale globally as well. And then we come to the next thing. And we need to continue to be very trustfully engaged within the public sector and the private sector and the academia. We need to foster that collaborative culture and to make it easier for companies to grow and scale in Sweden with a global agenda.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Ann, anything you would like to complement with in terms of how we build on Sweden's strength to do this growth acceleration?

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

Our challenge in Sweden is not the lack of ideas or lack of innovation. We have all the fundamentals in place, but it's very much about our ability to scale. We are good in collaboration, but we don't move fast enough. So many organizations are still navigating in early stages when it comes to AI in pilots and how to scale is not as clear. We have all the opportunities, but it is really about pace right now.

00:13:55 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

I think all you mentioned is good. I mean, leveraging the ecosystem much more and leveraging the fact that we are global, and as you started off with also, we have a very open culture which is built on trust, and that is one of the key ingredients for entrepreneurs to also grow the business. But of course, with the new technology, there is new demands in terms of leadership and how you steer and lead an organization into the unknown. Maybe Ann, you would love to comment on this.

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

In one way, technology is the easy part. It is really the leadership to drive the organization change that is the challenging part. Leadership, I mean, that is not any more about having all the answers. It's more about being able to answer the right questions and start up with that. AI can provide information incredibly fast, but when it comes to judgment, ethics and prioritization, I mean, that is really human responsibilities. And I think what's happening right now is that it's too many that does not really realize the importance of also creating psychological safety in the organization when they're driving change in the fast speed that is needed. But you don't manage to succeed with that kind of transformation if you don't create a psychological safety in the teams that you're working with. And I see a lot of fear in many organizations right now. It's fear of lacking behind, it's fear of internal politics, and also AI per se is creating uncertainties for many employees. We are still humans and we still have the same kind of needs and we need psychological safety to be able to really be the best version of ourselves. And I think it's key



really to create a leadership where we have these ingredients in place, transparency, trust, building trust in an organization. Without that, we will not succeed.

00:15:39 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

It's truly also about finding the people in the organization, but finding that power from underneath and nurture that and get that to flourish because you do have those people who are super curious in trying a new technology and maybe you don't even know them. Åsa, your own reflection on this and do you see actually any differences if you compare also different countries? Do you have any perspective on that?

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

I would say actually that I think Sweden is one of our success factors both historically, right now and in the future is that we actually have a quite good way of handling risk as a society. One of the models that we have, you know the "Svenska Modellen" is we're working together, the employers and the employees, together with the unions, and TechSverige is one of the organizations helping the tech companies as an employee organization as well. And this is how it works within the whole of Sweden. The fact that is really interesting here is that the union in Sweden most often has been quite positive about technique and we have been welcoming the coming jobs, like the future jobs. So I think it could actually be even more of a key of success in an AI era where we need to help people, businesses, the society to feel safe moving forward. We need maybe try to work out even better models for this and we need to highlight it even more to just help people to feel trust and feel safe about the future.

[Music]

00:17:39 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

How do we make sure also that we continue to take the AI native new generation on board? We've seen recently it's actually been a bit more challenging for the people coming from university. How do we encourage the industry to really bring this generation on board?

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

We don't have all the facts yet. I just need to say that. We can still see that people that are into engineering and everything, they have easier coming out to work than others. But with that said, we still feel and have some facts about younger people having more troublesome to coming out to a real work. I think we need to work with more internship. We as an industry could do more, I would say. We encourage that to open the doors for the next generation. I would say it would not be good for a company not to get the chance of getting the young AI native people into the businesses or in public administration or whatever. We really need to welcoming the next generation for many, many reasons. But we could also look into if we could work with the tax and everything that helps younger people to come into the new jobs.

00:18:59 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

And of course, if you look at some other countries, I mean, in US, you do see that the university and the industry players work much more integrated hand in hand. And it's expected to do so. I think here we can take actually a better giant leap forward. Talking about the politicians - so you had the opportunity, Åsa, to have a discussion with all the parties in Almedalen around tech. It would be good to have your perspective on, are we talking enough about technology on the political agenda? Because we have an election coming up, right, this year.

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

I would say I think I could see some more awareness and interest. Really, it has increased significantly over the past few years since, as you said earlier, it's more a critical strategical question in every sector in a society. So that's encouraging. At the same time, I would say it's the politicians is still operating on a



relatively short term horizon. And maybe why they are doing that is because they don't benefit enough from the voters if they focus on long-term questions sometimes. So in my kind of view, they should be interested, they should focus, they should understand, but they should support the society, the industry, the academia to take their responsibility.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

So is it also that they need to have a better understanding and knowledge themselves about new tech? Is it a problem also about not being close enough to this subject? And how could we then in the industry help them?

[Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

To one point you need to understand some of the effects or the consequences of doing or not doing stuff like even though you don't need to understand the whole part of the technology but to some extent I would say and I think I've seen more and more that the politicians and the industry are getting more closer to each other. And that's really good. We need more of the tech leaders to get closer to the politicians to talk about what are the possibilities and also what are the threats in the development. So I really like seeing that. And I think we need more of that kind of forum. And I hope to be helpful in that way also in the future. But I would say that technology policy and politics is no longer a niche issue. If we look into the next coming years, the International Monetary Fund, when they look into the next coming 10 years, they say 50% of the global GDP will come in the digital economy. So if you are a Swedish politician and you want Sweden to be part of that economy, what could we do with our policy, industrial policy, education policy, and security policy. That is the discussion that is needed.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

So what I hear and what I agree with is if you disregard technology, you would actually leave out the main lever for the growth of GDP as a whole. And it's an integrated part of all these different topics you just discussed.

[Music]

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Every year Capgemini is doing this e-governance benchmark study for EU. We are falling behind. And one of the challenges we foresee is that we are not able to give the best digital service to the citizens. And one of the key reasons behind this is that we still have a challenge to exchange data between our political agencies. And that is of course is a problem in itself. Any comments, food for thoughts from you Anne in terms of how we can help also the public clients in terms of moving on the digital ladder upwards?

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

I do actually believe that we are underestimating the people side on the time transformation. I mean, we talk less about organization changes and large-scale rescaling. But that will really be the thing that will impact, I mean, how well we will succeed. I mean, and in the public sector, it is a lot of workforce transformation that is needed. Even if technology improve and moves fast, if organization doesn't transform the self, I mean, to the same speed, and that is really what needs to be happening. And I think going back to Almedalen, that was one topic that was not discussed to the extent that I think is needed.

[Transition Sound]

00:23:51 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

So one of the topics which was discussed a lot in Almedalen was sovereignty. And for me, it's truly about a balance between control and innovation. And I think it's become very, very clear that all of us across industries need to have a strategy for the same. Ann, you were also part of these discussions. So anything



you would love to comment in terms of sovereignty and how do we really remain open to the new technology and take advantage of that, meanwhile also have a secure setup if and when needed?

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

I mean, detail sovereignty, that doesn't mean to do everything by ourselves. It means making sure that we have choices. It's important to continue to collaborate globally because innovation, I mean, that happens through openness and that will continue to happen through openness. But at the same time, we need to reduce critical dependencies. And I think it is this balance that many organizations right now are really reflecting on and try to find strategies around. And that means to really understand where our data is, having interoperable solutions, avoiding unnecessary vendor lock-ins, and make sure that we have alternatives if something happens. And I think what sometimes is missed in this discussion is that there are several dimensions into sovereignty. It's data sovereignty, operational sovereignty, technological sovereignty, even legal sovereignty. And I think decision makers must fully integrate all these dimensions in order to be able to manage trade-offs and create a really clear view on these strategic implications. So I think that is really why the discussion is around and why we need to find solutions.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Absolutely. And Åsa, in Digital Europe, you were just nominated then to be part of that executive board. How do you perceive now that we are in Europe mobilizing to invest in European LLMs, etc. and encourage also the interaction in between the European initiatives?

00:25:45 [Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

I would say it's more about how we invest and make it possible for European companies to grow, to be global leaders. And we really need more of European global leading companies. I think it's today 10 out of the world's 100 leading tech companies are from EU. And we can't be satisfied with that, of course. And it's not only around AI, of course. We're really having our strength within the connectivity with Nokia and Ericsson. That's part of the AI stack, of course. But we haven't been leading when it comes to the LLMs and so on. I think, and which was discussed also in Brussels the other week and also in Almedalen, I think we have a really, really good opportunity and we should put more focus on the physical AI since we have all our really competitive industries both in Sweden and in Europe with advanced services and products. And when it comes to the next level now of AI with the connected industries and with physical AI, I think there we will have something about getting the whole value out of it, but also the new kind of businesses happening around all that. So yeah, I'm really looking forward to see how it will transform all industries and new industries will come out of that.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

I agree. And I think we will have a more pragmatic approach and look at using different LLMs for different type of services and small language models, the European ones, which we use for certain type of services because we believe that's enough and that's good enough. And also there is a financial topic connected to the same, right? So we are coming a little bit to the end here and of course it's interesting to ask for your, maybe your best tips to other Sweden or European leaders listening to this podcast. What should they reflect upon when they now go for summer vacation? So maybe I start with you also. If you now have the opportunity, what is your best tip?

00:28:11 [Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

In a time of quite rapid change and some really great opportunities, but also some of the big challenges around the world, I think learning is maybe the most stable strategy and what is needed for yourself as a leader, but also in your team. I don't think we should be surprised waking up a day, going to work and we need to change what we thought was right yesterday. It's more of the way of living. And not that said that we should be stressful or we shouldn't be focusing on our values and what should be stable, but I think we need to be even more fast in changing and learning and changing and learning. So are we doing



that enough and could we do it more and in what particular areas should we be building new competences within the team?

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Truly so. We're talking a lot about constantly develop and train your AI muscle right now within our company, whether you know you're a consultant or you're a leader or by the way a controller. So how do you constantly develop your own AI muscle? Ann, what would be your sort of tip for the summer?

00:29:37 [Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

I think all leaders should ask themselves one sort of simple question. If AI develop much faster over the next years, is my organization prepared for that? And I think spend time asking how AI will change the game in your business and your customers' behaviors. That is one thing that should be reflected upon. But spend at least the same amount of time asking how is the need of change in your organization? How is the need of leadership, co-workers skill set? I mean, that is really where the real competitive advantage will be created. So I think to reflect of the fact that technology is moving incredible fast and the real bottleneck is not longer technology, it's leadership, it's organization transformation and skills. But I also think what we need to do, all of us, we also need to just reflect and also recharge during the summer. So I have something I call the strawberry strategy, and you know about that one, Caroline.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Yes, I do.

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

That is really that during the summer, it's really important to enjoy and recharge and to eat as many strawberries as possible.

[Host] **Åsa Zetterberg**

Oh, that's great.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

I love that.

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

It's about capturing the moment during the summer and enjoy the summer when you have the possibility.

[Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

Yes, thank you Ann. So a lot of strawberries and I think the important message was here also take the moment when you have the opportunity and just don't let it pass by, right? I also wanted to finally, you are truly optimistic about Sweden's tech future, Åsa. Where do you believe Sweden intelligent industry will be a couple of years from now?

00:31:19 [Guest] **Åsa Zetterberg**

We have been discussing the last years a bit about the AI race that we're not in front of it or in leading it since we have US and China and other countries maybe being first on LLMs and so on. But I really think that we should focus even more now on the physical AI with the digital and physical worlds come together in healthcare, in products, in factories, in energy systems and in public services. And I think this is really complex things to do to transform, once again, healthcare, factories, energy system and public services. I think Sweden is an advanced, knowledge advanced data-driven country. So I think when we put all these things together, that's where we will be the best in the world to find the value, create the value



and then spread all of our experiences, products, services and companies to the world. So I think it's a really interesting moment now moving forward and we should really focus on this part.

00:32:32 [Host] **Caroline Segerstéen Runervik**

I love this. So it's a very important, I think, ambition that we can take that leading position within physical AI. And thank you Åsa and Ann for joining us, for actually sharing some perspective from Almedalen, which is a very, very important democratic tradition of Sweden. This discussion is, as you said, Ann, technology is the easy part. What we discussed was really about leadership, was about curiosity, it's about purpose. And also, Åsa, as you discussed, we have all the assets to be the leading tech nation and it's all about ecosystems. And here I think we can build a stronger ecosystem between, of course, the public communities, businesses and academia. But we have all the assets to continue, thrive thanks to technology, and it's a very exciting period we are in. And with this, I want to wish you also a very nice summer. With that, let's go with the strawberry strategy, enjoy the moment, have proper vacation, reflect, recharge, and come back and drive the TechSweden forward for the autumn. Thank you both.

[Guest Host] **Ann Hellenius**

Thank you so much. Have a lovely summer.

[Host] **Åsa Zetterberg**

Thank you.

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