

A photograph of Ari Sihvola, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red tie. He is shown in profile, facing right, speaking into a microphone at a podium. The background is a light-colored screen displaying text in Finnish. The text on the screen includes "HAUS kehittämisen", "9.1.2018", and "yhteinen johtaminen".

Ari Sihvola

LANDSCAPES OF MY MIND

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Images of working life, life

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Cover photo: Ari Sihvola speaking in Helsinki, Finland, 2018.
Photo: Ari Sihvola's collection.

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Preface

After having retired in the spring of 2019, I started writing my memoirs. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the following spring, reduced my social contacts but accelerated my writing. In the summer of 2020, the first edition of the book "*Arin työt*" (Ari's Work) was published. The following spring, I completed the English-language version, "Mostly Uphill, Smiley". The second edition in Finnish, coordinated with the English version, appeared in the summer of 2022.

As the pandemic continued, I translated my 32-year-old PhD dissertation into French. It dealt with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's draft Constitution of Corsica (1765). So, I fulfilled the promise I made in the preface of my original dissertation: "The purpose of my work is to publish an abbreviated foreign language version for the use of international readers." However, I did not abridge the text, but instead translated the whole book.

The autobiography "Mostly Uphill, Smiley" focused on my working career at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and the HAUS Finnish Institute of Public Management. My writing consisted of short, punchy sentences imitating Hemingway's style in his book "The Old

Man and the Sea". I wanted to leave a story for posterity, from which they could later dig up memories related to father, *muffa* (grandpa) or papa. The landscape of my mind was not exactly discussed in the book. That is the reason for this new book.

I have built my story according to the principles of the Greek philosopher Aristotle's rhetoric: *logos, ethos, pathos*. I have wanted to say something meaningful. I have wanted to make my point in such a way that the reader feels there is a plot in my thoughts. And I've wanted to express my personal relationship with the story I am telling.

The title of my book, "Landscapes of My Mind", refers to the images I have had of working life and life in general. I hope the book will reach people who have lived during the same years and decades as I have and who have worked with organisations and personnel development. Likewise, I invite those people to read my book who are exploring themselves to find the key to personal growth. I have been trying to find the key, too.

My book consists of four parts that have little to do with each other. In fact, there is no coherent plot. The only factor connecting the parts is me. The book can, of course, be considered a collection of essays, although, personally, I have not realised that I have written essays.

My images go through the decades. I wade through infancy to adulthood. I try to guess the meaning of meetings and appointments that appear in my notebooks. I preach about the importance of leadership and negotiation skills. I interpret the analyses made of my managerial behaviour and personality. I wander in the landscapes of Montenegro. I

adopt the self-critical writing style of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who became close to me with my dissertation, in his "Confessions" (*les Confessions*, 1782 and 1789). I talk about myself, but I mirror myself in relation to the public debate.

Nowadays, there is a lot of talk about death cleaning. I started writing to save the next generations the trouble of visiting the past. From my professional notebooks, I have picked out what I think are the most essential things. From 2004 to 2019, I accumulated about a dozen notebooks. I had already disposed of notebooks from previous years before writing this book.

I thought I would offer posterity my own interpretation of my career. I know very well that it is not the whole truth. My professional self would say I use my sources selectively. In the selections, however, I speak as a person, not as a researcher. I have written about the things that I think were important evidence of my work and life. I hope, however, that my narrative will give posterity an insight into the reasons for the choices I made.

In my book "Mostly Uphill, Smiley" (p. 143), I mentioned that, in 2003, I met a senior Dutch civil servant in Brussels whose last name was Kok. When I wrote the book, the man's first name had disappeared from my memory. I suspected that he was Willem "Wim" Kok, the former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, who was working as a lobbyist in Brussels at the time.

My guess was good, but it turned out to be wrong. After I had written the book, my colleague Mr. Eero Vuohula, who had participated in that meeting, found the man's business card in his archive. It was instead Peter W. Kok. At that time,

he worked as a coordinator of the EU appointments of senior Dutch government officials in his country's EU representation in Brussels. Before that, Kok had been a leading official in the Dutch Ministry of Public Works and Water Supply. After the Brussels mission, Kok moved to Luxembourg, and later to Dublin as ambassador. He died at the relatively young age of 60 in 2018.

My thanks go to Mr. Ari Holopainen, Mr. Eero Koskeniemi, Ms. Riitta Paalanen and Mr. Eero Vuohula for commenting on all or parts of the manuscript. I would also like to thank Ms. Erin Kärkkäinen, who has revised the English text.

Language lives in time. Throughout my working career I used the Finnish term '*esimies*' to mean 'supervisor'. The Finnish term refers to a male. I notice that in modern times, the gender-neutral term '*esihenkilö*' ('henkilö' = 'person' in English) is used. The Institute for the Languages of Finland did not mention the new word until 2013. The use of the term '*esihenkilö*' became common in working life at the end of the 2010s, when I was already retiring from my permanent job. Here, I talk about '*esimies*', as was the custom during my career. Anyway, in English the term is 'supervisor, either male or female. I use the singular 'he' or 'she' or the plural form to be gender neutral. I also use the words 'boss' and 'manager' to replace the term supervisor.

Finally, it is appropriate to state that the thoughts and interpretations I present in this book are my personal views. They are not those of my former employers.

In Helsinki, 30 September 2024

Child, adolescent, adult

“Suddenly, life offered me
opportunities without limits.”

1

Who am I?

As a 10-year-old boy, I remember reading a headline in a newspaper that said the end of the world was coming soon. It was late summer 1961. The newspaper had to be *Helsingin Sanomat*, because no other newspaper came to our house. The title about the end of the world must have referred to a religious sect operating in the Oulu region at the time, which was called the Heinonen movement (led by sisters Laila and Aune Heinonen). Laila Heinonen predicted that, unless the Finnish people would repent of their sins, the world would end in the fall of 1961.

At that time, in 1961, we lived in the Cold War era. The nuclear weapon states, the United States and the Soviet Union at the forefront, conducted their nuclear bomb tests. The Berlin crisis of the summer of 1961 culminated in August, when East Germany began building a wall between East and West Berlin. Around the same time, the American clairvoyant Ms. Jeane Dixon predicted the end of the world for the year 1962. The signs of the end of the world really seemed to be in the air. In October 1961, the Soviet Union

detonated its largest and most powerful hydrogen bomb up to that time, called the Tsar Bomba. Finland's foreign policy crisis (the so-called *Note Crisis*) with the Soviet Union took place in October-November of the same year.

As a little boy at the time, I was thinking about that doomsday headline in the newspaper. It was scary to think that all life would end in the world. However, I had a new toy car in my hand, a red Chrysler. On the bottom of it was the year-model marking 1962. Looking back at photos of 1962 Chryslers, I recognise that the model was called Chrysler Newport. I thought the end of the world cannot come this year, 1961, because I have next year's car model. An unflinching chain of reasoning from a little boy! Maybe I realised that since B was true (Chrysler Newport 1962 was in my hand), A (the end of the world, 1961) had to be false. However, the main thing was that the end of the world did not come.

Speaking of toy cars, after having retired, I started collecting toy cars made from real models from the 1950s and 1960s. I started collecting the Volkswagen Kleinbus, a classic of that time. I have over a dozen of them in different colours. My collections also included an ordinary people's family car Toyota Corolla (from 1967), and a Volvo Amazon 122S (from the 1960s), which is still today seen in summer traffic. I also have the wonderful, sporty Ford Mustang of its time (from 1964) and a 50s beauty, the Chevrolet Bel Air (1957). The latter was the same model in which Rafael Trujillo, the Generalissimo of the Dominican Republic, was assassinated in 1961. However, despite searching, I have not found that 1962 Chrysler Newport small car.

Life rolled on. A little boy became an adult and a father in the late 70s. After our children learned to write, I started getting greeting cards from them. I often used them as bookmarks. While cleaning out the drawers in my mother Saara's chest of drawers, I found one special Father's Day card. I sat down on the edge of the bed to read it.



Toyota Corolla, Volvo Amazon, Chevrolet Bel Air and Ford Mustang in Ari's toy car collection. Photo by Ari Sihvola, 2023.

Our younger daughter, Seija, had written it to me. When I showed her the card on Father's Day in November 2022, she thought she had written it when she was eight years old. At that time, she was in the second grade of primary school. It had a beautiful, coloured cover page. On the inside of the card, Seija had written the following in stick letters: "Dad is an encyclopaedia when needed. Sometimes our dad is an unknown thought. Dad is chubby. It makes me laugh when I

look at Dad. Dad washes the dishes well. Best wishes to Daddy from Seija."

Our daughter recognised what was essential in her father. Knowing about things has always been important to me. I have not been able to talk about everything in a way that our child would understand. Also, especially as a younger adult, I have been quiet, thinking about things to myself before I have spoken about them publicly. Understandably, I was an enigma to a child. As a family man, the lean body of my youth had already had time to gain extra kilos in the stomach area. However, I have not resented it, even though relatives and some of my friends have kindly pointed out to me the desirability of getting slimmer.

As my daughter pointed out, I had taken care of all the household duties for the father of the family without complaining. Cooking and washing dishes had been part of my everyday life since the children were born. I already took care of house cleaning in my childhood home. Every week, I vacuumed the apartment. I regularly brushed the carpets in the yard of our apartment building. As a reward, my mother paid me a few *markkas*, which at that time was the Finnish currency. In middle school, I learned to iron my own shirts and suit pants.

The difficult years were my teenage years, 1966–1967, when I was 15 and 16 years old. I was no longer a child; I was not yet an adult. All my childhood playmates were gone. I wanted to get rid of my childhood toys. However, nothing came to replace them. Even the old bicycle, which used to be so dear to me, no longer interested me. Besides, it was broken, so I couldn't ride it anyway.

My summers were lonely, full of emptiness. I did not work summer jobs at that time, unlike many of my classmates. In the afternoons, I went to the Annala forest behind our home in Helsinki's Old Town. I sat there on the rock, from where the view opened across Gustav Vasa Road to the Koskela sports field and the tram hall.

Gustav Vasa Road was like a border between childhood playgrounds and the emerging world of adulthood. I felt a growing need to cross that border and enter the world of adults. However, I was unable to cross the border between childhood and adulthood. I could go for a walk in the Vallila industrial area, walk along its streets and see adults at work, hear the sounds of workshops and machines, feel the pulse of everyday life. Then I returned to the Annala forest, its rock holes, where I was used to sitting and reading a book or magazine. Even now, when I cycle through that forest in the summer, I remember every place, every stone hole, where I had spent summer moments and thought about myself, looking for meaning and direction in life.

In the summer of 1968, after finishing school, I went to work for the summer at the Office of Incoming Foreign Mail (in Finnish *Tulliposti*). At that time, the office was in the centre of Helsinki in *Tennispalatsi*, the sports house built in the 1930s, where tennis was once played. At that time, the Anttila discount store, the first of its kind in Finland, was in the same building. Ordinary people bought household goods and other necessities there. I worked at Tulliposti for six summers. Work was mostly a monotonous routine. However, I did not complain, because now I had a place to go in the morning and where I could come home in the afternoon.

Ari Sihvola: Landscapes of My Mind - images of working life, life.

"Landscapes of My Mind" refers to the images Ari Sihvola has had of working life and life in general. The book aims to reach out to people who have lived in the same decades as him and who have devoted themselves wholeheartedly in organisational and human resource development.

Similarly, Ari hopes the book will appeal to people who are examining themselves to find the key to personal growth. A key that Ari has also been trying to find.

The book consists of four parts, which have little to do with each other. In fact, there is no coherent plot. The only thing that connects the parts is the author. Of course, the book can be considered a collection of essays. Admittedly, Ari has not realised that he has written essays.

Ari Sihvola (born 1951) received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Helsinki on the subject of political history of ideas in the 18th century. During his career, he worked at the Finnish Foreign Ministry as a counsellor (chief of training) and at HAUS Finnish Institute of Public Management, where he was responsible for the development of public organisations and personnel in Finland, Europe and the world. Dr. Sihvola also served as principal administrator at the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium.

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