# Dream Factories revisited

## Post-War Industrialisation in the Nordic and Baltic countries 1945-1990

BY MARIJA DRÉMAITÉ



**ABSTRACT**

The paper reviews two projects – a three-year collaborative research project *Industry and Modernism: Companies, Architecture and Identity in the Nordic and Baltic Countries during the High-Industrial Period* and a subsequent travelling exhibition *Industry and Modernism in the Nordic and Baltic Countries 1945–1990*. The aim of both projects was to examine the connections between industry and modernism, and between interpretations and memories of industrialisation, in post-war Nordic and Baltic industrial society, and to explore how technology, industry and modernism affected the everyday life and culture of North European people.

The point of departure is the concept of the high-industrial era where industry extended beyond the economic and technological into other aspects of society, including social structures, ways of life, and values. In spite of the two different social models, ideological differences and mutual national diversities, the countries on both sides of the Baltic Sea implemented radical industrialisation and modernisation strategies in the post-war period. Comparative research of post-war industrial companies of the seven Nordic and Baltic countries shows surprising parallels and mutual influences. This prompts the question of a common European Baltic Sea identity, which runs across the borderlands of the cold war and emphasises the entire Northern European region as the seat of a rational industry with a common modernistic expression.

### INTRODUCTION: THE HIGH-INDUSTRIAL PERIOD IN THE NORDIC AND BALTIC COUNTRIES 1945–1990

Two different social models developed in the Nordic and Baltic countries after World War II: the Nordic social democratic welfare states (Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland), and the Socialist Soviet Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, commonly known as the *Pribaltika* region of the USSR), separated by the cold war. In spite of their ideological differences and national diversities, the countries on both sides of the Baltic Sea implemented radical industrialisation and modernization strategies. This discourse with industry, which was prominent in developing and forming an ideal for the rest of society, was probably prevalent in many other parts of Europe during these decades. Thus, despite the different political systems and ideologies, one can encounter strikingly similar models and similar rhetoric concerning the transformation of society.

Discussion of similarities and differences has become a favorite topic in recent years, during which collaborative research in the Nordic and Baltic countries has become increasingly developed. Three research projects were carried out during 2003–2010 in collaboration with many academic researchers, museum curators and heritage specialists from the Nordic and Baltic countries. In the course of this research, the question of similarities (as opposed to expected differences) was constantly present.

The Nordic-Baltic Industrial Heritage network originated from the *Industrial Heritage Platform* (2000–2003), initiated by the Finnish National Board of Antiquities and financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. It resulted in several different activities: (1) the doctoral school led by professors Marie Nisser (KTH), Maths Isacson (Uppsala), Andres Lundgren (Uppsala) and Austrums Klavins (Riga Technical University), which in 2002–2006 included researchers from different Nordic and Baltic countries and resulted in several dissertations and a joint publication[1]; (2) the interdisciplinary academic research project *Industry and Modernism* (2003–2005) conducted by Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna (University of Helsinki), which explored how technology, industry and modernism affected the everyday life, urban and visual culture of people in the Nordic and Soviet Baltic countries, and resulted in a series of forums, a special issue[2] and a book *Industry and Modernism: Companies, Architecture, and Identity in the Nordic and Baltic Countries during the High-Industrial Period* (2007)[3], and (3) a travelling exhibition *Dream Factories? Industry and Modernism in the Nordic and Baltic countries 1945–1990*[4] (2007–2010, chief curator Birgitte Beck Pristed, the Workers' Museum in Copenhagen) which was inspired by the academic research project *Industry and Modernism*.

Scholars of *Industry and Modernism* agreed that the modernistic belief of industry and technology as an ideal model of social organization was one of the cornerstones of the period after the Second World War, which resulted in a tremendous increase in living standards and industrial practices that altered social structures, ways of life, ideologies and values. According to the economic historians Maths Isacson and Susanna Fellman, one of the universal ideals of this new rational and efficient welfare society was the *large scale,* which was built on *abstract trust with large organisations,* which planned and took care of working and living conditions. Besides industrial production, the large scale and efficient organisation of activities was also an ideal in other areas of society – transportation, health care, education, shopping and housing. Isacson calls this period the *high-industrial period* (1930s-1980s) which stands for a short period of rapid industrial development, when the secondary sector held a dominant position in national economies.[5)] The discourse with industry at the forefront of this development corresponds to James C. Scott's concept of *high modernism* as an ideology that transcends the traditional divisions between the political left and right and could be found wherever anyone wished to use state power to bring about utopian changes in people's work habits and living patterns.[6)]

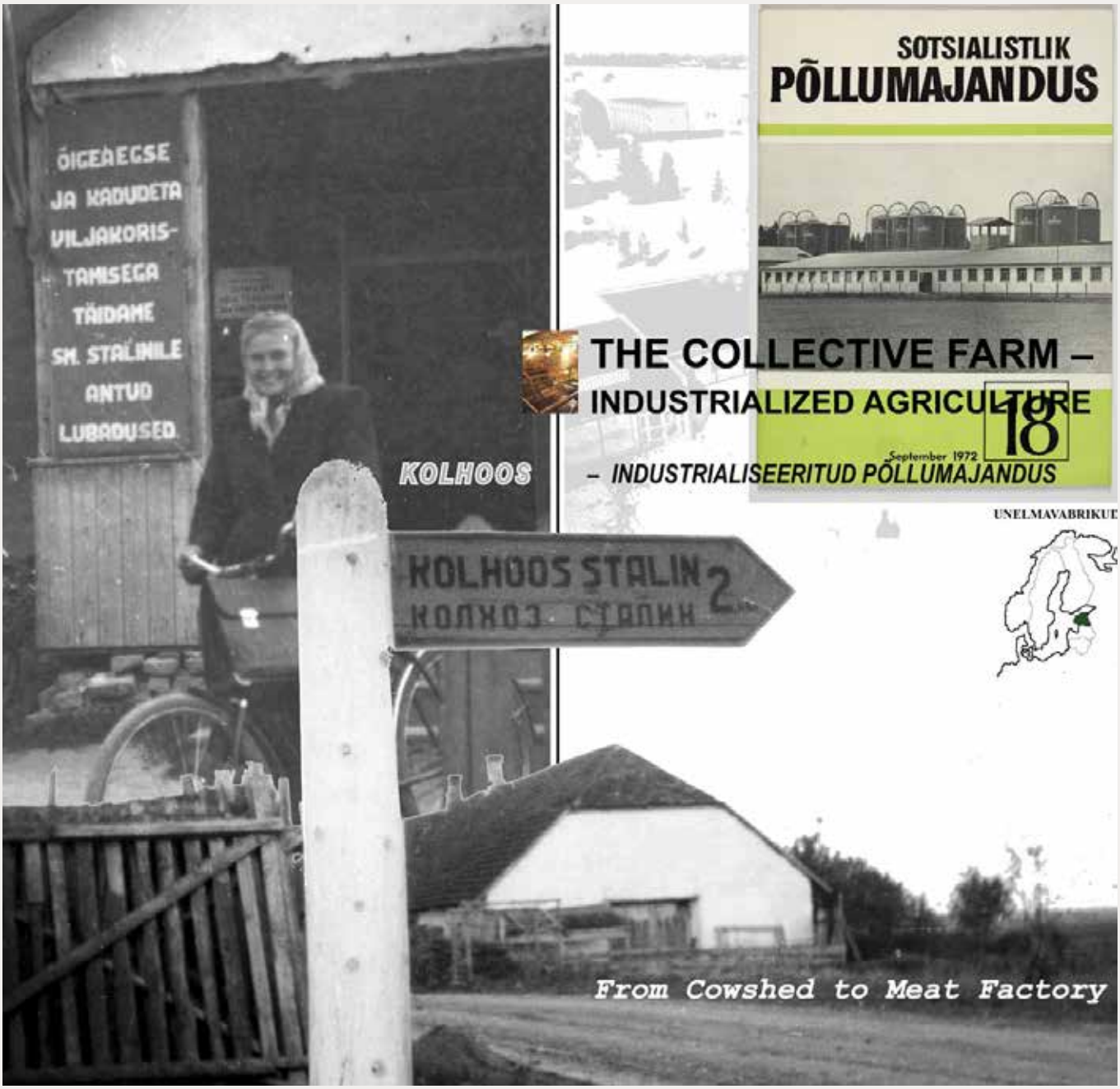
In the context of the *high-industrial period,* there is an argument for comparing the Nordic countries with the three Baltic States on the grounds of relative similarity. In the Soviet bloc, the industrial method of construction had to 'build communism faster', and in the West, it had to build 'a better future' and a 'welfare state'. Both the Nordic countries in Europe and the Baltic republics in the USSR became the leaders of modern life. Nordic societies developed and established a particular form of society, the welfare state, based on notions of security of social conditions and more even distribution of well-being. Even if most Western European states pursued similar models, some researchers have maintained that the Nordic model has been more successful than others. Within the Soviet bloc, the Baltic states were, in their own way, also seen as models during the high-industrial era. United by the common tragic destiny of incorporation into the USSR in 1940, and re-occupied in 1944, they have been named the *Pribaltica* region. The republics exploited relatively successfully the conditional liberalism of the Khrushchev Thaw in the 1960s. Administrative and economic (Sovnarkhoz 1957–1965) reforms fostered the development of an entire generation of local technocracy and Communist Party administration in the Baltic republics.[7)] Within the USSR, the Baltic republics increasingly surpassed the other republics in per capita national income. By 1968, Lithuania exceeded the average by 15 per cent, Latvia by 42 and Estonia by 44 per cent.[8)] Nordic and Baltic societies expanded and became rational and efficient model societies.

Despite the fact that both systems (capitalist and socialist) shared similar utopian aesthetic, ideological and utilitarian programs of welfare in this period, it is necessary to draw attention to the specific nature of Soviet modernization, since industrialization and the location of industry served as the basis of regional planning in the USSR. On one hand, rapid industrialization and urbanization of the Soviet Baltic republics can be viewed as a large modernist project characteristic of the period, especially when compared to the strikingly similar models and rhetoric concerning modernization and transformation of society on the other side of the Baltic Sea. On the other hand, Soviet industrialization is strongly connected to the totalitarian Soviet regime, where industry and architecture were known as a means of colonizing nations and of unifying the built environment. It creates a strong argument for viewing post-war Soviet regional and urban modernization not only from the perspective of industrial modernism but also from the perspective of the Sovietization of the landscape and built environment.

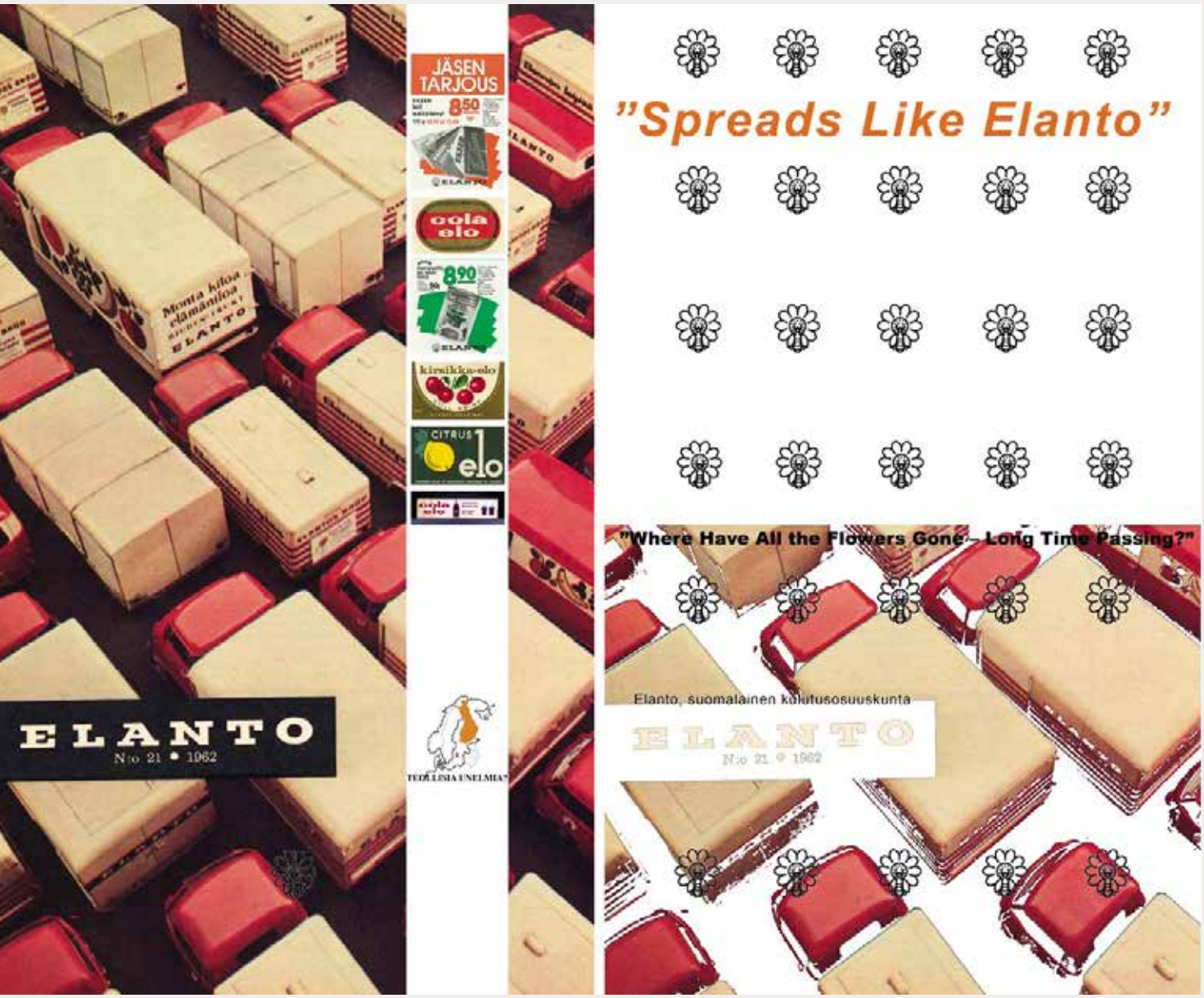
## INDUSTRY AND MODERNISM AROUND THE BALTIC SEA: FROM RESEARCH PROJECT TO TRAVELLING EXHIBITION

Industrial heritage, as a European way of enhancing knowledge, is an important key for understanding the societies that we live in today and for the European mental mapping of ourselves. For

Exhibition poster collage for the Estonian case "The Collective Farm – Industrialized Agriculture". Exhibition designers Elina Moreau Braunstein and Jens Bertelsen.



Exhibition poster collage for the Finnish case "The Consumer Cooperative Elanto". Exhibition designers Elina Moreau Braunstein and Jens Bertelsen.



**A morning in the Lithuanian industrial town Elektrénai, 1970s. Courtesy of the Lithuanian Museum of Energy and Technology**



the travelling exhibition *Dream Factories? Industry and Modernism in the Nordic and Baltic countries 1945–1990,* the new Industry and Modernism Museum Network (IMMN) was developed, consisting of the following partners: The Workers' Museum (Copenhagen, Denmark), The Museum of Science and Technology (Oslo, Norway), The Museum of Work (Norrköping, Sweden), The Museum of Science and Technology (Stockholm, Sweden), The Museum Centre Vapriikki (Tampere, Finland), Helsinki City Museum (Finland), the Estonian National Museum in Tartu, the Latvian Museum of Architecture in Riga, and the Lithuanian Energy Museum (currently the Lithuanian Museum of Energy and Technology) in Vilnius. The network united museums whose exhibitions were of different technological, social and architectural-historical scopes, thus crossing not only national but also professional boundaries.

The travelling exhibition had a twofold aim: in the first place, to communicate the common Nordic-Baltic industrial cultural heritage and to encourage debate about how to treat the recent past of the high-industrial period. Also, the network expected to establish long term co-operation between the museums, universities and national heritage agencies. The team also wished to approach the idea of modernism as a historical phenomenon, a process of changes, transformations and transitions in real contexts. However, the important task of communicating and spreading knowledge of the industrial past is not always easy. Thus, the researchers raised the following questions:

- do the results of the research project alter the general concept or the scholars' view of it?
- how can the research results be converted into a museum exhibition?
- where are and what are the borders, which the international co-operation and travelling museum exhibition should actually cross?
- when industry and modernism are approached in the European context, what does the concept of Europe refer to?

One of the points of departure of the research team was the fruitfulness of a Nordic-Baltic perspective to industry and modernism through the comparison of histories. The researchers focused on the images and counter-images of industry and modernism in the Nordic and Baltic countries in 1945–1990 within a shared European framework and aimed to discuss not only the political, technological and aesthetic ideologies and dreams, but also the shadows and ambivalence, related to factories and the high-industrial period.

## DREAM FACTORIES: SEVEN WORKPLACES, SEVEN NATIONAL HEROES

The economic theory of the high-industrial period and the symbolic framework of a factory formed a good starting point in the search for universal features of modern industrial society. However, the desire to test those features on both sides of the Baltic Sea required a more complicated methodology. The exhibition was thus based on examining similar industrial model structures in seven countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). These models served as symbolic objects of the high-industrial period; they were large scale, functional, and rational. It was also very important to trace how the factories were related to the welfare and socialist systems by showing the ramifications of the factories in the respective societies.

All 'industrial symbols' had to be witnessed by their contemporaries who really experienced the change brought by modernization. At a micro level the exhibition was focused on factory-inspired modes of living that entered the home and everyday life. Seven life stories presented through the viewpoints and memories of men and women working in the factories showed how factory-inspired modes of living entered the home and everyday life.

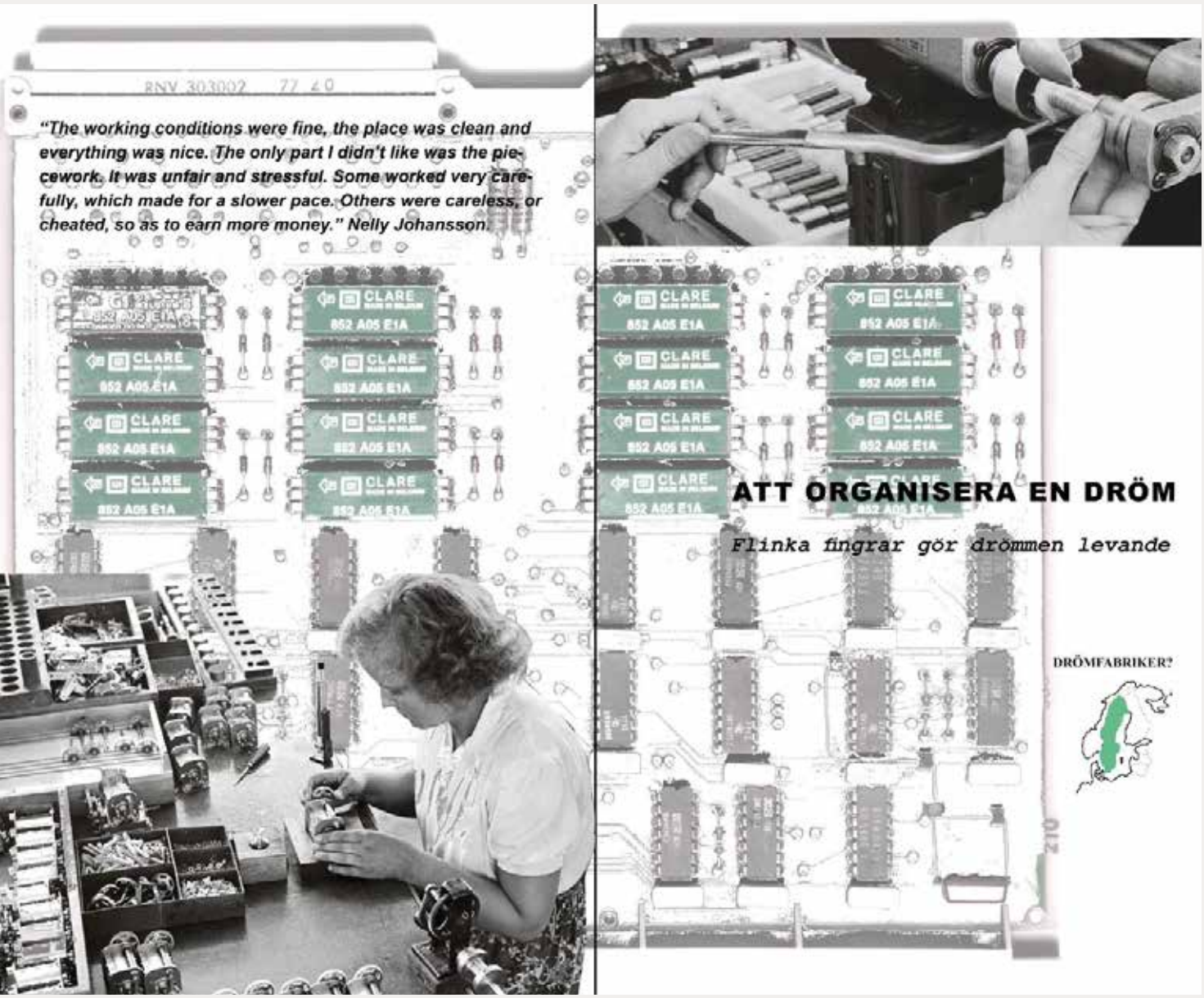
The Estonian collective farm *(kolkhoz)* represented not only the legacy of Soviet collectivization but also could be viewed as a universal European goal (dream) of industrialized countryside. The Baltic republics, especially Estonia, proved to be the most successful in the USSR after the Khrushchev Thaw at the end of the 1950s provided collective farms with a certain economic independence. The Soviet occupation brought to Estonian agriculture large-scale production in the form of collective farms. The pre-war small farmsteads were replaced by huge barns housing more than 1,000 head of cattle. In 1949, Stalin's regime deported more than 20,000 Estonians to Siberia. The remaining farmers joined the collective farms out of fear. The reforms of Khrushchev at the end of the 1950s provided collective farms with a certain economic independence. And the resulting growth in production did not suffer even during the Brezhnev stagnation of 1970–1980. Wages in collective farms became much higher than in towns. Productivity in Estonian agriculture was vastly superior to the rest of the USSR, although it still fell far behind the Nordic countries. A hypothetical Estonian heroine was the veterinarian Helgi, who belonged to the technocratic elite of specialists who were the brains of a collective farm and were offered perks – a car, a private house or a holiday abroad – a dream for many in Soviet Estonia. Helgi was one of many who implemented the scientific and technological revolution in Soviet Baltic agriculture and could enjoy its benefits.[9)]

The Finnish consumer cooperative *Elanto (Livelihood)* was not only related to a large part of industrial Helsinki and the political left, but also to a post-war ideal *(dream)* of educating an active modern consumer. *Elanto* comprised an entire world for Aino Pesonen, a second-generation employee, who had the opportunity to follow the development of the workers' cooperative into a consumer middle-class enterprise. *Elanto* started as a bakery. The tasty but inexpensive bread became the brand of the cooperative. In 1950, in addition to the bread factory, *Elanto* owned 450 smaller stores, two department stores and several restaurants. Both the 4,700 employees and the 100,000 members enjoyed various benefits. *Elanto's* marketing was innovative. Well-informed citizens were important in developing the welfare state. The cooperative had its golden era in the 1950s and 1960s, expanding into hypermarkets and hotels in the 1970s and 1980s. Aino Pesonen started as a shop assistant in 1947. She married an *Elanto* truck driver. Their family spent holidays abroad with *Elanto's* travel club. Aino's career in *Elanto* progressed. She took vocational courses organized by her employer and retired in 1993 as the head of a suburban supermarket. Her daughter is still an *Elanto* employee.[10)]

The Årdal aluminium plant in Norway was a widely publicised showcase of the social democratic government, but it also represented a universal dream of modernizing the entire country with the help of different regional development patterns (electrification being the most important) and constructing modern mono-industrial towns in sparsely inhabited areas of

Exhibition poster collage for the Norwegian case
"Årdal Aluminium plant – A Social-democratic Show Window".
Exhibition designers Elina Moreau Braunstein and Jens Bertelsen.

Exhibition poster collage for the Swedish case "LM Ericsson – To Organize a Dream". Exhibition designers Elina Moreau Braunstein and Jens Bertelsen.



the country. The Årdal industrial community became a symbol of modern Norway after World War II. In the course of a few years Årdal was transformed from a scarcely populated rural community to a small town situated around the aluminium plant. The power-intensive industry, including the aluminium industry, was an important part of the social-democratic modernization project in the post-war years. The period was characterized by integrated planning where energy supply, industrialization and regional policy were considered as a totality. This led to a characteristic phenomenon in the Norwegian settlement pattern: remote small town communities solely dependent on a power-intensive smelting plant. The engineers played a crucial part in helping to plan the changes and realize them. Ole Georg Gjøsteen was born in 1916 and graduated as a chemical engineer in 1939. He was an assistant engineer at Årdal Verk from 1946 to 1949 and came back as a senior engineer at the Årdalstangen plant in 1955. [11]

Norway and Årdal were in some respects strikingly similar to Soviet Lithuania, where the widely celebrated construction of thermal power plant and the town of Elektrénai had the same regional planning imperatives and *dream* of modernization of the entire country. The dream of creating an efficient and progressive modern socialist society with the help of industry, technology and electricity was proclaimed in 1957 by the new Soviet leadership under Nikita Khrushchev. The essence of the plan was the great construction of communism. Primarily designed for industry, electricity also embodied the modernistic dream of bridging the city and the countryside. Construction of the Lithuanian thermal power plant and the nearby industrial town between the two largest cities in Lithuania, Vilnius and Kaunas, started in 1960. The town, symbolically named Elektrénai (the electric town), represented modern town planning ideas and new living standards. Algis Mišinis (born 1938) was a foreman in the electric department of the power plant. He started his career in Elektrénai in 1962. After graduation from the technical school in Elektrénai, Algis became a skilled engineer. In his free time, he enjoyed sports, especially mountain climbing. He saw his life in Elektrénai as a success story. [12]

A similar pattern of countrywide modernization was perfectly represented by the Swedish *organized dream* of the welfare state. The development of 'LM Ericsson' in the 1960s, when 22 modern factories were built in different regions of the country, embodied the vision of new and modern Sweden, which might be compared to a rational and effective factory. Since the 1930s there had been a dream of making Sweden a new and modern country. Companies, trade unions, people and society were all working together to achieve this. But already by the 1960s, the Prime Minister was encountering growing discontent as expectations kept rising. Nelly Johansson in the factory assembly hall and Sven Eriksson as an engineer were both working to make the dream come true. They were employed at the LM Ericsson telecommunications company in the small town of Katrineholm, located 140 km south of Stockholm. Katrineholm was experiencing a period of rapid growth, as was the Stockholm-based company LM Ericsson. Katrineholm was the perfect location for a new factory outside the Swedish capital. The new premises, built in 1947, were modern, clean and spacious, and the product was suited to a female workforce. When the factory opened, Nelly immediately got a job in the assembly hall, and she stayed with the company for 40 years. Sven settled in Katrineholm in the early 1970s. He was an engineer and had worked for Ericsson in Stockholm since 1957. The collective vision of a new and modern Sweden was beneficial to all – to the people, to the company and to society. It resembled an organized, well-planned, efficient factory – a dream factory. [13]

The Riga panel house building factory system became a perfect representation of the relations between the factory and the home. Traditionally seen as a legacy of the Eastern bloc, mass produced panel housing can thus be understood as a universal post-war European dream of comfortable and affordable modern apartments for everyone. [14]

The Danish company 'Novo' showed how the pharmaceutical industry went through a radical change from penicillin production in the 1940s to the first genetic engineering in the 1980s. The biotechnological development was based on the modern industrial society's optimistic belief *(dream)* in science

as a means of curing diseases. Novo started the successful production of insulin in 1925. In the post-war period Novo, through intensive research, developed a broad product line of medicines, along with enzymes for the food and textile industry. Novo's buildings, designed from 1934 to 1971 by the Danish functionalist Arne Jacobsen, express a modernistic aesthetic ideal. The pure lines of the white concrete reflect the factories' and laboratories' functional demands for cleanliness and safety. Laboratory assistant Karin Lepper's story illustrates the transformation of the industrial society's factory into the knowledge society's laboratory that created a need for specialized labor.[15]

At a macro level the research revealed the infrastructure, institutions and network that spread out around the factories because the seven selected cases represented seven different aspects of modern high-industrial society: industrialized countryside, modern consumer, regional distribution of industry and modernization of periphery, mass electrification, science and technology for all, and modern living standards. At a micro level the stories pointed out differences, surprising parallels and mutual influence between the countries.

## DREAMS DO NOT LAST FOREVER: INDUSTRIAL IDEALS IN THE NORDIC AND BALTIC COUNTRIES SEEN THROUGH SIX ASPECTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

To construct the narrative, and to highlight in particular the differences or similarities between all seven countries, a unified comparative methodology of six themes was chosen, taking account of the extraordinary dynamics of post-war industrialization and modernization. In order to draw attention to aspects of everyday history, respondents ("heroes") described their working life by revealing the rhythm of their industrial careers, which consisted of (1) dreams of a factory; (2) working at the factory; (3) factory and home; (4) factory and (collective) leisure; (5) factory and society, and finally, (6) the change of dreams.

*Dreams of a factory.* Dreams about the future of an industrialized society are best embodied in the pharmaceutical company Novo's slogan 'Everything is possible!', which informed the public that, with enough knowledge, it is possible to defeat anything (in this case, any disease). Nordic industry began to grow at an unprecedented rate, with labor shortages in major cities. Sweden at that time underwent a special modernization of the periphery, which was primarily implemented by industrial companies together with municipalities. New enterprises grew not only as economic but also as social institutions whose ideology was based on the promotion of social equality and progressive activities in the creation of the welfare state. Small industrial towns, such as Årdal in Norway, became symbols of modernism, which was supposed to ensure prosperity and material well-being for all.

In the socialist world, dreams of industrialization were more often close to technological and political dreams. At the time, local technocrats and politicians had a little more optimism and freedom in building the republic's economy and industry. The unprecedentedly high-capacity (1800 MW) power plant, and the technological innovations implemented in it, became a real challenge and place of attraction for Lithuanian engineers.

*Work in the factory.* Mass production led to the mechanization and rational organization of production processes in Western factories very early on. Machines and conveyors made the job easier, but also made it monotonous. One of the most important elements of post-war modernization was the improvement of social security and working conditions in the factories of the Nordic countries: guaranteed employment, good wages, company benefits and health care. Occupational safety and hygiene requirements became mandatory. Yet, hard physical labour did not go away. Working conditions in Soviet companies also improved gradually. However, Algis Mišinis recalled that "working conditions at the power plant were difficult. The noise, the vibration, the pollution and heavy metals. Our colleagues advised us to be silent and not to frighten people in the town about the pollution. The employees knew that working conditions in the power plant were harmful, so they were paid supplements and given milk".

*Factory and home.* Rational thinking also affected the living environment. Small, standardized, mass-produced homes made

Exhibition poster collage for the Latvian case "The Building of Prefabricated Houses in Riga". Exhibition designers Elina Moreau Braunstein and Jens Bertelsen.

**Exhibition poster collage for the Danish case "The Pharmaceutical Firm Novo – Health as a Modern Industrial Product". Exhibition designers Elina Moreau Braunstein and Jens Bertelsen.**



it possible to realize the dream of a modern home for every family. Technological inventions in the health industry and the modernist ideal of cleanliness led to changes in Nordic homes and daily lives. The average age of the population increased, as did the amount of medication consumed. Consumption became a symbol of the modern way of life. Women's magazines became a key element of consumer education, publishing a wide range of articles from food to travel.

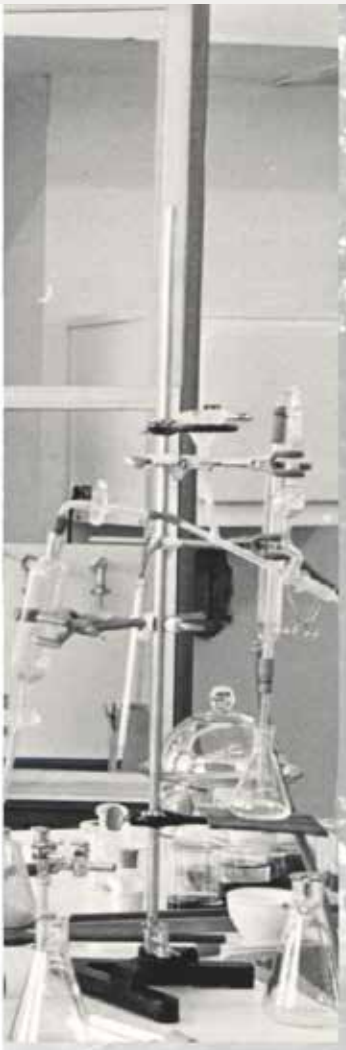
Meanwhile, the USSR allocated only 25 percent of national income for consumption. Such policies resulted in low living standards. One of the most important attractions that encouraged people to choose to work in industry was the promise of housing provision, which was mainly distrubuted through the workplace. In the 1960s construction of the first prefabricated blocks of flats began in the Baltic cities and kolkhoz settlements. Later, as the income of the collective farms increased, cooperatives for the construction of individual dwellings began to form.

*Factory and leisure*. A large part of the collective leisure and cultural events in the post-war Nordic countries were organized by factories and the trade unions. Under their supervision, sports arenas, meeting rooms and various societies were built. Companies promoted active leisure, which was one way of maintaining the physical and mental health of employees. The cooperatives also took care of the leisure and entertainment of their employees. The time spent singing together in the choir or exercising in the gym had the effect of bringing the staff of different departments and units closer together. In the socialist world, factories also took care of mass cultural and leisure activities. Although trade unions were merely artificial in the Soviet republics, they became the main agents of organized tourism such as collective holidays, and excursions played an important role in factory community building. In the Soviet bloc, this resulted in a huge system of collective leisure with specially designated resorts, large vacation houses and a regular system of two-week holiday exchange.

Factory and society. In the Nordic 'dream society', the state played an important role in fostering the well-being of its citizens and in planning a long-term strategy for improving all areas of people's lives. The state also funded labor exchanges and social services that made sure everyone had access to affordable housing. The steady growth of industry required new labor (immigration) and new construction (urbanization). At the same time, there was a growing concern in the welfare state to protect the health of the population, which supported politicians' vision of building a healthy society. The exemplary factory community was to become a model for the entire Nordic society. The state also played a key role in modernizing the socialist republics and creating social welfare.

*The change of dreams. Dream Factories* could have been cast just as an attractive success story. However, the researchers were overwhelmed by the critical desire to describe and illustrate the moment when industrial values lost their power in both Nordic and Soviet Baltic societies. Pollution problems and cutbacks made the dream less idyllic. The critical approach to technocratic fundamentalism and the dependency of a person on a factory 'from cradle to grave' changed the dreams. The extensive use of power to sustain highly non-ecological industry, such as the Årdal aluminium plant, came under debate in the Nordic countries. The pharmaceutical success of companies like 'Novo' put the economic and human resources of the welfare state under pressure. Today the goal is to prevent, rather than cure diseases. The consumer cooperative Elanto always had to struggle to maintain a balance between its ideological foundation and its commercial practices. For almost a century it succeeded. Nevertheless, the 1980s was a difficult time for the cooperative. Finally, in 2003 a century old symbol of the left joined together with its long-time rival – the cooperative *Helsingin Osuuskauppa,* which had always symbolized the political right. The Swedish dream came true – but lost its value, because dreams do not last forever.

In the Soviet bloc, neither electrification nor mass housing succeeded in constructing communism. The optimistic belief in industrialization in the Baltic republics was lost long before the collapse of the USSR. However, only after 1991 did criticism of industrial ideals find its mark. It contained a large part of disappointment though. The drama was probably best illustrated by





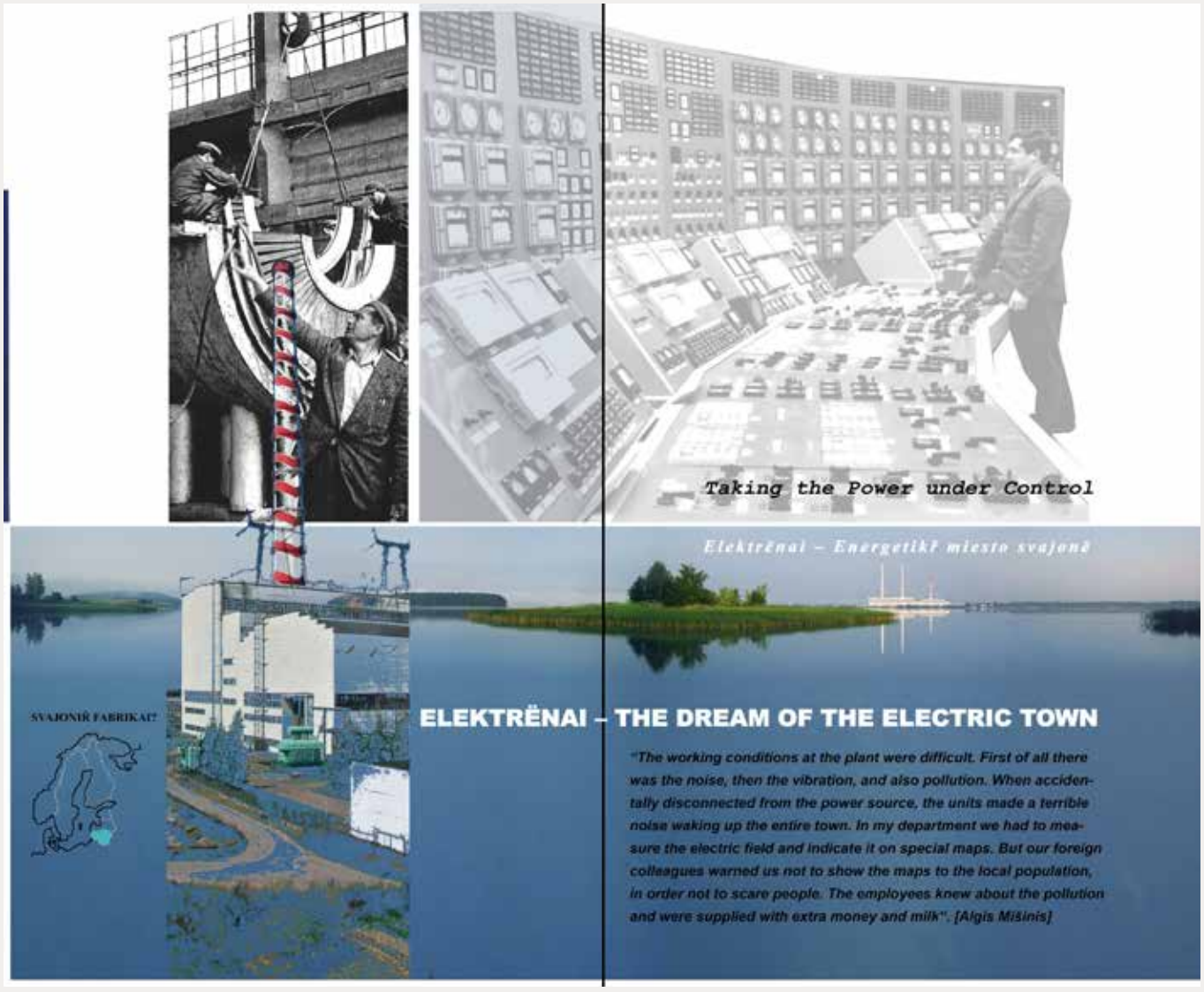

# ”It can be done!”

## *Health as a Technological Dream*

***Laborant***

**DRØMMEFABRIKKER?**

Purity Neutrality Simplicity




the destiny of the veterinarian Helgi from the collapsed collective farm: on the one hand, she was glad to be free of Russian oppression, on the other hand, she regretted that, according the new paradigm, what she had worked to build up all her life had turned out to be erroneous.

The seven workplaces described and the stories of the "heroes" truly confirm the universalist orientation of modernism and its aspirations to develop a more equal society - a society without borders - both nationally and socially, through mass production and modern consumption. Of course, there were a number of differences that stemmed from the political ideology of the Soviet system. Industrialization, urbanization, complex division of labor, strong social differentiation, science and technology, scientific ideology, and the teleological and optimistic conception of human history were characteristic of both systems; meanwhile, social contract theory was imitated in the Soviet system; the concept of self-consciousness was artificially supported by the collectivist ideology; whereas unlimited consumption was restricted because of the command economy and centralized distribution. Thus, the distortions or mutations of Soviet industrialization, urbanization, and modernization could not be understood fully without the political history.

## CONCLUSION

Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna has warned that standard descriptions tend to emphasize the similarities among the Northern and Baltic States, searching for grand examples; however, in terms of realities, the view is more diverse, even if the ideologies of modernism, the generalities adopted in the technologies, and the social and economic frames of reference might have involved similar goals.[16] The research showed that the striking visual similarities had rather different backgrounds, which indicated the importance of political history in understanding the core issues, mainly the differences.

**Exhibition poster collage for the Lithuanian case "Elektrénai – the Dream of the Electric Town". Exhibition designers Elina Moreau Braunstein and Jens Bertelsen.**



During the research process, an increase in the significance of political history was felt: it was particularly evident in contact with other European researchers without detailed knowledge of the course of events in the Nordic-Baltic region. The idea of political history as a major element in the study, however, somewhat contradicts the notion of industrial companies and professionals as the main agents in industry and modernism. It may also have been influenced by the notion of the seemingly unpolitical character of the technocratic society, conventionally equated with the industrial society. Political history normally relates to nation-states and to government-led activities, while the interest of the *Industry and Modernism* team as well as the *Dream Factories* exhibition was more in other approaches that also have surpassed national boundaries. Adopting particular geographical limits to the research and the exhibition was not a neutral choice, but had a strong political character. In this sense, the setting of the research contained problematic aspects. What industry and modernism in the Nordic and Baltic countries during the high-industrial period of post-war Europe was about still contains many unanswered questions, even if the several Nordic-Baltic collaborative projects have contributed to an understanding of the complexity of the processes involved.

## Notes

1) *Industrial Heritage Around the Baltic Sea,* M. Nisser, M. Isacson, A. Lundgren and A. Cinis (eds.), Uppsala Studies in Economic History 92, 2012. The doctoral school was funded by The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and High Education (STINT).
2) Yhdiskuntasuunnittelu / The Finnsih Journal of Urban Studies, 2003:3, vol. 41, special issue "Industry and Modernism".
3) Edited by Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna. Helsinki: Studia Fennica Historica 14. The research project was funded by NOS-HS (Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and Social Sciences)
4) The exhibition was a result of a co-operation between 9 museums in 7 Nordic and Baltic countries. The results of the exhibition research were published online ‹http://dreamfactories.eu/› (now expired). Birgitte Beck Pristed, "Dream Factories: A Travelling Exhibition on Industry and Modernism in the Baltic Sea Region 1945-1990", project presentation, *European Commission in The Culture Programme 2007-2013 Culture in Motion,* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008, p. 19.
5) FELLMAN Susanna, ISACSON Maths. The High-Industrial Period in the Nordic and Baltic Countries. In: *Industry and Modernism: Companies, Architecture, and Identity in the Nordic and Baltic Countries during the High-Industrial Period.* Ed. Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna. Helsinki: Studia Fennica Historica 14, 2007, p. 45.
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