

Nordic and Baltic Industrial Heritage

– some final comments

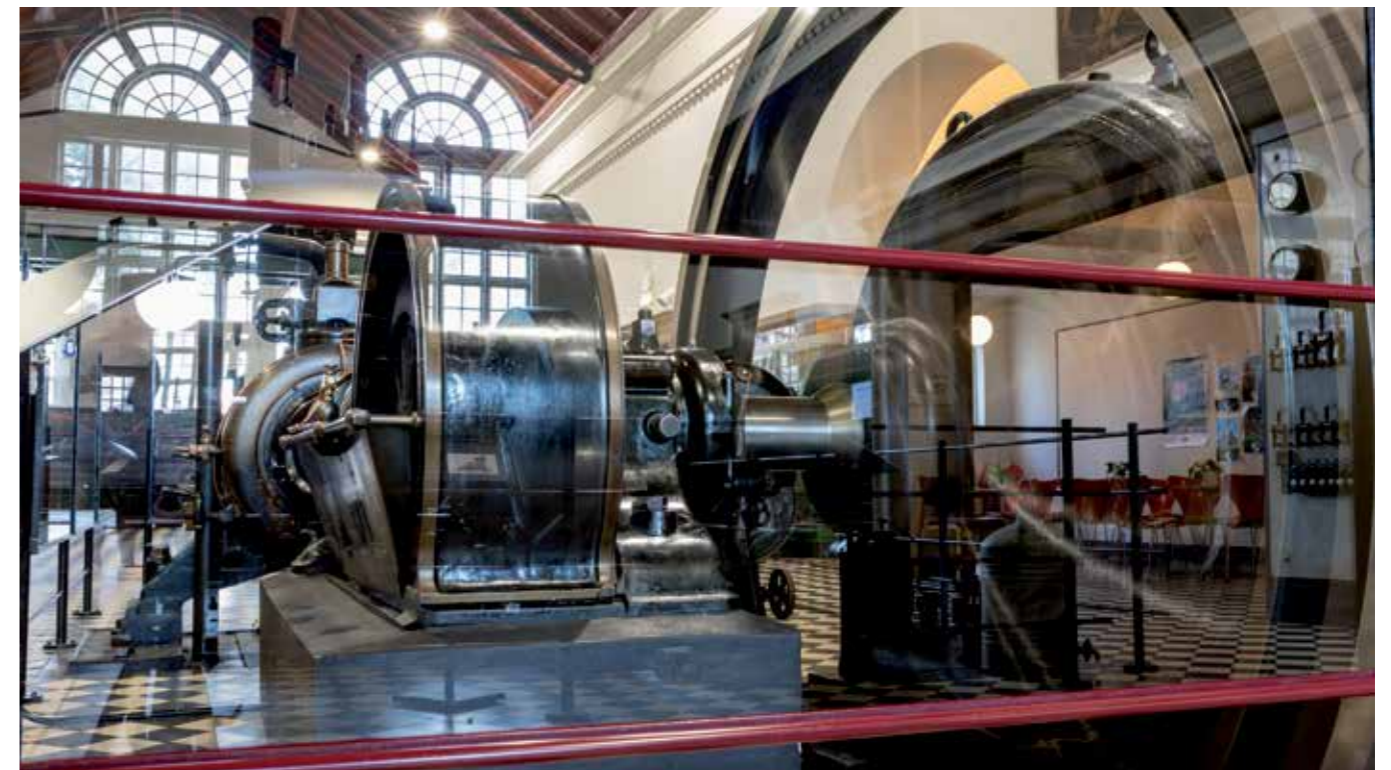
ANDERS HOULTZ

This theme issue of *Fabrik & Bolig* (Factory & Dwelling) has had its focus on industrial heritage across the Nordic and Baltic countries. Featuring authors hailing from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden, the previous articles have characterised the genesis, rise and development of public, as well as institutional, interest in the industrial heritage of the seven countries in question. The authors have likewise sought to map out and demarcate the extent to which this development has been mirrored historically in efforts to list and protect industrial plants and their associated facilities. In the introductory article, Susanna Fellman and Maths Isacson enable a

long-term perspective by analysing the changes that have occurred in the global industrial and economic development, and by delineating three distinctive industrial periods in the last century: “the High-Industrial Period” (HIP) from the 1930s until ca. 1980, the “Hyper-Global Industrial Period” (H-GIP) until ca. 2010, and – finally – the “Multipolar-Global Industrial Period” (M-GIP), which carries on into the present time.

Do patterns emerge when we compare national overviews of industry and relate them to the periodical framework of Fellman and Isacson, and if so, what are these patterns? Which general themes and similarities present themselves – and which differen-

117



The Industrial Museum Horsens. Photo: Anders Houlitz 2021.

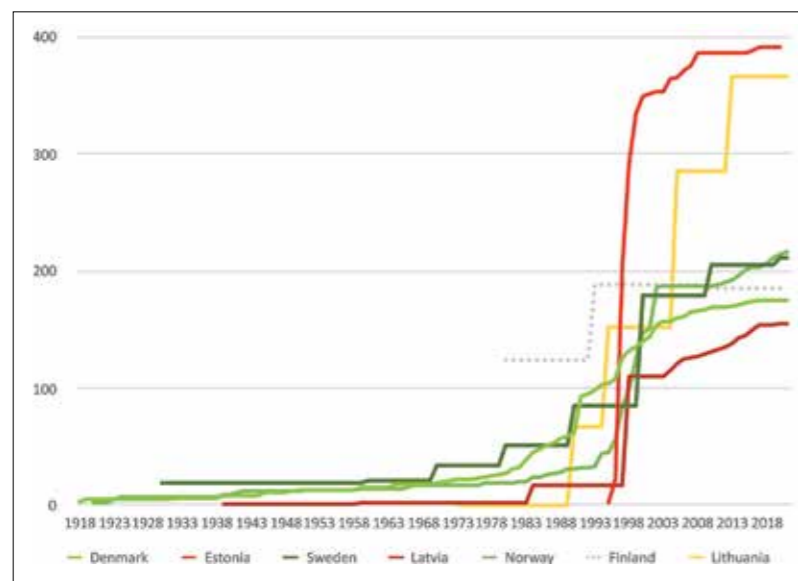


Figure 1. Protected industrial heritage, understood as listed property or cases in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Latvia, as cultural environments protected by planning measures in Finland, and as single buildings and objects in Estonia and Lithuania. The different calculation methods explain the significant differences in numbers for Estonia and Lithuania compared to the other countries. Source: the figures are defined and calculated by the authors of each national overview in this issue.

ces? How can we explain these characteristics? Firstly, it is crucial to stress that any such comparison between countries will be hampered by the inevitable differences in cultural and historical context from one country to another, let alone across seven nations. This issue is exacerbated by the differences in legislation and heritage practices, not to mention in the very definitions of “heritage” and “industry” employed by each entity. Objects or categories which at a given moment in time are defined as “industry” in one country may be sorted under “craft”, or some other label, in another. To a varying degree, the listing data particular to each country may include singular buildings and monuments, just as well as it may list extensive plants and sprawling industrial environments. The meaning and consequences of the listing itself also differs from country to country; both concerning the level of protection afforded and the practical and economic consequences a protection may bring. These issues render a strictly quantitative comparison problematic, if not impossible. Nevertheless, certain observations can be made.

Taking these reservations into account, the overall picture remains that the listing of industrial heritage in the Nordic and Baltic states follows a common, general development (see Figure 1). The first examples of listings in Denmark, Norway and Sweden took place in the Interwar years. However, these isolated initiatives were limited in scope, dealing only with single monuments. They were typically motivated by an interest in the history of technology, rather than in industrial culture per se, and were accompanied by few cognate efforts in the Baltic states in the same period.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, a noticeable increase in listings occurred across the Nordic countries; both in Denmark and Norway, but most significantly in Sweden. The activity also rose in Finland, but this did not result in listing to the same extent as the others, since – as Björkman notes in her article – planning legislation, rather than listing, planning legislation rather than listing is the central means for protection there. Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia, all part of the Soviet Union at that time, did not partici-

pate in this trend. When the listing trend intensified in the 1990s and the early 2000s, however, a considerable degree of activity was sparked also in the recently independent Baltic states. By the 2010s, the increase in listing activity gradually levelled off in all the surveyed countries, though without stopping entirely – a development which continues through to the present.

PRESERVATION LISTINGS AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIETY

The patterns of industrial heritage protection appear to correlate in different ways to the general development of industry and society. For instance, the first initiatives towards conceptualising ‘industrial heritage’ can be understood in the context of the transformations taking place during the so-called Second Industrial Revolution, which is commonly dated to the period ca. 1890–1930, and the subsequent High-Industrial Period (in Fellman and Isacson’s terms). On the threshold to a new mode of production – one characterized by electrification, mass-production, and scientifically-devised manufacturing processes – it became possible to define the previous stage as ‘history’, and to define certain objects as cultural heritage worthy of preservation and protection.

In his article, Jørgensen describes how the first Danish listings of industrial monuments were carried out in 1918, with the introduction of the first Listed Buildings Act. In similar fashion, Dahlström Rittsel shows how architecture and technical equipment from the Swedish iron- and mining industries were recognised as historical monuments in the early 20th century, and came to be preserved through joint initiatives between heritage institutions and industry itself. Actual legal protection and safeguarding of industrial heritage through listing was, however, still exceptional in both countries. An important factor in Denmark as well as Sweden seems to have been that engineers and company owners – not just museum officials, architects, and art historians – were engaged in the efforts to protect industrial monuments during this early phase.

A more consistent interest in industrial heritage appeared only when the High-Industrial Period terminated during the 1970s. This, in turn, was in part a consequence of the Third Industrial Revolution – bringing accelerating globalisation, automation and computerisation into play – which resulted in structural crises across several branches of industry and lay-offs and plant closures in European countries as production relocated to other parts of the world. The engagement of company owners and engineers appears to have decreased somewhat during this period, but taking the mantle were grass-roots organizations, academic researchers and heritage institutions who joined forces so as to document and protect industrial sites, equipment, and historical

residences threatened by demolition and decay. As an early sign of the times, TICCIH (the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage) was founded in 1973 in order to deal with this issue on an international level.

A clear pattern evident in all the Nordic and Baltic countries is the intensive heritagisation of industrial buildings which took place in the 1980s and 1990s – the “Hyper-Global Industrial Period” in the terminology of Fellman and Isacson. This was reflected in a substantial quantity of listings, especially in the 1990s. From the early 2000s, the rate and number of listings slowed down; instead, centralised official initiatives were set in motion (2002 in Sweden; 2007 in Denmark). Norway presents an inte-



Industrial landscape along the Tammerkoski river in Tampere. Photo: Anders Houltz 2022.



Eriksberg in Gothenburg – a shipyard transformed into housing area. Photo: Anders Houltz 2022.

120 resting example in this respect (see Loska & Lytomt). The Norwegian “Preservation programme for technical and industrial cultural heritage”, initiated in 2007, resulted in 15 selected industrial heritage sites of national priority, with funding provided for protection, preservation, and maintenance, concretely intended to serve as exemplars and to raise public interest in industrial heritage. Industrial heritage has been given special attention and funding in other countries, although without the same priority on a distinctive selection.

While this peak in heritagisation resulted from preceding work on inventorying, listing and research on the part of the Nordic countries, the effort in the Baltics was instead a pioneering one: During the Soviet occupation, industrial heritage was not a central concept in the eyes of the politburo. Instead, as Drémaité mentions in her article about Lithuania, so-called “technological monuments” were listed – counting among these were bridges and other constructions. In Estonia, as pointed out by Kuningas, inventorying and listings were carried out during the 1980s, but these did not include large-scale facilities, and were limited in overall scope.

With the Baltic countries’ independence, a surge in heritagisation emerged, covering a range of categories, including industry. The increase in listings seems a result of growing national awareness and pride. The Industrial Heritage Trust of Latvia, Anteniške observes, was established already in 1992, but the majority of listed industrial buildings in Latvia are to be found under the umbrella category of “Architectural heritage”, rather than specifically designated “Industrial heritage”. In Lithuania and Estonia, the development started a few years later but would in time increase rapidly.

Industrial heritage was acknowledged, as Drémaité mentions, following inspiration found through increasing contact across the Baltic Sea. This points to an aspect which is worth emphasising: The likeness in the rhythm of listings and preservation efforts of industrial heritage from country to country is not just a reflection of changes in social and economic structures; it is just as much the result of long-term international cooperation and mutual transference of knowledge between researchers, heritage officials and practitioners amongst the seven countries.

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AND THE GRAND NARRATIVE

The nature of designating elements as part of a cultural heritage is closely connected to the ways in which a nation’s history is understood and communicated. In countries like Denmark, Lithuania, or Latvia – heavily industrialised as they may be – the national narrative has been profoundly and persistently centred on agriculture rather than industry. In contrast, Sweden actively embraced an industrial identity around at the beginning of the 1900s, and this has ever since remained an essential aspect of its national self-image. “Grand narratives” such as these provide different conditions for the practices of designating and protecting cultural heritage. Another example is the way in which the grand narratives of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were shaped – or perhaps overshadowed – by the effects of the Soviet occupation. Following the declaration of independence in 1990–91, the listing of cultural heritage gained traction in all three countries, but the designated objects were mainly chosen from the period of independence between the world wars, or from the pre-1918 period under Imperial Russian overlordship. Only few objects representing the Soviet period were selected, meaning that large-scale industrial milieus from that period were rarely listed.

Grand narratives tend to morph at a glacial pace, but even so they are not set in stone. We are today undergoing yet another industrial and technological change, one which some hold to be as profoundly transformative as to be labelled a *fourth* industrial revolution, with automation, artificial intelligence, processual IT, and the global challenges of climate change. It cannot be denied that the effects of industrialisation is the central cause of the present environmental crisis; a crisis which, in turn, forces industry to develop new modes of production, and pushes people to adjust to new ways of living and working. Paradoxically, we have made the move from *deindustrialization* to *reindustrialisation*, with innovative, large-scale production facilities, logistics and infrastructure. In Fellman and Isacson’s words, we are entering a new phase: The “Multipolar-Global Industrial Period”. Whether this period will – or should – be reflected in terms of listing practices and heritage protection remains to be seen.