

Abstracts

Steel, heritage and economic nationalism – reflections on a visit to a steelworks in central Europe

By Lasse Kristensen

The article outlines the economic, political and ideological history of the steelworks at Vítkovice in present-day Czech Republic. The incitement for this historical investigation is based partly on a text in the memoirs of the Danish critic Georg Brandes written during his visit to the steelworks hundred years ago; and partly on an ethnologist's special invitation from the global steel magnate Mittal Steel, who now runs the steelworks, to a workers' visiting day a warm Sunday summer afternoon.

Firstly, it was striking how little working processes and everyday life have changed at a steelworks during the past hundred years. Secondly, it is thus a paradox that while the blast furnaces are still running full scale with massive reinvestments in new technologies and dismissal of a most workers as its cause and consequence, only a few hundred metres away, UNESCO, the Czech ministry of culture and the city government of Ostrava are doing their best to preserve older parts of the same plant as a unique cultural heritage site. An industrial heritage site in the network of European sites memorizing the industrial era as if it was a remnant of the past.

Which stories can a burnt out blast furnace tell? And to whom do we want to tell them? To the hard working – or dismissed – workers from the nearby Mittal Steel plant? To technical museum freaks from abroad? Or to a self-aware European public realizing the idiocy of the many historical feuds over coal and steel resources in Europe now accepting an Indian capitalist to consolidate the global steel industry by privatizing these formerly proud state owned enterprises not only in central and eastern Europe but recently also in the west?

Thus, is it really a story about the past, the present or the future?

**City Streams – a foundation of industrial society
150 years of heat, light, water and sewage in Copenhagen**

By Jakob Ingemann Parby

Focusing on the development of a modern supply system in Copenhagen from the 1850's onwards, this article brings attention to some important aspects of industrialisation often treated as secondary in research on the subject: The interaction between private initiative and the extension of public responsibilities; the importance of infrastructure and planning in the urbanisation process, in turn essential for the industrialisation process as it provides resources of labour and education for firms and factories. The public supply system played a role in educating and disciplining the modern consumer, while contact between consumers and representatives of the supply services was important in moving and redefining boundaries between public and private. The article treats different technological aspect of the supply system as well as the cultural effects of its extension. It also highlights the notion of security of supply and the system of public servants entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining a continuous flow of water, electricity and heating at all times. In recent years privatisation and globalisation has made its way into the market of electricity and has changed the conditions of employment in the supply services, while their function and importance for society is undiminished.

Woman in a time of change

By Malene Mygind

A new woman arose at the beginning of the 20th century following the industrialization and modernization of the Danish society. A woman being deeply embedded in society's contemporary role of the woman as a wife and mother, simultaneously facing actual structural changes of society, and thereby being marked by a new base of experience.

Ostensibly, the desire for self-realization and self-responsibility – the declared mantra of the female emancipation – and motherhood and marriage pointed in separate directions. Being described in the work and engagement of author Erna Juel-Hansen, the woman thus stood ambivalent and doubtful, in this junction between given patriarchal and industrial conditions; between an ideological set of norms and the literal circumstances of life. Contrary to the often assumed, this was hardly an expression of a revolt against the traditional way of life. Rather, the interest of enlightenment and freedom was a yearning for the improvement of the life of woman, and especially around the house. Thereby, the one did not preclude the other, but required an order of priority through a resignation of one in favour of the other. The life of a woman was a task of duality, and the female illumination and insight was a painful process of uniting all of the roles and levels of the woman into one. The development of all of the physical and psychological aspects of the female existence would create a healthy femininity, capable of binding women's identity to more than love as the only thing worth living for. However, genuine equality was more than the mere possibility of education, work and the freedom of

love. The goal was ultimately the woman becoming a unified entity without impeded sides of her personality.

Thus, around the 1900s, contours of a new image of the woman started to appear. A woman being economically independent, employed and having a goal in life besides giving birth, where especially the recognition of a sexuality in every aspect meant a life with more space for an existence on the terms decided and defined by the woman.

It just has to work - below, above and behind the modern amenities

By Louise Karlskov Skyggebjerg

The development of large technological systems such as railroads, underground sewers, electric power, telephone etc. reached Denmark in the 19th century. That forms the theme for an exhibition at The Danish National Museum of Science and Technology in 2007. The exhibition is called "It simply has to work – over, under and behind the modern amenities" and is inspired by a theory of large technological systems by Thomas P. Hughes. In the article parts of the theory is presented, especially Hughes' ideas of momentum and style. The theory is interesting, because it offers a number of theoretical tools which are suitable for a comparison of large technological systems across time, space and technological content.

Examples taken from the Danish literature on the 19th century's large technological systems show that Hughes' theory not have been used to any greater extent. In general the literature seldom is theoretically inspired. Instead the common approach to the history of the large technological systems is based on the history of events, including great studies of original sources often favouring the political discussions and decisions as well as the history of businesses.

At last in the article it's described, how the history of large technological systems is presented in the exhibition, where the histories of electric power systems, sewer systems, railroads and telephone systems are functioning as case stories. The connection between these new systems and the industrialization is emphasized as well as the competition between systems. Also the effects of political ideas, historical events and user behavior on the establishment and development of systems are in focus as well as the view, that the large technological systems not only were solutions to problems, but also the causes of new problems and new needs. The large technological systems can not be seen as an expression of any "natural" technical solution, but must be seen as the result of their context – culturally, socially, technically etc.

An exhibition is no place for long theoretical explanations. The exhibition "It simply has to work" has furthermore not been based on new research. Therefore, it can only be seen as an appetizer to what a more comparative approach to the history of technological systems can give of insights and as a suggestion to increase the use of comparative approach in general, for example inspired by Hughes.

The knowledge society: Denmark is to be upgraded – is Ethnology also?

By Morten Krogh Petersen

How can Denmark become one of the world's leading knowledge societies? This question has since the beginning of the 1990'es been under lively discussion in Denmark. Think tanks have been established to produce knowledge about the knowledge society and especially these think tanks are to come up with suggestions for what creates economical value in the knowledge society. The research practices in one of the central think tanks have been under ethnographic investigation in a project I developed and carried out in relation to my master thesis. In this article I discuss some of the findings from this project but my main concern is the practical methodological questions that arose during my research. One reason for this is that during my fieldwork it became very clear that there were no easy distinction between me as a researcher and the object that I was investigating. Problems in the practical research are the point of departure for a broader discussion concerning how we can understand and maybe upgrade ethnological research practices. With inspiration from amongst others philosopher and anthropologist Bruno Latour I suggest to understand these as always taking place in the world and as always adding something to the world. It is in acknowledging this 'adding' the potential for making convincing and therefore critical descriptions is located.