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While writing my licentiate thesis on floating in Finnish Lapland, I was amazed to discover that the first floating workers' dwellings built in Lapland bore very little resemblance to the local rural buildings. Knowing that forestry had been - especially in its early days when virgin resource areas had to be found - an international industry, I started looking for parallels in the camp architecture of other areas.

In my paper I will first take a general look at forestry in the northern regions with particular reference to migration, and then debate the question of how the migratory character of the forest industry was reflected in the material culture of forest work, especially the dwellings of forest workers.

Study of migrants' culture has, in addition to that of cultural contacts\(^1\), come to be regarded as the specific field of ethnological migrant research, examining what migrants brought with them from their original areas and what features of their original culture they preserved in their new living environment.\(^2\) In an article published in the 1950s Sigurd Erixon debated the question of whether the notched corner technique was taken to the United States by Swedish emigrants.\(^3\) American research into buildings has subsequently touched on the same theme: Signe Betsinger has studied the influence of Denmark\(^4\), Claire Selkurt of Norway\(^5\) and Matti Kaups and Terry G. Jordan of Finland\(^6\) on the folk architecture of America. In their studies these writers have singled out individual migrants as spreaders of innovations, but in the modern industrial society described in this article the spread of innovations tended more to be centralised.

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Ecologically the conditions for the forest industry are the same throughout the northern coniferous zone. With time the regional biases in forestry have, however, changed as the forest sector has expanded, since it was for a very long time possible to move on to new, virgin resource areas. If necessary the timber companies moved beyond the borders of their own country. The native population of the new areas was not as a rule sufficiently large, or capable of doing the work required of it, so the know-how passed to the new areas by means of migrants.

In the Nordic countries and Russia the wood-processing industry only acquired its subsequent vast proportions with the establishment of steam sawmills. The forest industries of Sweden, Finland and Russia can all thank the Norwegian timber companies for starting up a steam sawmill industry. The Norwegians operated at all levels of the forest industry, from wood-cutters to big investors, and to such an extent that some claim that the development of the forest industry in these countries (Sweden in the 1850s, Finland in the 1870s and Russia in the 1910s) was to begin with dependent on migrants.

Finnish Lapland is a good example of the Norwegian influence in the early days of the forest industry. During the water mill era cutting was confined to the areas around the sawmills and the necessary logging and floating was done by the villagers themselves. As the international demand increased and the establishment of steam sawmills became possible, the value of the vast, untouched forests of northern Lapland began to be appreciated. The first major steam mill in the area was that found by the Norwegian company of Hoist & Fleicher in 1873-1874, which was the first to extend its cutting and floating north of the Arctic Circle.

Since the local labourers were not sufficiently skilled, and there were not enough of them, the company recruited workers from other parts of Finland and Norway. To some extent this was, of course, on account of the language problem existing between the company and the local population; the work went more smoothly if the workers were Norwegian too. The company accounts for 1872 show the travelling expenses for 31 persons from Stockholm to Haaparanta, their board and lodging there and further transport to Kemi. In 1873 the Senate again granted forty Norwegian sawmill workers permission to bring personal property to Kemi without paying customs duties.

Over in Kemi the newcomers got a mixed reception, as is evident from the following contemporary report: ....There were a tremendous number of Norwegians in Kemi. Some ordinary workers, some foremen, others neither. Life in Kemi at that time was wild. In the evenings they all got drunk; brawled and fought in the streets so that the ordinary people hardly dared to step outside. Every single night there was a grand set-to outside a tavern; there would be dozens of men fighting one another and then vanishing into their dens to heal their wounds. Believe me, there’s never been anything like it in Kemi since, and never will be.”

The Norwegian companies were clearly unfamiliar with conditions in Finland, for they paid wages way and above those paid by Finnish companies. The logging companies also provided their workers with food, which was unheard of in Finland. The Norwegian workers probably also had company-built accommodation.” In 1890 the sawmill passed into Finnish hands, but because some of the Norwegian workers remained in the service of the new employer, the Norwegian influence continued to be felt. Similar examples of Norwegian activity are to be found elsewhere in Finland, too, and in Sweden and Siberia.”
The companies of Northern Sweden also got some of their timber from Finnish Lapland."

In North America workers travelled about the country to wherever there was work to be had. In the early 19th century the US forest industry centred on the northeastern states, especially Maine and New York. The loggers were mostly French Canadians with experience of logging in Canada. In the 1880s the centre of the forest industry - along with the companies and many of the workers" - shifted westwards and to the Mississippi valley. The men seeking work as loggers around the Great Lakes were emigrants from the Nordic countries who had experience of logging in their own country. In the south the loggers were usually the descendants of slaves and Mexicans." In the eastern parts of Canada they came from the permanent Frenchspeaking population, but in British Columbia they were migrants, and very often of Nordic origin."

On settling in their new homeland the Finnish emigrants often sought jobs as loggers. The majority of the Finns migrating to Sweden in the 1880s made for Norrland, Sundsvall and Härnösand, which had developed a thriving sawmill industry."

For the migrants heading for America the chance of finding work in a field already familiar to them sometimes acted as an incentive to emigrate." Even in their new homeland the logger migrants usually continued to move on to new areas as the timber supply areas changed."

Ideas from abroad

The foreign foremen and workers took with them innovations to areas where the logging and floating techniques were still only primitive. For the same reason, men who had worked abroad, such as former American migrants, were undoubtedly in great demand. - The time spent working abroad was for loggers and floaters something of an apprenticeship that was useful to employers. The foreign influence is reflected in, among other things, the Finnish floating terminology, which is based almost entirely on Swedish, English and Russian models.""

Forest workers were also sent abroad to learn more about logging and floating techniques. Companies wishing to improve their felling and transport methods would usually send their skilled workers to North America, where these were most highly mechanised. When, for example, an experiment was made with steam engines in hauling, the company's engineer was sent to the United States to see how mechanical hauling was done there. Over in America the trainees were instructed by Finnish emigrants. According to a letter sent by the engineer, the Americans were technically ahead of the Finns in winter logging but behind in floating." When, in the early 20th century, work began on improving the most important floating channel in Northern Finland, that of the River Kemi, the chief forester of the biggest company went on a study trip to Sweden, after which the floating channels were improved to a great extent according to Swedish models.""

Trends in logging and floating were also followed closely from international publications. International trends were one of the subjects in the training of the top company foresters - or so it seems from the extensive literature on forestry dating from the turn of the century in the forestry library at the University of Helsinki. International influences, in the form of study trips, publications, exhibitions and conferences, had been important in industry since the late 19th century, and instead of local culture it would be more apt to speak of the cultural uniformity of some particular branch of industry.
Internal migration

It has already been pointed out that the lumber industry, itself a migrant, turned many of its workers into migratory labourers. I have already mentioned that workers in the American forest industry followed the company when it moved on to new areas. The same applied elsewhere: between 1801 and 1914 six million Russians moved to Siberia, while in Sweden some loggers from Värmland and Småland chose the big logging camps of Norrland instead of North America. The migrant Värmland loggers seasonally employed in Norway are even regarded as having been teachers of logging and floating technology in Sweden. In Finland, too, logging and floating were a welcome source of employment for the surplus population of Eastern Finland in particular from the end of the 19th century onwards.

The following account of the everyday life of an American logger could just as well apply to that of his Nordic counterpart: "At the end of the 19th century loggers were largely transient workers, spending the winters in snowbound camps remotely located deep in the forests, and leaving in the spring, when logging and river driving ceased, for summer idleness or odd jobs. They frequently changed jobs even during the winter, walking from one camp to another and working at their trades."

Over the years many of the loggers in seasonal employment settled permanently near the camps. Of the marriages contracted in the municipality of Sodankylä between 1881 and 1915, a considerable proportion were between loggers from elsewhere and local girls.

Migrating innovations

Having taken a look at the expansive stage of the forest industry in the northern coniferous zone and its effects on population mobility, I now wish to venture into a far more hypothetical area, the mobility of cultural features. I in fact intend only to give some examples of how the international nature of logging and floating was reflected in the everyday lives of the workers at the turn of the century.

Although the migration of forest workers has received some coverage in the literature, only in a few cases has any attention been paid to the influences transmitted by migratory workers. The significance of international contacts and mobility in spreading innovations has, however, been dealt with in other contexts.

The aim wherever timber harvesting and transporting were carried out was to develop methods yielding the best possible result. One problem facing the remote camps in the wilds was looking after the workers. Often the workers themselves were left to find their own food and lodging, but some employers began to provide this even before they were obliged to do so by law, in order to achieve effective results.

The loggers' dwellings built in Sweden and Norway for a number of years' use were modelled on the buildings of eldpalls-koja and spiskoja type. The eldpallskoja had a living room with an open fireplace in the centre and the spiskoja a bricked stove in the corner of the room. There was a stable either adjoining the dwelling or separate, and sometimes the horses lived in the same room as the people. As logging and floating companies grew up in Sweden itself, many of the seasonal workers from Värmland and Småland who had previously worked in Norway...
headed for the camps of Northern Sweden. It is therefore claimed that they took with them the eldpallsköja camp from Norway to the Swedish logging sites."

The innovations may have spread to a restricted area only, as at Namdalen in Norway, where the timber company had a German manager in the 1860s. He introduced the logging camp of German influence and the same type of building was used in the area until the First World War. The ground floor of the two-storeyed round timber building with a saddle roof was used as a stable and the upper floor as living quarters for the loggers and cook." This type of building was not known anywhere else in the Nordic countries.

In western Canada, British Columbia and parts of the United States accommodation was usually provided for the loggers by building dwellings - and other facilities - on rafts. The advantage of the floating camp was that the buildings could be transported by water to the next camp when work came to an end. The floating camp consisted of several rows of buildings, one housing a cookhouse, accommodation for the kitchen staff and a storehouse, another the foreman's dwelling and office, and a third the loggers' sleeping quarters."

In the northeastern parts of the United States and the Midwest, the floating camps had log rafts on which was a rough hut of fabric or planks, steered by two big oars. As a rule the floating camp had only one raft per working team and it was therefore used for meals and storing goods, while the men slept in tents on the shore. The raft travelled down the river with the men as work progressed." Similar solutions to the problem of providing board and lodging for floaters were also to be found in Finland. Until the Second World War some of the floaters spent the night near the sorting base on mobile rafts. This raft was called a soho, and is the name also used for the cooking rafts and boats along the river. The name generally used for the cooking raft in North Karelia and Northern Finland probably comes from Russian; the word Hartsusoho (hartsonja) has become abbreviated to soho." At the end of the 19th century typical logging camps in the northeastern parts of the U.S. and the Midwest were log camps. These generally comprised the following buildings, all made of logs notched at the corners: an office and store, which were the headquarters and the sleeping place of the foreman, camp clerk and log scaler, a cook shanty, which housed the kitchen and dining compartment, and a bunk house which provided loun­ging and sleeping quarters for the men. The cook shanties and bunk houses were generally separate buildings, though in the Northeast they were often apart and the gap was covered with a roof, boarded up in the rear and used as a storage place." What makes the log camps interesting from the migration point of view is the argument that they were first built by Canadian immigrants working in the U.S." Furthermore, the companies operating the large logging sites in Northern Finland began building very similar camps (known in Finnish as ruukinpirtti)." The model for these was probably imported from North America by men who had gone over to study logging there, or returning emigrants. Another indication of the American influence on Finnish log camp culture is the spreading south of the Finnish word kämppä (from English camp) from Northern Finland at the beginning of the 20th century." At the beginning of this paper I mentioned that floating workers' dwellings in Lapland did not consistently observe the vernacular architecture of Lapland. This being the case, the log camps of Lapland - and North America - in many respects set the pattern for the floating workers' camps. However, the architecture of the floating workers' dwellings was more refined,
the side corridor veranda and row house ground plan being the
most typical exterior features of the first camps.”

Migrating ideas and images

As a result of migratory labour and the international nature
of the workers’ movement, the demands concerning the work­­
ing conditions of logging and floating workers were sur­­prisingly similar the world over. In 1911 the members of the
American ..Brotherhood of Timber Workers” laid down a series
of demands, which included a minimum wage of two dollars for
a ten-hour day, bi-monthly payment, freedom to trade in inde­­pendent stores, reasonable rents, the revision of doctors’ and
hospital fees, improvements in camps and towns, the disarming
and discharge of company guards and the rights of free speech
and assemblage. ” In 1906 the forest workers of Finnish Lap­­land had made precisely the same demands: the company must
raise its wages, the company must pay each working team for
building the dwelling, the company must sell unspoiled food in
the store, the company store must use a checked set of weights
for weighing, the black list system must be abolished, the com­­pany must pay for the doctor when somebody falls ill in the
forest, the working day must not be longer than ten hours and
overtime compensation must be paid for any overtime work,
overtime must not exceed four hours per day, working on
Sundays and holidays must be stopped, the fines (20% of the
salary) for gambling and drinking must be abolished, workers
must be given full right of assembly and workers must be treated
justly by the foreman.”

The labour protection legislation was likewise international
in nature. For example, a law on the obligation of the employer
to build dwellings for logging and floating workers was first
passed in Norway (in 1915)” and took a very similar form in

Sweden (in 1919)” and Finland (in 1928)”. In North America
similar state legislation was passed in the 1910s.”

Not only ideas migrated, but images too. It is in itself
interesting to note that the descriptions of the lives of forest
workers and the resulting stereotypes are virtually the same
in North America and the Nordic countries. Loggers every­­­where called forth a respect tinged with fear comparable to the
romantic aura surrounding cowboy culture. Both rough neck
occupations have also been an endless source of entertain­­ment.”

Notes

1. See e.g. Fjellström 1979; Nilson 1975; Tuomi-Nikula 1989.
3. Erixon 1956,56-68.
5. Claire Selkurtt as quoted in Å:sen Palmqvist Lena 1984,64.
10. Linkola 1939,38.
16. Skogarbetarnas levnads- och arbetsförhållanden i Värmland, Dalarna
och Norrland 1916,196,398.
18. Huunnisett 1989,6; Siirtolaisuuden ja maassamuution tutkimus 1984
17; Ljungmark 1991,8.
19. See e.g. Roinila 1992,15.
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