TECHNOLOGY, EVERYDAY WORKING LIFE AND EMPLOYER POLICY

Verla groundwood and board mill community from the 1880s till the 1960s

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Industrial communities that have grown around mines, mills and factories are a remarkable part of industrialisation both in Finland and in the rest of the world. One of these communities is the Verla Groundwood and Board Mill community located in the south-east of Finland. The majority of the buildings and machines as well as the infrastructure and the dwellings of the mill workers have survived into the present day, and the site was added to the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List in 1996. Hence, the first question is: Why has Verla been preserved? One of the answers lies within the technological development.

The technology used in the production affects not only the company's terms of survival, but also the everyday life and ways of work at the mill. In my doctoral thesis I have studied the ways in which a mill simultaneously creates, classifies and breaks up the sense of community. There is a variety of ways this happens: the technology, the physical environment, the infrastructure, the work itself, and the employer policy all have an impact. By thoroughly analysing the past and by using the methods of micro history, oral history and 'history from below' it is possible to bring new information to the subject. So, the second question is: How exactly did the Verla Mill affect the sense of community (positive and negative)?

One of the main remarks I wish to make, is that the dualistic way to look at a mill community as either a battlefield of industrial relations or as a near-ideal community, like 'one big family', is too simple to reflect the variety of the past. In this work the aim is to connect the two interpretations and to use a third one: simultaneous sense of community and separateness both at the level of individual everyday life and in the company strategy.

Verla mill in the 1930s. Photo: Verla Archives.

Why has Verla mill been preserved?

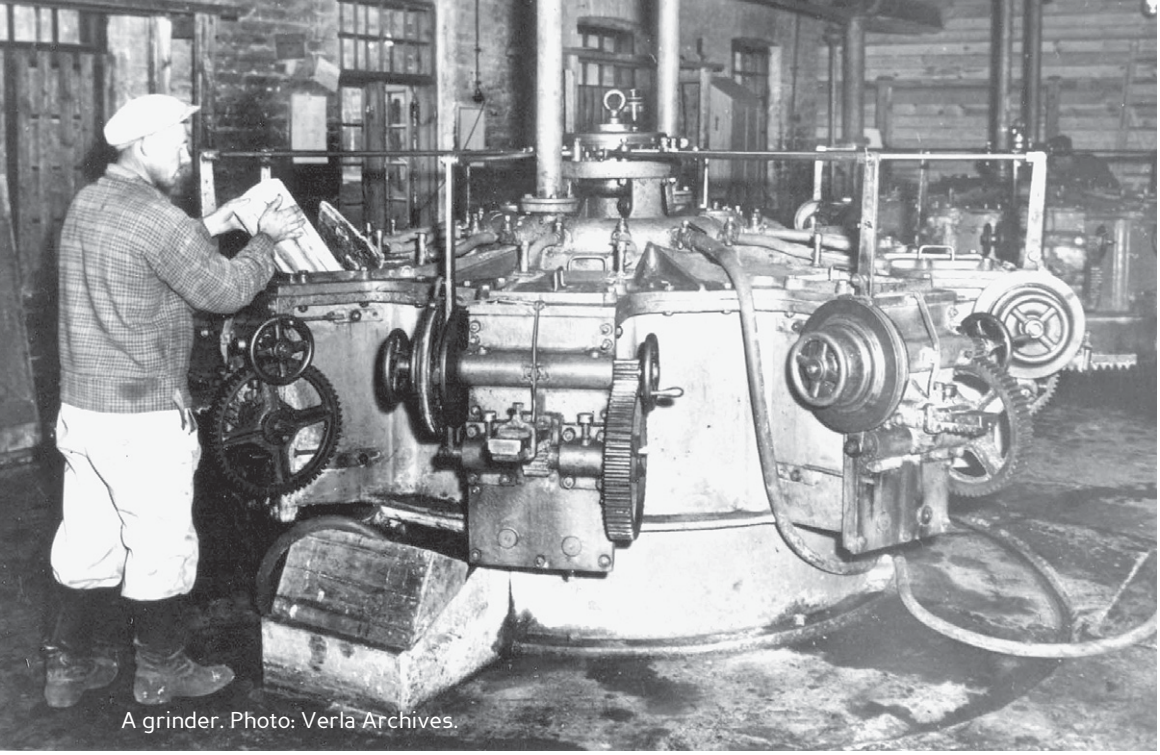
Part I: Why and how was the mill founded?

The first groundwood mill was built by the Verla rapid in 1872, just five years after the grinder of Heinrich Voelter was presented at the World Exposition in Paris in 1867. In the 1870s there was indeed a first boom of groundwood mills in Finland: in 1875 already 12 mills were in operation. And why? In Finland there was enough wood – in other words raw material – to which the floating routes gave access to. The rapids offered energy for mills. In addition to this, the railway (from 1889 only 8 km from Verla) facilitated entry to the huge markets in Russia. In the Russian markets Finnish products had a tax advantage, which according to Karl-Erik Michelsen was crucial for the development of the Finnish paper industry.[1]

The connections abroad were important in other ways, too. The founder of the first groundwood mill in Verla, Hugo Neuman, was a young engineer building the railway to St. Petersburg. Neuman had studied in Zürich in Switzerland, where he presumably got to know also the wood processing technology. His mill was relatively small (10–12 employees) and was destroyed by fire only a couple of years later.[2]

The second enterprise, Werla Groundwood and Board Mill was founded in 1882 by three men: a Finnish-German business man Wilhelm Dippell, an Austrian engineer Gottlieb Kreidl and a German engineer Luis Hänel. The engineers had been hired as foremen in two competing enterprises at Kuusankoski rapid ca. 25 km from Verla. Both left their original jobs after founding the Verla mill. Kreidl directed the mill itself and Hänel soon went back to Germany, where he presumably helped for example

Lifting of the logs from the river in the 1920s in Verla. Photo: Verla Archives.



A grinder. Photo: Verla Archives.

in different purchases. Dippell took care of the marketing and the company probably benefited from his connections to other Finnish industries: he was partner in several enterprises and the chairman of the Society for Finnish Board and Groundwood Manufacturers in 1892–1906.[3]

Part II: The technology and the required work force

In the second mill the entrepreneurs used technology typical of its time. The wood was floated to the mill and lifted out of the water by means of a big hoist that used manpower – in the beginning of the 20th century a horse whim was introduced.

Inside the mill the logs were cut into 50 cm pieces, barked and, in the first years, even the knots were removed. The cold grinding machines on the upper floor were water-powered, and the resulting pulp was piped through screens and to the wet lap machines downstairs by gravity. The pulp consisted solely of wood and water.[4]

Groundwood pulp and board sheets were formed on the cylinder of the wet lap machines: four sheets measuring 70 x 100 cm per machine at the time. Each machine had its own operator. The excess water was removed from the sheets in a screw press, after which the groundwood pulp was ready to be sold out. The board sheets were brought to a separate drying loft, where they were hung up like laundry.

During the heating in the drying loft, the temperature could rise up to 75 degrees Celsius. There was also a special summer drying loft where the sun and the wind took care of the drying through the sparsely covered walls. When the sheets were dry, they were moistened softly, fed into a calender to iron out any curling, weighed individually, sorted and packed in bales.[5]

In 1885 the Verla mill had 40 permanent employees, in the beginning of the 20th century more than 80 and at its height 160 in the beginning of the 1950s. The main idea of the production remained the same until 1964, as the mill was closed. Hence, the technology that was originally up-to-date, was not any more after 80 years.

Part III: Why was Verla mill not modernised in time, or was it?

Already in 1897 there was a wet lap machine that removed the sheet from the cylin-

der without an operator as well as machines that both formed the sheet and removed excess water. Debarking machines grew bigger, and different technology was developed to dry the sheets.[6] But these techniques were never introduced in Verla. Part of the problem was that the entrepreneurs of Verla company grew old and died in the first decade of the 20th century, after which there were no ambitious plans to develop the production. Partly it was a question of money and size.

In 1920 the Verla mill was taken over by a bigger company, Kissakoski Oy, and two years later the huge Kymmene Ab company (nowadays UPM-Kymmene) bought them both. The motivation behind the deal was mainly the large forests of the Verla company, but it was also noted that by buying the Verla mill there would be one rival less in the neighbourhood. The mill was kept going, for it could produce groundwood pulp for Kymmene company's bigger mills and, moreover, the Verla board had a good reputation in the market.[7]

So the production went on at the Verla mill and even some modernisation was made during the 1920s: the rapid dam was re-built to be more efficient, a new calender wing was erected, a thermo-grinder and a new press was brought to the mill, a new power plant was built and all machines except the grinders were converted to electricity (the electric light was available at the mill already in 1889). Two trucks were bought (in 1929 and in 1930) to replace horse carriages in transporting the board bales to the railway.[8] But the main method was not reformed and the volume of the production remained relatively small.

The volume of the production was, as a matter of fact, a factor that also prevented modernisation. For example, in the 1920s a mechanical log lift was introduced to lift the logs from the river, but after a couple of years it was abandoned probably because it was "too" efficient for the needs of the mill. Also, a ropeway was planned for bale transport, but the plan was given up presumably for the same reasons.[9]

Directly after the World War II Verla Mill participated in paying the war reparations to the Soviet Union. Also the Korean War brought about a need for industrial products in the market, but the boost was short-lived. In 1952 the mill met overwhelming challenges: from time to time there was a recurring lack of energy due to another power plant upriver and as well as problems with sales. So the leadership of the Kymmene company decided to close the mill down and use water power of the rapid for electricity. Anyhow, even if it wasn't the original plan, the mill was kept going in reduced form almost 12 more years. The reason for the final shutdown in 1964 was the high salary costs at the labour-intensive mill.[10]

Part IV: Founding of the museum and the preservation of the site

One of the first mill museums in the world was opened in Verla in 1972 as the result of social and PR work of the Kymmene company. It wasn't self-evident for a paper company to invest in a museum, but first a leisure centre for the company's personnel was founded in the former workers' dwellings in Verla in 1967. The Verla community probably benefited from its proximity to Kuusankoski factories only 25 km away. The founding of the leisure centre supported the idea of a mill museum – and actually there were quite many visitors and company guests at the Verla mill even when it was still operational.

In the 1960s and 1970s Kymmene's Veikko Talvi, "the father of the Verla mill museum", documented the mill process and understood the value of the milieu. The work was continued in 1990s by Eero Niinikoski, as the mill milieu was protected

and the site nominated for UNESCO World Heritage list as an example of the small-scale industrial settlement typical of the wood processing industry of Northern America and Europe at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.[11]

Some changes naturally took place at the mill community since the beginning of the 1960s. For example, the mill school building (built in 1890), the drying loft for summer time (built in 1908), and four of the larger residences were torn down during the 1960s. The mill manager's residence and the employee residencies were renovated for the needs of the leisure centre, and new sauna buildings were erected. In the beginning of the 1990s, a new power plant was constructed at the other side of the river, which reshaped the village landscape as did a parking loft in the centre of the village.

Anyway, a lot has been done, especially since 1996, to preserve most of the Verla mill community for future generations: for example, excess soil has been removed from around the buildings and covered drains have been built. The roofs have been cleaned and repaired, scales in the walls and in the base have been masoned, a sprinkler system has been built into the mill and the electricity system has been modified to make it safer.

At the same time, new information is gathered about the buildings and their past. The refurbishments include not only the actual factory but also other buildings like the employee residencies. Still, a lot is to be done in order to maintain the buildings, to document the artefacts in the museum collections and to explore the possibilities of the site.[12]

Wet lap machines. Photo: Verla Archives.

How did the Verla mill affect the sense of the community (positive and negative)?

Part I: Physical environment and the sense of community

In Verla it is easy to see where the power resides: the residence of the mill manager is situated in a dominant place on the river bank in the middle of the village and the architecture of the house also proclaims its dominance. The mill bought most of the land as well as the dwellings of the workers on the eastern bank of the river by the1920s,[13] where the pale colours of the houses of the clerks stand out clearly from the red-painted workers' houses. Only the last two company houses for workers (built in 1947 and 1948) were painted yellow instead of red. On the western bank, however, the workers built their own houses, which were originally unpainted but acquired different colours as the standard of living rose especially after World War II.

The mill itself was first built of wood (quick and cheap), but after a fire in 1892 it was rebuilt of brick. The architect Edward Dippell (Wilhelm Dippell's brother) designed many buildings in the area that manifested the prosperity of the company and its belief in the future in the end of the 19th century. In the 20th century the architecture still articulated the historical roots of the mill, but lacked the modern features that would have been typical of an up-to-date mill. The only modern building in the area is the power plant of 1954 that was built after the decision to shut down.[14] So, nowadays, the physical environment reflects a hierarchical but kind of a cosy small-scale old-fashioned community.

Part II: The inhabitants and the sense of community

Verla community was built in-the-middle-of-nowhere: before the groundwood mills there were only two normal mills of the nearby villages in the rapid. Hence, the first inhabitants and employees also came from outside and the community created its own identity only over time. Everyone had connections and relatives also outside of the mill community.

The mill owners had direct connections even abroad as we have seen, but the clerks were originally outsiders from different parts of Finland. They usually also moved away as they retired, because there were no suitable houses for them in the village (other than those that the mill owned). Foremen also came from outside, but many of them stayed permanently in Verla unlike the clerks. Only one of the foremen was originally an ordinary mill worker at the Verla mill.[15] Besides the mill employees there were surprisingly many other inhabitants in the village: shopkeepers, teachers, shoemakers, timber floaters and so on.

Even though the mill communities have often been seen as places of generational continuity, most of the people did not work there all their lives. They came to the mill from the outside and many also moved on. Because the mill did not expand all the time, only a few of the workers' children could stay in Verla, since there was not enough work for everyone. Some of the children also wanted something other than work at the mill. Therefore it is relatively hard to find three generations of mill workers in the same family during the 80 years of production – but there are few.[16]

The differences between social classes in the Verla mill community was originally so high and natural that it was hardly noted. Later the difference decreased and thus became more visible to contemporaries and could be criticised. Social hierarchy could be momentarily surpassed in common celebration or hobbies but at the same time it was apparent: even in joint hobbies or ceremonies, everyone had their place appropri-

The drying loft. Photo: Verla Archives.

ate to their social status. The children were more likely to cross divisions but in those cases, too, the initiative came from above. However, there were some people, like the village eccentrics, who overrode all boundaries and cannot be positioned in the village hierarchy.[17]

The Verla settlement has quite clear physical boundaries: the village ends as the houses end. Still, many of the mill employees came from the nearby villages. In many contexts the people of Verla mill community separated themselves from those around them in agricultural villages. There was a certain pride in being from Verla as well as an even more detailed division between the different residential areas in the village (eastern bank with company houses and two areas of private houses on the western bank).

However, in other contexts, the sense of similarity included the people from nearby villages: they came to Verla to shop, attended the same school, rented land for vegetable gardens for mill employees or hired them to help in the field in the summer. This made them "us" in contexts vis-à-vis to the bigger world.[18]

The Verla mill community was in other words a hierarchical social system that was relatively open for change in the population compared to agricultural villages. Yet this openness didn't include openness for change in the social hierarchy. There was very little chance to rise in the social hierarchy of the mill by staying in Verla. The community created its own identity. In the everyday life it was usually a benefit to be an original Verla inhabitant. Also, the part of the village one lived in influenced the one's social life. Yet in different contexts the identification could include, or not include, for example, the clerks, the farmers or the nearby villagers.

Part III: Employment at the mill and the sense of inclusion and exclusion

About 40 % of the mill workers were women, but the jobs were clearly divided by gender. Wet lap machines and the calenders were operated by women who also worked in the drying loft, at the regrinding mill and as board graders. Other jobs were carried out by men – that includes all the foremen and craftsmen like carpenters, masons and smiths. In the very beginning, boys were sometimes used to do women's jobs, but this was seldom. During the reduction phase of the mill after 1952 as well as during the war time, women took part in some men's jobs – these were exceptional situations.[19] This division of labour upheld and maintained the differences between the genders.

Even though women's work was often hard, the conditions difficult (for example 30 degrees Celsius in the drying loft during the work phase) as well as requiring special skills like good balance (walking on single loose planks in the drying loft) or agility (for example grading and cleaning the sheets), women's wages were about half of those of the men in the 19th century. The situation changed only a little before the collective agreements in the 1940s. Still, also after that, if a woman was hired to do man's job, she was paid less.[20] Why?

Behind all this may have been the idea that the man was the breadwinner of the family. Still, it was also cheaper for companies to use female workforce.[21] By classifying the employees and their salaries by gender, the mill could save in salaries. At the same time it reinforced the order of the gender in the society: men first, women second.

Through collective agreements the gap between women's and men's salaries got smaller in Finland nation wide. Yet in the beginning of the 1950s women's earnings in Verla could be almost 90 % of men's earnings on average, which is a smaller distinction than normal.[22] This could be explained by the old-fashioned technology of the mill and the fact that almost everything the workers needed to know could be learnt on the job – so also a male employee was easy to replace with another. A small mill community in the countryside was perhaps also not so far from the traditional agrarian world where both women and men were needed and valued, even though their tasks were different.

The payroll system also influenced the working atmosphere: only employees whose work was considered worth monthly paychecks were the clerk and the foremen – others were paid, for example, by day or hour. Piecework also created competition between individual workers and teams. Oral tradition tells about confrontations between log lifters and cutters in case they accidentally delayed each others' work. Si-

THE PRODUCTION PROCESS AT THE VERLA GROUNDWOOD AND BOARD MILL AND WOMEN'S WORK IN IT:

FLOATING

↓

LIFTING FROM THE RIVER

↓

CUTTING AND BARKING

↓

GRINDING

↓

WET LAP MACHINES (*women*) (→ regrinding of the sheets by women if needed)

↓

PRESSING (→ groundwood pulp is ready)

↓

DRYING LOFT (*women*) (→ regrinding of the sheets by women if needed)

↓

CALENDER (*women*)

↓

WEIGHTING AND GRADING (*women*) (→ regrinding of the sheets by women if needed)

↓

PACKING BOARD IN BALES

Above: Board sheets were graded individually.
Below: On the right, bales of board in the storage. On the left, bales of groundwood pulp.
Photos: Verla Archives.

milarly, among the board graders the elder ones chose the thicker sheets that were faster to weigh and even refused to help each other.[23]

It is also interesting to observe that the board graders and calender operators (both women and making piecework in continuous employment) were considered only as a kind of free-lance employees during the first 20–30 years of the mill. They came to work when they were needed and stayed home, when not. The conditions of employment differed also as the mill was being repaired and there was no, or only little, production: for the men, compensatory work was usually offered – and sometimes also for the women – but rarely for the "free-lance women".[24]

During the recession in 1931, the mill strategy was to work only five days a week instead of the normal six. This division of work was a way to retain the employment level and to maintain the mill's work force for better times to come.[25] According to Anu Suoranta, this "reduced work time" was a policy typical for the time of the economic depression, but also in "normal" years in such industries that do not involve any additional costs associated with starting and shutting down the process.[26]

In addition to the workers on the production line, the mill needed people to build, repair and transport as well as for other jobs outside the factory. In the 19th century these "outdoor workers" differed little from those on the production line, but gradually the craftsmen separated. They started to form their own hierarchies and became better paid than the other workers. The pecuniary difference diminished after the World War II, but the respect did not. Craftsmen were most likely to be elected to all kinds of positions of trust, such as members of the executive committee of the sickness fund or of the elementary school board. Even in the interviews in year 2000,

a craftsman was still considered someone better than an ordinary mill worker.[27]

From the company's point of view, the craftsmen, clerk and foremen were the only employees who needed more schooling and experience than could be achieved at their own mill. Therefore they were the most important ones to satisfy. Salary was a way to show respect. Other means were, for example, benefits in gaining good residences and bonuses for the clerk and sometimes for the foremen, too. The clerks still clearly belonged to a different world even after the World War II – even their mother tongue was often different, that is Swedish. In general, however, the difference between the salaries of the foremen, clerk and ordinary workers became smaller since the mid 1940s.

Part IV: Working at the mill and the sense of togetherness and separateness

Working at the mill brought together people of different ages. The Verla mill had few under-age workers: at most 12 workers aged 15–17 in the 19th century, but later usually only one boy in the stock lifting and one helping to make frames for the bales of board. Yet the mill was open to children: they brought supper or other food to their mother or father; they came to ask for board for drawing and crafts and to get warm in the winter. Outsiders were officially not allowed to wander in the mill, but it happened particularly when the foremen were not looking. Verla mill was never surrounded by a fence and its doors were not locked.[28]

In older oral tradition the story goes that the women were first put to work in the unpleasantly hot and damp conditions of the drying loft before they could go onto other jobs. In the 1950s, no task was exclusively for young people, because there was at least one worker over 47 years old in every task in the mill. Yet the female board sorters and the male greasers, board packers and heaters were older than average and these jobs were also desired by many people at the time.[29]

In some cases there was a juxtaposition between different age groups at the mill: older workers tended to keep the younger ones in check. Still the older ones also helped to train new workers, at least when it was not against their own advantage, which it usually was not. But age was not always a benefit: The mill had its oldest employees in 1920s and 1930s when several men and one woman – the legendary board grader Maria Mattsson – of over 70 years of age worked there. Most of them were given lighter jobs, such as night watchman, and were paid less than before. Still they were not allowed to retire as long as they were able to work, if they wanted to have some pension. In some cases, like Maria, the choice to keep working was presumably voluntary, but in all likelihood motivated at least partly by the lousy pensions compared to the salary.[30]

The mill career was not always one way. Only the craftsmen usually no longer returned to 'normal' work. Money, willingness or reluctance to do shift work or personal preferences could be reasons for changing jobs in the mill. Some jobs meant independent or even lonely work (for example heater), some team work (log cutting and barking, drying loft) and others working in a larger hall with few (grinders, calender operators) or many others (wet lap machines).

The (un)pleasantness of the working environment and personal relationship to coworkers naturally united and/or separated employees. There are, for example, stories about the work in the drying loft that indicate mostly togetherness (secret "parties" in the summer drying loft and swimming in summer time), but also tension, if someone was slower or clumsier than the others.[31]

When it came to factory work, the workers thought foremost about their own

needs and benefits. This '*Eigensinn*' (concept by Oskar Negt, Alexander Kluge and Alf Lüdtke) or wilfulness could mean disobedience and humour in dealing with the hierarchical relations of the mill, but also subordination depending on the conditions. The work was done proudly, but in such way as to make it suitable for the individual and this could be either for or against the employer or fellow workers.[32]

For instance, according to the oral tradition, smoking – which was prohibited – was practised at the Verla mill when the foremen didn't see, extra breaks were taken and a machine abandoned for a while if something "more important" came up. The pressmen slid on board cars, some of the workers read books during the natural pauses of production and jokes were told about the mill manager but also about the leading figure of the labour movement in the village. Yet, still, the work was done to earn the salary and the post.[33] All this demonstrates the individual and daily complicity of everyday life at the mill and the need for more complex interpretations than either a sense of community or a conflict.

Part V: Industrial paternalism as a source for a sense of community and separateness

Industrial paternalism has often been seen as a phase typical of the early industrial society: a phase that was rooted in the pre-existing social structure and which ended as modernisation proceeded. Yet paternalism developed, for example in England, in an environment where most employers adopted a policy of *laissez-faire*. Another way to interpret paternalism is to see it, as this study does, as one form of a socio-emotional employer policy, which has been and can be used in different times and places.[34]

Socio-emotional employer strategies like paternalism make an effort in the social work and creating loyalty and a sense of togetherness. They can be seen as a system of exchange: social benefits and care in exchange for an obedient, loyal workforce. Providing private social services, such as mill school and health care, can be seen also in Verla as one of the characteristics of the employer policy. Another typical feature is strengthening the emotional bond to the mill manager or the company, for example through joint midsummer parties in Verla.

Yet the way to define the limits of this paternalistic care and the membership in the community differed case by case and changed over time, too. At its widest, the care included everyone or most of the people in the locality. For example, the elementary school founded by the Verla mill company, was open to all the village children. Sickness benefit was organised in 1892 for the mill workers and in 1899 free medical care and free medicines were also given to the wives and children of the workers, but (naturally) not for other villagers. In the 1940s the sickness fund no longer included families of the workers, but the company hired a nurse, who helped everyone in the area.[35]

In other cases the care was more exclusive. A burial allowance was given for families of those workers who had served in the mill at least 3 years. The allowance was originally bigger for those who had a family, but this difference later vanished. Originally it was also given only for those who died whilst employed or within a year after resignation – employment kept a person as a primary member of the community. Later in the 1950s, retirement became part of the normal life of a worker, but the burial allowance was smaller for those who died as pensioners.[36]

Further, the mill pensions were originally same for women and men, but since the end of the 1910s the pensions were classified differently for male and female workers. Female pensions were smaller,

even though the pecuniary difference diminished later.[37]

The paternalist and welfare actions of the company in Verla were partially reactive – to the conditions like the lack of residences. Partially they were proactive aiming at something new like building a club house in 1919. The club house is an interesting case, for it was built soon after the Finnish Civil War in Finland in 1918, and could be seen as an indemnity, encouragement or attempt to re-educate the worker. Yet only after a couple of years it was rebuilt as apartments and was not used for its original purpose again until the end of the 1940s – the oral history tells us why: there was probably not enough use for it, as the labour movement was not allowed to use it.[38]

Other examples for proactive welfare actions could be starting of a staff magazine to build and reinforce the cohesion in the company or organising courses in cooking and handicrafts in the 1930s to pay respect also to the traditional family roles.[39]

Life-long employment is too much to claim but the employer encouraged long-term employment at the Verla mill especially for its key workers. In the earliest remaining rules of the pension fund, founded in 1894, the pension was scaled based on the length of the time worked: to get any pension at all, one had to work at least 10 years and for the full pension at least 20 years at the mill.[40]

The welfare institutions, such as the school, pension fund, health insurance and housing (at the beginning free – families in their own apartments were supported by the employer), can be seen as necessities but also construed as gifts that also created gratitude and obligation.[41] Also, individual gifts, for example medals, were given for loyal long-term service at the mill. Through gifts the mill company taught fidelity and created the sense of togetherness, but also provided goals and role models and divided and classified the members of the community into different groups.

Pupils of the Verla mill school in the 1913. Photo: Verla Archives.

Industrial paternalism includes also an authoritarian side: a membership in the community required subordination and obedience. If this wasn't right for an individual, there was the possibility to resign. Since there were no other significant employers in the area, it meant usually also moving away. But there were other ways to express one's thoughts, too. Even though the workers did not officially participate in determining the company's actions in Verla before the 1940s, they participated by accepting or rejecting benefits offered to

them.[42] An example of this (besides perhaps the club house), is a lunch room that was built at the mill at the end of the 1920s. Since the workers did not use it, it later became a hobby room.

Industrial paternalism has been seen as typical of at least two kinds of company: those which had to compete for skilled labourers with other companies in the cities and those that needed to tempt workers to the countryside by creating satisfactory living conditions and services if there were none. In the first case, social benefits were only given to the key workers of the mill production, but in the second, care is said to have been more extensive.[43] Verla belongs principally to the second category: the community itself had to be built from scratch. However, the benefits were not equal for all the mill workers or the members of the community.

Part VI: From industrial paternalism to the more modern world – change in the community

Since the 1910s until the 1940s the industrial paternalism in Verla changed step by step and got features that could be defined also as kind of welfare capitalism. This naturally influenced the sense of the community. There are many similarities with the earlier phase. The economic success of the mill was still the aim of the employer and to this end it used social care and influencing the sense of togetherness and the separateness. However, there are also several differences which are to be noted.

Handicrafts course at the Verla mill in 1934. Photo: Verla Archives.

The original doctrine of welfare capitalism was formulated in the USA in the first decade of the 20th century, as several companies created extensive welfare programmes with social benefits for their workers. The policy was aimed to fight the powerful and militant labour movement, as well as the increasing legislation. Companies tried to prove that more legislation was not necessary, since they took care of welfare by themselves. It also encouraged women to work outside the home.

In the 1920s and 1930s the original welfare capitalism was combined with the scientific management of W. F. Taylor and benefits became more rational. Many researchers have even claimed that welfare capitalism vanished or collapsed during the economic depression, but some others think that it just changed its form concerning, for example, different kinds of insurance: companies offered extra insurances for their workers and tempted them this way.[44]

So what was different at the Verla mill compared to the earlier industrial paternalism and similar to the USA in the beginnings of 20th century? First of all, in 1920 Verla mill was taken over by another company. This meant that the decision-making left Verla and there was no "patron" (in the meaning of a mill owner-manager) anymore. A sense of a supra-local company was added to the sense of community and the sense of the mill. Verla mill itself was a very small mill compared with the ones in the US, but the company wasn't.

Second, the influence of the municipality and the state increased whether the employer wanted it or not. In some cases it enabled the company to give up some services like the mill school. This resulted in the children of Verla being divided in two: those who lived on the eastern bank went to Valkeala municipal school and those on the western bank to Jaala municipal school. In other cases it led to new obligations like mandatory holidays for workers or limiting work hours to 8 per day (since 1917). A sense of belonging to a municipality and to the independent state of Finland (also since 1917) was strengthened through political and social rights and education.

Third, as the company grew, it became more bureaucratic and started to rationalise its policy at least at three different levels, as did the companies in the US also (at least since the depression). First level: the treatment of individual worker was made more systematic. For example, the company pension could vary individually still in the 1920s and 1930s, but in 1940 the contribution was made equal for the worker: all men received 480 Fmk and women 380 Fmk. In the eyes of the company, one's status in the community was depending less on the individual and more on the group one represented.

Second level: the company made its policy more systematic between its mills and factories in different localities, again during the 1940s. Even though the Verla workers did not always have all the same benefits as the workers at the company's other mills and *vice versa*, the direction was clear.

Third level: the employers of the same industry, as well as employers nationwide, organised more efficiently and started to be more systematic in their actions. This supra-local collaboration of the employers makes interesting also to examine the reaction and state of the working class movement at the same time.

Part VII: The working class movement and the sense of community

Industrial paternalism was based on the self-evident authority and paternal role of the mill manager and the leader of the mill. Yet there was a workers' association founded in Verla in 1905 and a trade union in 1917 unlike the official history of the mill has remembered. During the unsuccessful attempted revolution by the Reds and the Civil War between the Reds and the Whites in Finland in spring 1918, Verla mill workers took control over the production, established their headquarters in the residence of the mill manager, and carried weapons.

After the failure of the Red regime the revenge of the Whites was often horrendous with partially arbitrary executions and disease-ridden prison camps with little food. There were no executions directly at the Verla mill, but more than 10 Reds (but no Whites) from the locality died as a result of the Civil War on the front, executed or in the prison camps.

So the relationship between the worker and the employer changed, as did their world view. The social system had been questioned, overturned and retrieved. As a result of the Civil War the workers' association and the trade union could not be active in Verla in the 1920s and 1930s. The company sided with the Whites: the mill supported the local (White) civil guard and forbid the meetings of the workers' association in the company's rooms.

However, a Social Democrat youth organisation was active in the community and the Social Democrats participated in the municipal politics, as well as running the local co-operative store. Anyhow, the company refused to negotiate with the workers' collective and sought to independently govern the community and define 'welfare'. Therefore, its policy could be called more specifically 'company welfare capitalism'.

In the 1940s the relationship between the employer and the employees changed again. During the Winter War against the Soviet Union in 1939–1940 the central organisations of the employers and employees announced negotiations. In 1944, as the Continuation War (1941–1944) was still ongoing, they made a collective agreement, after which different industries made their own agreements with the corresponding workers' associations. The war conditions made the society to see the necessity of cooperation and the industrial production was elementary for the war.[45]

The employer policy and the atmosphere in the Verla mill community also changed. It now included channels of participation also for the workers' collective and therefore it can be called 'negotiated welfare capitalism': Since 1944 a trade union, and 1948 a workers' association, were active again at Verla mill. The local sports club, founded by the middle-class in 1934, united many people of the village. A lawful production committee was established for the representatives of the employer, the white-collar workers and the blue-collar workers to discuss work matters, production and, for example, vocational education and free-time arrangements. This committee had only an advisory role at the mill but it gave a new channel for meeting and discussion at the local level.[46]

Part VIII: Shutting down and the sense of the community

Although the employer used welfare and social care as means to the company's success, its policy was based on market economy and capitalism. Production at the Verla mill ended following the decision to produce hydro-electricity and to end board production. This was not negotiated with the workers, who stopped presenting any wishes or demands to the mill managers probably hoping to keep the factory going as long as possible. The only thing negotiated was how production would be reduced: so that, for example, family breadwinners would be employed as long as possible.[47]

The time after the decision was filled with uncertainty, which was destructive to the sense of the community. On the other hand it also created new fellowship. Most of the workers were employed at the company's other mills but the youngest ones were let go. Year after year (1952–1964) the mill was still going in reduced form and the rest of the worker waited their turn to come. Younger ones usually adapted better to the new conditions than the older ones, who were also sometimes bitter about the situation, as the oral history reveals.

Something in the employer policy of the 1950s and 1960s was still similar to the industrial paternalism of before: the mill managers took individual situations into account when determining individual's future: sacked, retired, employed at other mills or staying in Verla as long as possible.[48]

The community changed again: houses were left empty or used only in the summer time, societies lost their members, the activity at the mill decreased and finally stopped. The sense of the mill community gradually had the sense of an ex-mill community. Still, after a couple of apathetic annual reports for example the sports club noted that everything wasn't lost – big loggings in the area still brought people to Verla, for example to dance, and the 1960s were still quite an active time in the community.[49] And then the leisure centre and the museum were built.

Conclusion and discussion

At the same time as the mill and the company built a sense of community, they built differences between the members of the community through living, working, wages,

Verla Mill Museum. Photo: Inkeri Ahvenisto.

positions of trust and social benefits. It was not in the interest of the mill to have all equal members in the community, because it would not encourage them to become better educated, work better or be more obedient. So the separateness was an organic part of the sense of the mill community. All this is to be seen as well in the physical environment, in the social groups of the people, the working environment, in the terms of the employment and in the employer policy of the mill.

The mill and the mill company were powerful forces in the community, but not the only ones and not all of their aims were related to work and production (other ideological goals like patriotism with regard to the Civil War, the World War II and labour movement are also to be seen). Beside the work and company-related senses of community there was a local, regional, national and ideological sense of togetherness built in the community, as well as togetherness based on gender, different age groups, jobs, teams or neighbourhoods. Every member of the community had also other memberships and identities, which were not only passively adapted but could also be actively reformed, rejected and/or created.

The workers in Verla were proud of their mill and felt loyalty towards it as well as a sense of mill community in many ways. Still this did not prevent them from feeling also separateness and joining for example the attempted revolution in 1918. They could be dissatisfied with the wages in the 1930s and the living conditions in the 1940s. The people in Verla were grateful for benefits that in some cases other workers seldom, if ever, had, but they compared themselves also to those who had it better. Similarly, the togetherness and attitude to fellow-employees and other inhabitants of the village differed individually and case by case.

Building the sense of community did not bind the mill company too far either. As the mill managers considered it necessary to shut down, the mill was shut down, even though the way in which it was done was considered carefully. But a sense of community was only a means, not the goal, for the company and it was never all-embracing.

The Verla mill was preserved in its old-fashioned shape during the decades because it wasn't modernised early enough, the rapid wasn't big enough to awake desires of expansion and the mill went to the possession of a bigger company that didn't have great ambitions for it – it was kept going, but only as a small and not-so-important part of the ensemble. The mill's remote lo-

cation contributed to this and also created later no needs or demands of demolition in order to build something new instead.

The status of the mill as a museum and as a World Heritage site has naturally a great PR-value to the UPM-Kymmene company. It affects also the way in which people remember and assess the past in Verla. It helps people to see the importance of their history and makes them perhaps more willing to share their memories.

Articles in newspapers, journals and magazines, as well as guided tours at the museum offer interpretations of the past that are sometimes different to people's memories. The "official" information often mingles with individuals own memories and adjustments, but occasionally the official history is also challenged and even denied.

Through the use of interview material and micro-historical approach it is possible to gain new information about the mill communities. Sometimes memories are more accurate and truthful than other sources but even when the people seem to remember "wrong" there is always a reason, why they do so. If it is possible to search at the micro level, the reasons and contradictions are also more likely to be found. This makes it interesting and useful to examine the past not only through archives and books but combining them to people's personal memories.

Inkeri Ahvenisto, PhD.

[1] Finland was part of Russia until 1917. See Michelsen 1986, 97-98.

[2] Ilmonen 1933, appendix to an unpublished manuscript.

[3] Ahvenisto 2008, 106-110, 271-275.

[4] Ahvenisto 2008, 171-176; see also Niinikoski 2001, 51-58.

[5] Ahvenisto 2008, 176-183; see also Niinikoski 2001, 60-70.

[6] Helander 1918, 450-451; Sourander, Solitander 1943, 30, 38, 57, 69-77; Paperimassan valmistuksen käsikirja 1933, 12-18, 46-48.

[7] Ahvenainen 1972, 106-108; see also Niinikoski 2001, 15-16.

[8] Ilmonen 1933, 19-23, 37-39; Sata vuotta sähköä Pohjois-Kymenlaaksossa 1984, 6-7.

[9] Verla Archives: Interview material of Inkeri Ahvenisto, interview number 4, 7, 10, 15 and 30. Diverse, plan for the ropeway, dated 15.5.1929.

[10] Kymmene Archives, Direction Styrelsen Styrelseprotokoll Cb:29 and Cb:41: protocol 18.12.1952 and 14.4.1964 (Identif. Nr. 10/1964); Bokföringsavdelning Bokslutsuppgifter: hallinto- ja vuosikertomukset (annual reports) 1939-1964. See also Ahvenisto 2008, 381-386; 472-480.

[11] Niinikoski 2001, 87-88 and UNESCOs description, see for example http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/751, date 25.2.2010.

[12] See for example Verla Archives: Annual reports of the Verla mill museum 1997-2010.

[13] Verla Archives, Juridiska avdelningen Ca:1 and Cb:1, lainhuudatukset ja kauppakirjat (contracts of sale).

[14] The buildings itself; see also for example Verla Archives, Produktionsavdelningen, Ritningar (drawings).

[15] See more Ahvenisto 2008, 104-123.

[16] See more Ahvenisto 2008, 127-141.

[17] See more Ahvenisto 2008, 142-161.

[18] See more Ahvenisto 2008, 161-166.

[19] Verla Archives, Personalavdelningen, salary books; see also interview material.

[20] Verla Archives, Personalavdelningen, salary books for example Ka:1, Ka:10, Ba:2, Ba:15, Ba:27, Ba:38. See also interview material.

[21] See also Markkola 1994, 156-167; Suoranta 2009, 68-69 and passim.

[22] Ahvenisto 2008, 241-244. About the average in Finland see Bergholm 2005, 259.

[23] See more Ahvenisto 2008, 245-252.

[24] Verla Archives, Personalavdelningen Ka:1, Ka:8 3.7.-8.10.1903, Ka:16 2.1.1913-27.2.1913 or see more Ahvenisto 2008, 254-256.

[25] Verla Archives, Direktionen Ca:2, vuosikertomus (annual report) 1931; Personalavdelningen Ba:9 palkkaluettelot (salary books) 1931.

[26] Suoranta 2009, 37-45, 214-224 and passim. Due to this, there was, for example in the textile industry in 1925-1939, only temporarily full time work available, but the companies had always sufficient work force for the production.

[27] Ahvenisto 2008, 232-244 and passim.

[28] National archives of Finland, Teollisuushallitus, saapuneet tilastotiedot (industrial statistics) TH 178-174, 181 (year 1886-1901); Verla Archives, interview material of Inkeri Ahvenisto. See also Ahvenisto 2008, 211-217.

[29] Ahvenisto 2008, 190-194, 221-229.

[30] Verla Archives, Pensinsavdelningen Hb:1 Personal files; the interview material of Inkeri Ahvenisto. See more Ahvenisto 2008, 221-229.

[31] Verla Archives, interview material of Inkeri Ahvenisto. See also Ahvenisto 2008, 260-269 and passim.

[32] Concept of Oskar Negt und Alexander Kluge has been analysed in industrial context by Alf Lüdtke. Lüdtke 1993, 9-13, 121 and passim.

[33] See more Ahvenisto 2008, 260-269, 148-153. See also Verla Archives, interview material by Inkeri Ahvenisto.

[34] See for example Roberts 1979, 6; Joyce 1982, 136-139; Svensson 1988, 197 and passim; Teräs 1992, 262-269; Ericsson 1997, 144-145 and passim; Kling 1998, 74-77 and passim; Koivuniemi 2000, 30-32 and passim.

[35] Verla Archives, Sjuk- och begravningskassan Da:1, kassan säännöt (rules of the sickness and burial fund) 31.8.1898 and Ca:1 johtokunnan pöytäkirja (protocol) 28.4.1899.

[36] Verla Archives, Sjuk- och begravningskassan Da:1, kassan säännöt (rules of the sickness and burial fund) 31.8.1898; Ha:1 säännöt 1947 (rules in 1947); interview material by Inkeri Ahvenisto; Ahvenisto 2008, 394-408 and passim.

[37] Verla Achives, Direktionen, eläkerahaston säännöt vuosikertomuksen 1912 välissä (first remaining rules of the pension fund); Ilmonen 1933, 27 (rules of the fund in 1919); Ahvenisto 2008, 411-419.

[38] Stuff magazine Kymi-yhtymä was founded in 1936. Kymmene Archives, Kymiyhtymä-magazines. Ahvenisto 2008, passim.

[39] Stuff magazine Kymi-yhtymä was founded in 1936. Kymmene Archives, Kymiyhtymä-magazines. Ahvenisto 2008, passim.

[40] Verla Archives, Direktionen, vuosikokouspöytäkirjan 3.9.1912 välissä olevat eläkekassan säännöt (rules of the pension fund).

[41] See for example Ericsson 1997, 165-173.

[42] Similar reactions see also Tone, 1997, 200-244; Kling 1998, 74-77.

[43] Svensson 1988, 177-180. Isabela Mares has analysed other factors that influenced the choice of the employer policy: the industry and its need for skilled labour, the social risk of the company, and the size of the company. Mares 2003, 28-31. Also Peter A. Swenson has researched employer policies and classified them into three groups: cartelists trying to define minimum wages through collective agreements, solidarists trying to define maximum benefits collectively and segmentalists trying to offer benefits at company level and concur with other employers through this and efficient wages. Swenson 2002, 21-35 and passim.

[44] Tone 1997, 7-8, 140-181, 230-231 and passim. On creating a company spirit within an industrial company in Finland after the 1920s see also Kettunen 2002, 288, 301, 348 and on company's social work in 1940s Teräs 1992.

[45] More about war time economy in Finnish companies see Teräs 2009, 157-217.

[46] Ahvenisto 2008, 370-373 and passim.

[47] Verla Archives, Personalavdelningen, Tuotantokomitean pöytäkirjat 1952-1964 (protocols of the production committee of the mill), Archives oft he Paper Union, Osastojen kirjeenvaihto (correspondence between departments), Verlan osasto 1952-1964; Ahvenisto 2008, 481-487.

[48] Verla Archives, Personalavdelningen Bc:1, Beträffande nedläggande av papptillverkningen å Werla 20.2.1964 (a memo of the mill management concerning the future of individual employees after the shutdown).

[49] Archives of the Werlan Kiri sports club: Annual reports 1952-1964.

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National Archives of Finland, Helsinki.

Kymmene Archives, Kouvola.

Verla Archives, Kouvola.

Interview material:

Verla Archives, Kouvola.
Interviews made by Inkeri Ahvenisto in 1998–2005 include 21 men and 17 women born in 1915–1944. 17 of them are mill workers, two clerks and the rest are, for example, different kinds of other workers, shopkeepers, policemen, farmers, and their relatives from the neighbourhood.

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