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American Lessons in Mass  
Production and Mass  
Consumption: Danish Study  
Visits to the United States  
under the Marshall Plan's  
Technical Assistance  
Programme

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*This article discusses the main lessons of the Marshall Plan's Technical Assistance Programme. The point of departure is the Danish case, but the perspective is wider, and the article aims at broadening the somewhat narrow chronology and geography often applied in studies on the history of the Marshall Plan. When following the Technical Assistance up until the mid-1950s in a Scandinavian country it becomes clear that American diplomats didn't just want the Europeans to work harder, but that their drive for productivity also promoted Americanisation in the form of an US-style business and consumer culture. The 'American Way' presented through the Technical Assistance Programme, though not uncontested, was a powerful and appealing model for prosperity applicable to all areas of the economy, from agriculture to retail.*

In the discussion about US influence in post-1945 Europe, the Marshall Plan is a central topic. The Marshall Plan consisted of several related initiatives. While, on a financial level, the largest proportion of Marshall aid was used by the Europeans to buy imports from the dollar area and reconstruct their energy supplies, investments in infrastructure and international trade comprised a smaller but still important part of the plan, with an underlying aim to change Europeans' thinking about economy

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*Contemporary European History*, 27, 4 (2018), pp. 582–600. © Cambridge University Press 2018  
doi:10.1017/S0960777318000450

and production. The Marshall Plan's Technical Assistance Programme was designed to increase European productivity through a range of different methods. European experts, business leaders, trade unionists, technicians and even shop floor workers were supposed to learn to 'think like Americans' and turn the increase of economic productivity into the highest priority in their daily work. Through the Technical Assistance Programme several thousand Europeans came to visit the United States and observed how high levels of productivity had turned the country into the world leader in the realms of economy, business and technology. The Technical Assistance Programme became a component of the Marshall Plan in 1948 with this long term objective in mind. The Marshall Plan's dollar aid was to relieve the European's shortage of US currency in the short term. The Technical Assistance component, by contrast, was designed to teach Europeans how to build strong economies in the long term. It was continued until 1961 – so long outlived the Marshall Plan aid itself –, but the main part of the activities, at least in the Danish case, took place before 1955. The head of the Marshall Plan, Paul G. Hoffman, had a background of working in the American car industry and the organisation Committee for Economic Development (CED). The economic thoughts of CED had roots in Roosevelt's New Deal, and according to the organisation the reconstruction of Europe ought to follow a strategy of 'liberalism of abundance'.<sup>1</sup> Following the development of the US Cold War policy Technical Assistance grew more explicitly anti-communist from 1950 onwards. Not only was the programme to ensure higher living standards for common people (preventing them from turning communist), but production of military importance also received higher priority. Apart from study visits the Technical Assistance Programme also supported productivity consultants, information activities and the establishment of productivity centers in the participating countries.

In this article I will take a closer look at one element of the visits by Europeans to learn from US methods and approaches, namely the Danish study visits to the United States under the Technical Assistance Programme, and consider the main lessons and legacies for Denmark and Danish personnel. Elsewhere I have mapped out the different Danish study tours, focusing on the four main areas of the Technical Assistance Programme in Denmark: agriculture, industry, trade unions and retail.<sup>2</sup> Building on these insights, this article will consider the story of the study tours from

<sup>1</sup> William Sanford, *The American Business Community and the European Recovery Program 1947–1952* (New York: Garland Publishing 1987), 73.

<sup>2</sup> See Sissel Bjerrum Fossat, *Den lille pige med iskagen, Marshallplan, produktivitet og amerikanisering*, (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2015); Sissel Bjerrum Fossat, "We Have a Lot to Learn!" American Influences on Danish Social Democracy and Organized Labour in the Early 1950s: Transnational Perspectives', *Labour History Review*, 75, 1 (2010), 44–59; Sissel Bjerrum Fossat, *The American Way eller den danske model. Danske studierejser til USA under Marshall-Planens Tekniske Bistand, 1948–1955*, Ph.D.-thesis, Odense: University of Southern Denmark, 2011; Sissel Bjerrum Fossat, 'The American Way eller den danske model? Den socialdemokratiske fagbevægelse på studierejse til Amerika under Marshall-Planen', in Sissel Bjerrum Fossat, Anne Magnussen, Nils Arne Sørensen, Klaus Petersen, eds., *Transnationale Historier* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2009); Sissel Bjerrum Fossat, 'Mekaniseringen af landbruget – mekanikplever og djævelskab eller det moderne familiebrugs fremtid? om de danske landbrugsstudierejser til USA under Marshallplanens Tekniske Bistandsprogram', Nils Arne Sørensen, ed., *Det amerikanske forbillede* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2011).

a broader perspective and map out some of the consequences. A key question that has divided scholarly analysis of the Technical Assistance Programme is the extent to which it was primarily envisaged to convey a message about higher productivity, often understood as ‘hard work’, as Victoria de Grazia has claimed, or rather present and create an American-style consumer culture, as David Ellwood suggests.<sup>3</sup> Both arguments can be supported considering different contexts, and ultimately there is a significant common ground between them. My research shows that the emphasis of the productivity message was on making Danish economy perform according to US standards of mass production *and* mass consumption. However, this message was interpreted in several different ways by the participants on the study visits, and by some even refused. This perspective brings us closer to an understanding of why US influence was so strong in Europe in the post-war period, but also why Europe remained unmistakably European.

### Americanisation

Before this article turns to the study visits themselves, it is important to see how the existing literature has interpreted them. The history of the Marshall Plan has traditionally been treated as diplomatic or economic history and placed within a rather limited chronology focusing on the origins, the goals and the immediate effects of the plan.<sup>4</sup> Two scholars who have contributed to our understanding of the Marshall Plan are worth thinking about in some detail: David Ellwood and Victoria de Grazia. After publishing various monographs they appeared together in a 2009 volume about Marshall Plan propaganda, in which each discussed the extent to which the Marshall Plan promoted American-style mass consumption.<sup>5</sup> In her chapter, Victoria de Grazia’s answer is a clear ‘no’, since, as she argues, ‘mass consumption in the form associated with “Americanization” comes in the second half of the 1950s, when practically everybody had ceased speaking about the Marshall Plan!’<sup>6</sup> She stresses that the plan meant reconstruction, economic stability and restraints on consumption. According to de Grazia, the Marshall planners feared that excessively high hopes for increases in consumption would lead to social unrest in Europe, and

<sup>3</sup> See further discussion below and the chapters by de Grazia and Ellwood in Günter Bischof and Dieter Stiefel eds., *Images of the Marshall Plan in Europe: Films, Photographs, Exhibits, Posters* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> The literature on the Marshall Plan is vast, but see, for instance, John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York: Contemporary American History Series; Columbia University Press, 1972); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952* (Studies in Economic History and Policy; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987); Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945–51* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Bischof and Stiefel, eds., *Images*.

<sup>6</sup> Victoria De Grazia, ‘Visualizing the Marshall Plan. The Pleasures of American Consumer Democracy or the Pains of “the Greatest Structural Adjustment Program in History”’, in Bischof and Stiefel, eds., *Images*, 34.

therefore the Technical Assistance Programme had to focus on productivity and hard work. Ellwood instead emphasises that the implied message of the Marshall Plan was that 'you, too, can be like us'. In this view, 'progress', to the American Marshall planners, meant above all mass production for mass consumption.<sup>7</sup> The difference in the conclusions of Ellwood and de Grazia can be explained by a difference in both the chronological and geographical foundations of their studies. De Grazia has a mainly Southern European perspective and draws on sources from as early as 1945, while Ellwood is much stronger on the Northern European cases and looks at the ramifications of Technical Assistance until the later 1950s.

Much of the existing literature on the Marshall Plan concentrates on the scheme's beginnings and early years.<sup>8</sup> In practice this perspective has its limitations because the Technical Assistance Programme set in motion by the European Recovery Programme (ERP, the formal name of the Marshall Plan) outlived it and continued in various guises after the ERP had ceased to exist. The Marshall planners (the American civil servants and diplomats responsible for putting together and overseeing the plan), emphasised economic stability at the outset but later prioritised economic growth and the politics of productivity.<sup>9</sup>

David Ellwood is less interested in origins and beginnings and focuses more on developments after 1953. In his view the Marshall Plan developed into a 'complete model of investment, production and consumption'.<sup>10</sup> And, like Michael J. Hogan, Charles S. Maier and others before him, Ellwood argues that productivity was a key concept in US politics:

Ever more efficient and cheaper production would be managed scientifically by forward-looking industrialists, and guided on rational economic lines by the state. This would transform the ancient battle between reactionary capitalists and revolutionary workers into a constructive, dynamic

<sup>7</sup> David W. Ellwood, 'Film and Marshall Plan', in Bischof and Stiefel, eds., *Images*, 63.

<sup>8</sup> Including Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction* and Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*. This early focus is even more evident in the Danish literature on the Marshall Plan primarily researched by Vibeke Sørensen and Leon Dalgas Jensen. Leon Dalgas Jensen, 'Mod en langsigtet erhvervspolitik: De erhvervs- og industripolitiske spørgsmål som anvendelsen af modværdimidlerne rejste', *Økonomi & politik*, 60, 4 (1987), 255–62; Leon Dalgas Jensen, 'Nogle tal om Marshallplanen og hjælpen til Danmark', *Økonomi & politik*, 60, 4 (1987), 210–2; Leon Dalgas Jensen, 'Dansk forsvar og Marshallplanen 1947–1960', *Historisk tidsskrift*, 91, 2 (1991), 459–506; Leon Dalgas Jensen, *Politisk kamp om Danmarks importpolitik 1945–48* (Dansk politik under forandring 1945–85; København: Statens Humanistiske Forskningsråd, 1993); Vibeke Steinicke Sørensen and Mogens Rüdiger, *Denmark's Social Democratic Government and the Marshall Plan, 1947–1950* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001), 360.

<sup>9</sup> Jacqueline McGlade, 'From Revolutionary Vision to Productivity Drive', in Dominique Barjot et al., eds., *Catching up with America. Productivity Missions and the Diffusion of American Economic and Technological Influence after the Second World War* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002), 80. For Charles S. Maier's classic article about the politics of productivity see Charles S. Maier, 'The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy after World War II', *International Organization*, 31 (1977), 607–33.

<sup>10</sup> David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America, and Postwar Reconstruction* (New York: Longman, 1992), 94.

relationship, uniting enlightened producers and content consumers. Growth would resolve all the difficulties, overcome all the challenges, just as in America.<sup>11</sup>

Ellwood understands Americanisation as 'a particularly distinctive form of modernization' that was applied to Europe with great political, economic and cultural power, but had an often unpredictable result in each country.<sup>12</sup> The Marshall Plan and the Technical Assistance Programme were a part of this development. Theoretically, countries in Western Europe could choose between the different elements of the US model, but in practice fears of social unrest and the appeal of communism created a consensus around economic growth as a tool to stabilise societies.

Existing scholarship on the Marshall Plan has had a tendency to study the scheme as part of a wider and broader processes of Americanisation, without always paying particular attention to the more specific focus and impact of the Technical Assistance programme. The study visits, in particular, have not been well understood in their own terms. A number of scholars, such as Harm Schröter, Richard Pells, Reinhold Wagnleitner and Richard Kuisel, have understood them as examples and case studies of Americanisation.<sup>13</sup> Kuisel is ambivalent about the precise results of the study tours for France, whereas Schröter evaluates them in largely positive terms for West Germany. According to Schröter, ideas about mass production, management education, self-service and advertisement were transferred to the Germans, though adapted in the process. The link between Americanisation and the Technical Assistance Programme is clear to him.<sup>14</sup>

This supposedly intrinsic and unwavering 'Americanisation' purpose of the Technical Assistance Programme is an important component of those publications that analyse the study tours. For example, the anthology *Catching up with America* exclusively deals with the study tours and their results. Discussions of the English, French, German, Italian, Dutch and Japanese cases demonstrates that even though the adoption of US technology and ideas was highly selective, the tours still presented a form of 'Americanisation' and more generally were part of 'an intensive and prolonged exposure to the innovative business practices and strategies of the major US

<sup>11</sup> Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, 94. David Ellwood cites several of Charles Maier's works: Charles Maier, 'The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy after World War II', *International Organization*, 31, 4, 607–33; Charles S. Maier, 'Why Was the Marshall Plan Successful?', *Transatlantic Perspectives*, (1988).

<sup>12</sup> Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, 236.

<sup>13</sup> Richard H. Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 295; Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 156–7; Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1993), 70–102; Harm G. Schröter, *Americanization of the European Economy a Compact Survey of American Economic Influence in Europe since the 1880s* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 50–4; Harm Schröter, 'Economic Culture and its Transfer: Americanization and European Enterprise, 1900–2005', *Revue Économique*, 58, 1 (2007).

<sup>14</sup> Schröter, 'Economic Culture', 222–5.

corporations'.<sup>15</sup> Other publications paint the same picture of how, under the Marshall Plan, technology and business practices were 'transferred' to receiving countries.<sup>16</sup>

In this article I will further explore the study visits as a case study of how Americanisation took place in practice and on the ground. On the one hand, the visits can be seen as a case of attempted Americanisation 'from above', but on the other they were just as much a sign of the Europeans' own interest in and interpretation of 'the American way', and can as such be seen as examples of 'Americanisation from below'.<sup>17</sup> In this article, the term 'Americanisation' will be understood as a transnational process in which change and movement are core elements. Mel van Elteren has provided a broad definition of this process:

A process in which economic, technological, political, social, cultural and/or sociopsychological influences emanating from America or Americans impinge on values, norms, belief systems, mentalities, habits rules, technologies, practices, institutions and behaviors of non-Americans. These diverse influences are conveyed by the importation into foreign contexts of products, models or exemplars, images, ideas, values, ideals, technologies, practices and behavior originating from, or at least closely associated with, America or Americans.<sup>18</sup>

His definition, though very broad, argues that Americanisation should not be understood as a sharply formulated theoretical term but rather as a framework within which a specific development can be studied. Van Elteren shows that Americanisation can be understood as a cultural encounter in which different American influences were subject to change, negotiation, acceptance and rejection, but also as an encounter between Europeans and Americans which was not one between equals but determined by US superiority in many areas.<sup>19</sup> Some historians, including Harm

<sup>15</sup> Dominique Barjot, 'Introduction', in Barjot et al. eds., *Catching up with America. Productivity Missions and the Diffusion of American Economic and Technological Influence after the Second World War* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Matthias Kipping and Ove Bjarnar, *The Americanisation of European Business: The Marshall Plan and the Transfer of Us Management Models* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Marie-Laure Djelic, *Exporting the American Model: The Post-War Transformation of European Business* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); T. R. Gourvish and Nick Tiratsoo, *Missionaries and Managers: United States Technical Assistance and European Management Education, 1945–1980* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Nick Tiratsoo and Jim Tomlinson, 'Exporting the "Gospel of Productivity": United States Technical Assistance and British Industry', *Business History Review*, 71, 1. See also John Krige, *American Hegemony and the Postwar Reconstruction of Science in Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006); Akira Kudo, Matthias Kipping and Harm G. Schröter, *German and Japanese Business in the Boom Years: Transforming American Management and Technology Models* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Rhiannon Vickers, *Manipulating Hegemony: State Power, Labour, and the Marshall Plan in Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Mel Van Elteren, *Americanism and Americanization: A Critical History of Domestic and Global Influence* (London: McFarland & Co., 2006), 136.

<sup>18</sup> Van Elteren, *Americanism*, 103.

<sup>19</sup> Van Elteren's conclusions can be supported by many other scholars adopting the idea of the twentieth century as an 'American century'. See: E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 15; Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From 'Empire' by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27–32; Richard R. Nelson and Gavin Wright, 'The Rise and Fall of American Technological Leadership: The Postwar Era in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 30, 4 (1992), 1931–64.

Schröter, have attempted to define a set of basic American values that they then search for in the European context in order to determine whether Americanisation took place.<sup>20</sup>

In this article, by contrast, Americanisation appears as an open process, and the results of the American experience cannot be pre-judged as foregone conclusions. What did the study tour's participants see as the core elements that explained and brought about American success? The participants had very different backgrounds, studied very diverse subjects and arrived at different, at times contradictory, conclusions about what, if anything, was unique about the United States.

### **The Technical Assistance Programme in Denmark**

After 1945 Denmark, along with much of the continent, faced a series of economic challenges. Before the war Denmark's export of agricultural goods to Britain had been lucrative and had comprised the majority of the country's income in foreign currency. The first reaction of Danish politicians after the war was to try to re-establish a pre-war economy which had been based on free trade and open borders. This attempt failed miserably due to the weak pound and the British need to support and protect its national agricultural production.<sup>21</sup> The war had made it clear to the larger European nations that depending on food imports had been a major strategical weakness, as a result of which a free market for agricultural products was not to be a part of economic reconstruction.<sup>22</sup> At the same time the whole of Europe experienced a dollar shortfall because of the lack of interchangeability between the different currencies, which was diagnosed as a great problem because of the Europeans' need for imports from the dollar area. This meant that the dollars provided by the Marshall Plan were just as much welcomed in Denmark as they were elsewhere, even though Denmark had come out of the war comparatively unharmed. The new economic situation also accentuated the need for an increase in industrial production to compensate for the less attractive export market of agricultural goods. Here, the Danish Social Democrats and the Marshall Plan administration found common ground.

Throughout the ERP's existence the Technical Assistance Programme was the major instrument and practical expression of the Marshall Plan in Europe. It set out to improve the performance of overall European economic production. Under the Technical Assistance Programme, the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA, established as the main office administering the ERP), called on participating countries to set up productivity centres to coordinate the various initiatives for increasing productivity. These centres were to be constructed along the lines of the US corporate model and include representatives of industry, trade unions and the

<sup>20</sup> See Schröter, *Americanization of the European Economy*, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Kryger Larsen, *Industri, stat og samfund 1939–1972* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag 2008), 133.

<sup>22</sup> Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction*, 435 and Jaqueline McGlade, 'More a Plowshare than a Sword: The Legacy of US Cold War Agricultural Diplomacy', *Agricultural History*, 83, 1 (2009), 79–102.



state. Unlike in many other countries this construction did not give rise to protest or significant problems in Denmark.<sup>23</sup> A Productivity Council was formed in Denmark under the Ministry of Trade at the end of 1949 and consisted of important and influential figures drawn from industry and the Social Democratic trade unions. Arguably this was not an expression of Americanisation but rather corresponded well with Danish tradition.<sup>24</sup>

Among the Technical Assistance Programme's many practical components, the study visits came to be the most important in Denmark. The Danish Productivity Council organised 256 separate study tours to the United States between 1948 and 1955, for a total of 1,191 participants. Out of these I have collected data on the 781 travellers who participated in the so-called 'national teams' (not the trips organised through the Organisation of European Economic Cooperation, another institution created by the Marshall Plan), as well as the 123 young interns from industry and agriculture. By far the majority of the travellers were male, between thirty-five and fifty-five years old and held a relatively high position in their organisation or company. They were experts or leaders, and, apart from the field of agriculture, not academics. The application process for joining the study trips came to be heavily controlled by complicated negotiations between the Danish and the different American authorities, who often did not agree. On the whole the applications from study groups put forward by the Productivity Council were much more successful than initiatives 'from below', in which companies or individuals applied on their own behalf. In the following sections I will look more closely at the study visits in the main areas of study: agriculture, industry and retail.

### Agriculture

The local Marshall mission in Copenhagen generally thought highly about the state of Danish agriculture and reported to Washington that the meat eating Danes had the highest intake of calories in Europe. The main aim here was to ensure that, at a minimum, this high level of food consumption be sustained to avoid social

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, for the English, Italian, Dutch and Norwegian cases: Tiratsoo and Tomlinson, 'Exporting the "Gospel of Productivity": United States Technical Assistance and British Industry', 74; Erik Bloemen, 'The Technical Assistance and Productivity in the Netherlands, 1945–52', *Le Plan Marshall Et Le Relèvement Économique De L'europe* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière, 1993); Erik and Griffiths Bloemen, Richard T., 'Resisting Revolution in the Netherlands', in Dominique Barjot ed., *Catching up with America. Productivity Missions and the Diffusion of American Economic and Technological Influence after the Second World War* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002); Kai R. Pedersen, 'The Technical Assistance Program's Promotion of "Corporatism" and "Productivism" in Norway, 1949–1953', *Essays in Economic and Business History*, 16 (1998); Luciano Segreto, 'The Impact of the Productivity Philosophy in Italy after World War II', in Dominique Barjot, ed., *Catching up with America. Productivity Missions and the Diffusion of American Economic and Technological Influence after the Second World War* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Asbjørn Sonne and Christiansen Nørgaard, Peter Munch, *Faste forhold – flygtige forbindelser. Stat og interesseorganisationer i Danmark i det 20. århundrede* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2003), 59–65.



unrest.<sup>25</sup> The local mission was on the one hand content that Denmark was in a position to export food to other parts of Europe but on the other hand concerned about the over reliance and over emphasis on the types of agricultural production that demanded imports of foodstuffs for animals, especially Danish dairy cattle. The Danish government, too, was proud of Danish agriculture and considered it to be a cornerstone in the Danish economy.<sup>26</sup> Even though the Social Democrats, who were in power from 1947 to 1950 and again from 1953, sought in the longer term to industrialise Denmark, they counted on the ability of the agricultural sector to make earnings in foreign currency here and now. The Social Democrats and the Marshall mission therefore largely agreed upon the vision of turning Denmark into an industrialised country less dependent on agricultural exports, but both parties also wanted to keep agricultural production high.<sup>27</sup>

Because of the important role that agriculture played in the Danish economy it was also a central pillar in the Marshall Plan's technical assistance offered to Denmark. Almost half of all the study tours to the United States had agriculture as their main focus.<sup>28</sup> In agriculture, more so than in any other field, the participants were to a large degree theoretical, academic experts from university, research centres or agricultural schools. The main focus of the tours was highly technical and less politicised than in other fields. The general assumption in the US administration was that Danish farmers were already in favor of the United States both politically and culturally. A 1950 report from the US embassy in Copenhagen to the US State Department said about agricultural leaders in Denmark that,

from an earlier generation of Danish farmers came the large majority of American-Scandinavians. They have a natural sympathy for their relatives across the Atlantic and an interest in their manner of living in the United States.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the participants studied subjects in connection with dairy production – dairying as such – but also cattle diseases, feed, breeding and so on. The Ministry of Agriculture eagerly promoted these studies, but the Americans were more interested in supporting more general subjects, especially those concerned with productivity

<sup>25</sup> Report of OSR review team on the agricultural program for Denmark, 26. okt. 1951, NARA, RG 469, Deputy director for technical services office of food and agriculture, Country files 1950–56 box 1. See also the CIA report Agriculture and food supply in Denmark, Extract from NIS-7 sec.61, for Agricultural Subcommittee, NIE, CIA, Sept. 1952, NARA, RG 469, Deputy director for technical services office of food and agriculture, Country files 1950–56 box 2.

<sup>26</sup> Hanne Rasmussen and Mogens Rüdiger, *Tiden efter 1945* (Danmarks Historie, 8; Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1990), 112.

<sup>27</sup> Sørensen and Rüdiger, *Denmark's Social Democratic Government*, 104–13.

<sup>28</sup> The Danish Ministry of Agriculture organised study tours for a total of 234 participants, but out of these a smaller number (mostly women) studied housekeeping. Subtracting those and adding a couple of early participants who went directly through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the total number of agricultural experts visiting the States was 218 – around one third of the Danish participants distributed on around half of the study tours. Apart from the 218 experts, who typically visited the United States for four to six weeks, eighty-one younger farmers also stayed at different US farms as interns for approximately one year.

<sup>29</sup> USIE country paper April 5, 1950, NARA State Department Decimal Files 511.59/5–250.

and mechanisation, and questioned whether the Danes really needed to go to the United States to learn about dairying.<sup>30</sup> Because of US preferences many of the proposed studies in dairying were turned down by the ECA, and a considerable number of studies in mechanisation were completed instead.

The debate about mechanisation in agriculture revealed that the psychological and social gap between Danish and American farmers was, in the end, significant. Mechanisation came to be perhaps the most controversial topic in the agricultural debate in Denmark after the war because of the fundamental changes it presented for the rural population. This was expressed both as a fear of modern technology destroying the farmers' close connection to their animals and the farmland and as a political wish to maintain high rural employment. A common argument for keeping the number of rural workers high and the size of farms small was that this 'Danish model' produced a higher output per acre. In comparison, US farming was perceived as more extensive and wasteful.<sup>31</sup>

The experts and landowners studying mechanisation under the Technical Assistance Programme unanimously supported further mechanisation, however, and eagerly promoted their point of view through various channels such as magazines, books and lectures. Mechanisation did not just mean new and more machines but also that farms would have to be bigger and that new crops ought to be introduced. On the small farms, so common in Denmark, mechanisation would not be profitable, and American corn was much better suited for mechanised harvesting and silage than the turnips that were widely used as cattle feed.<sup>32</sup> Both the Danish and the US models promoted an increase in production and productivity, but while the traditional Danish approach promoted productivity as measured in acres, the Americans conceived of productivity as measured in man hours – in short, machines should take over manual labour and let industry absorb the resulting excess workers. Many of the reports from the study visits suggested utilising a combination of the Danish and US models. As one conclusion stated: 'it is the opinion of the team that if Denmark can maintain and increase her good and large production and at the same time introduce the more

<sup>30</sup> Udenrigsministeriets gruppeordnede sager 1945–1972 journalnr. 73.C.67/4/94–101, Danish National Archives, Copenhagen.

<sup>31</sup> Among the many articles discussing these problems in the agricultural journals see, for example, 'Udstykning og Mekanisering er Landbrugets Fremtidsproblemer', *Maskinhandleren*, 14, 25, (1946), 4–5; N. Krabbe, 'Landbrugets mekanisering i U.S.A. og Danmark', *Tidsskrift for Landøkonomi*, 2 (1952), 6; Siliam Bjerre, 'Nytaarsønsker for den danske Bonde', *Dansk Landbrug* 8 Jan. (1953), 4; H. K. Olsen, 'Indtryk fra en rejse i Amerika', i *Tidsskrift for Landøkonomi*, 9–10 (1951), 391.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, *Mekanisering i Landbruget, rapport over studierejse til U.S.A. foretaget fra 3. juni til 25. juli af 6 praktiske landmænd*, (København: Udenrigsministeriet, 1952); H. Rosenstand Schacht, 'Visiting Fireman in U.S.A.', *Ugeskrift for Landmænd*, 95 (1950); Flemming Juncker, *Dansk Landbrugs Fremtid*, (København: Westermanns Forlag, 1948); Flemming Juncker, 'Erfaringer med majsdyrkingen på Overgaard 1949', *Tidsskrift for Landøkonomi*, 3 (1949), 113–28; Flemming Juncker, 'Fortsatte erfaringer med majsdyrking på Overgaard i 1949', *Tidsskrift for Landøkonomi* (1950), 225–45 and Flemming Juncker, '7 års erfaringer med majsdyrking på Overgaard', *Tidsskrift for Landøkonomi*, 3 (1954), 121–39.

mechanised methods of American agriculture, then Denmark will look into a bright future'.<sup>33</sup>

The implicit precondition behind the mechanised and modernised model for agriculture promoted by the ECA was an expanding economy which would allow this transition to happen without creating the mass unemployment that the US administration feared just as much as Danish politicians. Even though the laws encouraging small farms were not changed until the beginning of the 1960s, already the 1950s saw widespread mechanisation and modernisation for Danish farmers allowing for the staggering increases in agricultural productivity from 1948 until the present day.<sup>34</sup>

In many ways the focus in on productivity and mechanisation of the Technical Assistance Programme clashed with traditional virtues in Danish agriculture. It was seen as more wasteful, and by consequence it encouraged the rural population to find employment in the cities. A modified version of the American promise of a brighter future through higher productivity per man hour was accepted by the Danish participants on the study visits when combined with Danish high yields per acre.

### Industry

The social democratic trade unions in Denmark largely embraced US models and ideas and were almost more enthusiastic about industrialisation than business owners. In spite of its enthusiasm for American ideas about productivity, it was, however, the trade union movement which most clearly formulated an alternative to the American way, the so-called Danish model, as a way to ensure that a high standard of living also included better social conditions than those found in the United States.<sup>35</sup> To call the development within the social democratic trade union movement the 'end of ideology', as Anthony Carew has, is misleading and lacking in precision.<sup>36</sup> The efforts by the ERP's administrators with respect to the trade union movement were deeply steeped in ideology, as was the manner in which proposals by the trade union movement were received the United States. Danish trade union officials argued that the United States provided ideas that could help to cement a social democratic vision of progress, economic growth and prosperity for all in Denmark, even if at the same

<sup>33</sup> *Mekaniseringen i landbruget, rapport over studierejse til USA foretaget fra 3. juni til 25. juli af 6 praktiske landmænd* (København: Udenrigsministeriet, 1952), 30.

<sup>34</sup> The productivity in the agricultural sector is forty times higher today than it was in 1948. Productivity in industry is just six times higher. See Birgitte Mackie Brøndum, Marianne Nielsen, Kamilla Elkjær ed., *60 År I Tål. Danmark Siden 2. Verdenskrig* (København: Danmarks Statistik, 2009), 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Amerika er anderledes. Med den danske fagforeningsdelegation til U.S.A.*, (København: Fremad, 1950); Sven Tillge-Rasmussen, 'De danske arbejders indtryk i Amerika', *Politiken*, 11 Okt. 1949.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 247–50.

time they rejected American ideas about how trade unions were to be run or how labour market agreements were to be reached.<sup>37</sup>

Danish industry was also ready to learn, although somewhat more reluctantly than the trade union movement. As was the case in all the participating countries, Danish industrialists resented state interference and only under pressure and with hesitation contributed to the work of the Productivity Council.<sup>38</sup> The concept of higher productivity, though, proved difficult to resist. The ECA noted a change in attitude among both the Liberal-Conservative government (1950–3) and industrial leaders as early as 1951, and, compared with other European countries, the Danish Productivity Council turned out to be exemplary.<sup>39</sup> The ECA attributed much of this change to the very positive reception of American ideas amongst a group of leading industrialists who visited the United States in 1951. This group noted that US industry contained many medium-sized companies of a similar structure to Danish ones, and that it was here that ideas and inspiration could be sought.<sup>40</sup> Danish industrial leaders were in practice attracted to features of US production that were different from those hailed by West German manufacturers, for example.<sup>41</sup> The major industrial giants were seen as exotic points of interest, and Danish industrial leaders stressed that the United States contained more than automated assembly lines in giant factories. US ‘inventions’, such as particular management principles, conveyors, time studies and piecework systems, could be adapted to Danish conditions. Danish industrialists also argued that what needed to be replanted in Denmark was a certain sense of American ‘productivity-mindedness’. In a trip report, they noted that in the United States it was common sense ‘that the possibilities for progress and prosperity come from free competition in combination with competitive cooperation’. This mindset was to be welcomed, they went on, as the real explanation behind high US productivity.

The tours contributed to a change in attitude towards productivity in Denmark; however, this change did not come from the tours alone, as they were only a component part of a wider interest in the United States during the Marshall Plan years

<sup>37</sup> For social democratic thoughts about rational planning and productivity see, for example, Niels Daalgaard, *Ved Demokratiets Grænse. Demokratiseringen Af Arbejdslivet i Danmark 1919–1994* (København: Selskabet til Forskning i Arbejderbevægelsens Historie, 1995), 137–8; Bo Lidegaard, *Jens Otto Krag, 1941–1961* (København: Gyldendal, 2001), 415–6; Niels Wium Olesen, ‘Jens Otto Krag og Fremtidens Danmark’, *Historie*, 19, 1 (1991), 72; Klaus Petersen, *Fra legitimitet til legitimitetskrise. Velfærdsstatens udvikling i Danmark i perioden 1945–1973* (København: Københavns Universitets Prisopgave, 1995); Klaus Petersen, ‘Om formuleringen af velfærdsstaten som politisk projekt i 1950’erne’, *Arbejderhistorie*, 4 (1996), 62–78.

<sup>38</sup> Programming and budgeting TA for 1950–51 and 1951–52, 21. Sept. 1950, NARA, Productivity and technical assistance division, office of the director, technical assistant country subject files, 1949–52, Denmark box 4.

<sup>39</sup> Denmark, Survey of Results of TA, 1953, NARA, RG 469, Office of the Assistant Administrator for Production, Productivity and Technical Assistance Division, box 3. See also Kryger Larsen, *Industri*, 137–9, Sørensen and Rüdiger, *Denmark’s Social Democratic Government*, 156 for industry’s hesitancy towards state interference.

<sup>40</sup> *Vi kan lære af Amerikansk Industri*, (København: Industrirådet 1952).

<sup>41</sup> Christian Kleinschmidt, *Der produktive Blick: Wahrnehmung amerikanischer und japanischer Management- und Produktionsmethoden durch deutsche unternehmer 1950–1985* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 308–12.

which culminated in 1951 – the same year that the majority of the tours took place.<sup>42</sup> The trade union movement and representatives from industry took turns to act surprised at each other's concessions as far as productivity was concerned.<sup>43</sup> Industrial leaders abandoned their argument that a lack of results in the field of productivity was due to laziness and worker negligence. Here, the concept of *productivity* replaced to a large degree the concept of *rationalisation*, and the interpretation of the word stressed that productivity was more than simply hard work and higher output. It also contained a promise of a better tomorrow and higher living standards for all in the Danish society. At the 1950 general assembly of the Industrial Council, a private organisation representing industry, the president Axel Odel (member of the Productivity Council) explained the difference between rationalisation and productivity in his speech:

When we talk about more efficient production the word rationalisation inevitably comes up as the means of reaching that goal. It is very gratifying that the understanding of this appears to be growing in all circles. It shouldn't be forgotten, though, that rationalisation is just the means – cold and clear reason put in to practice with psychological understanding – but productivity, however, is much more than the means or a method. Productivity is in particular not just a statistical term, productivity is a goal. If we want to become competitive, high and ever increasing productivity is something the whole society must feel and understand that it is worthwhile pursuing – knowing that through this, and only this, can better material living standards for everyone be achieved for the greater good of all.<sup>44</sup>

Even though leading industrialists and trade unionists both praised US principles of productivity they had encountered on their visits to the United States, they disagreed about one important detail – namely the issue of how workers were supposed to obtain their fair share of the profit achieved by increasing productivity.<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, the trade unions argued that workers should benefit directly at the workplace and receive higher wages, such as in the form of higher piecework rates and better working conditions. Industrial representatives stressed that workers would benefit from lower consumer prices and thus would automatically benefit from higher productivity. When this inherent gain failed to materialise without delay, the retail sector was blamed by both the trade unions and industry as chief culprit. Both parties claimed that retail prices were too high as a result of inefficiencies and adherence to outmoded, traditional practices. The trade unions envisaged a consumer society with self-service and supermarkets, as they had seen in the United States, and were convinced that modern retail methods would deliver more consumption possibilities for the working class.<sup>46</sup> Industry went even further and described private consumption as way of

<sup>42</sup> Based on a systematic reading of the industrial journals *Ingeniøren*, *Arbejdsgiveren* and *Tidsskrift for Industri* between 1945 and 1957.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, 'Rationaliseringsgevinstens fordeling', *Arbejderen*, 50. årg. nr. 19, 1. Dec. (1954), 277–9.

<sup>44</sup> Axel Odel, 'Produktivitets-problemet', *Tidsskrift for Industri*, nr. 21, 1. Nov. (1950), 256.

<sup>45</sup> For example, the discussion about bonus wage 'Bonusordninger og rationel produktion', *Arbejdsgiveren*, 17, Sept. (1951), 273; 'Atlas' fællestillidsmand udtaler sig', *Arbejdsgiveren*, 19, Oct. (1951), 310.

<sup>46</sup> 'Selvbetjening den moderne detailhandels våben mod for høje omkostninger', *Arbejderen*, 49. årg. nr. 19, 1. Oct. (1953), 231–4.

achieving economic growth, stating as much in the official organ for the Danish employers' organisation:

The most important thing, therefore, is to create a *need*, to get people to desire things. . . . If this *need* grows an urge for a larger production emerges which again creates an aspiration in the population to earn more. Strong and varied demand is the root to high economic activity in a society. Such activity will create employment, it will further the best and the most rational methods of production and will urge every worker to do his best. Once this demand has been created a positive circle will be formed and all of society will experience ever growing living standards.<sup>47</sup>

The desire to expand consumer needs and demands, and to produce more at lower prices, was directly at odds with more traditional ideas about quality and the fulfillment of individual consumer wishes. Representatives of both the clothing and shoe industries concluded after their visits to the United States that Danish factories did not lag behind *technically*, but rather in terms of their lack of specialisation. A more efficient use of existing machinery and marketing methods would help to advance them.<sup>48</sup> An interesting conclusion in a shoe industry report found that the average American consumed 3.11 pairs of shoes in 1949 but the average Dane just 1.53 pairs, and argued that to improve this ratio towards the US average, manufacturers 'should concentrate their efforts upon pursuing their common purpose of making the consuming public more interested in footwear and thus promoting consumption'.<sup>49</sup> This was clearly a new way of thinking about production and consumption. The seamstresses visiting the United States in 1952–3 disliked the unprofessional finishes on many of the dresses produced in the US factories where speed and not perfection was the ideal. But in the end they noted reluctantly that the American woman seemed to prefer buying more dresses at lower prices, and that she was apparently not concerned by the fact that mass production meant that she could run into someone else in the exact same dress.<sup>50</sup>

To the trade unions productivity certainly did not mean hard work. On the contrary, they supported this American idea because they saw it as a way to achieve lower working hours, better working conditions, higher wages and lower product prices. Danish factory owners were more likely to see productivity as a problem of 'mindset' amongst the workers. Hard work would in their view benefit both the workers and the industrialists. This difference in perception is hardly surprising. What is more interesting is that over time a compromise developed amongst the participants in the different activities of Technical Assistance. Industrialists would refrain from indirectly accusing the workers of laziness, and unions would lower their expectations to higher wages. Both parties claimed that the American promise

<sup>47</sup> 'Selvbetjening i U.S.A.', *Arbejdsgiveren*, 20, Oct. (1953), 330–2.

<sup>48</sup> See the report *Amerikansk beklædningsindustri* (København: Udenrigsministeriet 1951).

<sup>49</sup> Summary and conclusions of report on the US shoe manufacturing industry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen 1954, 3, NARA, RG 469, Assistant administrator for production, productivity and Technical Assistance Division, Country and Regional File, 1949–1954 box 2.

<sup>50</sup> *De danske industriarbejdere i USA* (København: Udenrigsministeriet, 1954), 69–70 and Rapport Nov. 21, 1952, NARA, RG 469, Mission to Denmark, Labor information division, Press stories and photographs, 1950–53 box 3.

of higher levels of consumption should be made possible through lower prices on products, and would agree on blaming Danish retail for being too old-fashioned and inefficient.

### Retail

During the later years of the Technical Assistance Programme pressure to change Danish retail practices increased. 134 Danish delegates studied US trade, especially the details of retail but also marketing and wholesale practices. The link between economic growth, productivity and mass consumption was a major reason for US support in the modernisation of Danish stores. The later years of the Technical Assistance Programme were characterised in many of the participating countries by an increased focus on military and strategic production. Often as a direct consequence retail received growing attention as well.<sup>51</sup> They were clearly linked, but how? Publicity efforts across Western Europe included demonstrations of self-service stores, refrigerators, packaging methods and propaganda movies such as 'Shopping is a Pleasure'.<sup>52</sup> To the American administrators in Copenhagen it was clear that a more rational way of distributing the goods produced by industry was necessary if the population was to benefit from the increases in productivity: 'the conversion of Danish distribution and retailing practices to a position of greatly improved efficiency is essential if the ultimate benefit of increased productivity within industry are to be passed down to the consumer'.<sup>53</sup>

The mission as declared in the productivity programme for 1953 and 1954 was clear, but the scope was wider than that. The American retail expert George R. Lindal, who shared his advice in several of the countries participating in the Technical Assistance Programme, made it clear that a more efficient retail sector in Denmark would benefit the entire national economy. He wrote that it would make it possible for the 'producer to make better use of his production facilities, lowering costs and hereby reduce the cost of the final product. In this way purchasing power would rise, people would buy more, more workers would find employment and their wages would again increase the purchasing power and the forces of productivity would be set loose in the frames of a consumer economy'.<sup>54</sup>

In Denmark, as well as in Norway and Britain, the first retailers to adopt US style self-service were the co-operatives.<sup>55</sup> As 'the third leg' of the workers movement, the

<sup>51</sup> Jacqueline McGlade: 'NATO Procurement and the Revival of European Defense, 1950–60', in Gustav Schmidt, *A History of Nato: The First Fifty Years* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> Kleinschmidt, *Der Produktive Blick*, 80–1.

<sup>53</sup> Productivity and technical assistance programme, fiscal years 1953 and 1954, MSA Mission to Denmark, Office of the Special Representative in Europe (1948–53), Productivity & Technical Assistance Division, Country Files, 1949–54, box 5.

<sup>54</sup> 'Hvad vil der ske i dansk varedistribution i de næste fem år?', Speech by George R Lindahl jr. in Salgs- og Reklameforeningen, København 1. april 1954 i NARA, RG 469, Mission to Denmark, Labor Division Subject Files 1949–54, box 3.

<sup>55</sup> See Even Lange, *Organisert kjøpekraft. Forbrukersamvirkets historie i Norge* (Oslo: Pax, 2006); Louise Curt and Alexander Shaw, 'Selling Self-Service and the Supermarket: The Americanisation of Food



co-ops had it as their primary mission to deliver inexpensive goods to consumers. 'Self-service' was perceived as an efficient way of lowering prices because it reduced the man hours needed to service the customers. The co-op in Esbjerg was the first shop in the country to implement this model of self-service, doing so as early as 1949, and in 1953 the co-op in Islev opened its doors to Denmark's very first supermarket. By the end of the decade 545 self-service stores had opened accounting for only 7 per cent percent of turnover in the entire retail sector, but almost 20 per cent of that of the co-operatives and between 80–100 per cent of the turnover of some of the larger chain stores.<sup>56</sup>

However, these US principles were not welcomed by all retailers. Many merchants were hesitant, especially the small traders of the specialty stores, like shoe shops, butchers, cheese shops and so on. They tended to be highly critical of self-service. Max Lindskov, president of the Common Organisation of the Danish Trade Associations (the interest organisation representing small traders) was a very prolific and articulate sceptic. He did not think that self-service fitted Danish conditions and thought the co-operatives were wrong to claim that self-service would lower consumer prices. He was sure that Danish housewives preferred the advice and guidance of the local grocer over the shelves of the supermarket. Moreover, the colourful packaging used in the United States was very likely to increase cost, he claimed. In 1952, well aware of his sceptical attitude, the Productivity Council invited Max Lindskov to participate in a trip to the United States, together with representatives from the co-operatives, the merchants and the consumer interest organisation.<sup>57</sup> Seeing self-service with his own eyes did not change Lindskov's opinion. He continuously warned against a development that would not only mean fewer small shops but also increase the use of advertisements and packaging, as well as frozen and canned food. All of this would lead to undesirable uniformity according to Lindskov. This part of his argumentation took the shape of a more comprehensive critique of American society. His warnings resonated with left wing intellectuals. Poul Henningsen, who had an influential and critical voice in Denmark in the 1950s and 1960s, joined the debate over retail practices. He argued in one of the large retail journals that American mass production would lead to a uniform 'mass human' lacking cultural depth, only interested in fast and colourful news about Hollywood stars and sports and only consuming pulp-literature, romantic movies and amplified

Retailing in Britain, 1945–60', *Business History*, 46, 4 (2004), 568–82; Kåre Ørum Andersen, 'FDB Som Amerikanseringsagent i dansk detailhandel efter 1945', in Nils Arne Sørensen ed., *Det amerikanske forbillede* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2001); Kåre Ørum Andersen, *FDB som Americanizer? – En undersøgelse af FDBs rolle i amerikaniseringen af dansk detailhandel i 3-Årtier efter 2. Verdenskrig* (Odense: Unpublished master-thesis, Syddansk Universitet, 2008), 65; Barbara Usherwood, "'Mrs Housewife and Her Grocer": The Advent of Self-Service Food Shopping in Britain', in M. Talbot ed., *All the World and Her Husband. Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture* (New York: Cassell, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> Max Kjær-Hansen, *Selvbetjeningsbutikkerne i Danmark* (Handelsministeriets Produktivitetsudvalg, 1960), 32–3.

<sup>57</sup> Udenrigsministeriets gruppeordnede sager 1945–1972 journalnr. 73.C.67/101 and *Om selvbetjeningsbutikker i U.S.A* (København: Udenrigsministeriet, 1953).

music.<sup>58</sup> In this way the debates about retail entered into a wider discussion on how to shape the future of the nation.

In spite of these critical voices, Danes' interest in US practices in general did not diminish, and the demand for technical assistance for retail grew. When the Productivity Council was first created, interest from the merchants and other retailers had not been overwhelming, but by 1953 a separate council had to be set up to deal with the increasing number of requests for advice, study tours and so on from different retailers.<sup>59</sup> Co-operatives and merchants in particular readily accepted the US offer of assistance, which, apart from the study visits, included advice from American consultants, the creation of a Danish consultant's service and the option of borrowing money for the modernisation of individual shops.<sup>60</sup> The American administrators of the Technical Assistance Programme admitted that in the case of the co-operatives and chain stores, the main purpose of the programme had been to guide and advise on how the best possible methods, but that the interest had already been there. Merchants, however, took far more convincing, and in the course of the Technical Assistance Programme a major change in attitude took place.<sup>61</sup> Svend Gade, a member of the Productivity Council and a merchant, was key in directing merchants toward becoming 'the predators of the retail sector': large self-service stores with a broad selection of goods on offer would end up 'eating' small specialised shops.<sup>62</sup>

It was in the area of retail that the US model of mass consumption was most directly expressed. To the American administrators of the Technical Assistance Programme the connection between higher productivity, mass production, mass consumption and higher living standards was clear. The increased intensity of the Cold War amplified this logic. An American-style consumer economy would secure the hearts and minds of the common Dane. In this sense there was no contradiction between increasing European military and strategic production while also allocating Technical Assistance funds to modernising the retail sector. In Denmark the first-movers and the most wholehearted supporters of self-service was the co-operatives. The lower prices attracted them, but many shared a dislike of what they perceived as exaggerated American commercialisation. In this they agreed with small traders who went even further in their opposition to US principles.

<sup>58</sup> 'Masseproduktionens forudsætning er i dag massemennesket', *Danmarks Handels Tidende* nr. 25, 13. Dec. (1955).

<sup>59</sup> Notat vedrørende oprettelse af et udvalg til behandling af spørgsmål om fremme af handelens effektivitet. 21. Jan. 1953, Økonomi- og Erhvervsministeriet ujournaliserede sager, kasse 599-7-53, Danish National Archives, Copenhagen.

<sup>60</sup> Implementation of self-service program in NARA, RG 469, Mission to Denmark, Productivity & technical Exchange Division, subject files, 1948-54 box 1 and memorandum by Erik Jensen to O'Neill Osborn 28. May 1952 in NARA, RG 469, Mission to Denmark, Productivity & technical Exchange Division, subject files, 1948-54 box 1.

<sup>61</sup> Memorandum by Erik Jensen, Produktivitetsudvalget to O'Neill Osborn 28 May 1952 i NARA, RG 469, Mission to Denmark, Productivity & technical Exchange Division, subject files, 1948-54 box 1.

<sup>62</sup> Søren Mørch and Tom Buk-Swienty, *Købmandenes Historie* (København: Gads Forlag, 2007), 202-5.

### Conclusion

To Danish participants the study tours above all confirmed that the United States was a model for the future. The Danish experts who had the opportunity to visit the United States through the Technical Assistance Programme found US ways of production, on the whole, appealing, and US methods and ideas were widely discussed and broadly welcomed in Denmark. In fact, the appeal of American society did not originate in either US diplomacy or incentives such as the Technical Assistance scheme, but rather derived from the promises of higher living standards sought by Danes and many other Europeans alike.

Agricultural production was the area in which American consumer society seemed to be least relevant. Across Europe an increase in food production was a basic and necessary economic and political goal. However, if the Technical Assistance Programme had only promised more butter and bacon to the Danish agricultural sector, then there would have been no need to focus on mechanisation and saving man hours. Danish agriculture already produced an exportable surplus and Danish production per acre was actually higher than in the United States. But the key underlying concept of the Technical Assistance Programme – productivity – prescribed a universal recipe for progress and was perceived as the only way a better living standard could be achieved.

While the connections with American style consumption as perceived by the Danes might have been indirect in the area of agriculture, by contrast both industrial and trade union officials became increasingly aware of both the retail sectors' and the individual consumer's role in the economy. Merchants and other retailers were given the opportunity to visit the United States to learn how to modernise their shops and implement self-service in order to both ensure lower consumer prices and to some degree stimulate consumption. The open shelves and colorful packaging made the modernised shops in Denmark 'festive, cozy and well designed', and were not merely an advantage for busy costumers who did not have all day to wait in line but also invited housewives to study the variety of goods on offer.<sup>63</sup>

The travelling Danes perceived economic growth, mass production and mass consumption as being intimately linked with the 'American way'. As they argued, traditional wisdom to save your pennies for a rainy day and buy shoes and dresses that would last for years was outdated now that the Americans had demonstrated that consumption, rather than prudence, was the way to prosperity. Victoria de Grazia is right to argue that the actual change in consumer culture did not become available immediately, and, in the Danish case, not until the very end of the 1950s. Despite this, the message of the Technical Assistance Programme was unmistakable: higher levels of consumption were not just tomorrow's reward for today's hard work, but were an integral part of the US model for economic growth that the Technical Assistance Programme promoted. And, as such, David Ellwood is correct in arguing that the Marshall Plan most certainly meant mass production for mass consumption.

<sup>63</sup> 'Selvbetjeningsdiskussion', *Dansk Handelsblad*, 3, 15. Jan. (1954).

When we consider the Technical Assistance Programme in terms of Americanisation, then the 'American Way' presented here was a powerful, appealing, interconnected model for prosperity: higher productivity in the agricultural sector was possible because industry could absorb the excess workers, an expansion of industry was possible because exports and consumption would increase and with increased consumption the living standards of common people would also increase. Nonetheless, the reach of the US example was not without limits. When we look at Danish participation in the Technical Assistance Programme it is clear that not everything American was perceived as desirable. Acceptance of US principles required that they could somehow be modified to fit Danish habits, needs and ideals. Even those who most actively sought American know-how and inspiration and crossed the Atlantic doing so, would adapt the experience to best fit their own needs.