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## ERKKI KOISO-KANTTILA AS THE DESIGNER OF LAPLAND'S TYPE- PLANNED HOUSES

ANU SOIKKELI

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### Abstract

Research into the post-war reconstruction period in Finland has mainly focused on the national reconstruction's massive production and building processes and urban architecture; or issues regarding the housing of returning soldiers and displaced civilians from Karelia. Lapland's part in particular has been neglected in the national history overviews, and thus there is very little examination of the type-planned houses in the area.

The architectural goals of the type-planned houses and their status as the questionable representatives of modernism have been briefly touched upon in post-war research. In the early studies, the designs of the reconstruction period, type-planned houses in particular, received much criticism. However, from the 1990s onwards the attitudes towards them took a more positive turn. None of the studies or interviews have paid much attention to the views of the designers regarding the goals of the type-planned house designing process, or on the lack of building materials at the time and its effects on the designing work. This paper examines these issues from the point of view of an individual designer, Erkki Koiso-Kanttila.

It is impossible for the decade-long criticism towards the reconstruction period type-planned houses not to have affected the designers of these houses. In the worst cases this criticism caused a sort of a trauma for the designers, as they were shamed by it. This trauma was also noticeable in the way Koiso-Kanttila felt about a significant, yet underestimated phase of his career.

Keywords:

post-war reconstruction,  
housing, type-planned houses,  
criticism, trauma

## 1. Contents and goals of the study

The study at hand examines Koiso-Kanttila's status in the reconstruction process of Lapland; in particular the design principles of the so-called reconstruction era type-planned houses, as reflected by his type-planned house designs. The study is based on my interview with Koiso-Kanttila in 2002 as well as on his vast personal archive. After his death in 2006, his papers, consisting of a substantial archive of diary kind calendars, photographic albums, letters, plans and publications were handled to me to be used in a biographical study. Any biographical study, if it is to do justice to its subject, must embrace the complexities of influences and relationships in a life. Consequently, this paper engages Koiso-Kanttila's contemporaries and precursors in pursuing the same or similar ideals in contexts of type-planned houses. In this paper I also examine how the type-planned houses are valued as part of the reconstruction period building, as well as their relationship with modernism in light of earlier studies, with emphasis on the changes in how buildings are valued.

Architectural history need not be just about buildings or architects but can also be about relationships, values and how these inform the process of architectural practice. Therefore this article is structured around different aspects of the relationship between values and architecture that shaped Koiso-Kanttila's life and legacy. The starting point of the study at hand is both historically and societally contextualising. The subject, data and sources of the study have an emphasis on everyday practicality; however, at the same I will shed light on the interpretations of the reconstruction period through the writings of a few central architectural researchers. This study is in many respects based on views and approaches that have not been examined before. The approach I have taken on the matter thus aims to cross-reference both the reconstruction period and its interpretations. The research conducted complements the existing discourse on reconstruction by taking the views and experiences of an individual designer under discussion, and by examining how the strong criticism towards the type-planned houses affected the designer's work, as he views his 1940s work history against his entire career<sup>1</sup>. The approach of the study is also aimed at discovering why research on the reconstruction period type-planned houses was not undertaken until relatively late, in the 1990s.

## 2. A short overview on Erkki Koiso-Kanttila

Professor and architect Erkki Koiso-Kanttila (1914–2006) is better known for his work as the Rector of the University of Oulu and a long-term professor, than as a designer or a researcher. He made a career for himself as a designer and a teacher, as well as a building executive. For the larger audiences Koiso-Kanttila is practically an unknown architect. However, he was a versatile designer whose work included everything from recreational buildings to schools and care facilities. Erkki Koiso-Kanttila

1 A biography of Erkki Koiso-Kanttila will be published by Anu Soikkeli in spring 2015.

represents those designers whose work can be seen mainly in the background of the development of the building industry and architecture.

During the Continuation War (1941–1944) Koiso-Kanttila took part in the design and guidance work of Karelia's reconstruction as a Building Officer. After the war in 1945 he was asked to take the position of Design Director in the Lapland section of KYMRO (the Ministry of Transport and Public Works' building department), in an effort to rebuild Finnish Lapland. In 1950 Koiso-Kanttila was appointed the Head of Design of the Finnish Association of Architects, SAFA's, Building Standards Committee, a position which he held until 1958. His main responsibilities were the development of the RT Building Information File and compiling of the files. In addition to this he acted as the First Deputy City Architect of Helsinki in the years 1958 through 1959, and as the Deputy City Architect until 1961, after which he had a significant career at the University of Oulu both as a professor of architecture and as the University Rector. Koiso-Kanttila resigned as the Rector of the University of Oulu in 1968, because he preferred to work as a professor, and retired in 1977. However he continued to supervise the building of the university as the Chairman of the Advisory Board until 1982.



Figure 1  
Erkki Koiso-Kanttila (1914–2006) as a  
young architect in the 1940s.

E. KOISO-KANTTILA'S PRIVATE ARCHIVES.

As a young architect Koiso-Kanttila worked as an office architect, for instance at the office of architect Aarne Ervi, and during his years at the Building Standards Committee he worked closely with architect Alvar Aalto. Alongside his official career he worked actively as a designer from 1939 until 1979. He designed numerous public and private buildings which were held in high regard at the time. Many of the buildings he designed have been featured in architectural publications both in Finland and abroad and they have also been presented in the *Suomi rakentaa*, i.e. *Finnish architecture*, exhibitions that included selected examples of Finnish architecture. Stylistically Koiso-Kanttila was not committed to keeping up with the trends of the time, and his work is rather branded with a certain minimalistic humanity and tightly space-bound architecture together with a sense of meaningfulness. The unwritten goal of his designs was always the additional demand of technical sustainability. He was not very eager to try out new technical innovations or building materials, but rather was dispassionately analytical and critical towards them.



### 3. The reconstruction period and housing

According to the most widely accepted interpretation, the Finnish reconstruction period is considered to fall within a time frame starting at the end of the Winter War in 1940, continuing throughout the war and the 1940s until at least 1952, when the last war reparations were made to the Soviet Union. The building conditions at the time were extremely demanding. The most urgent issues at hand were the need to build new production and energy facilities to replace the ones lost or destroyed in the war, and especially the massive lack of housing for displaced citizens.



Rapid revitalisation of the Finnish countryside was fundamentally important for restoring Finland, a country which relied heavily on its agriculture. Due to this the building of small residential houses quickly became the main form of building during the reconstruction period. The rebuilding of Karelia area was a vast project that continued throughout the Continuation War (1941 to 1944). According to the terms of the 1944 peace treaty, eastern Karelia was to be surrendered to the Soviet Union, thus bringing about the question of relocating the nearly 500 000 of Karelia's inhabitants in other parts of Finland.

While the war in the rest of Finland was over and its destruction partly mended, fighting still continued for nearly six months (1944–1945) in

**Figure 2**  
The destruction of WWII was heavy, particularly in Northern Finland. As a result of the war some 40–47 % of the dwellings in the area were destroyed, and the provincial capital of Rovaniemi was burned to the ground.

SA-KUVA.

Lapland, during which almost half of its infrastructure and buildings were destroyed by the Germans as they retreated out of Finland. The level of destruction in the residential centres was almost complete. For example, the capital city of Lapland, Rovaniemi, lost over 90 per cent of its buildings (Ursin, 1980, pp. 383–385). In the Finnish historical rhetoric the well-established concepts of «the Winter War» and «the Continuation War» have led to the marginalisation of the Lapland War in national memory, and even in the most recent overviews on the subject, the experiences of Lapland residents during the war and the destruction of an entire region have largely been omitted. The history of the reconstruction of Lapland is practically unwritten (e.g. Tuominen, 2012, *passim*). There has been no research whatsoever on the specifics of the reconstruction of Lapland within the national architectural research.

Building during the reconstruction period demanded extreme rationalisation of the building industry, for which the Finnish Association of Architects was responsible. It was at that time when, for instance, most of the type-planned house models and the RT Files were born. As a result of the standardisation work, the most common small residential house of the reconstruction period, the gabled, board-clad, one-and-a-half storey house, was developed. Their ideological starting point was a modernistic doctrine of standardization. Designed for ordinary people, type-planned houses aimed at universality: they should be suitable for everywhere and everyone. They spread all over the country – in the countryside and on the outskirts of towns – at a time when the dwelling and the need for rapid housing were central issues in architecture: over 120 houses had been destroyed in the war or were left behind in the territories ceded to the Soviet Union.

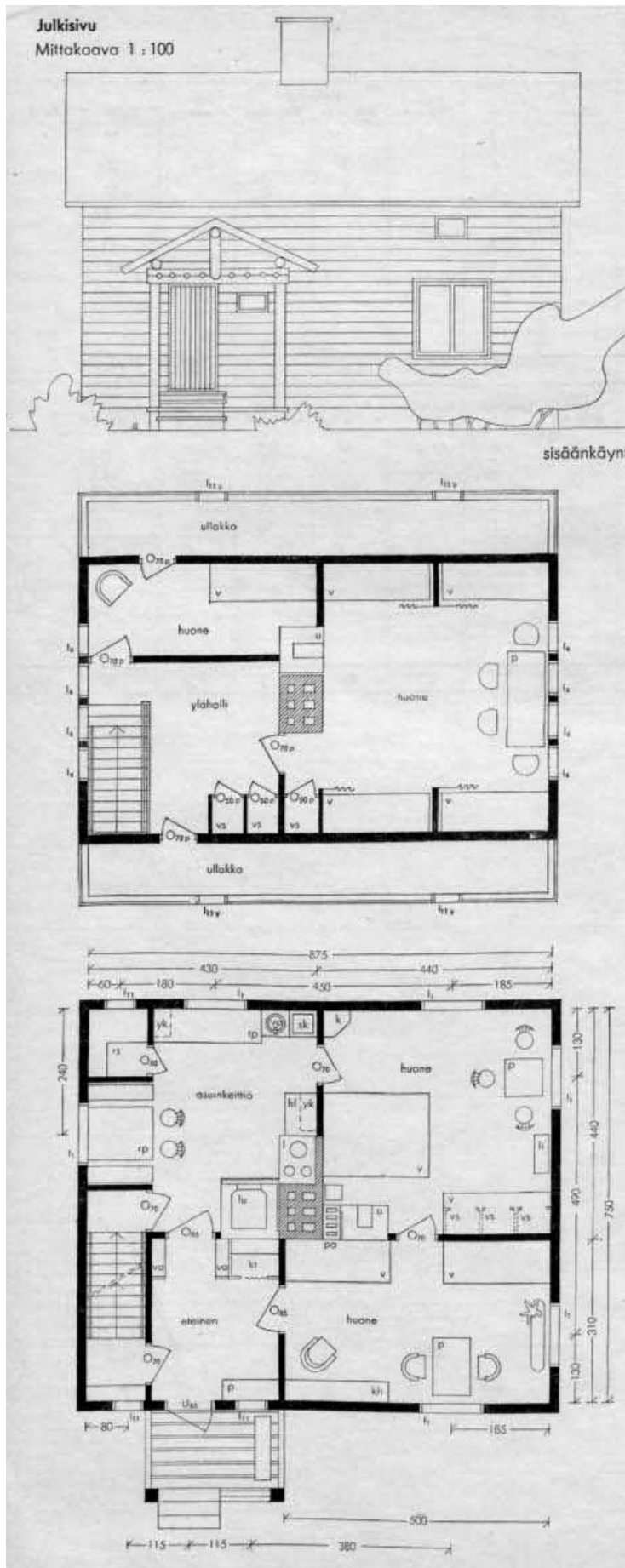


Figure 3  
 A one-and-a-half-story, pitched-roofed, nearly square wooden house with a small floor area emerged as the dominant building type in the reconstruction period. The rooms were arranged around fireplaces and a chimney located in the centre of the house plan. The second-floor rooms could initially be left unfinished or they could be rented out and then taken into the family's own use at a later time. The façades of the buildings were faced with uniform, smooth horizontal or vertical board facing, the windows were quite small and the buildings usually had a small glass or open porch. In general, these houses had three rooms on the ground floor: a kitchen, a living room and a bedroom; two more bedrooms were often added later in the attic. The Ministry of Agriculture, Settlement Department: type plans / type 6 «Growing house for rural areas», 1943.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF FINLAND.

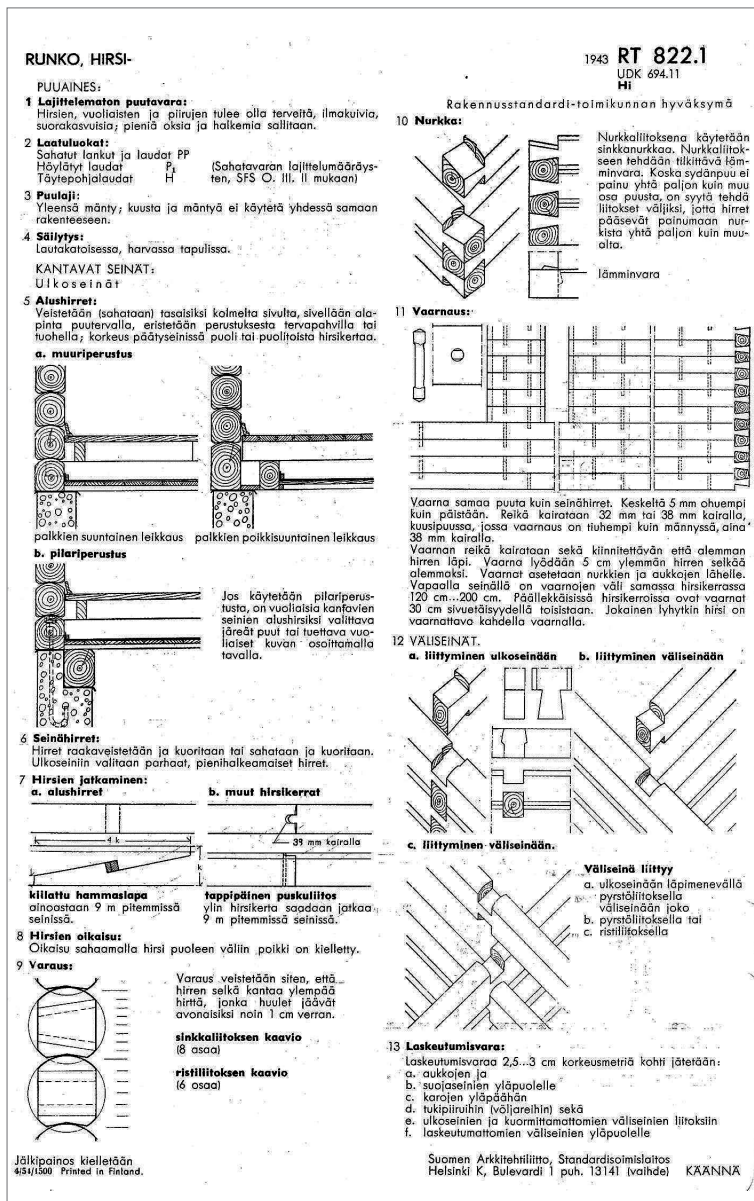


Figure 4  
The Finnish Association of Architects stressed the importance of standardization. Economical resources were limited and standardization focused on the individual parts of the building. The instrument of standardization was the Building Information File, so called RT, where the data was published on individual cards. Also some type-planned houses were published on Building Information cards (RT-files). Most of the cards gave detailed information how to build in an economical and esthetical way and at the same time ensure the long-term durability.

#### 4. On the designing of the reconstruction period type-planned house

The small residential type-planned houses were designed from the end of the 1930s onwards by various instances in order to meet the need for better living conditions of the working population. The influence of the Swedish type-planned house development was considerable. The time period during which the type houses were designed guaranteed – in spite of its brevity – that the reconstruction of Finland was realised as high-quality building rather than barrack solutions. Initially the construction was conducted with the help of 24 different type-planned house blue prints received from the housing committee of the Central Organisation of Finnish Agricultural Societies (Laukkonen, ca. 1980, p. 4).

The foundations of the so-called brother-in-arms houses were designed at the Finnish Association of Architects' reconstruction office. Other instances involved in the design work were various ministries as well as private organisations. The small residential house in all its variations was the most common building type, because it could be built entirely out of timber during a time when building supplies were scarce. Along with the various type-planned house series of the 1940s, the detached house type of the time, the so-called reconstruction type, was established as the norm in building (Helamaa, 1983, p. 80).



Figures 5 and 6  
Today's typical reconstruction period area, Karjasilta in Oulu. Various modifications of the same basic type of house spread throughout Finland. It was used on rural resettlement plots and in reconstruction neighborhoods in population centers, where the closely-spaced rows of similar houses along the streets created town-like streetscapes

ANU SOIKKELI.

Building in accordance with the type-planned house blueprints had a great significance in all stages of the reconstruction period. It was the only way to manage the designing and building of small residential houses (Erkki Koiso-Kanttila interview, 27.8.2002). The same basic type of residential buildings spread all over Finland in different variations. It was used in the countryside as well as in the new residential areas of cities. The one-and-a-half storey, gabled, almost square timber building with a small surface area became the most common building type.

Structurally these houses relied firmly on the Finnish tradition of timber building, but they varied in appearance from the traditional Finnish houses. The rooms were divided around the fireplaces and flues situated in the middle of the building. The one-and-a-half storey buildings with lofts were high and had a dice-like shape, exaggerated by the somewhat steep saddle roof. The upstairs rooms could be left undone at first, or alternatively they could be rented out and only later taken into one's own use. The façades of the buildings were clad with uniform smooth horizontal or vertical boarding, the windows were rather small and the houses were usually equipped with a somewhat small glass or open patio area.

## 5. Koiso-Kanttila's house design and Lapland

Various studies have mentioned that building types specifically designed for northern areas were used in the reconstruction of Lapland (e.g. Palomäki, 2011, p. 293). The argument has always been made without justification. Kirsi Saarikangas<sup>2</sup> has reached an opposite conclusion in her dissertation (Saarikangas, 1993, p. 280).<sup>3</sup> The type-planned house blueprints Koiso-Kanttila designed for use in the residential centres of Lapland, the *Omakoti* series 1–10, comply in terms of its solutions with the other residential centre type blueprints of the time, and thus do not in fact vary greatly from the other types of post-war era houses.

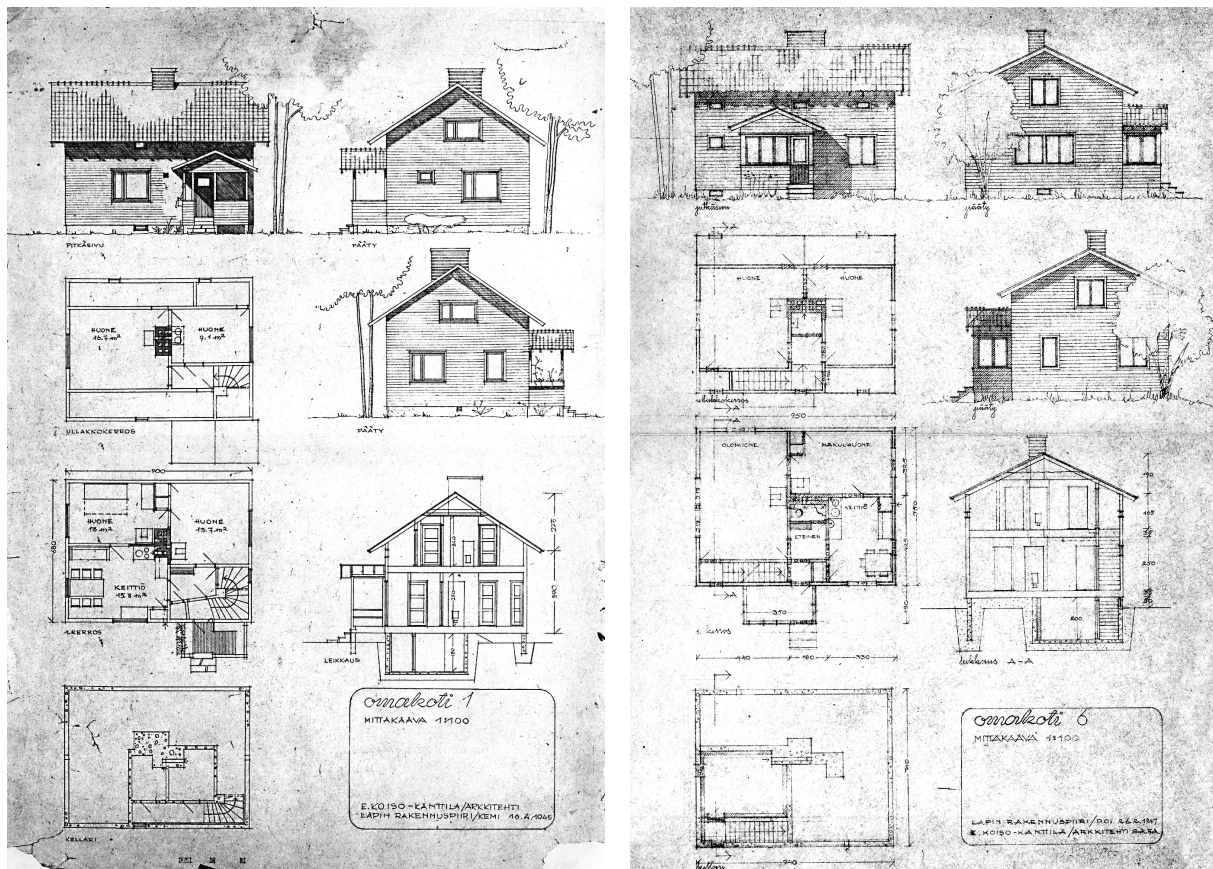
Certain kinds of countryside or city-specific attributes have been searched for in the studies regarding type-planned houses, assumed to reflect the location in which the house is meant to be built.<sup>4</sup> In the post-war era house, that otherwise featured very little detail, the porch was an important architectural item. The way that the porch has been situated and the way the façade cladding is laid has been seen to reflect the designers' relationship with modernism and tradition; topics suitable for the city and the countryside. Timber was a traditional and readily available material with lots of possibilities for variation: vertical cladding for a traditionally rural look, and horizontal for a modern city feel.

In most of Koiso-Kanttila's *Omakoti* types the cladding had been presented as horizontal; however, vertical cladding had been used for some types. For example, in the single-storey *Omakoti 4* type Koiso-Kanttila

2 Kirsi Saarikangas, director of Finnish Research School for Women's & Gender Studies and since January 2011 professor of art history. In 1993 Saarikangas examined the central building type of the 1940s, the type-planned house, in her dissertation *Model Houses for Model Families. Gender, Ideology and the Modern Dwelling. The Type-Planned Houses of the 1940s in Finland*, which is the most in-depth study regarding the reconstruction period type-planned houses (Saarikangas, 1993).

3 The Ministry of Agriculture's housing department (ASO). The type blueprints provided for circulation by the Central Organisation of Finnish Agricultural Societies and the Agricultural and economical societies can, on the other hand, be considered designed for northern conditions in terms of their layout.

4 For comparison of architectural attributes suitable for the countryside and the city, see for example Heininen-Blomstedt (2013), p. 87.



used a vertical cladding, although in other respects the building is the most modern of the *Omakoti* series types. On the other hand, studies have taken the presupposition that if the designer placed the porch symmetrically in the middle of the longest side, it created a more traditional feel, whereas placing an open porch in a corner or under a suspended roof would give a more modern impression. This would imply a conscious choice by the designer. In the *Omakoti* type house series 1–10 there is some variation between porch types, and the openness and placement of the porches did in principle provide the possibility to take part in tradition, or alternatively move away from it.

According to the statement made by Koiso-Kanttila in an interview, practicality and the lack of building materials framed the design process. In the northern conditions it would have been more practical to use a closed porch; however, the lack of glass for windows led to different versions of an open porch. For example, in the one-and-a-half storey *Omakoti 1* type the gabled porch was a reminiscence of a traditional Finnish porch type, however in the *Omakoti 4* type the suspended roof reached over the porch giving it a less traditional look. Based on Koiso-Kanttila's interview and a careful analysis of his designs it must be concluded that connecting countryside and city attributes with the type-planned house designs is a result of later interpretation, rather than the intention of

Figures 7 and 8  
Type-planned house «Omakoti 1» and  
«Omakoti 6» designed by Erkki Koiso-  
Kanttila are quite typical examples of  
reconstruction period small houses.

MUSEUM OF FINNISH ARCHITECTURE.

the designers. This notion is supported by examination of other type-planned houses of the time.

Window placement subtly separates the type-planned house blueprints of different designers from one another. Although the size and structure of windows were standardised, they did manage to retain their expressiveness as architectural items through their placement. Placement of windows on the end façades could be done more freely than on the longer sides, as the nearly uniform sized rooms led to an aspiration of symmetry regarding the look of the longer façade. Koiso-Kanttila did not strive for the ribbon window type solutions that were typical for functionalism, where windows were, for instance, joined together with panelling, as was done in some of the type-planned houses. Instead he accepted the lack of window glass and let it show in his façade designs. In the Omakoti 4 type, however, he did place two middle-framed windows side by side in order to achieve a larger opening for light in the lounge, but clearly this was not done with the intent of creating a ribbon window, but rather to achieve a more illuminated feel.

The careful measurement of the type-planned houses' floor plans, together with their functional design, reflects the principles derived from the research on functionalism and minimalistic living space<sup>5</sup>. The rooms of the houses were situated around the flue, and were typically organised so that one could walk through them. Koiso-Kanttila's smallest type design had two rooms and a kitchen on one level. His largest type designs were the most popular ones. Access upstairs was arranged through a closed front hall, making it easy to rent out the rooms as lack of housing at the time was extensive. Often the upstairs rooms were not built until years later, once it was easier to acquire building materials. The layout of the single-storey Omakoti 4 type varied from the typical post-war era houses in that the rooms were not walk-through, but entry to the bedroom was via the lounge. The kitchen and bedroom had been separated with a row of closets. The rooms were situated around the flue as in other layouts. See Koiso-Kanttila (1946), p. 21.

Various studies have argued that the type-planned house blueprints were adapted quite freely in their implementation. Varied adaptation has been linked in particular with the peripheral conditions in Lapland. Koiso-Kanttila did not endorse this claim in his interview, as one of the prerequisites of the government-funded project was that the blueprints were adhered to. According to him such adaptation occurred by the decision of the designer, and could be seen as modifications in the blueprints (Erkki Koiso-Kanttila interview, 27.8.2002).<sup>6</sup> The quality of the design was trusted, which is one of the reasons why they were not modified on the building sites. Stories told in connection with the project of memory collection on the reconstruction of Lapland support this view:

5 Heininen-Blomstedt, for example, argues that the development of functional house design continued in the pre-war and reconstruction era type houses, although architecturally they contain very few modern attributes. Heininen-Blomstedt (2013), p. 82.

6 Deviation from the blueprints could result in disqualification of purchase permit: »As an example of the uncompromising attitude towards the blueprints, Väinö Sirkka recalled that when he wanted to change, and did change, the position of the door in order to get a log sledge inside the house, he was denied of nails. He had to smuggle them over from Sweden...» (Vaattovaara, 1983, p. 227).

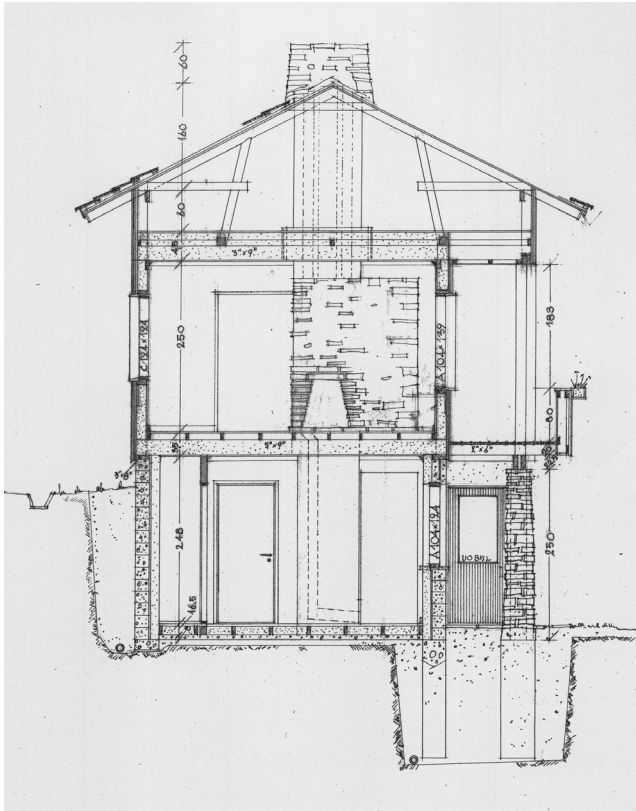


*I don't know why, but my father was heart set on having three windows side by side on the main façade. They said that in that case the house would be structurally weak, as the wall could not hold the weight of three windows. So the blueprints we got only had two windows on the main façade. But my father insisted on having three windows. Because of this we could not get a professional carpenter to work for us, as no one dared to deviate from the blueprints (Pekkala, 1983, p. 61).<sup>7</sup>*

On the other hand, the memoirs regarding the reconstruction of the countryside have stated that in addition to the 1:100 blueprints, there were no specific instructions available, and everything was done case specifically. One of the problems seems to have been that the contractors hired by the agricultural societies were unaware of the RT files, in addition to the insufficient availability of said RT files. The main traditional building material in the countryside was log, and as it represented a well-known tradition of building, it was perhaps felt that there was no need for instructions as such.<sup>8</sup> In Lapland the level of guidance in building, and thus the quality as well, could vary greatly between the rural areas and the residential centres. The biggest problems were encountered during the early stages of the reconstruction process, when the official system was only being set up, and the reconstruction of roads and bridges was still in progress (Tervonen, 1994, pp. 28, 38–39). Variation in implementation between the countryside and the cities and towns is evident in the reconstruction of Lapland, so it is by no means a homogeneous area.

7 The building master who conducted the final inspection did not complain of this, as he had not seen the original blueprints. Control in the countryside was not necessarily as strict as in the cities.

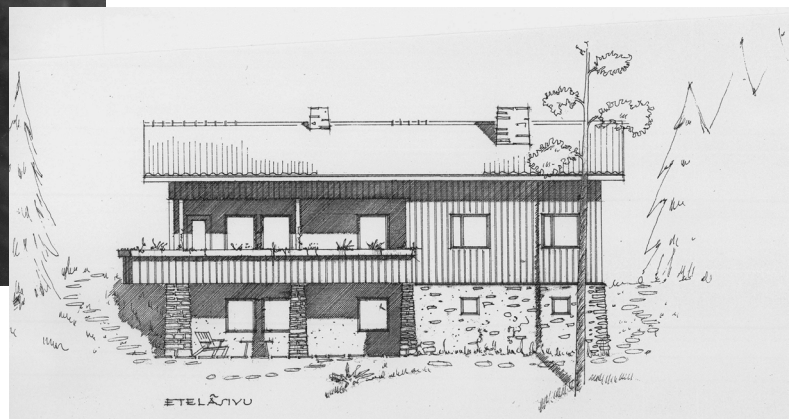
8 Such descriptions are also present in the stories from the time. E.g. Luro, 1983, p. 126.



Figures 9–12

A small part of reconstruction period constructing consisted of individually planned houses. Koiso-Kanttila planned also many of those in Lapland. An example is his own house at Rovaniemi, 1947, which at the time was regarded as one of the best examples of housing architecture in Finland.

E. KOISO-KANTTILA'S PRIVATE ARCHIVES.



## 6. Architecture during the reconstruction period and evaluation of type-planned houses

Writing a general overview of the architecture of reconstruction period type-planned houses is challenging; however, research on the events of the period is quite well established due to the interpretations made during the past forty years. The type-planned houses have been seen as a softening of the modern theoretical ethos – as either a conscious or unconscious need to break out of the strict formality, or as a romantic period that is completely separated from modernism. According to some interpretations the softening of architecture was caused by the war and the human catastrophe that ensued, in addition to the consequential lack of building materials. The earliest interpretations are quite critical of the architecture of the 1940s and 1950s. Art historians Kyösti Ålander<sup>9</sup> and his follower Asko Salokorpi<sup>10</sup> were the loudest representatives of this critical view.

The building of type-planned houses was considered necessary in order to solve the housing problem in Finland; however, the architecture and planning of the areas did not receive much praise even among the architects themselves. For example, in 1941 architect Alvar Aalto, who himself took part in the designing of reconstruction period type-planned houses, was sceptical of its standardisation and predicted problems as well:

*It is obvious that we can build five or twenty-five similar 'standard houses' without a reaction from the people; we may even build fifty, whereas a hundred will already bring about problems. However, under no circumstances can we build hundreds of them. The way that standardisation is being applied to buildings nowadays has incredibly constricted limits, which hinders the method considerably. It is apparent that no pure, unadulterated joy and satisfaction is derived from this, and thus as a means it is incomplete and in some way proletarianises the human soul. The current small 'garden colonies', of course, are much better than these, however it is not impossible that this short-sighted standardisation method borrowed from technology will result in the development of a new kind of slum – that of the mind (Aalto, 1983, p. 129–130).*

In his extensive overview *Rakennustaide renessansista funktionalismiin* (Architecture from the Renaissance to Functionalism) published in 1954, Kyösti Ålander reserved a mere page for the 1940s. In his view the 1940s was a sort of a temporary phase, a false step on the road to modernism, described as follows: «So once more the life of new architecture seemed threatened, however this time the threat was only ostensible. A few years of disillusion were enough to guide architecture back from the swamp of subjectivity into the straight and narrow firm road of progressive development». In his view the greatest problem with the decade's

9 Kyösti Ålander (1917–1975) was not an architect but made a long career as a critic. He saw modern architecture as a manifestation of its time. Ålander's journal writings is both revered and criticized. He is remembered, above all, as Museum of Finnish Architecture's archive instigator and first director of the museum.

10 Asko Salokorpi (1935–2009) was one of the most known Finnish critics of architecture. He worked as an archivist, research manager and vice president at the Museum of Finnish Architecture and also as a teacher at the Department of Architecture at the Helsinki University of Technology.

architecture was the same as that of Jugend's; an aspiration to create something richer and warmer than the achievements of rationalism. War, on the other hand, he defined as a contrast to the buzzword of the time, humanity (Ålander, 1954, p. 485). Ålander positively despises the architecture of the 1940s and finds it completely separate from functionality. Ålander's rhetoric seems to describe a battle between the progressive and rational aspirations and the romantic, humanity and decorativeness-embracing regression (see also Hakli, 2012, p. 33). Furthermore, Ålander focuses on interpreting the 1940s architecture on a general level, and makes no note of the type-planned houses as part of it.



Figure 13

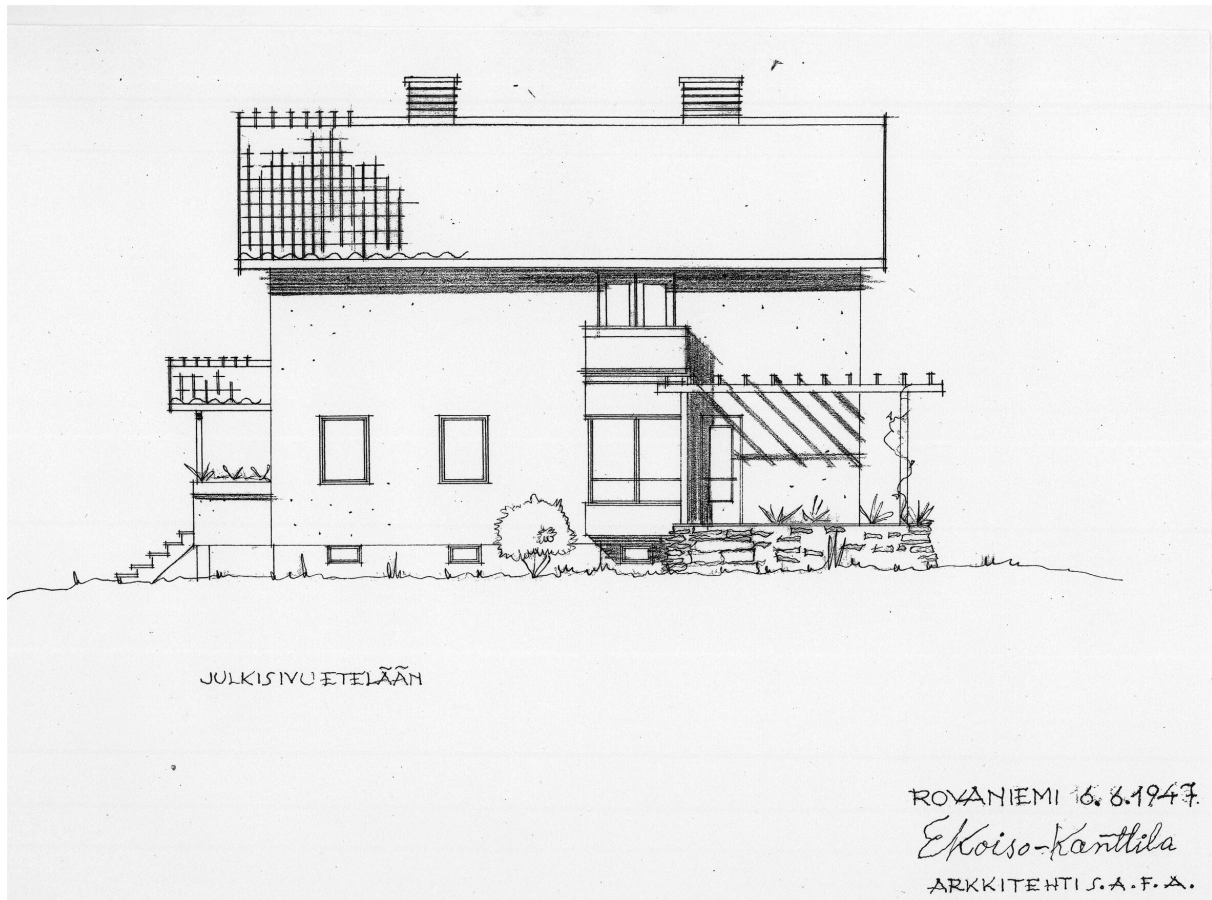
This monotonous view was considered as a warning example in 1946. The original text in a publication in 1946: «A concentration camp? – Not but in Finland, one of the newest residential areas, completed as late as 1943. (...) Does the seeing of that kind of a landscape not press a life and to rumble every mind of the healthy and free human being? In a mental mind this is a slum already now, in the future it will become it in the full significance of the word.» (von Hertzzen, 1946, p. 33)

HERTZEN, H. 1946. KOTI VAIKO KASARMI LAPSILLEMME. HELSINKI: WSOY, 33.

In Ålander's point of view, the war was responsible for the straying away from modernistic goals, and a couple of decades later Asko Salokorpi argued that perhaps functionalism itself contained some aspects that caused a change in the mode of expression. «In the 1930s there was already a desire to soften the harsh stylistic attributes of functionalism – for example the flat roof that gave the house a boxy look» (Salokorpi, 1971, p. 34.). However, Salokorpi was not happy with the one-and-a-half storey detached house either:

*This house has been considered the worst false step in the history of modern Finnish architecture. It has forsaken the aesthetic ideal of functionalism; and at the same time the detached house with a high gabled roof is the caricature of a traditional low farmhouse. (...) The most significant improvement in this area is the low detached house without a cellar that came into fashion at the end of the 1950s, which like the old farmhouse blends better into the landscape. It is perhaps permissible to see some influence of the functional design tradition in the inappropriateness of the post-war era type (Ibid.).<sup>11</sup>*

11 A couple of decades later Salokorpi had softened his view: «... when I look at the countryside today, I do not like the flat roofed houses at all anymore, but instead I rather think that the old detached houses fit our scenery better; and so it seems that one's opinions can change from time to time.» Nicklin interview, 21.1.1987, 9. Interviewer Asko Salokorpi (The Museum of Architecture's archives).



The most notable statement on behalf of the new, 1940s architecture embracing view, was presented in the 1983 exhibition and connected publication on 1940s and 1950s architecture composed by Erkki Helamaa<sup>12</sup>. Based on his sources, interviews and his own observations, he came to the conclusion that the Finnish reconstruction period was in fact romantic in terms of its materialistic culture (Hakli, 2012, p. 54). Whereas Salokorpi had bundled all one-and-a-half storey houses into one, Helamaa introduced the different type-planned houses and their designers in more detail.

According to Helamaa, the 1940s did not consciously try to separate itself from the previous decade, but rather aimed at functioning in accordance with the same theoretical goals.

*1940s romanticism did not develop its own architectural theory or an ideology. No manifests were made on its behalf, nor did anyone have to declare their support of it. Therefore no devoted groups were born around the 1940s romanticism either. In fact, many of the special attributes of the decade have been discovered only since then (Helamaa, 1983, pp. 121–122).*

**Figure 14**  
House Lanner (1947) by Kuisma shows the impact of the shortage of building materials to architecture. If the roof implementation as flat-roofed would have been possible, the building would have represented the architecture of functionalism. The reconstruction period architecture and functionalism were not as opposed to each other as it is often presented.

E. KOISO-KANTTILA'S PRIVATE ARCHIVES.

<sup>12</sup> Erkki Helamaa (1924–2014) was a Finnish architect and a professor in building science at the Tampere University of Technology 1971–1988.

In addition to this, Helamaa also clearly saw the problem of the decade:

*In brief statements it has been quite unanimously agreed that architecture was at a standstill during this decade, wedged between two superior periods of time. Behind it, in the not-very-distant past, there was the bold ideology of functionalism; and in the future ahead lay a time during which Finnish architecture in a flash ascended into the international elite (Helamaa, 1983, p. 115).*

The reconstruction period was situated in between two major transitional periods, and was thus overshadowed by both the former and the latter.

It was not until the turn of the 1980s and 1990s when the reconstruction period type-planned houses became to be more clearly regarded as part of the Finnish building tradition. Professor Vilhelm Helander<sup>13</sup>, for instance, says the following in his work published in 1987: «*The one-and-a-half storey dice-like timber houses with their porches are so well established as an integral part of the countryside and the suburbs that they have become the archetype of Finnish way of living*» (Helander, 1989, p. 23). In 1993, Riitta Nikula<sup>14</sup> in turn describes the lush green type-planned house neighbourhoods as follows: «*Tall trees, dense bushes and blooming perennials nowadays make these detached house neighbourhoods so lovely, it is hard for many to understand why they were so heartlessly redesigned as new row house lots only a couple of decades ago*» (Nikula, 1993, p. 138).

Kirsi Saarikangas examined the central building type of the 1940s, the type-planned house, in her dissertation in 1993 (Saarikangas, 1993, passim). Saarikangas placed the type-planned houses into the genealogy of the Finnish house, taking a step back from the earlier evaluations of the architecture of the time, which appealed to the prevailing abnormal situation and shortage of everything. Saarikangas emphasises the ideological goals rather than the materialistic restrictions and examines the idiom of the type-planned house in terms of space organisation, which reflects both the concept of a nuclear family and that of reinforcing the gender roles.

Post-war architecture has been seen as a temporary phase that deviates from the fundamental principles of modernistic architecture. The architecture of the reconstruction period type-planned houses did not directly affiliate with modernism; however, despite the accusations of romanticism the type does not look back on any earlier period either, but follows the principles of functionalism in terms of its interior layout, in other words functional separation. A new inspiration for architecture was sought from the traditions of timber building, particularly during the reconstruction of Karelia (e.g. Helander and Rista, 1987, p. 23).

13 Vilhelm Helander was a professor of architectural history at Helsinki University of Technology, Department of Architecture 1985–2006.

14 Riitta Nikula is a Finnish art historian, author and professor emerita of art history in the University of Helsinki. She has also acted as the head of research at the Museum of Finnish Architecture from 1988 to 1994.



Figures 15 and 16  
Many of the buildings has been refurbished and modernized completely from the outside as their modest appearance hasn't been appreciated.  
ANU SOIKKELI.

In some connections the design of the reconstruction period has been seen as a strong, conscious renewal of architecture. Architect Aulikki Herneoja<sup>15</sup>, for example, has stated the following in her dissertation: «The group of professionals involved in the reconstruction period design work held humane architecture with its eaves and traditional paint in high regard. Not even the snide critique of the establishment could turn the heads of architects working hard on the everyday design» (Herneoja, 2007, p. 62). According to the view presented by Koiso-Kanttila in his interview, there was little discussion of ideology involved (Erkki Koiso-Kanttila interview, 27.8.2002). According to him the architects continued their work in the prevailing premises. The period in question involved a clear conflict between a great need for building and lack of resources and regulation. According to Koiso-Kanttila, humane factors may have had an effect on the way architecture was shaped and how it changed. He also suggests that it was the building technical factors that affected the development of architecture, more so than people usually care to admit. For example, flat roof solutions were nearly impossible to realise

15 Aulikki Herneoja works as a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture, in the University of Oulu. Her dissertation *The Colouration of the Home During the Post-War Reconstruction Period* was published in 2007.

in a sustainable manner as materials were scarce, so it was only natural to design houses with pitched roofs.<sup>16</sup>

The selection of materials, for example the use of traditional paints, was dictated by the available building materials rather than anything else. The pressure of housing the population fast and with quality was the guiding force behind the process. From the point of view of the designer there was neither time nor need for stylistic variation. Five years of experience as a wartime designer had probably also had its part in lessening the need for questioning. According to Koiso-Kanttila, there was no apparent juxtaposition involved in the design work as described by Herneoja. Erkki Helamaa also concurs that stylistic issues were not under debate among the architects during the reconstruction period and in the 1950s, but the work at the Finnish Association of Architects rather focused on finding solutions for the practical problems instead (Erkki Helamaa interview, 17.9.2013).

## 7. Reconstruction and architecture: the designer's trauma?

The post-war era type-planned houses were already condemned in the 1960s and 1970s, not only by researchers, but by the younger generation of architects as well. During that time versatile, flat-roofed and low foundation small houses had become the goal in building design. Only after Koiso-Kanttila retired did the attitudes start to soften, and the type-planned houses of the reconstruction period were slowly gaining a status of a respectable part of the building tradition. Koiso-Kanttila himself had somewhat conflicting feelings towards the reconstruction period and the type-planned houses, or rather he excluded the time period from his career.

I interviewed Koiso-Kanttila in 2002 regarding the reconstruction of Lapland and the type-planned house designs. What was problematic about the interview was addressing these issues. Koiso-Kanttila was happy to talk about the challenges in his career; however, he was very evasive of any questions regarding the end of the 1940s and clearly attempted to steer the conversation towards the 1950s. To my question regarding the designing of the type-planned houses he replied: «*We did what was expected of us. There was no time to think*» (Erkki Koiso-Kanttila interview, 27.8.2002). His reply describes the challenges and atmosphere of the reconstruction period well. He did not describe the type-planned houses much either, but instead regarded them as being appropriate considering the financial aspect and the lack of materials and professionals.

Although later research on the matter has seen a sort of ideological juxtaposition between the modernistic and romantic designs in the 1940s,

16 According to Koiso-Kanttila, humanness was evident in the work of the Building standards Committee: Softer lines instead of sharp window details. Rectangular shapes were seen almost parallel to steel armours. On the other hand, Koiso-Kanttila brings up the softness of the Swedish architecture, and the impact of nature. Erkki Koiso-Kanttila interview, 26.6.1987, interviewer Asko Salokorpi.



Koiso-Kanttila did not find that it had reflected on the everyday work of the designers. Including some kind of ideology, or rather the lack of it, into the examination of the period, as well as the heavy critique towards the type-planned houses, seems to have wounded him as a designer. As a representative of the profession he later shared this critical view, and was thus forced to, in a way, deprecate his own work. The easiest choice was to sort of exclude this time period completely from his career. Approaching the subject matter some 60 years later seemed somewhat traumatic.



Figure 17  
Erkki Koiso-Kanttila in 2002.  
E. KOISO-KANTTILA'S PRIVATE ARCHIVES.

When reflecting on his career as a designer, Koiso-Kanttila himself has given very little emphasis to the designing of the type-planned houses. No doubt the contempt towards the type-planned houses of the reconstruction period in particular, lasting for decades after the war, had had its effect on him. On the other hand, the history of architecture is traditionally seen as the history of heroic architects and heroic buildings; as the history of the design and construction of public buildings.

Koiso-Kanttila was not part of this architectural core. When the reconstruction period type-planned houses started gaining more and more respect, and interest in studying them increased, it was not focused on the reconstruction of Lapland, but rather on the high profile architects who, among others, took part in the design work. In the studies on type-planned houses, the examples given are the designs of architects who have made their name mostly in other projects. The research has been centred on the type-planned houses designed by Finnish architects like Alvar Aalto, Aarne Ervin, Aulis Blomstedt, Yrjö Lindegren and Kaj Englund.

At the end of my interview with Koiso-Kanttila in 2002, he was very much taken and almost revitalised as I brought up the positive features that are nowadays affiliated with the type-planned houses. After the interview he reverted back to the subject with a hint of disbelief in his voice: *«It is truly wonderful that someone can now appreciate those houses»* (Erkki Koiso-Kanttila interview, 27.8.2002). I have later reflected on that moment and wondered why the designer would feel estranged from a part of his career, quickly trying to skip over the period of time in the discussion. In this paper I have attempted to shed light on the possible reasons.

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Soikkeli's present research on the reconstruction period is part of a broader research effort on work biographies, the goal of which is to illuminate how architectural phenomena and themes were reflected in the life's work of a single architect, a career spanning some forty years from the functionalism of the 1930s to the rationalism of the 1970s. The research explores the occurrence and foregrounding of various construction-related themes in national and international discourses of architecture in tandem with the occurrence of these themes in Erkki Koiso-Kanttila's writings, plans, designs and other architectural work. An additional theme that the research brings to the fore is the paradigm shift in planning from the ideals of functionalism to the problem-solving focus of reconstruction and, further, the rationalism of the welfare society.