

Preserving and Presenting Shipbuilders' Heritage: Museum as Facilitator of a Heritage Process

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Abstract: This article details Rauma Maritime Museum's work together with the town's shipbuilder community to preserve and present the shipbuilders' heritage during a turbulent time. The shipyard, which has a history of several centuries, was closed in 2014, and the future of the industry seemed threatened. The shipyard was, however, reopened, and shipbuilding continues. In the co-operation with shipbuilders, the museum found ways to fulfill its objective to actively participate in the life of the community. The work enabled the shipbuilders, with the museum's help, to take control of their own heritage, to make decisions about it and the ways it is presented. The community and the museum have found ways to work toward shared goals, and both benefit from the other's knowledge and expertise.

Keywords: Heritage Community, Identity Work, Industrial Heritage, Museums, Rauma (Finland), Shipbuilders

Shipbuilding in Rauma

Rauma is a small town of about 40,000 inhabitants in Southwestern Finland and was founded in the fifteenth century (Statistics Finland 2017).² Seafaring and related activities have always played a crucial role in its economy and culture. It has a shipbuilding tradition of several centuries. In the sixteenth century the King of Sweden, whose dominion at the time included present-day Finland, ordered the construction of so-called Crown's Yard for building military vessels (Uola 1996).

Countless wooden sailing vessels were built during the following centuries in small shipyards in and around Rauma. Most were small cargo vessels, built to export Finnish timber to European ports. In the second half of the nineteenth century some larger sailing vessels were built for the ocean trade, and in the early twentieth century small steamships were built for the coastal timber trade (Uola 1996). After the Second World War a modern, large-scale shipbuilding industry was started very quickly by two shipyard companies, Hollming and Rauma-Repola. The first vessels they built were exported to the Soviet Union as war reparations. Between 1945 and 2014 more than 600 ships of many different kinds were built in Rauma. The Soviet Union was the biggest customer until 1991, but ships were also built for Finland, Sweden, America, China, and other countries (Uola 1996, 2001; Snellman 2014).

Hollming and Rauma-Repola Shipyards merged in 1992. The ownership and name of the new shipyard changed several times during the 1990s and 2000s. In September 2013 the owner, South Korean-owned STX Finland, announced the impending closure of the Rauma yard. All operations ceased on June 30, 2014, and more than 600 employees were laid off. The future of shipbuilding in Rauma, a proud industry with a tradition of centuries, seemed uncertain (Snellman 2014). However, a new company, Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC), was founded by former employees of STX Finland. In June 2016, it secured its first shipbuilding contract, and the future of shipbuilding industry in Rauma seemed a little brighter again (Rauma Marine Constructions 2016).

The new company functions on a business model based on a network of subcontractors and has few employees of its own (Rauma Marine Constructions 2017). The old shipyards did almost everything in-house and had many permanent employees, who usually became career shipbuilders. Many never worked in any other industry and devoted decades of their lives to the

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² The official population calculated by Statistics Finland on December 31, 2016, was 39,614.

shipyards. This resulted in a strong sense of community among shipbuilders (Uola 1996, 2001). For example, welders who work for a subcontracting metalwork company may work on a shipyard one week and on a building site next week (Rantanen 2017). Consequently, they may not strongly identify as shipbuilders, like the previous generations did.



Figure 1: Rauma-Repola Shipyard, 1956

Source: Rauma Maritime Museum's picture collection, 37323

The closure of the shipyard, even if temporary, caused a crisis not only of local economy, but also of identity. Shipyards had been among the largest and most prestigious places of employment in town. Ships built in Rauma were a source of pride, one of the few things the town was known for elsewhere in Finland and even abroad. As the future of the shipyard was endangered, so was an important element of local identity (Rantanen 2017).

Rauma Maritime Museum wanted to try to help the community deal with this crisis.³ Together with past and present shipbuilders the museum started to collect, preserve, and present the heritage of shipbuilders in Rauma. The co-operation between the museum and shipbuilders has since become a permanent feature in the operation of Rauma Maritime Museum, and this author has been involved with it as a curator of the museum. While only a fraction of the material collected was used in the exhibition, the collection has already proven useful source material for research. In September 2016, I began a research project to write a doctoral thesis on Rauma shipbuilders' heritage in cultural heritage studies at the University of Turku.

Heritage Processes, Participatory Practices, and Experiences Elsewhere

This article reviews the co-operation of Rauma shipbuilder's community and Rauma maritime museum as a heritage process. Laurajane Smith has suggested that heritage is essentially a process consisting of acts of communication and meaning making, rather than tangible places or objects. She argues that heritage is produced by communities in a process of attaching meanings and values to symbols, which can be tangible, like buildings, or intangible, such as songs. Smith sees all heritage as essentially intangible, as even the tangible only becomes heritage through the intangible meanings and values attached to it by a community (Smith 2006).

Anna Sivula has further analyzed heritage processes. She argues that a heritage group, a community connected by a common history and identity, chooses what traces of the past it accepts as evidence worth preserving, not necessarily unanimously but on some level of mutual

³ Detailed information on the museum in Finnish, English, and Russian is available on its website: <https://www.rmm.fi>.

understanding. The process need not be conscious. The participants may feel that they are, for example, recording accurate historical information. Sivula has described three levels of identity work that are present in a heritage process. Monumentalizing identity work chooses symbols of the shared history and justifies their importance. Adoptive identity work creates experiences of belonging to the heritage group and strengthens the feeling of ownership of its symbols. Historizing identity work generates awareness and consciousness of the shared history of the community (Sivula 2015).

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) have defined discussion as the most important mechanism that builds, changes, and maintains identity. Thus, the discussions that took place within the framework of this project have shaped and defined the shipbuilders' identity. Stuart Hall (1988) has claimed that all identities are assumed in relation to self and environment and that identities are constructed on differences. Ian Hacking (2000) argues that identities may be interactive: a person's identity, whether assigned by him- or herself or by others, may influence his or her behavior. Juuso Marttila (2014), in his study of ironworks communities, has demonstrated that professional identity was expressed in very formal and rigid ways—for example, dressing in a certain way or acting in a manner that was expected.

Peter Aronsson (2006) claims that citizens in a democratic society have the right to shape and choose their own cultural identity. Cornelius Holtorf (2006) has discussed the citizens' right to decide what their heritage includes and what it does not instead of having decisions made by an authority imposed on them. This article aims to demonstrate that the shipbuilders of Rauma are exercising these rights by means of their heritage process.

Nina Simon describes an approach to participation in museum that she calls "co-creative." This means that the needs of the participants, not the institutional objectives of the museum, take priority. The participants should be involved in all stages of decision-making, which enables the museum to truly understand what the community really needs and wants and act accordingly (Simon 2010, 263–80).

Other Finnish museums have recently engaged in participatory operations. The case of Forssa Museum, another museum in a small Finnish town with an industrial past, provides some interesting comparisons. It redesigned its exhibitions and pedagogical programs from 2011 to 2013 (Isotalo 2013). The museum invited all inhabitants of Forssa to provide their opinions and suggestions about the museum's future and introduced new communication strategies in order to reach those who had previously expressed little interest in the museum (Huttunen and Kattelus 2012). The project was regarded as a success, and Forssa Museum was awarded the Finnish Museum of the Year prize in 2014. The project in Forssa was visitor-centered, focusing on exhibitions, whereas work with Rauma shipbuilders involved both collecting and exhibiting (Huttunen 2015).

Octave Debary (2004) has described development of an industrial heritage site in Le Creusot, France, over decades. Tanja Petrović (2013) has studied industrial heritage and identities in former Yugoslavia. Debary recounts that when the museum was established in the early 1970s, the first manager wanted to include the local community in the project, but no one wanted to be "associated with the staging of a chapter of history that was still being written at the time" (Debary 2004, 125). The first managers of the museum in Le Creusot employed practices that they themselves described revolutionary, which may have alienated potential participants, perhaps even more so in early 1970s than they would have forty years later (Debary 2004, 126–28). Petrović, too, suggests that ongoing or very recent events cannot be presented in museums (Petrović 2013, 103). As demonstrated in this article, experiences in Rauma differ from their findings.

Cathy Stanton (2005) has studied an attempt at participatory heritage in Lowell, Massachusetts. The project consisted of cookery demonstrations with cultural commentary and involved Lowell's various ethnic communities. According to Stanton's analysis, the project produced positive experiences for participants but largely failed to achieve its objectives. It

resulted in “others” performing their heritage for an audience and reproduced marginalizing patterns present in society (Stanton 2005, 422–27). The Lowell project attempted to assess some challenges that are practically absent among Rauma shipbuilders, like the sensitive issues of ethnicity and relations between communities of different backgrounds. That may, to some extent, explain why Rauma shipbuilders’ heritage work has successfully enabled the participants to present heritage in their own terms, not only perform it, as this article demonstrates.

Henrik Lübker (2016) has criticized current museum practices striving for inclusiveness. He suggests that the museum is always in a position of power: it can include or exclude. Lübker claims that those chosen to be included are given power only momentarily and within a framework defined solely by the museum. He also notes that participatory actions in museum often take place within the framework of a short, fixed-term projects, after which the institutions usually revert to more traditional, non-inclusive operations, failing to achieve any sustainable results (Lübker 2016, 44–46). This article aims to demonstrate that Lübker’s criticism is only partially applicable to this project.

Sometimes presenting heritage in museums and declaring sites as heritage monuments have been met with criticism and resistance. For example, Philip Feifan Xie (2001), Sharon MacDonald (2008), and Katja Huovinen (2017) have argued that so-called musealization may turn living places and practices into dead monuments of an idealized past. They have also suggested that heritage may be taken away from those it belongs to and given to others, often tourists and commercial operators profiting from tourism.

Reaching Out to Shipbuilders

When closure of Rauma Shipyard was announced in September 2013, Rauma Maritime Museum immediately contacted the Association for Shipbuilding Heritage in Rauma, a society of former and current shipyard employees.⁴ Appropriate measures to preserve the tradition and heritage of the shipbuilders were discussed. The museum also reached out to the public by means of a small photography and video exhibition and an online campaign to collect memories and materials related to shipbuilding in Rauma.⁵ The association and the museum had cooperated before. Some oral history interviews were conducted from 2009 to 2011. The recordings and transcriptions had been stored in the museum’s collection. However, the association had been inactive since then. After September 2013, the co-operation intensified; many more people became involved than previously. While a majority of participants in the shipbuilder’s heritage work are members of the association, many are not. Membership is by no means a requirement for participation.

Rauma Maritime Museum has only three permanent employees. They could not devote all of their working hours to the shipbuilders’ heritage work. The museum received financial assistance from the Finnish National Board of Antiquities and the Shipbuilders’ Heritage Association. This enabled hiring Anna Meronen as a project manager for six months, starting in September 2014. Her role as a planner, coordinator, facilitator, and organizer was crucial to the success of the project. As the employee responsible for the collections of the museum, I concentrated on the materials collected, both tangible and intangible. The museum was also able to hire part-time assistants for such tasks as transcribing the recorded interviews and digitizing photographs.

Both the museum and the association wanted as many people as possible to participate. The shipbuilding history itself is relatively well known in Rauma. Many, if not most, people have some kind of connection to the shipyards or at least know someone who has at some time worked as a shipbuilder (Rantanen 2017). Awareness of the collection work was not as widespread. It was decided to engage the public by reaching out to people outside of the museum.

⁴ The full Finnish name of the Association is *Rauman laivanrakennuksen perinne RY*; RY is a common acronym for *rekisteröity yhdistys*, or legally registered association. It was established in 2009.

⁵ The online campaign was carried out using the *kerromuseolle.fi* platform, which is maintained by the Satakunta provincial museum. It was active from October 2013 to end of 2014.

Seaside Industry Park, a municipally-owned company, took control of the shipyard after STX Finland left (Seaside Industry Park Rauma 2017). It arranged an open-doors event in the area on September 13, 2014. The museum participated together with the Shipbuilders' Heritage Association. A pop-up exhibition was built in a building where hull sections for the last ship built by STX Finland's Rauma yards had been welded only six months earlier. The exhibition consisted of ship models, pictures, and video material. It was the most popular part of the event, attracting more than 500 visitors, and proved an excellent medium through which to inform and engage the public.



Figure 2: The Museum's and Shipbuilders' Pop-up Exhibition in Seaside Industry Park, September 13, 2014
Source: Photo by Anna Meronen

According to Finnish Museums Association's study, the demographic group that is least likely to frequently visit museums are men who work in heavy industry, such as shipbuilding (Finnish Museums Association 2012). It was necessary to find ways to reach out to those who seldom visit museums. In September and October 2014 three quiz competitions were organized at a popular pub in Rauma. A coffee stand on the central square is a traditional meeting place for citizens of Rauma, including shipbuilders. Members of the public, particularly middle-aged and senior men, gather there every morning to discuss local events such as municipal politics and the fortunes of the local ice hockey team. The museum staff decided to participate in this morning coffee ritual a few times in order to approach people, inform them of the heritage work, and invite them to participate. This way people who probably would not otherwise have come to events arranged in a museum were contacted. These measures also attracted media attention. Some people contacted this way became active participants.

Preserving Intangible and Tangible Heritage

It was decided that the heritage work would be done for the shipbuilders and, as much as practically possible, by the shipbuilders. While the museum staff was happy to participate in discussions and planning, no decisions would be imposed upon the community. The main priority was to preserve the experience of everyday life on the shipyards. In practice, this meant organizing interviews and group discussions and collecting personal photographs and information related to them. Material evidence of shipbuilding, while important, was a secondary priority. This was because the shipbuilders understood their sense of community as a defining

characteristic.⁶ The community of shipbuilders was not only active on the workplace, but also arranged a lot of leisure activities such as sports, photography, and fishing clubs. According to the shipbuilders themselves, their identity is more about intangible things, like skills and knowledge, than any tangible objects.⁷



Figure 3: Santa Claus in a Shipyard Staff Christmas Party, Probably 1989.

Donated Personal Photographs Help Document Leisure Activities, which the Shipbuilders Consider Important. Many Interviews Contain Fond Memories of Events such as Staff Parties.⁸

Source: Rauma Maritime Museum's Picture Collection, 34632. Donated by Pekka Hoikkala.

In early 2014, the association organized many interviews with shipyard employees who had lost or were about to lose their jobs as the shipyard was closing. In addition, some former shipbuilders who had retired earlier were interviewed. These interviews were generally conducted by shipbuilders, not the museum staff. Most interviews were individual, but there were also a number of group interviews. In total, 117 individuals have been interviewed, some of whom participated in several group interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The approximately seventy-eight hours of recordings are stored in Rauma Maritime Museum's oral history collections.

During the winter of 2014 to 2015, five group discussion meetings were organized. They were open to everyone interested, but in practice all participants, 119 in total, were shipbuilders or former shipbuilders. These conversations, too, were recorded and transcribed and added to the museum's oral history collections. Many participants were also interviewed later individually or in small-group interviews. The meetings prompted many participants to donate their personal

⁶ This is evident in many interviews, for example: Three shipbuilders, interview by Markku Palonen, March 6, 2014, RMMV 44:48, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; A shipbuilder, interview by Markku Palonen, March 6, 2014, RMMV 44:53, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; Two shipbuilders, interview by Markku Palonen, April 16, 2014, RMMV 44:54, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection. Reference notes to interviews and personal communications have been placed in footnotes in order to improve readability of the text. As recommended by the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, the names of the interviewees are withheld (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics 2009, 13).

⁷ For example: A shipbuilder, interview by Markku Palonen, August 13, 2014, RMMV 44:42, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; A shipbuilder, interview by Markku Palonen, February 22, 2014, RMMV 44:51, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; and Five shipbuilders, interview by Anna Meronen and Paula Kupari, November 7, 2014, RMMV 44:65, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection.

⁸ For example: Four shipbuilders, interview by Olli Palomäki, February 25, 2014, RMMV 44:47, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; Two shipbuilders, interview by Markku Palonen, April 16, 2014, RMMV 44:54, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; and Five shipbuilders, interview by Anna Meronen and Paula Kupari, November 17, 2014, RMMV 44:66, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection.

materials, mostly photographs. In addition, discussions and sharing of pictures take place online in the Facebook group "Rauman laivanrakennus / Rauma Shipbuilding," which was started in May 2014 by the shipbuilders, not the museum.⁹ The shipbuilders' heritage process and work with the museum continues. A group of volunteers has taken up the task of helping museum staff to catalogue the shipbuilding-related objects donated to the museum. Discussion meetings take place approximately every three months. The theme of every meeting is decided by shipbuilders. Usually a short presentation prepared by one or more shipbuilders is included. Often photographs or films are shown in order to inspire discussion and to record information. While the museum staff participates in these events, they are managed by the shipbuilders, who are now controlling their heritage process. The museum's tasks are support and assistance.

For the shipbuilders, the discussions and interviews are identity work and an integral part of their heritage process, as defined by Smith (2006) and Sivula (2015). When shipbuilders discuss shipbuilding, they discuss what it means to be a shipbuilder, what a shipbuilder's identity consists of, and what is essential about it. It is not only about recording and preserving historical information, but also about choosing and producing heritage. They decide what their heritage consists of and, by coming together to remember, create experiences of belonging to the heritage group of shipbuilders. Consequently, the discussions are both monumentalizing and adoptive identity work. The meetings also proved to be an empowering and enjoyable experience for the participants, as they provided a way to express things connected positively to the shipbuilders' self-image. Jorma Kalela has demonstrated that, regardless of the researchers' objectives, the act of sharing experiences may itself be important for participants of oral history collections (Kalela 2006).

Great care was taken to ensure that shipbuilders from all backgrounds were involved in interviews and discussions: male and female shipbuilders, welders and naval architects, and staff of both Hollming and Rauma-Repola companies. However, a perfect balance was hardly achieved. The interviews were conducted by relatively few people, and their views and opinions affect the oral histories collected, even if the interviewers made a conscious effort to avoid this. The heritage work, quite naturally, attracts those who strongly identify as shipbuilders and who see their shipbuilder identity as a source of pride, a positive part of their life.¹⁰ If there were shipbuilders who felt differently, they chose not to participate. Unsurprisingly, most active participants, but not all, had had long careers in the shipyards. Most, but not all, had retired before 2013.¹¹

⁹ The group's membership at the time of writing (September 26, 2017) was 468. Most participants are shipbuilders, but there are also, for example, maritime history enthusiasts, seamen working on Rauma-built ships, and museum staff.

¹⁰ For example: A shipbuilder, interview by Markku Palonen, March 4, 2010, RMMV 44:23, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; Three shipbuilders, interview by Markku Palonen, March 6, 2014, RMMV 44:48, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; A shipbuilder, interview by Markku Palonen, February 22, 2014, RMMV 44:49, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection.

¹¹ An overview of the interviews has been compiled and kept by the museum. It shows that the average length of the interviewees' career in shipbuilding is almost thirty years.



Figure 4: A Themed Meeting on Ship Design in October 2014
Source: Photo by Paula Kupari

The shipbuilders had practically no previous experience of oral history interviews. This can be seen as a disadvantage. The interview process did not completely follow guidelines for good practice in recording oral history. Leena Rossi recommends, for example, that interviews be preceded with a thorough review of relevant existing research and that a question set be used and test interviews be conducted for orientation (Rossi 2012, 68–74). This was not the case. A question set was used, but not by all interviewers. The set was provided by the museum staff as requested by the shipbuilders.

However, there were advantages. Control of interviews gave the shipbuilders control of their heritage. It enabled the shipbuilders to choose the topics they considered important and thus make decisions on their heritage. When discussing the highly specialized industry, the shipbuilders were often able to ask questions that an interviewer lacking expert knowledge would not have considered. Consequently, knowledge that could otherwise have been lost was recorded and preserved. Many interviewees felt much less reserved talking to another shipbuilder than to a museum employee; however, some female workers specifically asked to be interviewed by female museum staff rather than former male colleagues. The majority of workforce in the shipyard has always been male, and consequently the workplace culture seems to have been mostly masculine (Uola 1996, 2001). Maybe this was the reason these women felt more at ease in female company discussing the challenges they faced in a male-dominated workplace.

In the beginning of all recorded interviews and discussions, the interviewer or moderator explained that the recordings would be stored in the museum's collections and available for researchers in the future and asked if the interviewees had any reservations concerning this. In addition, everyone was offered the chance to be interviewed anonymously and afterward withdraw any statements from the archived materials. This was well understood, and everyone involved has happily given their consent. No material has been withdrawn. The museum staff had initially expected a more reserved attitude.

Some interviews include sensitive information on topics such as safety and compliance with company regulations, while some participants may have chosen not to discuss some issues they considered inappropriate to record. Even if interviewees have expressly given consent to be quoted in publications, it may still not be permissible from ethical point of view. The museum strongly suggests that researchers who may use these materials follow the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics' guidelines (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics 2009).

Another potential ethical issue involves certain kind of objects. It was quite common for shipbuilders to make tools, decorations, household items, and more for their own or others' personal use during work hours, using their employer's materials and tools. This unofficial manufacturing was common among Finnish industrial workers in the twentieth century and was often tolerated by employers if it didn't excessively interfere with regular work (Pesonen 2014). In practice, this issue did not prove problematic. Unofficial work may have violated the letter of company regulations and law but seems to have been quietly, and sometimes expressly, accepted by the employer in Rauma shipyards. For example, a plater remembers in an interview how his supervisor noticed that he was making a spare part for a bicycle. The supervisor encouraged him to take pride in his work, as those who do their own work well also do well for the company.¹² Many people happily donated unofficially manufactured objects for the exhibition. They are not thought of as illegal or morally questionable but are presented as evidence of tradition and craftsmanship.

Two groups—namely, naval architects and trade union officials—are remarkably active in the heritage work. This unavoidably results in some bias in the material recorded. Purely coincidental and personal reasons are probably factors, but there are possible causes why these groups are particularly active. The naval architects usually have a lot of materials to donate, such as ship brochures and photographs, from their personal collections. In contrast, production workers seldom have any tools they had used, as they were property of their employer. Because of their professional experience with the shipyard's project archives, the naval architects may also be familiar with project work comparable to heritage collection and therefore comfortable in participating. Trade union officials are experienced in association work involving meetings and committees, not unlike the discussion and planning the heritage project involved.

One challenge was the uncertain status of the shipyard area and the historically valuable material there. They were property of STX Finland, which expressed very little interest in the fate of the material. The situation was further complicated by the fact that access to the shipyard area was, for reasons of security, strictly controlled. The museum staff could only visit the area if invited by the company. There was a very real threat that a lot of material would be destroyed and valuable evidence of shipbuilding history lost forever. Thankfully, some of STX Finland's employees, particularly Johan Snellman, collected and saved lots of documents and objects. As an employee of the company and a long-time friend of Rauma Maritime Museum, Mr. Snellman was able to facilitate negotiations between the museum and STX Finland concerning the donation of materials he and others had collected. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to catalogue the material properly at the time because of access restrictions and an extremely tight schedule.

The situation improved as the ownership of the shipyard area transferred to the municipality of Rauma on July 1, 2014. The museum was offered storage space in one of the shipyard buildings, and the museum staff got access permits to the area. To manage this collection, the museum relies on the continuing assistance of the shipbuilders. Most of the material is very specialized and known to experienced shipbuilders only. A challenge regarding collections is the limited storage space available. This ruled out big machinery such as ship's propulsion units or cranes. The photographic and video collections present a partial solution, as they contain plenty of images of heavy machinery. If museums can only collect small, easily stored objects, can they preserve and present a complete picture for posterity? This is a problem for many museums, particularly those involved in industrial history and heritage.

In her study of the builders of so-called war reparation schooners in the Hollming shipyard of Rauma in 1945–52, Sirpa Wahlqvist demonstrates that the shipbuilders had a high level of pride in craftsmanship, and it was important to them that the ships they built were of good quality. This is reflected in the title of her thesis, "Sailing Ships Built from the Heart" (Wahlqvist

¹² A shipbuilder, interview by Markku Palonen, October 22, 2010, RMMV 44:30, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection.

2011). It seems that the shipbuilders in Rauma still have a high opinion of their expertise and skills. An example of this pride is the presentation given in April 2014 on the history of Rauma shipyards by Johan Snellman, himself a shipbuilder in Rauma since 1981. He closed the otherwise matter-of-fact presentation with this sentence: “We have actually been pretty damn good!” (Snellman 2014). The shipbuilders are often emotionally attached to the ships they build. The sense of being a shipbuilder, a skilled professional and maker of high-quality products, seems to be important for the self-image of many.¹³ Of course, much more research is needed for a comprehensive analysis of shipbuilders’ identity. These are general observations, and each shipbuilder’s experience is his or her own.

Presenting Shipbuilders’ Heritage

From the very first discussions, it was clear that the project must result in an exhibition. It was very important for the shipbuilders that there would be tangible results to show the public, that the materials collected would not be “hidden” in the storage rooms of the museum where few people would see them. This is easy to understand, as the shipbuilders’ heritage is not very visible in Rauma. There were prominent public monuments, for example, for seamen and lace-makers, but not for shipbuilders (Rauma Art Museum 2017).¹⁴ The shipyard area and harbor are closed to the public, and people of Rauma seldom see the ships built in their town. Without the exhibition, the work would not have been very visible, and the general public—indeed, many participants—might have concluded that nothing at all was achieved.

The exhibition, called *Rakennettu Raumalla—Made in Rauma*, opened on March 19, 2015. As the exhibition was designed with a living community, its timeframe is from 1945 to the present, and the preceding centuries are presented as a background only. It was designed to be temporary and will remain open until January 6th 2018. After that, it will be partially integrated in the permanent exhibition.

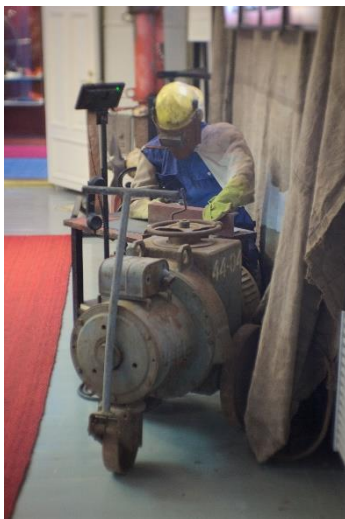


Figure 5: The Exhibition Includes a Welding Machine,

¹³ For example: A shipbuilder, interview by Markku Palonen, February 22, 2014, RMMV 44:49, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; Two shipbuilders, interview by Markku Palonen, April 16, 2014, RMMV 44:54, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection; A shipbuilder in a Group Discussion, October 22, 2014, RMMV 44:61, transcript, Rauma Maritime Museum Oral History Collection.

¹⁴ There is a monument for shipbuilders, but it is situated in the Port of Rauma, an area inaccessible to the public. On August 18, 2017, a new memorial for war reparation work in Rauma 1945–1952 was inaugurated. Shipbuilding was an important part of the war reparations (see the first section of this article), and the shipbuilders seem to consider the new memorial their own.

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Complete with a Mannequin Dressed as a Working Welder, in a Typical 1970s Configuration.

Source: Photo by Mikko Aho

The shipbuilders were invited to participate in the process of planning and building the exhibition. This provided a natural framework for co-operation and an objective, tangible, and practical goal that was easy to understand for everyone involved. The preparations for the exhibition also facilitated the heritage process of the shipbuilders, as they discussed, both among themselves and with the museum staff, what should be visible and what stories they wanted to tell in the exhibition. Thus, the exhibition became not only a means for the shipbuilders to present the heritage, but also an instrument in producing it. The production of the exhibition became what Sivula (2015) calls monumentalizing and historicizing identity work.

The exhibition was produced according to the model that Simon calls “co-creative.” The shipbuilders were involved from the very beginning with planning and decision-making. As Simon suggests, the museum asked the shipbuilders, “What ideas do you have for the exhibition we could make together?” not “Please help us with an exhibition we have planned” (Simon 2010, 263–64). The themes chosen for presentation were those the shipbuilders saw as most important. For example, advances in work safety were considered essential by many, and attention was paid to make this theme visible. The same applies to the shipbuilders’ community leisure activities such as sports and fishing clubs. It proved important to maintain balance between Rauma’s two shipyard companies, Hollming and Rauma-Repola, in the exhibition too. Even though they merged in 1992, the sense of rivalry between their former employees is alive and well. Some were concerned that disproportionate attention would be paid to one company or the other.

A certain division of labor between the museum staff and volunteers emerged. The shipbuilders provided opinions and suggestions about general themes but preferred to leave final decisions to the museum staff. They chose the name for the exhibition and provided, for example, opinions on which ships built in Rauma they would like to see presented in the exhibition but did not want to be involved in decisions concerning such matters as the layout of the exhibition. They did, however, help with details when asked to do so. For example, former welders volunteered to make sure that the mannequin dressed as a 1970s welder, and the tools involved, were positioned in a realistic manner (see Figure 5). Forssa Museum had comparable experiences; participants did not want to assume some responsibilities that the museum staff would have liked to delegate to them. For example, when the initial draft of the future exhibition was published online, very few comments were received (Huttunen 2015).

As much of the shipbuilders’ heritage is intangible, like the sense of community and the pride in the expertise, it is quite challenging to present this in a traditional object-centered museum exhibition. Four short video interviews were filmed with volunteer shipbuilders to help and explain such aspects of shipbuilders’ life to visitors.¹⁵ The abundant photographic and video material was also helpful in presenting the intangible heritage and identity of a shipbuilder. The museum also designed an education package for elementary schools. It is built around a shipyard-themed board game, designed by Hollming Shipyard in Rauma in 1984. The package also includes pictures and explanatory texts. The objective is to improve pupils’ awareness of the shipbuilding and its importance and assist schools in their teaching of local history. The board game is also available for playing in the exhibition.

¹⁵ These interviews have English subtitles and can be seen on Rauma Maritime Museum’s Vimeo channel, <https://vimeo.com/raumanmerimuseo>.



Figure 6: A Shipyard-Themed Board Game, Designed by Hollming Shipyard in Rauma in 1984, in the *Rakennettu Raumalla—Made in Rauma* Exhibition. The Game is also Used in an Education Package for Schools.
 Source: Photo by Mikko Aho

The shipbuilders of Rauma unequivocally see presentation and conservation of their heritage in a museum as a positive thing. They have in discussions with the museum staff expressed satisfaction and pride that their materials and experiences were wanted by the museum and seen as valuable. Some opposition had been expected, and the museum staff had prepared to explain that collecting materials does not imply that they, and by extension shipbuilding and shipbuilders, belong to the past and are no longer relevant in a modern world. The community was involved in the decision-making process, which may have helped to avoid the negative issues connected to musealization. No protests have come to the museum's attention. Some shipbuilders joked that they now feel very old because their memories and belongings are old enough for museum, but these statements were good-natured humor and not made in protest of the heritage work.

Debary notes that in Le Creusot, it took a long time after the closure of the factory before public discussion of the industrial museum was feasible. According to him, a generation had passed before it was possible to choose which objects to exhibit (Debary 2004, 130). The experience in Rauma was different. All participants agreed that the closure of the shipyard, which was finalized less than eight months before the opening of the exhibition, should be visible. As suggested by the shipbuilders, a Rauma-designed steering thruster from 1965 is presented in a way that makes evident its connection to contemporary thrusters (see Figure 7). Ongoing events were an important topic in discussions. When RMC secured its first newbuilding contract in June 2016, the shipbuilders and the museum staff agreed to immediately add material related to the event to the exhibition. Consequently, I disagree with Petrović's statement that "the industrial past has to unambiguously and irreversibly belong to the past" in order to be presented in museums (Petrović 2013, 103).



Figure 7: An Early Rauma-Designed Steering Thruster, Presented with Video Material of Modern, More Advanced Thrusters Based on Its Design
 Source: Photo by Mikko Aho

Response of Participants and the Public

Before the exhibition opened, the museum conducted an anonymous opinion poll with participant shipbuilders. They were asked if they found recording of shipbuilders' heritage important, if they thought the co-operation with the museum had been successful, and what kind of common activities, if any, they wanted the museum and shipbuilder community to arrange in the future. The answers were collected by means of an online survey and paper questionnaire. The questions asked online and on paper were identical. All thirty participants who answered considered the heritage work important and the co-operation successful, and twenty-nine wished that the heritage work would continue. No one opposed it, but one participant left this question unanswered. Group discussions about different shipbuilding themes proved the most popular method of heritage work; they were mentioned in twenty-four answers.¹⁶ In meetings after the opening of the exhibition, shipbuilders have been asked to provide feedback about it. Many have also spontaneously offered their views and opinions in private discussions and events. Judging by the feedback received this way, the shipbuilders are satisfied with the exhibition and have accepted it as appropriate representation.

The response of the general public has been positive as well. All contact persons of guided groups that visit Rauma Maritime Museum are contacted shortly after the visit and asked to complete a small online survey. Several of those who answered have mentioned the *Rakennettu Raumalla—Made in Rauma* exhibition as a highlight; no one has offered any negative criticism of it, but one person expressed a wish to see more material about shipbuilding in the museums' exhibitions. The museum's policy is to randomly ask individual visitors for feedback and record answers, as well as spontaneously offered opinions, in writing.¹⁷ Comments about the exhibition have been almost unanimously positive. It has been praised as informative, and the audiovisual material has been regarded as impressive. The positive feedback received is consistent with a

¹⁶ A summary of the answers was compiled by the project manager and is kept by the museum. Participants could choose one or more from four options or make their own proposals. The options given in the questionnaire were "themed discussions about different themes concerning shipbuilding" (chosen by twenty-four out of thirty participants), "lectures by experts" (sixteen out of thirty participants), "identification of photographs in museums' collection" (fifteen out of thirty participants) and "Pub quizzes" (zero out of thirty participants). One participant proposed discussing the training and education the shipyard companies provided for the workforce.

¹⁷ The museum compiles and keeps an overview on feedback received this way.

very high national level of museum visitor satisfaction. The Finnish Museums Association's most recent visitor survey found that 98 percent of visitors to Finnish museums were generally happy about their visits, and 90 percent would recommend the museums they visited to others (Finnish Museums Association 2012).

A few negative comments criticizing the exhibition of defeatism have been received. According to some visitors, it deals too much with the closure of the shipyard and paints a bleak picture of future possibilities. As the exhibition was built and a lot of material for it was collected at a time when the shipyard was closing, the crisis and uncertainty about future are indeed visible, just as the shipbuilders wanted them to be. As stated, when the situation changed, the exhibition was also amended to avoid presenting an outdated and negative picture.

Preserving and presenting the shipbuilder's tradition in Rauma was considered an important task. Few, if any, disputed that. The public perception of Rauma Maritime Museum as a relevant actor in the community likely improved, as did the overall awareness of the museum. During the project, Rauma Maritime Museum received more media attention than it has since it opened to the public in 2004. The coverage was exclusively positive.¹⁸ The project gained national recognition too. The Finnish Museums Association and ICOM Finland awarded the museum the yearly special prize in May 2015 (Finnish Museums Association 2015).

Experiences and Recommendations

In general, the practices that proved most successful were the ones with which the shipbuilders had been involved the most. The discussion meetings have been popular and continue regularly. While the museum had a bigger role in the first meetings, they are now almost completely organized by shipbuilders; the museum only provides space, technical support, and coffee. In contrast, the pub quizzes were completely organized by the museum staff, and while they served the purpose of spreading awareness of the project, they did not prompt discussions or directly result in recording of heritage. The shipbuilders have expressed no desire to continue them. The Facebook group started by shipbuilders has proved to be a popular and active platform for sharing heritage, whereas the online campaign to collect shipbuilding memories set up by the museum prompted very few answers.

Stanton's analysis of the culinary heritage project in Lowell, Massachusetts, provides an interesting comparison. Stanton quotes participants who felt that they were relegated to a role of an assistant rather than an active participant and were only invited to perform at an event planned by others. They believed they would have had more to give had they been included in planning and shaping the event (Stanton 2005, 422–24). This, compared to Rauma Maritime Museum's experiences, suggest that it is beneficial to include the community as early as possible in planning and deciding the framework. The participants should be equal partners in making decisions about their participation, not visiting outsiders invited to events decided by an institution. Treating the participants as co-creators rather than contributors seemed to work well and has resulted in enthusiastic, active and continuing participation (Simon 2010, 263–64). This is consistent with Lübker's recommendation that the hierarchical relationship between museum and community should be disestablished (Lübker 2016, 45). That said, it would probably be helpful if the museum could provide suggestions based on its own or other museums' experiences.

The project was prompted by the news of Rauma Shipyard's impending closure. The crisis of shipbuilding, a situation generally understood to be a historical turning point, probably made the work easier. As the shipbuilding heritage was threatened, it was not difficult to engage people to preserve it and convince the public about the urgency of the matter. Connection between

¹⁸ A list compiled by the project manager counts twenty newspaper or magazine articles and five radio and three television broadcasts about Rauma Maritime Museum between September 2014 and June 2015. Not all were focused exclusively on the shipbuilders' heritage project, but it was mentioned every time.

museum and participants was easy to create, and it was not difficult to agree on common goals. In a different situation, the response might have been much more passive.

No significant disagreements among the shipbuilders regarding priorities in collection and representation have come to the museum's attention. Shipbuilding may be easier to involve volunteers with than, for example, the general heritage of the town, as people would probably have more varied opinions on priorities and goals. A consensus may be easier to reach when dealing with a clearly-defined subject. The experience of Forssa Museum suggests that this may be the case, as participants there had some conflicting views (Huttunen and Kattelus 2012).

Many people, especially the older generations, seem not to be familiar with participatory practices. They tend to see museums as closed "temples of knowledge" and museum staff as highly learned experts who don't need to and probably don't want to listen to the public. Many shipbuilders expressed surprise, even confusion, when the museum staff asked for their opinions on preserving the heritage or their participation in the exhibition-planning process. Modesty is traditionally a highly valued virtue in Finland. Drawing attention to oneself and talking about one's own achievements is easily seen as bragging, which is generally frowned upon (Nishimura, Nevgi, and Tella 2008). Some participants preferred to keep quiet in group discussions but were happy to relate their experiences in an individual or small group interview. Some shipbuilders were unnecessarily modest about the value of their memories and materials they could donate. Convincing them of the importance of their input took some effort.

Giving shipbuilders the control over their heritage, and giving up that control, was not completely straightforward for the museum either. Some internal staff discussion proved necessary. Sometimes the staff, without realizing it, reverted to traditional roles of active experts and passive informants, whose participation didn't mean more than answering questions asked by the museum. As stated, not all shipbuilders were comfortable in assuming an active role. While the shipbuilders' identity is by nature exclusive, as it cannot be shared by people who never worked in the shipyards, it includes a broad range of sub-identities. There is a genuine desire to include every shipbuilder's experience, from part-time cleaners to general manager, from welders to engineers. For example, during the exhibition-planning process many participants expressed a desire to see every stage of shipbuilding and everyone's work, not only their own area of expertise, visible in the completed exhibition.



Figure 8: Albums Donated by the Shipyard Employees' Camera Club Include Some Impressive Photography, Such as This Portrait of a Welder at Work.

Source: Rauma Maritime Museum's Picture Collection, 33741.

Photo by Veikko Räsänen. Donated by Finnish Metalworkers' Union Local Branch 66.

Many shipbuilders emphasized the good “team spirit” among themselves and pointed out that, for example, former trade union activists now work together with former leaders of the shipyard. This is indeed noteworthy, as the shipyards have had well-documented internal conflicts in the past, among them bitter strikes and other industrial actions (Kauppinen and Kohtanen 1984; Uola 2001). Both trade union activists and high-ranking company managers are active in the heritage work. Interestingly, Petrović provides an example on similar cross-hierarchy integration in heritage work at a Slovenian car museum established and maintained by an association of former car factory employees (Petrović 2013). The shipbuilders themselves are very aware of this sense of fellowship. A humorous and memorable example of this reconciliation took place in a discussion meeting in November 2015. An official of the Finnish Metalworkers' Union and a former general manager of Rauma Shipyard gave presentations, and both used the Union official's laptop computer. As the former manager was about to begin, another former general manager in the audience joked that it's great to see that he is on such amicable terms with a representative of the Union that they can share the computer, implying that this had not always been the case.

As Lübker argues, the museum has the power to cease co-operation and exclude the shipbuilders (Lübker 2016, 38). On the other hand, the community has the same power; the museum is hardly the only possible framework for the heritage process. The framework of co-operation was not completely decided by the museum. The shipbuilders actively formulated the nature and extent of their involvement. However, the positions of power are not symmetric. The museum could have controlled the participation tightly, but chose not to. The museum has legal ownership and practical control over the materials in its collections, including those collected by the shipbuilders. This undeniably puts it in a position of power, even though limiting access to the collections would violate ethical guidelines the museum is committed to follow (ICOM 2013). Lübker criticizes the momentary nature typical of inclusive projects, but co-operation between the museum and shipbuilders seems to have become permanent, or at least long-lasting (Lübker 2016, 38).

The museum could be criticized for making a virtue out of necessity in inviting the shipbuilders to take responsibility for the process. The museum's three permanent employees lacked both the time and expertise required. Therefore, there really was no other alternative than to delegate a lot of work to the shipbuilders. However, the museum genuinely wanted to enable the shipbuilders to decide over their own heritage. The museum has assisted the shipbuilders in exercising their democratic heritage rights as described by Aronsson (2006) and Holtorf (2006). The small organization and limited financial means were at times a disadvantage, and the staff sometimes felt as though they were under pressure. Since work with shipbuilders was given a high priority, other things were left undone. On the other hand, the organization proved nimble and flexible. Speedy planning, improvisation, and rapid decision-making were not limited by organizational rigidity or unnecessarily tightly defined staff roles. Based on this experience, engaging in participatory projects is possible for museums of all sizes.

The museum became a participant in the shipbuilders' heritage process. The staff consciously tried to distance itself from, for example, the interviews. However, it was involved in choosing the themes of group discussions, in deciding which objects to include in or exclude from the collections, and in presenting the heritage in the exhibition. These could be considered disruptive outside interferences in the community's heritage process. On the other hand, it can be argued that in participating, the museum facilitated the process. Often the opinions, advice, and participation of museum professionals were expressly requested by the shipbuilders. The museum provides them with a space in which to conduct the process. Its exhibitions provide a means to present their heritage, both to the public and to the community itself.

The museum also acted as an initiator. The intensive heritage process started in late 2013, when the museum contacted the shipbuilders. While it could be argued that the process did not

require participation of the museum, the shipbuilders themselves emphasized the importance of the co-operation. Shipbuilders have in discussions with the museum staff expressed satisfaction and gratitude in the museum's role. Many participants have stated that they do not believe a meaningful heritage process would have been possible without the support of the museum and have praised the museum's active role in reaching out to shipbuilders and engaging them in the early stages.¹⁹

During the process, the role of the shipbuilders has been increasing and that of museum diminishing. This, however, does not and should not mean that the museum withdraws completely. The museum's collections provide a means for preserving the shipbuilders' heritage for posterity. This is especially important because the shipbuilder community may in the foreseeable future irreversibly change, or even disappear, as explained in the first section of this article.

Both the collection and presentation activities of Rauma Maritime Museum have greatly benefited from the active and enthusiastic work of shipbuilders. While collection of some material related to shipbuilding might have been possible without their active involvement, their help was essential in making informed decisions about such specialized collections. An exhibition could have been planned and realized by the museum alone, but it would have resulted in an institution-centered exhibition on shipbuilding, not a people-centered one on shipbuilders. All things considered, the co-operation has been a success for both the community and the museum, and there is every reason to expect it to continue to be successful.

¹⁹ For example: Pekka Hoikkala, Johan Snellman and Timo V. Laine (shipbuilders and participants in the project), in discussion with the author, February 16, 2017; Markku Helamaa (Chairman of the Association for Shipbuilding Heritage in Rauma), email message to author, February 20, 2017. Many others have expressed similar opinions in numerous discussions.

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