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## Crafting the City: Promoting Heritage Awareness Through Craft Making in a Historical Town

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### Abstract

This paper reports on a project designed to promote the understanding of the World Heritage site of Old Rauma, Finland, with the help of craft activities. Through fieldwork and an analysis of the data collected from two craft interventions, the paper examines how craft making can serve as a medium to celebrate a sense of place and inspire people to deliberate the role that heritage occupies in their everyday lives. Based on the study, it can be concluded that attention needs to be placed on the teaching and learning of creative practices in order to contribute to the makers'

perceptions of placeness and to sustain local development as well as to promote heritage in a historical town.

### **Introduction**

In a historical town, the materiality of the everyday is constructed around historicity and tradition. In this article, the term *historical town* is used as a reference to an institutionally legitimated residential site included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, which aims to reflect the world's cultural and natural diversity of “outstanding universal value” through implementing the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage enacted in 1972 (UNESCO, 1973, p. 135). In such places, historicity serves as the foundation for presumptions about how people form meaningful relations with places and add value to the material and immaterial reality of the place (Platt, 2017; Santos, 2016; Silva & Santos, 2012). Thus, a historical town can be seen as a spatial territory where placeness is being embraced through sentimentality and nostalgia regarding the historicity of the town. According to Johansson (1999), examining the place and its experiential recontextualisation (e.g., making crafts) belong to the basic methods of the study of placeness. This approach emphasises that experiences of placeness will deepen if interactions with the place occur with people living within the community (Relph, 1976).

Given that heritage is “continuously created in relationship between people and the places in which they live” (Kokko & Kaipainen, 2015, p. 10), there is an urgent need to promote knowledge of the locality to ensure that the cultural heritage of historical towns is preserved (see UNESCO, 1973). Indeed, promoting heritage awareness seems to be particularly important at sites with substantial historical or cultural heritage, since the decisions to retain heritage are reflected in the actions of people dwelling that neighbourhood.

This study examines how crafts contribute to perceptions of placeness in a historical town recognised as World Heritage site by its outstanding universal heritage value (e.g., Barton et al., 2009; Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016). The study adopts UNESCO’s definition of “World Heritage” as the cultural and natural legacy that is considered to be of outstanding value to humanity for all the peoples of the world as “unique and irreplaceable property” (UNESCO, 1973, p. 135). The research was conducted in the town of Old Rauma, Southwest Finland, a historical, neo-Renaissance-style wood architecture neighbourhood, which constitutes one of the best-preserved examples of traditional northern European architecture and urbanism (Haanpää et al., 2018; UNESCO, n.d.; Vahtikari, 2016). In this study, the heritage of Old Rauma was (re)produced through handcrafted material interpretations carved into wood, wool and salt clay.

As researchers, we are ourselves citizens of the historical town of Rauma; the first author is fairly new to the town, whereas the second author has lived in the town for two decades. Our previous research focused on the townscape images that pupils, 7 to 8 years old, produced during their multisensory pedagogical walks in Old Rauma and investigated how walking developed knowledge of their environment and increased positive bonding with their hometown. The study revealed that learning tasks situated in the historical town contributed to pupils' experiences of placeness through collective and shared occupation (Keskitalo et al., 2016). Additionally, the studies discovered that the authentic learning environment and experiential hands-on activities enriched children's understandings of their own past and culture (Aerila et al., 2016) and that cultural heritage education enabled children to create a bond between time and place and encouraged them to commit to their community. Drawing from the same interests, this study focuses on mapping out how participatory and communal craft activities can contribute to the rethinking of placeness. Therefore, this study shows how craft making can promote a sustainable livelihood in a historical town.

### **Theoretical Background: Creating Relationships to a Heritage Town Through Creative Engagement**

Heritage and development are sometimes framed as opposites, as if communities and societies can either be open to change and development or commit to maintain and protect the heritage precisely as it is inherited (Basu & Modest, 2015). Nevertheless, the critique of such binary views has led to an interpretation of heritage as a culture of legacy characterised by expansion and transfer through language (Vecco, 2010). At the same time, the scope of heritage has broadened from a mere concern about physical heritage to intangible cultural heritage (Ahmad, 2006; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; UNESCO, 2018).

Indeed, heritage is manifested in many forms from natural and cultural world heritage to music, rituals, narratives and community practices (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; UNESCO, 1973, 2018; Waterton & Smith, 2010); also addressing the value of crafting as socio-culturally and historically situated heritage occurring within the realm of the everyday life (Buchczyk, 2014; DiCindio, 2019; Kokko & Kaipainen, 2015). Today, heritage is often concerned with a value-based approach that seeks to identify, enhance and sustain the significance of heritage and provide value-attached reasons for the aims of conserving heritage (Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016; Pye, 2001). Overall, the value of heritage seems to be widely integrated with the sense of continuity through the vibrancy of knowledge that is renewed by every generation (Basu & Modest, 2015; Hobsbawm, 1983/2006).

A discourse of placeness connects heritage to the community values embedded within the landscape (Cele, 2006). Through the creation of the townscape, everyday materiality becomes

central for the subjective perceptions of places, which take their form from the “ever-moving material and immaterial geographies” (Amin, 2004, p. 34) and from social networks that stretch beyond and across the boundaries of communities (Allen & Cochrane, 2007; Ameen & Tani, 2012; Spencer & Blades, 2008). In terms of crafting, Platt (2017) interprets that placemaking accounts for everyday encounters, which resonate with the ways in which people understand and perform their own identities through creative making and how they affect and become affected by the materiality of crafts. Indeed, heritage value is not given but occurs through the interaction and insights of people within their communities and cultures (e.g., Baron, 2016; Kokko & Kaipainen, 2015; Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016; Vahtikari, 2016). In the same vein, places are not objective solid sites but complex phenomenal layouts determined by individual experiences and human interpretation (Ameen & Tani, 2012; Hadjipieri, 2019; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001).

Cultural heritage education is an important part of personal growth; it provides physical evidence of the past and helps feeling connected with a place and community (Hadjipieri, 2019; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Spencer & Blades, 2008). It has even been argued that cultural heritage education can assist in promoting social tolerance and good citizenship in society (Sully, 2015). In discussions relating to heritage education and sustainable local development, creative and performative arts have attracted growing attention, and their role in maintaining an awareness of a community’s past has been widely recognised (UNESCO, 2018). Indeed, many studies conclude that craft making has the potential to contribute to a sense of authenticity through the uniqueness and originality of the handmade craft (Littrell et al., 1993; Chang et al., 2008) and to illustrate cultural and historical ties with the use of traditional materials and the artisanship learned from past generations (Buchczyk, 2014; Kouhia, 2016). Alongside the use of traditional techniques and materials with which craft making is conventionally understood, the historical integrity of crafts is linked to artisanship: “the artist’s connection to the product, having produced it with his or her own hands” (Swanson & Timothy, 2012, p. 492). Thus, crafts are understood as complex and historicised entities, which are connected to a wide range of matters, ranging from materials, media and technologies to heritage.

Linking crafts with sustainable cultural development and heritage education is timely due to the emergence of contemporary maker cultures that encourage skill sharing, participation, empowerment through the democratisation of the production process and collective (and often political) investment in the everyday neighbourhoods (Dougherty, 2012; Gauntlett, 2011; Mann, 2015; Platt, 2017; Tanenbaum et al., 2013). Indeed, we have witnessed how contemporary crafts have trickled into the urban spaces during the past decade through the range of craft art projects on display, which cover collaborative arts, craftivism and

performative making. For example, Mann (2015) used yarn bombing in the streets of Bristol in order to demonstrate crafts' capacity to increase attentiveness to the urban environment and to demonstrate the power and potential of crafts to "restimulate the senses and instil a mood of possibility by inviting inhabitants to think differently" (p. 69). Likewise, Platt (2017) examined how craft practices can lead to the creation of a sense of self and attachment to place and concluded that placemaking occurred as a result of the craft makers' material negotiations, which allowed them to establish their identities within the city. These projects demonstrate that placemaking can be based on hands-on approaches that aim to inspire a collective reimagination and reinvention of public spaces (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

This study approaches craft making as a means of developing attachment to a place through implementing participatory and communal craft activities with the cultural heritage of a particular geographic location. Accordingly, we approach craft making as a material expression that has a significant potential to facilitate responsive insights into the place through immaterial practices, descriptions, skills, knowledge and experiences, and material tools and technologies (Falk & Feldborg, 2017). Craft making paves the way for material experimentation by emphasising the potential that it has in sensitizing people to culture and tradition (Greenhalgh, 1997). Amongst other things, craft making resonates with the openness to the unknown, which helps people acknowledge and understand different cultures and differences within the cultures (Pöllänen, 2011; Mason, 2005).

In this study, the idea of people gathering together to make crafts is significant, as it highlights the social meanings of craft making as a domestic art (Mason, 2005; Morrison & Marr, 2013) as well as how craft making maintains a sense of the self and helps with personal growth and cultural reconstruction (Huss, 2009; Karppinen, 2008). Ideas about craft making as stereotypical feminine activity still prevail, as featured aspects have been linked to the politics of gender as well as images of domesticity. In this study however, craft making is understood as a process and as an enduring space of community (Gauntlett, 2011; Platt, 2017), which has the ability to tap a rich variety of historical materials in order to retrace past experiences, both personal and widespread.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***The Study Context***

Old Rauma is known as one of the most expansive examples of northern European wood architecture. The old town is comprised of a 29-hectare area with over 600 buildings, many of which were built in the neo-Renaissance style between the 18th and 19th centuries (Haanpää et al., 2018; UNESCO, n.d.). The town plan structure of Old Rauma has remained the same

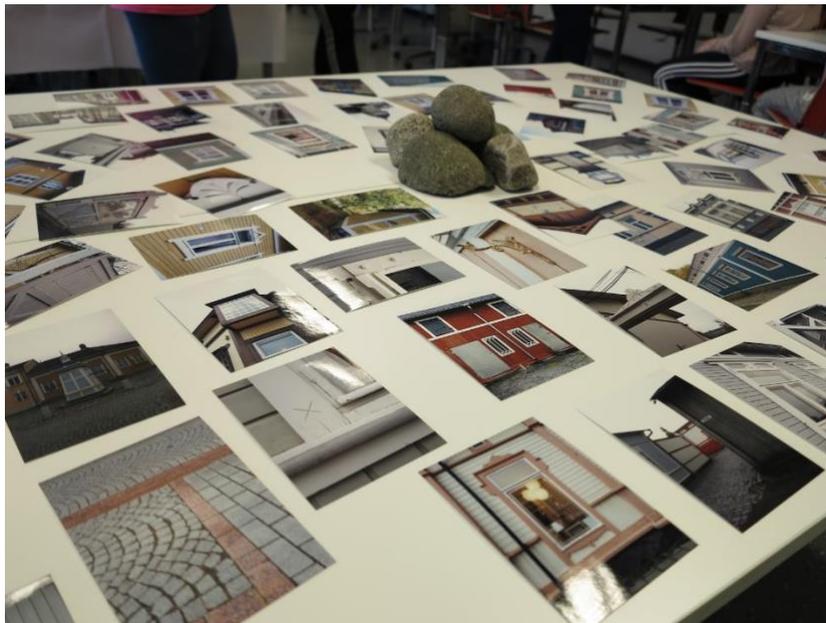
since the medieval period, including the irregular and exceptionally well-preserved street network, city blocks, plots of land and courtyards. According to UNESCO, the genuine spirit of Old Rauma is based on the well-preserved urban fabric, which includes different historic layers, building traditions and visual and historic architectural elements. Accordingly, the heritage value of Old Rauma lies in its historic houses (see Figure 1), courtyards, fences, gates, architectural details and the traditional street pavements, each of which maintain the local spirit of the traditional settlements of northern Europe (Vahtikari, 2016; UNESCO, n.d.). Today, Old Rauma is both a commercial and a residential area, and a home to over 800 inhabitants (UNESCO, n.d.).



*Figure 1.* The Old Town Hall situated in Old Rauma is recognised as a spatial hallmark of the town. (Photo: Marja-Leena Rönkkö).

The craft interventions organized as part of the research project focused on promoting the heritage value of Old Rauma for the inhabitants of the region as well as the tourists visiting it. They were conducted as two recreational workshops entitled *Window of Treasures—Reconstructing the Heritage of Old Rauma through Craft Art*. Both were carried out in

cooperation with the City of Rauma Educational and Cultural Services and the Craft Education Teacher Training Programme at the University of Turku, Rauma Campus. Both craft interventions were managed and put in practice by the staff (the researchers) and student teachers (the workshop organizers) of the Craft Teacher Training Programme. The researchers have a background in the field of textile crafts; however, in the workshops, craft making aimed at expanding the makers' visions of placeness by encouraging multi-material, arts-based learning in ways that can expand comprehension (Thompson, 2002) and assist in perceiving craft making as a face-to-face community practice (Morrison & Marr, 2013).



*Figure 2.* A perspective on the architectural details of Old Rauma viewed through a photo installation in Window of Treasures workshop one. (Photo: Anna Kouhia).

### ***Pilot Workshop: WoT1***

The first intervention, a two-hour workshop pilot titled *Window of Treasures 1* (WoT1), was arranged at the Rauma Teacher Training School in early November 2017 in order to test and redevelop the workshop plan. The group of informants in the pilot workshop consisted of nine pupils (all girls) of Rauma Teacher Training School from the grades four to six (10 to 12 years old). They participated in the optional afternoon craft club held at the craft classroom of the school. In practice, these pupils were first invited to observe the townscape of Old Rauma by viewing a photo installation of approximately 250 photographs specifying the details of the old town (see Figure 2). They were then encouraged to choose the photo they found most attractive as a basis for a material experimentation. For this material experimentation, pupils were provided craft materials and tools, with which they could recreate what they saw in the

selected photo with three alternative craft techniques: dry felting, moulding salt clay or carving wood with a soldering iron. Each piece was made as a part of a collaborative craft work that was being constructed collectively by the workshop participants. The data collected from this workshop consist of field documentation kept by one of the authors (four pages consisting of 1,400 words and 38 photos).

### ***Main Workshop: WoT2***

Based on the pilot workshop, the main community craft workshop titled *Window of Treasures 2* (WoT2), was held in mid-November 2017 at the City Museum of Rauma; it was constructed as an open, pop-in makerspace where people were encouraged to leave their marks on a collaborative craft work. The museum-based makerspace that was created just for the intervention was open to a diverse audience of children, youth and adults, but typical for the workshops provided by the museums (see Brahm & Crowley, 2016) it attracted family participation. Indeed, the four-hour workshop at the museum engaged 39 individuals to take part in the community-based craft experimentation: men (12) and women (27); residents (30) and tourists (9). The visitors ranged from toddlers to pensioners, and the majority of participants consisted of middle-aged residential women.



*Figure 3.* A workshop participant browses through an installation of 250 photos. (Photo: Anna Kouhia).

When people arrived at the workshop studio, they were first given time to wander around and be inspired by the materials provided. Subsequently, people were informed of the outline of the workshop and motivated by the workshop organizers to take up actions by choosing a source of inspiration from a photo installation that was set to trigger material experimentation (see Figure 3). For the means of material experimentation, the same craft materials and tools were provided as were available in the previous pilot workshop (felt, clay, and wood). However, with a focus on community crafts, this workshop operated as an open makerspace that promoted productive participation and a sense of belonging to the historical site more explicitly than the pilot workshop. The data collected from this workshop consist of field documentation similar to that in the pilot workshop (six pages consisting of 2,500 words and 113 photos).

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

In its quest to weave craft making together with an understanding gained by theoretical readings, the study employs a case study methodology operated in the form of a social arts intervention. In social arts interventions (Huss, 2009) creativity is used to enable conversations relating to the creation of new identities through art making in social or societal contexts. The case study method with two craft interventions illustrates an event or activity in a certain environment (Yin, 1994), and it is used to acquire diverse data through an “in-depth exploration from a multiple perspective of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project” (Simons, 2009, p. 21). While case studies are considered suitable for study contexts in which it is impossible to arrange an experiment to test the relevant causal relationships (Yin, 1994), social arts interventions provide insights for reviewing people’s feelings and emotions through arts-based and informed research practices (Eisner, 1997; Huss, 2009; Morrison & Marr, 2013).

Our study is based on two designed craft interventions (see Figure 4). This kind of intervention approach was chosen as a research method because earlier studies (Cobb et al., 2003; Huss 2009; Jansson, 2013; Loukomies, 2013) suggest that design-based research is particularly suitable for examining arts-based social activities. Similar to social arts interventions (Huss, 2009; 2015) which harness creativity for the purposes of social or societal change, this study applies craft making as a creative passage to promote a hands-on understanding of the uniqueness of the area's cultural heritage. Here, craft making is incorporated in the data collection as a form of creative knowledge production, which draws from the craft makers’ emotive, affective experiences (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Finley, 2008). In this view, the worth and value of craft making is to demonstrate the experiential knowledge of the creative process and provoke social behaviour through the self-expression of the craft makers. Since the study participants were encouraged to materialise their ideas based on the

given design task, craft making informs the understanding of socially situated activity that arises “in our dealings with ideas, tools, and materials of practice” (Bolt, 2007, p. 33).

During the craft interventions, three student teachers were responsible for organising the workshop, explaining the workshop outline, and teaching the craft methods to the participants. The field observations made by the craft student teachers and the researcher present in the pilot workshop (the first author) were significant for the development of the main workshop. Also, field observation also proved crucial in the main workshop as a method of data gathering. In both workshops, the researcher, having professional experience as a craft teacher, was involved in the workshops and documented the situation by keeping field notes and recording impressions of it. Both student teachers and the researcher took photos and made memos during the workshops.

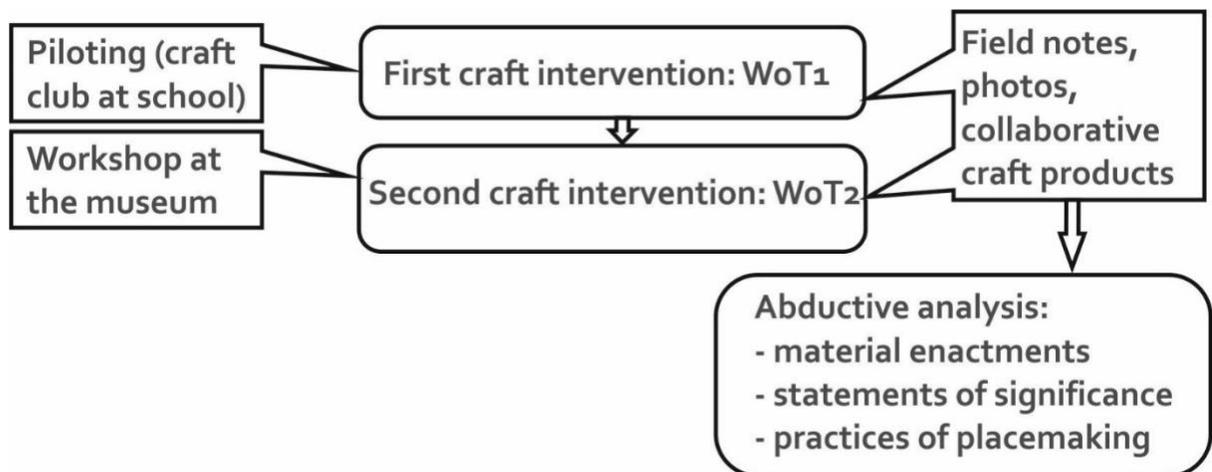


Figure 4. The study process.

The framework for analysis was abductive (Reichertz, 2010), meaning that it was created based on theories of cultural heritage education (Kokko & Kaipainen, 2015), place sense making (Ameel & Tani, 2012; Relph, 1976; Spencer & Blades, 2008), craft making (Kouhia, 2016; Karppinen, 2008), and holistic approaches to hands-on activity (Keskitalo et al., 2016; Aerila et al., 2016); these theories were complemented by a data-driven coding. The analysis was split into two phases, which allowed for the close reading of each workshop field script, as well as the conceptual development of the themes in reflection of the theoretical readings. Data analysis was emphasised through open-ended coding, and it was undertaken in order to develop meaningful themes to describe the findings of the study (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It is to be noted that the field script recorded by the researcher present in the workshops was an interpretative translation of the in situ experiences, or indeed, a “micrology

of lived experience, which intends to shed light on broader structures, relationships, discourses and processes through the mediated social action” (O’Neill, 2013, p. 78). During the analysis, the researchers—both contributing to the analysing of the data—aimed at becoming attuned to the knowledge provided by the theoretical readings and linking them to the empirical findings and the feelings, emotions, and actions of the makers. In detail, the analysis was not linear in its evolution: it moved from theory to close readings of researchers’ descriptive fieldnotes, and was eventually combined with the reading of lived experiences in the workshops through several cycles of analyses.

Eventually, insights provided by the theoretical readings proved essential in anchoring in situ field script to the wider research context and structuring the discovery of new knowledge nurtured by experience (Reichert, 2010). The study findings coalesced around considerations of the participants’ (1) material enactments, (2) statements of significance, and (3) practices of placemaking. Thus, in reflection of the abductive and interactive research process, the report begins with a descriptive account of the resources and materials used in the process of materialisation; it then proceeds with an analytic narrative of the means of exploring and exhibiting a perceived sense of place, and ends with a view of the participants’ developing place attachment. Based on the study, it can be concluded that craft making has the potential to increase the knowledge of the locality among the people involved and is, therefore, capable of supporting and sustaining cultural heritage.

## **Research Findings**

### ***Material Enactments: Handling Materials, Crafting the Site***

Working with one’s own hands and producing new materials is regarded as corporal sense making (Bolt, 2007). Thus, in order to explain how and by which means living heritage becomes manifested in and through craft making, descriptive information concerning engagement with tools, materials and ideas relating to cultural heritage is needed.

Overall, craft makers tended to select territorially or topologically iconic features or well-established details and designs as an inspirational source for their material expression. On the one hand, the makers were triggered by the structural iconic details, such as door panel inscriptions and lace-like wooden carvings of the yard entry gates, which were both typical to the townscape of Old Rauma. Structural iconic elements were often selected to be recreated as self-standing designs that stood out as modern recontextualisations of the heritage. On the other hand, craft making was also inspired by the spatial hallmarks or other prominent or outstanding constructions characteristic to the old town. In both workshops, the Old Town Hall (see Figure 1) located in the centre of the old town served as an inspirational boundary

construction that urged people to create material recontextualisations of the heritage of the historical town with all three craft techniques (see Figures 5a & 5b). The landmarks materialised during the craft process suggest that the reconfiguration of the space was not based on a subversive reclamation of the townscape. Instead, craft making seemed to serve as a passage to heightened awareness of the details of the town and to install a “mood of possibility” (Mann, 2015, p. 69) to take better notice of the city space.



*Figures 5a and 5b.* The Old Town Hall was one of the iconic recontextualisations of heritage that recurred among the craft works. (Left) The Old Town Hall is felted on the left of the base fabric in colours imitating its original appearance. (Right) The Old Town Hall is moulded with salt clay. Photographs from the WoT1 workshop. (Photo: Anna Kouhia).

On a conceptual level, visual stimuli—such as colours, shapes, frames and textures—offered a source of inspiration for the recontextualisation of a particular heritage aspect. One of the repeated reconceptualisations was the window, which was often intended as a reference to the metaphor of framing as indicated in the name of the craft workshop. Windows seemed to be intended as material outlines imposing the content that was being framed in and out of the design and eventually represented the heritage source in a new design. Metaphorically, windows invite looking at the townscape through the eyes of others and interacting with the world. Since participants drew both realistic and more fictitious portrayals of the windows, the relevance of the window depictions seems to lie in the power to attribute the materiality of the place and mediate the sense of placeness perceived by their maker and the wider social group (Hadjipieri, 2019). Regardless of the appearance of the window frames, the handcrafted

window fragments offer a way to reconceptualise the maker's heritage awareness by anchoring placeness into the material realm, which can then be further grasped by others.

Multi-material making was also important in activating a site for social interaction and collective learning. For smaller children, salt clay moulding tended to sustain the most resolute form of material experimentation. The children's salt clay models were often created as self-standing artworks that usually adopted a creative approach on the use of the heritage; for example, they animated the heritage site with animals that they imagined lived there. Other craft media attracted the adults; both men and women experimented with felting and wood carving, yet men tended to carve wood instead of felting. For adults in general, the power of craft expression was substantiated by an array of different craft materials and working methods. From this perspective, craft making did not only serve as "an anchor of familiarity" (DiCindio, 2019, p. 157) but was also capable to serve as source of inspiration on a material level.

Indeed, a multi-material craft approach seemed to captivate the audience, trigger craft making, attract participation and offer a means of experimentation with a broad set of craft materials, tools and techniques. All in all, craft making provided an avenue for learning about oneself and the surrounding world through different activities and materials used within the workshops. For some, craft making was considered more of an avenue for simplifying or layering the elements of the townscape and experiencing presence through spatiality. Simultaneously, other participants took up different approaches to craft making, as they highlighted the functionality of the technique and put more emphasis on the materiality of the craft making than on rethinking about the placeness of the historical town.

### ***Statement of Significance: Reflections on Perceived Sense of the Place***

When the heritage becomes part of visual representations crafted at a historical site, the value of personal biographies and memories is heightened (Santos, 2016). Accordingly, besides emphasising the crafts' appearance in relation to the townscape, we need to call for craft's potential in promoting a sense of placeness and deepening interactions between people and the landscapes of their everyday livelihoods (Platt, 2017). Heritage awareness, in this light, is understood as a performative statement made visible by the process of craft making, which reflects on the maker's experience of the locality.

In the workshops, the act of choosing a photo can be seen as a statement of significance that resonates with the private sense of self and with the meaningfulness experienced by the makers at the site. Accordingly, the statement of significance is dependent upon the change of transition and can be envisaged as trivial routines and relationships as well as the

transformative aspects of existence that occur in interactions between the mundane and the extraordinary (Lefebvre, 1971/2002). Hence, it must be acknowledged that a sense of significance is relational and varies substantially among people; some have a deeper sense of engagement to a place than others. Indeed, the impulses for selecting material inspiration for crafting were often prompt and spontaneous. The students were keen on the details of the buildings (e.g., window frames, gates and doors).

Statements of significance and the resulting placemaking practices occurred through sometimes opposing arguments. For local people, a statement of significance reflected their experiences of moment-to-moment everyday authenticity and their ongoing engagement with the community and town space: the drive through town on the way to work and back home, the familiar routes taken to buy groceries and the walks with the dog around the block. For people visiting the site, the statement of significance was based on other, perhaps more imaginary accounts that resonated with the material, social and cultural conditions of their everyday life as reflected in their experience of the locality at the historical site. From this perspective, the people were not just “gazing upon the materiality at the site” or “experiencing it on the surface” (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 73); instead, they created kaleidoscopic conceptualisations (see Figure 6) of the historical site based on their sense of otherness as cultural difference (Santos, 2016), as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

Three people pop in to the workshop. It soon appears that all three are tourists visiting Rauma for the first time and that they are also new to the craft techniques undertaken in the workshop. The student teacher advises, and all three tourists begin to experiment. The ticking sound emerging from the felting needles fills the studio. ‘This is like therapy’, says a man, felting for the first time in his life. The woman says excitedly, ‘This [craft work] will be strong, really strong’. She compares her creation with the coat of arms of the city of her home town Joensuu, which she says, ‘is weak in symbolic colouring and layout.’ The crafting continues; more felt is fetched, [and] the ticking continues. The woman is passionate and carried away by the process. ‘[The picture was] just for inspiration,’ she explains about her crafting. (Excerpt from the WoT2 fieldwork script)



*Figure 6.* Interpretations of the material cultural heritage. The details of Old Rauma became a creative emblem in the hands of a maker in the WoT2. (Photo: Anna Kouhia).

Indeed, people with different intentions, motivations, skills and knowledge make different kinds of material objects and seek to materialise different visions of the heritage. It appeared that tourists, as described in the previous excerpt, could perform their artistry through openness, infusing their experiences of the locality at different spatial sites. For them, developing a sense of placeness at the historical heritage site was based on social, material and cultural interconnections as well as the conscious and capable management of the cultural-historical knowledge. However, statements of significance were also based on the makers' visions of material expression. In these occasions, portrayals of the site were developed on an experimental basis. For instance, makers were inspired by the chance to experiment, such as the participant experimenting with soldering iron in WoT2 who claimed that she would make the letter R for Rauma even if she had a picture of the Old Town Hall as a supporting photo. Indeed, from a performative perspective, heritage awareness can be understood as a concept composed of multiple trajectories of the presentation of the materiality within a cultural-historical setting; it is a concept based on continuous redefinition and mediated by further socio-material interactions, which echo the aims and experiences of previous craft making.

***Practices of placemaking: Nurturing coexistence and collaboration through craft making***

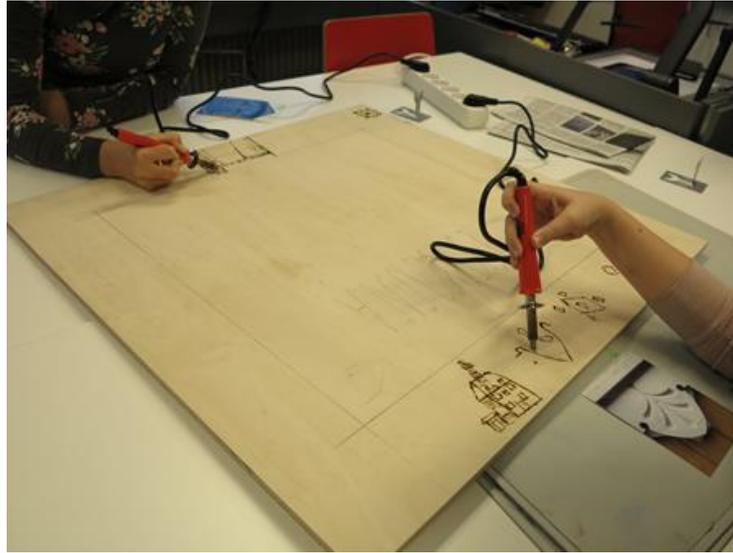
As historical and cultural aspects are seen to overlay the experience of a place, people feel attached to these places, though not to the same degree (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Indeed, each workshop participant had their own accounts of the craft process; these accounts were based on different sensory and experiential capacities that envisaged different ways to respond to others and collaborate through craft making.

Although crafting aimed at contributing to a sense of place at a personal level and craft makers often concentrated on their own work, social interaction was part of the craft process

in many occasions. For instance, salt clay modelling prompted social communication among the makers in WoT1, who kept asking their peers whether the roof should be coloured “this way or that way” (excerpt from the WoT1 fieldwork script). The exchange of information and ideas occurred as curious and communicative practice, which fostered a sense of placeness through shared occupation and sympathy towards the work of others. The following conversation is focused on crafting:

‘My town hall is upside down,’ replies one participant, looking at the collective craft piece. ‘You can do whatever if you find it in a photo,’ she then replies to her friend. Other craft makers offer encouragement: ‘No, you can look at this collective piece from any direction. You don’t even know which way around the artwork is going to be presented!’ Later, the direction of the work is decided collaboratively. The artwork is turned over, looked from many directions. Eventually, the direction is approved by all, democratically. (Excerpt from the WoT1 fieldwork script)

Significantly, conversations that shifted towards collaboration showed that the value of craftwork may reside in communal craft making, which allows makers to reconsider the ideas behind the act of making. While constructing one’s own craft, collaborative crafting seems to offer an opportunity for engaging in community as well as in a broader view on crafts as a value within the heritage context. Different and sometimes conflicting views of perceiving materiality and making were also exhibited during the workshops. Not only did the craft makers have conflicting views on crafting, they also had a different level of willingness to continue the work, differing motivations for participation and differing perceptions for taking part in the making of a collaborative art piece. In addition, their participation, social group experiences, and individual relations varied greatly; some participants had more experiential attitude towards crafting than others. Indeed, recalling Platt (2017), a collective craft piece can be seen as a contribution to placemaking practices negotiated within the very community of practice.



*Figure 7.* Being present, collaborating. Two craft makers work on a shared craft art. Both work on the same craft piece but the other way around. (Photo: Anna Kouhia).

However, the kind of diversity promoted by the craft making encouraged open, dynamic and responsive encounters and eventually resulted in a framework for craft making that permitted creative engagement in and across a community of practice. Although all of the participants did not unanimously share the knowledge of the area's cultural heritage, the design task operated as an umbrella for the craft practices and eventually made participants seemingly agreeable with the need for historical sensitivity, especially in relation to the promotion of urban life at a historical site. Overall, the attention paid to the details of the historical town called the workshop participants to action (see Figure 7), pushed them to take ownership of the local heritage through creative expression, and rooted them more intimately to the historical site.

In elaborating the practices of placemaking, it is important to acknowledge differences in the ways of taking up crafts and participating in the workshops. In WoT1, participants showed great interest in recreational craft making, whereas the heritage of the place was conceived more as a formal framework for material experimentation. Accordingly, WoT1 resulted in a great variety of material experimentations. All three techniques (felted, salt clay moulding, and wood carving) were equally undertaken, which allowed workshop participants to construct a relationship to the heritage site in a hybrid, multi-material manner. Conversely, the participants in WoT2 seemed to have a strong motivation to promote a sense of belonging within the heritage site and explicitly underline the worth and value of the historicity of the place. In this workshop, craft making was understood as an expressive practice, capable of

substantiating the meaningfulness of the place which contributed to heritage awareness. Perhaps due to this emphasis, materialisations in the WoT2 seemed to require more time and effort than in the WoT1 workshop, which made craft practices more intense, time consuming, and comprehensive. Nevertheless, the materiality of craft making cannot be considered independent of its maker (Hadjipieri, 2019); the awareness of the heritage involves rethinking how makers come to know and learn about the historicity of the place emergent in their encounters with each other.

### **Conclusions**

Crafts in the townscape can have ethical, political, and aesthetic effects (Mann, 2015) as well as performative powers that allow craft makers to “establish their identities within the city and to contribute to placemaking” (Platt, 2017, p. 13). This study showed that craft making invited craft makers to engage more deeply with the knowledge of locality and had an important role in contributing to participants’ willingness to take part in sustaining local development and heritage transmission in a historical town. Heritage awareness was identified as being promoted through the process of crafting on three levels, all responsive to each other. These levels addressed the following:

- attentiveness to materiality of the environment, which invited craft makers to observe and experience the historical town in an unexpected and previously unfamiliar manner;
- attentiveness to the perceived sense of the place, which stimulated craft makers to accomplish and perform material statements of the historical town; and
- attentiveness to the means of sharing knowledge of the locality through collaborative craft making, which emerged the interactions within the group of craft makers.

These findings, which emphasise the meaning and value of craft making as a communal and participatory activity, position crafts as part of the debates concerning heritage transmission and local identity construction (Silva & Santos, 2012; Santos, 2016), and argue for crafts’ broad potential for sustaining and developing the attractiveness of a historical town for both local inhabitants and tourists. At the core of this process seems to be ability of craft making to harness heritage elements as material for what ultimately aims to be an education process: learning new knowledge of the region, learning to respect the local traditions, and learning to collaborate with people and communities in a way that increases the awareness of the heritage, as was addressed by the study.

In this vein, the study continues discussions that focus on learning in the field of heritage education and environmental learning (DiCindio, 2019; Hadjipieri, 2019; Hooper-Green, 2007; Spencer & Blades, 2008). It also adds to an understanding of craft making as a method

that can nurture strong connections between people and their surroundings through sensory experiences. In the study, a multi-material approach to crafting seemed to trigger participation in the workshop. Most makers seemed to find felting most attractive, while salt clay moulding tended to attract family participation by offering children an opportunity to become involved in the community craft project. Male participants seemed to be especially interested in wood carving, which was argued to be more familiar to them as a craft technique. Understood as a limitation of the study, workshop participants seemed to be more inspired by experimenting with craft materials with which they were already most familiar with, although learning new crafts was set as a means to trigger participation. This suggests that the utmost potential of such transitory, pop-in, social arts interventions does not seem to lie in their pedagogical potential, but rather in their capability to support and sustain free-flowing individual artistry and material experimentation. It was also noticed that experiences with craft materials provided opportunities to work both communally and individually while making participants aware of the instances when collaboration was substantiated and when it was more fruitful to work on the shared goals with one's own tasks and targets. In the study, craft making eventually allowed the participants to gain new insights into the physicality of the environment through embodied learning and to develop a sense of placeness through a rich collaborative experience.

Promoting sustainable livelihood in a historical town is challenging and demands openness to different ways of fostering cultural heritage. In this note, the study contributes to the rethinking of practices that could sustain living heritage with the ongoing spread of craft-making culture (Dougherty, 2012; Gauntlett, 2011). To be clear, the data we drew on for the analysis are not intended to be representative of the entire craft-making community or cover all craft techniques, materials or contexts. However, with the positive change that craft makers identified in relation to their sense of placeness, we argue that creative explorations with materials, local traditions and histories can assist in developing richer and more sustainable communities. In reflection, the *Windows to Treasures* workshops could be considered as an attempt to enhance heritage awareness among people interested in creative practices rather than to capture a wider audience and diverse stakeholders in a variety of cultural and institutional contexts. Future research seeking to further engage different approaches to craft making is still needed to provide multi-material approaches to crafting.

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