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PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGISTS AS A PART OF THE  
HERITAGIZATION OF NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL SITES

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## INTRODUCTION

In August 2018, a group of pupils was bent over a test pit behind the Pateniemi Sawmill Museum in Oulu, Finland (Fig. 1). The school of Pateniemi had already earlier utilized local industrial history in their curriculum and this led to an idea for cooperation with archaeologists. In late summer 2018, this cooperation manifested itself in excavations organized for the pupils of the upper comprehensive school. The aim of the excavations was to introduce archaeological methods to the pupils and give them a hands-on experience with their local history. These excavations were just one way in which our informal group of archaeology and history students and researchers has tied their research into public outreach activities. The industrial past is evident in many places in the Oulu region and offers multitude of options for enlivening the past.

We see industrial remains as a resource when re-interpreted as industrial heritage. Heritagization is a process whereby memories, ways of use, and meanings connected to a place shape people's understanding of the place as heritage. Heritagization is thus a product of the historicized present, not necessarily originating in the past. (Harrison 2013; Milošević 2017: 54; van de Kamp 2019.) Hence, the authenticity of a site is not necessarily important for heritagization, whereas a personal connection and interaction with the site often become central aspects (cf. Holtorf 2013 on authenticity).

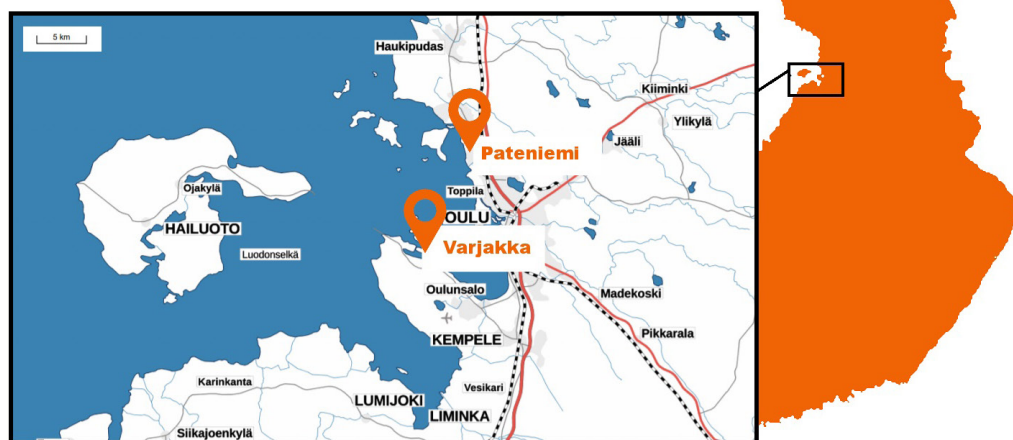
Our case studies stem from two sawmills in Oulu region, in Northern Finland (Fig. 2). Between the years 1873–1990 a sawmill operated

in Pateniemi. It was founded to serve the needs of ship building and timber export. Within the 20th century a lively sawmill community developed in Pateniemi and sport and culture facilities as well as a school for workers' children were built. In 1913–36, there were 1200 employees at the sawmill. (Laukka 2006; Launonen 2016.) Gradually the communal buildings ended up in the ownership of the city of Oulu. After the sawmill closed down, its buildings were torn down in 1994–95. Another sawmill operated on the



Figure 1. Pupils at the excavations in Pateniemi. (Photo: Tiina Äikäs, 2018.)

Figure 2. Map of the sawmill sites mentioned in the text (Map: Tiia Ikonen, 2020, including parts from Plain map series 9/2020 by National Land Survey of Finland).



island of Varjakka, some twenty kilometers from the city of Oulu, between the years 1900–29. It employed at most 700 people. The area of the sawmill consisted of a head office, housing for the workers, canteen, shops, movie theater, and a fire station. In 1917, a school was founded near the sawmill area. Contrary to Pateniemi, the school near Varjakka was not built up by the local sawmill company. It was a public school with a strong student base of sawmill workers' children. (Huhmo 2015: 22.) The sawmill ended its operations in 1929 and the production facilities were cleared by 1938. Nevertheless, in wartime 1941–2, Russian prisoners of war worked at the old sawmill. Later the dwelling houses on the Varjakansaari functioned as summer residences for the workers of Oulu corporation until the last actual inhabitants left in the year 1950 (Oulunsalo 1992; Hirviniemi 1995: 47).

At the moment, Pateniemi is under the pressure of intense town development. The industrial past is still evident in some remaining buildings, street names, and vegetation mirroring the old roads and lots but much is already lost under the construction sites. In Varjakka, the island

is left abandoned and the buildings remain unused most of the time (Fig 3.). Some of them have been renovated, others left to decay. In the mainland, the old housing area by the road is visible as house foundations. Neither of the sites is registered in the Ancient Relics Register maintained by the Finnish Heritage Agency but both are defined as nationally important built cultural environments.

#### LOCAL SCHOOL RE-CREATING INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

The school in Pateniemi has included studies of local history and history of the sawmill into their curriculum. Pupils together with their teachers have planned and actualized a digital history route in Pateniemi. It consists of 12 signs with text and photos as well as QR codes which open links to additional material, e.g. videos. In the process of making the signs, six older local residents were interviewed by the teachers. These interviews have also formed the starting point for our cooperation with the school. The interviews are available for our research and one of



Figure 3. Houses at the Varjakka island (Photo: Tiina Äikäs, 2015).

our former master's students Marjo Juola collected additional interview data as a part of her traineeship in the Pateniemi Sawmill Museum (Juola 2020). We reciprocated by arranging an excavation for the pupils of the upper comprehensive school in Pateniemi.

The excavations took place in the area of the old sawmill in Pateniemi in August 2018. Prior to the excavations, Äikäs and Ikonen had conducted a survey in the area to locate suitable places for excavations. We probed possible locations based on historical maps and noted that cultural layers and stray finds were evident around the area. Three locations were selected based on the survey. Test pit 1 by a house remain that had preserved in the middle of three bicycle roads, test pit 2 by a recent construction pit, and test pit 3 behind the Pateniemi Sawmill Museum, which is housed in Nikkari's cabin, built in the 1850's, situated in the area of Pateniemi sawmill.

Before the excavations we met the pupils in the school and gave them a short lecture on the principles of archaeological research and excavation methods. In accordance with the schedule of the school, a week was allocated for the excavations. There were altogether 25 pupils taking part in the excavation during that week. Each day of the week there was a group of five pupils. The day included digging but also mapping the area with a total station and surveying plants that were possible connected to human habitation. As one part of the day, the pupils familiarized

themselves with recognizing plant remains with a microscope.

The purpose of the excavations was to see whether archaeological material from the time of the sawmill was still evident. To achieve this small-scale test pits were efficient enough (Äikäs et al. 2020). It was also possible to finalize them within a week's time with pupils who had no prior excavating experience. Trained archaeologists finished each test pit and took care of the documentation. In addition, archaeologists excavated the test pit 2 without pupils. There was a construction site close to the test pit and it was a safety hazard for the pupils.

Pupils attended the excavations with a varying eagerness. Participation was voluntary but some pupils stated that they simply thought that it would be more interesting than math classes. Rainy weather combined with only a small number of finds at the test pit 1 led to some motivation problems. After the first day, the pupils were relocated to the test pit 3 and at the same time the weather also improved. Different tasks brought variability to the days but still some of the pupils felt that excavating was not exciting enough and that it was too hard for their back. In a small group, a person with the role of an opinion leader could easily affect the atmosphere. Another group of pupils on the other hand, was so exhilarated that at the end of the day they wanted to stay and excavate even longer. Not surprisingly, finds motivated the pupils. They all wanted to

work in the square where most of the finds came and enjoyed inventing stories of the cattle bones, doll's foot, and window glass that were found. The material from the near past was easy to tie to their personal experiences. Creating these kinds of narratives together may strengthen the feeling of belonging to the group as well as to the place.

What we learned from this experience is to be more precise when planning the excavations with the school. We had hoped to have more time with the pupils before and after the excavations but the schedule of the school diminished our time. We had also agreed that there would be an adult from the school who was responsible for the pupils but even though such a person was present, the control over the pupils was left for the archaeologists. Hence we had a double role of inspiring the students for archaeology and taking care of that they followed the rules of a school day.

We have brought these experiences with us when we are planning the next excavations for pupils. The original plan was to carry these out in Varjakka in May 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic the excavations were postponed to 2021. We saw that taking part at an archaeological excavation was definitely an inspiration for some of the pupils and gave them a possibility to discuss the history of their neighbourhood with archaeologists. Even though the sawmill area is not listed as an archaeological site, the fieldwork

process in its entirety undoubtedly amplified the heritagization of the place.

## LOCAL NGO AND MUSEUMIFICATION

In Varjakka, there is a local organization TaikaBox, which was founded in 2010 by choreographer/dancer Tanja Råman and digital artist/designer John Collingswood in order to create new ways to experience dance. In their work, they pay special emphasis in engaging with the audience. ([https://taikabox.com/.](https://taikabox.com/)) They have shown great interest in developing new ways for the public to interact with the industrial heritage of Varjakka. TaikaBox has organized art residencies and voluntary work on Varjakka island. Råman also suggested that we could organize excavations for the pupils of the local school and helped us to contact the teachers.

TaikaBox is in the process of creating a Virtual Reality (VR) museum at the house ruins by the road to the shore of Varjakka. These houses were built in the early 1920s (Hirviniemi 1995: 39). Nowadays, all that remains are foundations of the houses (Fig. 4). They are not old enough to be protected as an archaeological site by Antiquities Act but the area of Varjakka is listed as nationally important built heritage even though the house ruins seem to be left out from this protected area. Before the summer 2020, the house remains were hard to notice due to the



*Figure 4. House ruins in 2019. (Photo: Tiina Äikäs, 2019.)*

Figure 5. House remains with the gardens. (Photo: Tiina Äikäs, 2020.)



dense forest. Only one of them was clearly visible and an information sign standing by it tells about the old, protected pine next to the foundation - not about the industrial past. During 2019, the city of Oulu cut down trees by the road and at the moment, the house ruins are visible and easy to approach. Råman and Collingswood plan to make the foundations even more approachable for the public with this virtual reality museum. Using mobile devices one can learn how the houses looked like and what kind of areas of interests people of that time had.

We have cooperated with TaikaBox in the creation of the VR museum. A member of our group, an archaeologist and historian Dr Tiina Kuokkanen who is specialized in the use of historical archival sources in archaeology, spent the summer of 2019 in the Oulu office of the National Archives of Finland going through the archives of the Ab Uleå Oy's Varjakka sawmill company. She was able to find information on the former residents of the houses that can be included in an anonymized form in the VR museum, for example number of residents, their work tasks at the sawmill, and comments on the cleanliness of the houses (Äikäs et al. manuscript).

To give more background for the realization of the VR museum, we organized a field course for the students of archaeology and cultural anthropology in cooperation with TaikaBox in

summer 2019. During the course we mapped the house ruins and the smaller outhouses, trenches, and possible human introduced vegetation. We used RTK-GPS, total station, and manual mapping in order to give the students a diverse learning experience but also because of the limitations that the dense vegetation gave to the mapping. In addition, the students interviewed local elderly residents about their memories connected to the sawmill area and their wishes about its use. Altogether 10 interviews were conducted under the supervision of university lecturer Anneli Meriläinen-Hyvärinen. Both the data from the interview and from the mapping can be used in the building of the VR museum as well as in our research.

Another way to bring life to the house ruins was the idea of a communal garden. The Village Association of Ervastinkylä together with Råman has organized grow boxes which can be rented for growing vegetables and flowers inside the house foundations. The permissions are obtained from the city of Oulu. We gave our archaeological consultation on how to implement this plan with the minimum damage to the material culture. It was agreed that the earth should not be dug and the grow boxes should be placed so that they do not contact the foundations. The summer of 2020 witnessed the first flowers within the foundations. (Fig. 5.) The two



Figure 6. Artwork inside an outhouse. (Photo: Tiina Äikäs, 2020.)

remains of houses that were allocated for the gardens were full of grow boxes during summer. This would indicate that there is a demand for these kinds of new ways to experience historical sites. TaikaBox also organized together with the Cultural Centre Valve an art path where one can for example experience dancing with mosquitos, build stick rya, and make cone cows. Some of the art pieces alongside the path took inspiration from those industrial remains and some ruins were even used as part of art. (Fig. 6.) Observing, exploring, and experiencing this historical site in different ways may produce a new sense of belonging to the place. One can also add self-made, nature friendly art pieces while following the art path. This may even create new kinds of trends to connect to the place.

#### ARCHAEOLOGISTS, LOCALS, AND THE HERITAGIZATION

In Pateniemi and Varjakka, the industrial past was essential for the sense of belonging to the place for the locals who actively worked on the heritagization of the industrial area. It has been

noted also elsewhere that valuing and knowing one's local heritage creates a sense of belonging to the place (cf. Raike et al. 2020, in this volume; also Hawke 2011). As archaeologists, we got the positive feedback that we were adding to the knowledge and value of these places, and hence contributing to the local interaction with their heritage.

Both in Pateniemi and in Varjakka, the local residents were also interested in the past around them. This was demonstrated for example by the participation in the interviews and the way one interviewee told he took care of the remains. Also, when we were mapping the house ruins in Varjakka, more than one person stopped on the road and asked what we were doing and if the foundations would be affected. Both sites show how the eagerness of only a few people supported by a local appreciation of the places can lead to new ways of using heritage. In Pateniemi, the local schoolteachers were active in bringing the past into school and in Varjakka, the founders of Taikabox have experimented with novel ways to interact with the landscape and heritage within it. Heritagization is a process of shared meanings and uses of place hence grown out of the experiences and memories of many; in these cases local inhabitants, teachers, Taikabox, village association, and archaeologists.

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