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Making Time

The art of loving wooden boats

Mikko Jalas

ABSTRACT. This article adopts a point of view of practice theories and elucidates how temporal orientations commence in the interactions of humans and the material world. Empirically the article focuses on the contemporary practices of wooden boating. Such practices offer a variety of different temporal orientations, which include emancipatory uchronias, flow states, altruistic care of common heritage and craft identities of mastering traditional skills. These positions within wooden boating result out of a distinct historic development. The practices of wooden boating also frequently imply stress and heavy toll on time, and entail subtle negotiations between self-determination and duties as a practitioner. **KEY WORDS** • material culture • non-human agency • practice theory • temporal orientations • wooden boating

Introduction

Academic texts have explored many sides of the commodification of time: Mumford (1934) connects the systematized and disciplined approach to time to the mode of inquiry in natural sciences; Thompson (1967/1974) argues that the notion of the value of time and the moral dissension with idleness was connected to industrialization and the emerging labour markets. What results are overarching claims of the capitalistic societies in general. Linder (1970), for example, compellingly predicts that productivity growth will only accentuate the time famine in all spheres of human life. However, cultural change is disordered and,

as Giesen (2004) has pointed out, one of the most interesting points in studies of time is the interaction and coordination between different temporal orders and orientations.

One of the prominent examples of contested temporal orders of material objects is related to food; the distinctions between fast and slow food are gaining popularity (Parkings, 2004). Yet, it is not obvious how such dichotomies develop and how they are anchored to the material objects. Instead of new dichotomies of slow and fast time, what is needed, and like Hörning et al. (1999) have requested, is detailed attention to the enabling and disabling facets of the material objects or technologies and the disciplinary as well as the emancipatory practices which they give rise to. In other words, although culinaryism for example is a well-published theme in the sociological literature of time, there is a gap and a need to closely analyse how different temporal orders and orientations arise, are reproduced and cultivated, and take new forms in the interaction between humans and the material world.

Upon such a task, I adopt a post-humanistic, object-oriented practice point of view (Pickering, 2001; Schatzki, 2001a; Reckwitz, 2002), and claim that the underlying temporal orientations can be located in shared social practices. The claims that I want to put forward are as follows: first, practices imply the possibility that the proper and skilful ways of acting challenge and partly take over instrumental rationality. Such skilling and aesthetization of action thus localize and contextualize the abstract and universal economic time. Second, I argue that objects play an active role in the skilling and aesthetization of actions and thus configure human time. Accordingly, a practice is a specific, historical and socially shared way of understanding the world and engaging with the relevant objects. Third, because of the pertaining and active role of the other human practitioners and the involved objects, the temporal orientations are neither to be freely chosen by individuals nor static. Rather, the individual practitioners face uncertainties while negotiating temporal orders through specific relations to material objects. Using the terms of Schatzki (2001b), the aim of this article is to elaborate on how the social ordering of time takes place in and through the teleo-affective arrangements of humans and the material world within specific practices. This approach implies that temporal orientations do not derive out of large societal arrangements, and that they are neither simply enacted by individuals as personal 'time styles'. Rather, in general, a practice view of temporal ordering is a mid-range approach to the question of co-determination of agency and social order.

Empirically, I explore wooden boating in contemporary Finland, and bring forward a practice of resistance, which praises and proclaims piety in material relations, a non-instrumental concept of time and alternative ways of being. A first glance at the enthusiasts reveals dedicated individuals who seek alternative ways of being. However, a deeper look through – or a deliberate tack around –

the individuals also reveals a social pattern of action and a shared practice of boating or boat owning, which regulates the ways of thinking, speaking and acting around boats. In such a collectively shared practice, the objects assume a central role; wooden boats are not merely tools for getting around, or summer residences for the short season. They are not only used, but also appreciated and worked on. Wooden boats are objects towards which action is oriented and on to which individuals project their desires, but which, in return, place demands on the individuals and assess their skills and commitment. A close examination of wooden boating proves that the objects of wooden boating frequently fail in delivering slow tempo and rather reproduce busyness.

The description I present is based on my personal career as a practitioner, on more deliberate participant observation during the years 2003–4 and on interviews with hobbyists and professionals within the practice. A set of secondary data consists of articles related to wooden boats and boating in the major Finnish boating magazine, *Vene*, in the period from 1967 to 2000 and in the national daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* from 1990 to 2004.

In the following section, I first elaborate on a practice theory and introduce the concepts that have been used in the analysis. Next, I present a short story of doing wooden boating in order to tune up for the theme. I start to uncoil the story and the phenomenon of wooden boating by sketching the historical development of the trade. Thereafter, I focus on my own empirical material and analyse the different ways of doing wooden boating and the related temporal orientations. The concluding section pulls together the workings of the practice.

A Practice-theoretical Point of View to the Ordering of Time

The concept of social practices is referred to in a variety of different meanings. For the current purposes, I shall briefly introduce a particular interpretation of social practices that emphasizes the role of material objects in configuring the social world and human intelligibility. Such an emphasis might be labelled as post-humanistic practice theory (Pickering, 2001).

One of the frequent uses of the term ‘practice’ stems from phenomenology and positions the practical solving of problems and manoeuvring in the complexities of everyday life as opposite to intellectual, scholastic or scientific reasoning. Hence, practical going about in everyday life implies more or less routinized action and problem solving. Practical performance is nevertheless not void of intelligence, but rather governed by less verbal knowledge. Practice theorists have thus drawn on the notion of tacit knowledge and aesthetic knowledge as more context-specific forms of knowledge (Strati, 2003).

Writers such as Schatzki (2001b) and Reckwitz (2002) develop practices as particularly *social* entities. Practices (as *Praktik*) are social and historical entities

that regulate human behaviour, create norms and establish criteria for proper action. Practical performances do not only result in effective coping with complex tasks, but reproduce such action schemas and ultimately social order. As Schatzki argues, performances always presuppose a social practice and at the same time the performing reproduces the very same schema.

Central to such thinking is the notion of skilled and effective performance on human bodies in a materially populated world. Practices as coordinating and order-making social entities enmesh human mind with the body and the material object world. Reckwitz (2002) aptly summarizes the order-making capabilities of practices:

[practical] knowledge is more complex than 'knowing that'. It embraces ways of understanding, knowing how, ways of wanting and of feeling that are linked to each other within a practice. In a very elementary sense, in a practice the knowledge is a particular way of 'understanding the world', which includes an understanding of the object world (including abstract ones), of humans, of oneself. This way of understanding is largely implicit and largely historically-culturally specific – it is this form of interpretation that holds together already for the agent herself (the carrier of the practice) the single acts of her own behaviour, so that they form parts of a practice. (p. 253)

Although practice theories argue that human thinking is configured by (the repeating of) social practices, this does not imply a total loss of human agency. For example, in the works of Bourdieu, practices level and declare a playing field for the various games of social distinction (see Warde, 2004). Thus such theories convey a highly strategic and economic view on human action. On the other hand, Warde counters Bourdieu's interpretation and claims that practice theories are well equipped to account for the frequent non-instrumental behaviour of everyday life either in the form of routines or in the form of emotions and desires.

Temporal orders can be argued to arise out of social practices. While Bourdieu's (1984) account makes for economic time, Schatzki, Reckwitz and Warde open up different temporalities. Accordingly, legitimate, proper and desirable ways to relate to time in everyday life are spelled out through practical arrangements, in which human understandings and desires align – or to use the words of Pickering (2001), have been forcefully mangled together – with the objects of the material world. Just as busyness as a subject position is convincingly embedded in various convenience technologies, alternative subjectivities are constituted by other material arrangements.

Parkings (2004: 365) connects slowness to 'heightened aesthetic and sensory experience'. She suggest that reflexivity and self-artistry cultivate the individual sensibility of time and capabilities of slowness, but also notes that any such arts are necessarily situated in social networks. However, more than just social networks, any self-artistry of slowness works with the object world and carves different temporalities out of rather solid material.

With such thoughts I will now turn to the case of contemporary wooden boating. What I want to contribute with the analysis is that the arts of slowness are not out there just to be picked and taken into use. Rather, their availability is a result of unanticipated socio-technical arrangements. As will become obvious, I argue that wooden boating is a historical development in which the material objects have acquired radically new identities. Furthermore, the artistry of slowness implies an inseparable mix of pleasures and duties. I will point out that in wooden boating the rewards and the obligations intertwine just as the temporalities of non-instrumental careful craft time and the extreme forms of temporal strain. True to the post-humanistic point of view, I will allow for the objects to act back on humans. I start with a story from Helsinki.

Doing Wooden Boating

V. and P., a couple, live in Helsinki. They have recently acquired a 30 ft wooden sailboat. The sloop was built in 1935 and has had various owners across the country during the course of the 69 years of its life. On average, the ownerships of the boat have lasted four years.

The first summer of V. and P. involved learning the basic skills of sailing, as neither of them had sailed before. Minimum safety rules concerning mooring and winter storage were imposed on them by the yacht club they joined. The national inspection rules pointed out their lack of equipment and provided a checklist of new products to purchase. After a few tries together with the previous owner to grasp the basic skills of handling and steering the boat, the couple took off by themselves. The growing experiences at sea were complemented by navigation lectures in which both of them participated during the following winters. In addition, V. and P. subscribe to a boating magazine called *Vene*, as well as a specialized wooden boat magazine, *Puuvene*. V. also checks the internet discussion page for wooden boating daily.

Aside from learning how to maintain and use the boat, V. especially has devoted time to documenting their hobby on the website of the boat, which includes all the available information on the prior owners, a description of various renovations from the past history of the boat and collected written and film material of boats in the same class. V. is proud of the fact that the site has been selected among the top ten boating sites by *Vene* magazine.

Both of the current owners have a design education and share an interest in working with materials. During the first winter they learned about the maintenance of the boat but undertook no major reparations. During the second winter, they stripped the paint from the bottom, repainted the bottom after first impregnating the surface, and rebuilt the transom.

Such maintenance procedures involve extensive planning and engage a large number of commercial and non-commercial actors. A good example is afforded by the efforts of V. and P. during the third winter, when the deck cloth was replaced. This work was initiated because of the small cracks in the seam of the canvas and the sideboards. The replacement effort began by reading available practical texts about doing such work. In the autumn, V. and P. removed all the metalwork on the deck, the centreboard and the sideboards as well as the old cloth covering the deck. After viewing the available commercial internet catalogues for additional deck ventilation parts, V. decided to post an ad on the internet discussion page. He soon received emails on available second-hand parts from other hobbyists. V.'s brother welded a support for the outboard engine. A colleague, J., provided help with acquiring new interior lights from a 1950s car to be installed on the new centreboard, and a friend, J., an electrician, promised to install the lights. A.-M., the wife of another colleague, was to be responsible for the printed name signs to be installed on the deck.

V. had read on the internet discussion site about a Stockholm-based shop selling cotton cloth for various traditional maritime purposes. So, after making a paper model of the deck, they undertook a journey from Helsinki to Stockholm and selected a special, thick deck cloth. The problem of attaching the cloth proved troublesome. V. had planned to use a pressure-air gun and stainless rivets. However, after contacting the importer of the staplers, he was able to conclude that none of the rental companies rented staplers that were compatible with the available stainless rivets. Refusing to buy such a stapler, V. and P. decided to use small copper nails. A box of 1000 nails was acquired from a maritime antique shop in Helsinki.

The timber choice was regulated by the class rule. V. and P. decided to stick with the original choice and selected oak. Oak in proper dimensions was only available in a special shop 100 km from Helsinki, the location of the boat and V. and P., who don't have a car. It was also not available in the right thickness. Thus, V. agreed with a carpenter, N., whom he had met earlier during the sailing season, that N. would buy the timber, German oak of class A, plane it to the right thickness together with his wife, E., and deliver it to Helsinki. In order to cut the right shapes out, V. bought an electric table-saw together with M., a friend and the previous owner of the boat.

Work on the boat started in the autumn and continued at weekends during the third winter. In spring, both V. and P. took an additional one-week holiday to work full time on the project. The most critical part of the work was the cutting and installing of the new cloth. V. and P. had made a test piece in their apartment to try out the properties of the cloth and the selected paint. They had also agreed with the previous owner, M., on a date when all three could work to install the cloth.

The workday started at 10 am. V. and P. had ensured that all the necessary materials and tools were in place. M., who had first taken his son to day care, brought with him two more small hammers. After all the preparations were finalized, the three first had lunch and then took up the work. It transpired that the cloth could not be stretched in the same way as in the illustrations V. had seen. However, after five hours of work, the cloth was cut and fastened in the proper form. At 4 pm, M. went to pick up his son from the day care and V. and P. stayed on the island to apply the first coat of paint on the attached canvas. In the evening, V. uploaded photos of the work onto the photo-gallery of the website of the boat.

The details of the above story reveal a committed couple employing their previous skills and developing new ones to support a very particular relationship between themselves and the 69-year-old boat. The story also highlights how they familiarize themselves with, use and further develop a network of private persons and commercial suppliers to support their efforts. However, what is less visible is how the standards of such work have developed and how they have started to make sense and get a grip on V. and P.. There would have been other, far easier, ways to fix a leaking deck. Or was the deck in need of repair to begin with? They chose, however, a different orientation towards the task at hand. Yet they both also feel the over-persuasive grip that the boat has taken on them; they agree that they would rather spend their holidays sailing the boat than working on it, and that if there is to be a next boat, it has to be already in good condition. They say that they have done their fair share of renovations and V., looking tired, admits, 'I am exhausted. Just launch the boat and sell it.'

Sharing wooden boating

The above story can be paralleled by a focus on the emergent structures of creating shared understandings of wooden boating. To begin with, the number of such boats that are made out of wood is not available and would make a poor proxy for wooden boating. Enthusiasts are much fewer: the sales of the dedicated Finnish magazine, *Puuvene*, is about 1300 copies, the dedicated internet discussion pages have 450 registered users and the same internet discussion pages list 30 dedicated associations. The largest single association has 370 members and the largest race for wooden sailboats in the Helsinki area attracts about 200 boats annually. On the other hand, the consumption of the symbols of the practice is much more common; the visitors at the wooden boat summer festivals are counted in tens of thousands and media coverage of the phenomenon is versatile and extensive.

The boatyards, where the boats are stored side-by-side for the wintertime, are

sites of dense interaction. In these yards, amateurs test, discuss and dispute over tools, methods and materials. Similar to the interaction while maintaining the boats on land, also the social gatherings of the summer season – races, squadrons and festivals – bring together like-minded people and occupy the weekends of the water season with a variety of competing options. However, interaction and sharing is perhaps at its densest at the point of changes in ownership. Dedicated owners explain in detail how the boat has been taken care of and also make lists of what needs to be done. In short, together with the boat they hand over a project and an orientation. The changes in ownership occur relatively often – the case of V. and P. covered four years – and thus the sharing of knowledge both in the transaction and through the object itself is highly relevant.

The internet has changed the way the practice is available to outsiders and the way the practitioners interact among themselves. First, the private internet pages document and represent the hobby in such minute and subjective detail that one can claim that the practice is indeed also performed on the web pages. Thus, the competence of the practitioners is increasingly evaluated on the basis of the web pages. Second, the community of practitioners of wooden boating is now interactive not only at the physical sites of practising, but through issue- or problem-oriented discussions on the web. The dedicated internet discussion page has over 3500 clustered messages from the two years that the forum has been available. In other words, the infrastructure of discussing the efficient and the proper has extended its scope and scale.

Dedicated magazines and books have flourished alongside the practice of wooden boating. The Finnish magazine, *Puuvene*, was established in 1995, and, just as the other wooden boat magazines such as *Wooden Boat* (USA) established in 1974 and *Classic Boat* (UK) established in 1987, *Puuvene* has published and distributed images of wooden boating in a particular and favourable light. These media cover the practicalities of wooden boating, but also delineate a more or less articulated philosophy of wooden boating, the ‘art of loving and taking care of a wooden boat’ as Malmberg and Husberg (1998) have titled their book.

Finally, boat-building schools are sites for accumulating and sharing practical knowledge and for mixing amateur and professional interests and orientations. Two Finnish vocational schools have continued up to now to provide education in wooden boat building. In addition, there are numerous new schools and a polytechnic offering education for the profession of wooden boat building. However, what might be even more significant in terms of institutionalizing the practice of wooden boating are the many short courses offered to dedicated amateurs.

Contemporary wooden boating can be related to numerous other developments. The most obviously link is the substitution of fibreglass for wood as the

dominant construction material for leisure boats. Wooden boating would thus make a case of non-contemporaneity (Giesen, 2004) in which the techniques of the past survive only in the enclaves of the museum institution and in non-serious, aesthetized play. However, it is too simplistic to assume that technological development simply brackets old technologies to be available for nostalgic, slow mode of being. Rather, the contemporary practices of wooden boating draw on other, more distant developments such as the wide acceptance of the need to preserve the material objects of (maritime) history, the economic recession in the early 1990s, the novel chemistry of epoxy resins and the use of the internet as a medium for organizing social activity.

The Second Round for Wood: Evolving Ways of Thinking, Speaking and Acting Around Wooden Boats

By the end of the 1970s the gradual substitution of fibreglass had virtually abolished wood as a material for boat building. On the basis of the annual sales catalogues, one could argue that the situation has not really changed; wooden boats do not appear in the commercial catalogues. I suggest, however, that it is not fruitful to look at the phenomenon as a reversal of the 1960s and 1970s. Wooden boats are not (merely) becoming more competitive against fibreglass boats, although this is the aim of the commercially interested constituents of 'the new culture of wooden boating' (e.g. Skogström, 1994). Rather, I claim that new practices have evolved around old boats, old designs and in more general around wood as a particular material. These diversified practices include different and even opposing genres: those who sail vernacular replicas from the late 19th century, those who are committed to the restoration of existing old boats from the 20th century and those who commission and build modern wooden boats.

In the following section, I will describe some of the apparent ways of understanding wooden boating and the discrete sets of assumptions, valuations and practices each of which constitutes wooden boats as worthy objects. In other words, the task of the following text is to elaborate on constellations in which wooden boats gain agency as loci of socially shared temporal orientations. I start by following up Laurier's (1998) distinction between *replication* and *restoration* as two culturally oriented approaches to maritime history.

Replication of local history

Replication refers to the rebuilding of old designs and the remaking of past history. In Finland, the replication of wooden boats according to old drawings or models became popular during the 1970s. By 1989 such activities had expanded and resulted in the building of the first larger Finnish replica of the wooden

sailing ships (Ålands Skötbåtsförening, 2004). Since then, major constructions have taken place along the Finnish coastline (Hytönen, 2004). It can be argued that replications celebrate the craft of boat building and the technologically outdated impracticality of wood as a boat-building material more than any other orientations of wooden boating. Furthermore, many of the building projects are based on voluntary work and appear as a way to connect to the local history, to get a sense of a place as Hytönen argues, and to maintain traditional skills. As a practitioner in a small community of the Finnish archipelago states, 'The interest in old vernacular boats and in the replicas is social, it is a way to be a local resident'. Replicas promise to root the delocalized modern life. Hence, the geographical spread of the different traditional construction methods and the variations in vernacular designs are of great concern for the practising of replication.

Restoration: The mission to preserve maritime history

Restoration practices do not replicate history, but rather claim that it cannot and should not be replicated. It is the original and unique objects that have the immeasurable value and it is the patina on them which make them particular historical objects. Thus, restoration practices are concerned with maintaining a strain of originality or reconstructing the history of the unique objects (Laurier, 1998). However, authenticity raises disputes. For example, a historian and museum chief argues, 'Converting a canvas deck to a teak deck is perhaps a matter of maintenance. But is it a good enough reason to alter the weight balance and radically change the overall appearance of the yacht. The pious yacht-owner of course chooses to stay with the original solution' (Nordlund, 2004a, translation from Swedish by this author).

Restoration practices cohere under the mission of preserving maritime heritage. In 1994, the National Board of Antiquities established a register for the existing large historical vessels and a fund for their restoration. These national efforts parallel an international focus on maritime history. The first European Maritime Heritage Conference was held in 1992 and the fourth congress issued the so called Barcelona Charter in 2002, which 'set out a Code of Good Practice for owners and operators of traditional vessels along the lines of the Athens Charter drafted by architects and museum technicians in 1931 (as amended in Venice in 1964) to give guidance on the restoration of historic monuments'.¹

Restoration concerns are not confined to the museum institution. In 1981, the owner of the major daily newspaper presented a glamorous restoration project of an old motorboat, which had been used by presidents of Finland from 1929 up to the 1970s. Later, in 1986, *Vene* magazine published the first report of a thorough renovation of an old SK-yacht – a type of a project that had ten years before been deemed senseless in the same magazine. This project was not

legitimized by a glorious history of the yacht or celebrities of the past, but rather embraced the dedicated current practitioners. Altogether, it seems that the practices of preservation and restoration of existing maritime history, regardless of the uniqueness and size of the vessels, were appreciated by and made sense to a wide array of constituents by the end of the 1980s.

There is a striking difference between the contemporary practice and the era from which many of these material fetishes originate. Vernacular boats were tools to be used and then left ashore to decay; racing yachts were to be short-lived attempts to twist the construction rules and beat the boats of the previous season. Thus, the lifetime of boats was supposed to be short. Contemporary practices, however, celebrate the anniversaries of old boats and claim that one of the best features of wood as a construction material is the possibility to practically rebuild the boat bit by bit. The boats have altered their script, and the notion of the *lifespan* of a wooden boat, which was still used in *Vene* magazine in 1984, has lost meaning.

Aesthetic superiority

Wooden boats are not valued merely as unique historical objects. After the introduction of fibreglass as a dominant boat-building material in the late 1960s, it did not take long for the boating discourse to allude that the *aesthetic qualities* of wooden boats are superior to fibreglass. Since then the dedicated press has incited and supported the aesthetic superiority of wooden boating. Indeed, Laurier (1998) argues that media reports of (re)building and using boats are skilled photo-narratives, which construct and tell stories of boats and claim and convey their picturesque quality. Furthermore, he maintains that such narratives collapse time and underplay the other resources needed in such projects.

The practices of wooden boating thus rely on the skills of visual representation. Providing such leverage of photos in understanding wooden boating, the magazine *Wooden Boat* (2004: 81) advises readers how to take pictures of boats: use 35mm slide. Take the pictures in the morning or in the evening to avoid ambient light and to produce sharp contrasts. Keep the background simple and/or scenic. Frequently, the images of skilled, aesthetized human existence are made available through such representations that exclude the human practitioner and emphasize the objects.

However, contemporary practices also celebrate the tactile properties of wood. Not only the look, but the feel of wooden boating is superior to the fibreglass era. As Skogström (1994) spells out, 'the smell of wood, the looks and the warmth and the sounds of water touching it, emphasize the joy of building and owning wooden boats' (p. 47, translation from Finnish by this author). Thus, the very activity of wooden boating has been given a sensory quality and the time of wooden boating is aesthetized, decommodified and given inherent meanings.

The invited epoxy revolution

During the recession of the early 1990s it had become commonplace to wonder about the incapability of Finns to develop high-value products out of the domestic supply of wood material. Consequently, wood as a material lived a strong renaissance during the early 1990s with dedicated, publicly funded technology programmes, academic curricula and marketing activities by industrial actors.

Wooden boats received also specific, albeit more modest, interest. A committee was set up in 1992 to evaluate the state of boat building and to consider educational measures to promote this new potential field of high value-added mechanical wood processing. The committee sought ways to connect with the new era of modern wooden boat building, which had started in the USA in the 1970s (Skogström, 1994).

The advocates persisted in building new boats that demonstrated the breakthroughs in the available technology. The previous public opinion was regarded as outdated and wrong in many respects, but most of all it was the assumption that wooden boats are troublesome to maintain which was called into question. It soon became common wisdom that it is possible to make competitive, easy-to-maintain and yet unique boats out of wood with the aid of modern gluing technology. On the internet, an expert at the so-called Virtual Centre of Wooden Boats specifies this 'convenience claim': it takes (only) 15–50 per cent more time to maintain a wooden boat compared to a fibreglass one.

These tenets are in strong contrast with the prior practices. For example, the replication practice embraces the tool-like, rough and traditional models if not leaking per se, and the restoration practices are conservative and suspicious about new materials. Similarly, it is the traditional materials and ways of building, and the patina of the objects that evoked dedication and were aestheticized, not merely wood as such or certain 'classical' shapes of the hulls. Attempts to modernize wooden boating have resulted in perplexing ideas of convenience; while modern wooden boats are advocated as convenient and easy to maintain, the other orientations tend to disregard or even cherish the involved time requirements. At this point in time, the epoxy revolution is, however, still in its infancy; most boats are of old stock and most boat builders work with maintaining the stock.

Agency: How Boats Speak and Act

Putting aside the most technical parts of the arguments for the re-established competitiveness of wooden boats, wooden boating suggests new ways of being in the world and valuing it. Whether it is a connection to local history via the replicas, the missionary restoration projects of grand yachts, the aesthetic appreciation of wooden boats or the tactile contact with the material and a state of

flow while doing wooden boating, they all imply attentiveness and different sensibilities. Hence, the various genres of wooden boating all come together in that boats are worthy objects.

Experienced builders are celebrated as specially gifted master craftsmen who create, carve and force boats out of difficult, living material. They are, typically, men who (are thought to) have an over-generational, shaman-like special and deep understanding of wood material, trees and nature as a whole. Furthermore, it is not only that they possess such skills. The frequent use of emotional language – boats are reported to have been built with *love* – suggests that designers, builders and dedicated owners convey their life forces to the boats.

It comes then as no surprise that boats are suggested to be alive. Ownerships are described as relationships or companionships; like pets, boats are thought to deserve good and constant maintenance and, at point of sales, dedicated new owners. Boats are described as carrying the features of their designers (Whynott, 1999) and owners (Nordlund, 2004b). And to take such animism further, boats are thought to be able to sense their environment, to know a big wave from a small one before hitting them, and to speak to each other during the long, dark winters in the boatsheds (Whynott, 1999). On her website, Silene, a 6m-r-yacht explains herself:

Independent of any race success my old hull has always been taken good care of. A few years ago I had all my keel bolts checked and re-zincd, my wooden keel was inspected, found healthy and impregnated, and I got a new rudder, lighter than before. Four boards on each side of my under-water planking were replaced and a number of spars were also repaired. Every year my bilge has been impregnated with the sweetest natural linseed oil and all varnished parts have been looked after, not forgetting my dear rig and sails. Sometimes I truly feel that I am getting younger year after year. I hope, however, that I can keep my classic beauty.²

Such screenplays written for the drama of wooden boating bring boats to the fore and stage owners to the background as responsible care-takers of the unique and personified boats. The owners of Silene thus construct a duty and a location for themselves in the material world. However, it is not only the boat as an assembly of boards, bolts and spars, which is capable to play the role of Silene and place convincing requests on the owners. Rather, the taken-for-granted ways to appreciate boats and properly maintain them – *the practice of wooden boating* – delineate and suggest specific identities and (cycles of) actions upon the owners.

The lines of Silene also indicate a material side of wooden boating. Galvanic reactions and the decay of organic material are physical processes that degrade the boats. Such processes are transformed into practical requirements upon the owners through shared understandings of proper behaviour, and when the requirements come from loved sources, which are also publicly claimed unique and priceless, these requirements gain power. The practitioners are of course not

simply blind victims of such requirements and not merely addicted to wooden boating. Rather, wooden boats and the practices of boating enable practitioners to articulate different object relations and temporal orientations, and among other things both proclaim authenticity of their pursuits and establish socially accepted uchronias. The game is, however, delegate. Boats may lose their credibility and, on the other hand, overly tax their owners.

Enacting and Reproducing Wooden Boating

In the above, I sketched different available orientations towards wooden boating. However, much more variety exists in the very doing. The tales of the individuals, their points of entry and the trajectories through which their careers have evolved, thus further elucidate the collective structures at play around wooden boats. In the following, I discuss the enrolment and the different nuances of practising based on my own experiences as a practitioner and on the field notes and the interview and the visual material I collected during the years 2003 and 2004 of boat owners in two major coastal cities.

Entering and exiting

How do people become engaged with wooden boating and how do they depart from it? To begin with, boating in general is often inherited and shared by two generations; many state that water, as an element is familiar for them from childhood. However, couples and families who engage in boating do not share this equally. Often it is the men who claim to have such a deep relationship with water and the women who either adapt to or withdraw from boating. In addition to kinship, social encounters in youth organizations, schools and universities, and at work expose fans to each other and trigger initial encounters with boating.

Wooden boating as a practice recruits new practitioners in much of the same ways. However, each of the orientations towards wooden boating also has particular mechanisms of making itself available; racing the classics requires crew and new members are recruited based on sailing skills and commitment to training and racing; replicas and larger heritage vessels are often built and operated by associations, and the orphan wrecks waiting for new dedicated owners are the lures of renovation practices. Furthermore, just as the previous story of V. and P. showed, such projects engage a large number of other people besides the owners.

These mechanisms tap into particular ways of thinking and skills of working with materials in general and wood in particular. Hence, the professions of architects, designers and engineers are well represented. Such an observation could easily evoke a class or an income explanation. Yet, I argue for a more

practical explanation of skills of doing and appreciating of wood and certain kinship of practices as many of the boaters also do other crafts, for example dwell in and 'do' wooden houses.

Boats are on sale for different reasons. Most often the departure is framed as a question of lack of time or growing family and additional space requirements. Frequently, also the internalized track of maintaining and improving the boat is at odds with the resources. However, health reasons are also common. The body – the back and the knees – is no longer apt for the practice of wooden boating.

Learning the trade

Wooden boating is rich in details that can be discussed, learned and disputed. For some of the practitioners, the aim is to master such knowledge; they are eager to engage with different and demanding projects, but once having completed them, would rather not repeat the procedures. The trajectory of the career is towards increasing expertise. Just as V. and P. in the story argue that the deck renovation was the first and the last they will perform, these practitioners avoid routine work and look for challenges; they acquire wrecks to take on a demanding project or engage or plan to engage in building a new boat on their own. In an interview, V. states that 'There is nothing better than to be out with a boat, which is in good condition and which one has thoroughly renovated oneself . . . of course the best would be to have built the whole boat oneself' (V., male).

These learning-oriented practitioners are performance oriented. They have plans on what needs to be done to the boat and hurry to achieve those targets, which should, little by little, lead the way towards the envisioned perfect boat. Thus, for example V. scheduled his first winter seasons with the help of a calendar. The accumulation of skills and the improvement of the boat tie together the past, the present and the future, and as the object world is worked on, it also rewards skills and visualizes accumulation and learning. Öian (2004) has argued that such a track organizes time as linear. For many practitioners of wooden boating, the demands that are placed upon them by the practice, however, take control. What results may be publicly reported descriptions of heroic and successful rescue operations, but also frequently stress, short periods of ownership and grandiose projects that remain unfinished.

Dedication

Another aspect of wooden boating might be called dedication. If the learning-oriented amateurs are committed to learning the trade and improving the boat, there is a different kind of dedication, which appreciates boats as unique historical objects worthy of and entitled to good care and maintenance of integrity. Boats are indeed referred to as companions or as family, or alternatively some-

thing, which we only have in custody as trusted guardians of common heritage. An owner, who states that the restoration of a 6mr-yacht has been his mission for last ten years, admits, 'I am not skilled enough. I did not dare to start practising and honing my skills on this boat, but rather let the best professionals to work on her' (T., male).

A position of guardian is a position of activist. A number of people in the associations and in the media are dedicated to trying to increase the appreciation of the heritage value of the existing fleet of boats, boat-yards and the related pool of traditional skills. The politics of wooden boating begin to unfold as requests for resources for wooden boating from the surrounding society.

Emancipation

For many, wooden boating is an emancipatory practice. As a woman in my field notes says, 'I don't care so much for my job. This [working with wooden boats] is what I really want to do. In May, I come here every day after work. The boats are my family'. For these people, wooden boating is a way to claim a personality and to denounce and disagree with whatever they regard as normal. In a similar vein, my field notes document a practitioner in a newly painted fishing boat:

He proclaims to be a fisherman. But the boat did not match such a statement; it did not have a radar, for example. He explained that he is a traditional fisherman. He is not so much about the money, but tries to do things he feels good about. Thus, he explains, he has also studied wooden shipbuilding. The next project is the renovation of a large fishing vessel from the early 1900s. I asked when the new project will be ready. 'Soon', he replied, 'if I go and resign from my job at a cargo ship right away'. (Field notes, 26 April 2004)

The image of individuals who take charge of their own lives, make radical career changes and act differently matches the learning orientation and the dedication. However, there is a different tone in the activity of these people. On the one hand, time appears as a political struggle. On the other hand, means and ends are less clearly distinct and rather merge into a flow experience, which praises a craftsman-like orientation and meditation. Indeed, there are practitioners who refuse to commit to external schedules. As a woman fiercely notes:

My husband, at one point of time during the spring, makes a plan on a calendar on which date the boat will be launched. From there on, we are in a rush, and I have to do the varnishing, which is the only thing I know how to do and enjoy, in whatever weather condition. Last year I had to varnish the main boom, although it was 7 degrees and the humidity was close to 100 [per cent]. This is why we never get it [the varnishing] right. (S., female)

Frequently, it is not only schedules that are rejected, but also the formal and the underlying rules of proper conduct. The practitioners may, for example, accept

quick-and-dirty reparations just to keep the boat floating and the niche, which they have found, open. They may state that their boat is not in such a good condition without continuing with a list of planned renovations. However, many feel guilty and admit that this spring they will be doing only a cosmetic upgrading, but promise to devote more attention to the boat next spring. The springs are, nevertheless, often alike and the cracks and the rough finishes tell the story of a particular orientation – lack of commitment, as the dedicated would phrase it, or lack of understanding and skill as the learning-oriented might argue.

Identity and distinction

The practices of wooden boating create identities and yield distinctive resources and positions. The distinctiveness is partly based on mere rarity. As a reflexive novice notices, ‘After sailing a week with a wooden boat, I understood wooden boating. Just because of the boat, everyone was looking at us when we entered harbours. We didn’t have to have a big and fancy boat to attract attention’ (U., female).

Another more experienced practitioner appreciates distinctive skills as part of who she is: ‘The boat is a huge burden, but it is difficult to think of switching to fibre-glass. No more comments on the nice boat we have and the fine work we have done with it’ (S., female). Indeed, to be engaged in wooden boating is to be of character. An owner of an INT 5 metre-yacht explains on the website about the class association: ‘There is of course a set of common denominators of those persons who buy an old leaking hull, fix it to top condition, restore, maintain and enjoy the sailing of a yacht of tradition, professional craftsmanship and sailing performance’ (Nordlund, 2004b, translation from Swedish by this author). Time and temporal wealth, but also dedication and skill, are on display.

Skilled performances on land and on water connect practitioners with the distinct social network of boating and yachting. Moreover, the histories of the different boats attract increasing interests. To locate the designer, the yard and the previous owners serves to place oneself in a course of history, especially if the history even remotely includes celebrities of the sailing sport or members of distinguished social strata.

Professional boat building

Professional boat building is yet another way of practising wooden boating that has become available through the efforts of the state and the various local constituencies to increase boat-building education. It is distinct in that practitioners are financially dependent on the doing of wooden boating. However, a growing share of the younger boat builders have chosen their profession on much of the same bases as the amateurs.

Elovirta (2002) describes the business culture of Finnish boat builders as non-competitive. They are in the business to make a living in a free and independent way. In more material terms, some see it as their mission to carry on tradition, transfer knowledge to the younger generations and keep the old classics floating while others aspire to small-scale batch production and aim to develop manufacturing technologies. These people are not financially independent or secure in any particular way. According to Elovirta, many builders seek to earn extra income aside of farming and forestry. Thus, while they identify with the amateur orientations, which resist cost-benefit calculations, the need to earn a living does set the professionals of wooden boating into a different light. Time is a commodity, which is to be sold. However, professional pride and the adopted obligations strongly define the exchange of time and money also in the business of wooden boating.

Conclusions

By focusing on contemporary wooden boating, I have attempted to show how temporal orientations arise out of social practices, which are, so to say, resources for the individual when negotiating between different temporal orders and resisting the commodification of time.

Leaning on the work of Reckwitz (2002), Schatzki (2001a, 2001b) and Pickering (2001), I have argued that practices comprise of a network of humans, skills and material objects, which interlink and co-determine each other. It is such a network of human and non-human actors, which constitutes what Schatzki calls teleo-affective structures and which defines the criteria for the good, the efficient and the proper within the realm of a practice.

A practice point of view has many consequences. Most importantly, it highlights the collective – both discursive and material – nature of temporal orientations. The temporal orientations, which are manifest and reproduced in individual action, thus originate outside of the individuals. They are, to cite Schatzki again, supra-individual. Consequently, forms of resistance such as wooden boating or culinaryism advocated by the Slow Food movement, are not something to merely be decided upon by an individual, but depend on an array of constitutive elements within language, skills and the material world that all are variably present or not in given social context. Hence, two questions have oriented this empirical study: first, how have the practices of wooden boating taken form, and second, how do they operate particularly in respect to time and temporal orientations?

Four important aspects can be distinguished in how the practices of wooden boating in contemporary Finland have commenced and condensed up to present. First, there is a stark polarization between old and new technology, which

essentially assigned wooden boats as superior in aesthetics. Second, the museum institution has elucidated the uniqueness of the existing old boats. Third, there has been a state-led campaign to modernize wooden boat building that has led to increasing awareness and availability of the skills involved. Finally, the practices of wooden boating have condensed within the evolving infrastructure in the media, in the internet and in the various associations.

How does the practice of wooden boating work? In this article, I have sought a balance between human and non-human agency. My analysis has indicated dedicated individuals who reason and enact temporal orientations within wooden boating. Boats and the practices of wooden boating are used to construct obligations and grant owners legitimate projects of self-artistry. However, in such a practice, the material objects also gain agency as parts of the network: (a) they reflect the aspirations and skills of individuals, indicate accumulation and implicate linearity; (b) they connect to a selective past, and put forward a set of related practices and social relations; and (c) the physical processes such as corrosion and decay place requirements on and schedule the doings of the humans.

Practices are localized sets of speaking and acting and hence they also fragment the universal commodification of time and oppose the claim that time is money. Such is the case with all the different orientations in and ways of enacting wooden boating; they all establish time as meaningful. However, there are differences as well. As I indicated, for some the boat ownership is a project under which time is scarce and to be allocated efficiently, while others devote time for the cause of maintaining common heritage. Yet, some politicize time and more deliberately resist a common imperative of efficiency and technological improvement. In a bit similar way, wooden boating is also a form of meditation, a flow-like state, in which means and ends merge and time features at the back-stage. Finally, the professionals of the trade navigate between these orientations and seek, modestly, to make a living on the conditions spelled out by the practice.

Notes

1. See <http://www.heritageafloat.org.uk/barcelona.htm>.
2. See <http://www.6mr.fi/DAS/yachts/981119-125927.html>.

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