

*BOATS HAVE SOUL.
WORK AND PROFESSIONAL PRIDE IN SHIPYARDS*

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(Post-)Industrial Narratives: Remembering Labour and Structural Change in Oral History”

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Zaza González Llanos
Marine Engineer

*"Building a boat has a great charm.
Boats have soul"*
(Press interview, 19 July 2009)

Exhibition: *The Skills of the Dock*



Humanizing boats
Ship launching: a rite of passage?



A gala day



Astillero Río Santiago (Argentina)
Mural picture inside the dinning room remembering the launching of the boat Eva Perón

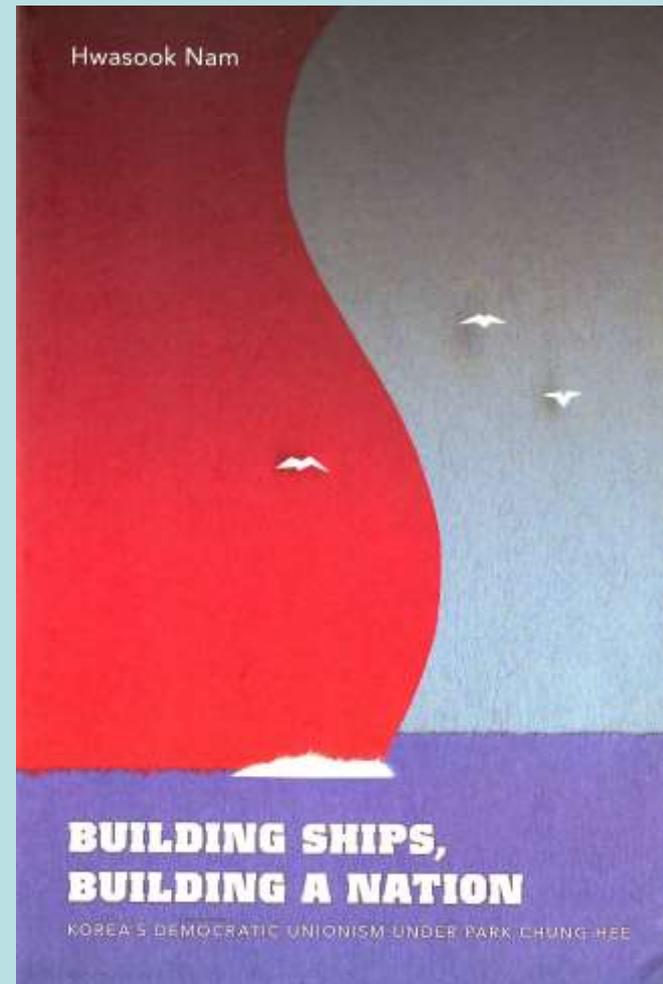
Wherever you look



Ship launching in Kolkala (West Bengala - India) January 2015

Economic importance

- The shipbuilding industry is a strategic sector whose impact has effects on the local and national economy.
- Problems in shipyards easily become source of uncertainty for many other industries.
- Concern, discussions and solutions are the object of attention in the media, business circles, and the political sphere.
- Bigger shipyards become a matter of national pride and images



Workplaces

- Shipyards concentrate a large number of workers in defined spaces. Work puts them in touch, fosters cooperation and communication.
- Although trades and skills are the basis for stability and negotiation, the chaining of tasks, physical proximity in confined spaces, interdependence between different specialists... make easy wider solidarities.
- Any event (conflict, accident, meeting...) is immediately known by the majority.
- Assemblies are natural responses to common problems.

Workers assembly
Astillero Río Santiago
Ensenada - Argentina



Working conditions

- Many tasks in a shipyard imply hardness and danger. The difficulties of the work are a source of self-esteem for those who make it.
- Unequal rhythms of work for each trade depending on the phase of construction (and even on weather conditions) create moments of close cooperation and others of relax, both promoting sociability.
- Daily work requires solving problems and unforeseen situations, adapting plans and designs to put them into practice, performing tasks that require cooperation. Solidarity and sociability spaces are generated around this.



dining room in
Lisnave Shipyard
Setubal - Portugal

Professional pride

- There is an extended consciousness that working in a shipyard demands a higher grade of specialization for the same trade than in most of alternative jobs.
- Many tasks in a shipyard require a specific qualification due to its difficulty.
- Skilled workers are conscious their knowledge can't turn obsolete.
- Experience and hands-on learning play a key role.
- Workplace learning and transmission of knowledge combine with a permanent recycling of trades, forced by the changing characteristics of the ships and technological innovations.



Tuzla Shipyard
Istanbul - Turkey



The produced object

- Each vessel is a singular product, with features that make it different from the rest.
- The construction period is long and everybody comprehends the constructive process.
- There is no (complete) alienation in the relationship between the worker and the product of his job.
- All workers taking part in the process understand the place that everyone takes in it.
- Once finished, ships enjoy prestige. They become a matter of pride for those that built it.



Social and urban environments

- Shipyards are generally located in industrial-dockland areas in which they are important pieces.
- Social integration of workers in neighbourhoods and towns where they live is (was) usually deep.
- Shipyards' problems hit immediately the economic activities and daily life of their towns.
- Shipyards' Trade Unions usually have great social and political influence in their immediate surroundings.

Collective action

- Importance of trade, qualification, experience, and work in team.... are basis for vindication.
- In the same way, penalty clauses in case of delay in the ships' delivery deadline can offer opportunities for pressure.
- Meetings and demonstrations are usually part of the habitual repertory of protest. At the same time, these collective proofs of strength and cohesion become identity factors.